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The Invisible Sublime:

Theories of Art in Carl Einstein's Later Writings

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Summary

This study is a contribution to research on Carl Einstein (1885-1940), German-Jewish writer, critic and historian of art. It concentrates on Carl Einstein's later work, from *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*, his contribution to the *Propyläen* art encyclopedia series, first published in 1926, to *Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen*, most likely written between 1932 and 1936, paying attention also to unpublished archival material. The thesis is that, while the role of dialectics has been played down in much of the secondary literature, Einstein's writing on aesthetics and on the history of art exhibits a pervasive dialectical use of concepts, reconstructing traditional aesthetic theory from within.

This is not to deny the dismantling from without, i.e. the impact of other disciplines such as ethnology, sociology and psychology, on the development of Einstein's theories (the plural is required as substantial shifts in his concepts engender distinct, rivaling theories). Nor is it simply to write him back into a discourse he sought, sometimes painstakingly, sometimes rashly, to write himself out of: the discourse of aesthetics in its peculiarly German variety, with a strong emphasis on epistemology and an even stronger emphasis on ethics. It is, rather, to attempt to understand the way in which some of his key concepts shift in valuation between his texts. One such concept is the 'tectonic'. With reference to this concept and its dialectical counterpart, the 'hallucinative interval', theories of the sublime, starting with Kant, are probed.

Particular attention is paid to the outcome of the sublime experience, pivotal in an era caught between liberation of the senses and contingency management. Adorno's conception of the sublime is instructive in this regard: it allows a pinpointing of the textual instances where Einstein's theory moves, sometimes almost indiscernibly, across the spectrum of positions offered between outright aesthetic liberation and outright management of contingency, as if testing different options. One such option Einstein theorizes involves a flexible subject, freely administering the boundaries of its own subjecthood. The text in which this theory is developed, 'Il se pose la question', dated about 1928, remained unpublished in Einstein's lifetime and, significantly, has as yet gone unnoticed in Einstein scholarship. The response to the sublime conundrum presented in that text is considered in terms of a corrective to the liquidation of the subject in some recent theoretical projects.

Note on orthography

Einstein's idiosyncratic spelling and grammar are retained in all quotations, e.g 'social', 'Cubism', 'metafysik', ss instead of ß, as well as his use of dashes and irregular use of small and capital letters. Where Einstein uses abbreviations, e.g. Kw for Kunstwerk(e), I provide additional information in square brackets ([…]). These I also use generally, throughout the study, for clarification within quotations and to indicate elisions. A key to the literature cited in abbreviated form is provided at the beginning of the bibliography.

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Introduction

The opacity of the writings of Carl Einstein (1885-1940), novelist, critic and historian of art in an age of cultural and political upheaval, is a topos in German literary studies. This study attempts to throw some light on a number of dimensions of his later theoretical writings on art by offering an interpretation of the developments certain concepts undergo. These developments are significant enough to make it necessary to speak of theories rather than a theory of art. A key concept—perhaps *the* key concept—requiring investigation is 'the tectonic'. The standard meaning of tectonic in English is 'of construction or building'. The tectonic forms—basic geometric forms such as the circle, cube, triangle or pyramid, the rudiments of architecture—represent, in Einstein's theory of the late 1920s, the boundary zone between form and formlessness or figuration and the non-figurative. The tectonic constitutes a kind of hub category, around which other concepts in Einstein's writing are organized, and to an extent also a dividing line, along which sets of oppositions are aligned. But, as the study will show, these oppositions are anything but static, given that the hub concept is itself liminal and dialectically conceived.

Einstein's 'tectonic' is of fundamental importance; the reason it requires investigation is as follows. In the course of reading Einstein's work and research based on it, and tracing the development of concepts from the early to the mid and late work, the function of the tectonic as a concept began to present a puzzle. On the one hand, tectonics seemed to perform the role of one of two indispensable elements ('the tectonic' and 'the vision', later 'the hallucinative interval') in Einstein's concept of form—or more accurately formation, the coming into being of form—developed in relation to Cubism. Einstein understood tectonics to have collective significance, and that seemed to constitute a crucial aspect of his theory of Cubism. In the course of the *Georges Braque* (anti)monograph, however, the significance seemed to dwindle and become compromised as an altered notion of form emerged.

Reading *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts* in light of this discovery, it became apparent that the rift in Einstein's idea of form and the change in the significance attached to the tectonic was already to be found in that work, not so much in one particular edition of it, but rather between the three editions (1926, 1928 and 1931). From

a critical engagement with Einstein's ideas about language and representation in the early writings, it appeared to be possible to read the concept of the tectonic and the shift in its significance in the context of ideas about language and the possibilities and limits of representation.

It was while reading *Georges Braque* that an affinity between the theory of the 'hallucinative interval' and the concept of the sublime as evinced in certain literary works of the Romantics began to suggest itself. The idea of the tectonic as a theory of limits, the emphasis on a momentary and risky cancellation of subject-object boundaries as the initial aesthetic moment or inception of the work of art, and also the implicit ethical/political dimension to the theory seemed to reaffirm the affinity. Given Einstein's critical and often polemical engagement with traditional aesthetic categories and concepts, the question of how far this affinity extended, and whether and how an implicit reworking of the concept of the sublime might be afoot, needed attention.

The contextual introduction to the sublime in the first chapter is designed to provide a working model of the structure of the sublime experience. This enables different versions and theories of the outcome of the experience to be compared in a productive way. It allows reference to be made from the subsequent chapters in the study back to certain aspects of the initial patterns set out in the contextual introduction without having to interrupt the flow of the main body of the work. It also adumbrates the question of openness and closure to contingency topical in the subsequent chapters and of interest from the point of view of its wider application in the study of Weimar cultural paradigms.[1]

In Einstein's work one can make out subtle shifts in the significance and evaluation of certain concepts from one text to another, not necessarily in chronological development, and, overall, a reconstruction of aesthetics and art historiography from within. Only some of this reconstructive work is carried out explicitly, however, and the presence, in much of Einstein's writing, of a strong polemical charge often means that concepts are weighted tacitly. This negative or positive weighting may seem arbitrary to the reader; one of the tasks of the researcher is therefore to elucidate the historical

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[1] Some insightful studies of these paradigms and the models of openness and closure that mark them have appeared in recent years. See for instance Inge Baxmann, *Mythos: Gemeinschaft: Körper- und Tanzkulturen in der Moderne* (Munich: Fink, 2000) and Helmut Lethen, *Cool Conduct: The Culture of Distance in Weimar Germany*, trans. by Don Reneau (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

context of certain terms and the polemical background that generates the evaluation they carry in the texts. This is itself of course an act of interpretation, which as such is engaged in its own weighting.[2] At critical junctures throughout the study alternative readings of problems that arise as a result of contradictions and aporias within and between the texts will be provided, and their merits discussed with reference to particular theoretical standpoints.

As regards the contention that much of Einstein's reworking of aesthetic categories and concepts occurs at a 'subterranean' level, this reading is clearly bound into a topographical notion of the texts and the words that constitute them. That is not to suggest, however, that to investigate the ways concepts interact 'beneath' the terms that Einstein actually works with will produce a reading of 'the true' Einstein. Rather, it is an attempt, in a gesture of 'and' rather than 'or', to offer another interpretation to complement rather than displace or replace those offered to date. But it is also to offer a reading of Einstein that to a certain extent writes him back into a tradition of philosophical aesthetics he largely and deliberately wrote himself out of.[3] This is not to seek to annihilate his own project and positioning or disregard the fruitful discontinuities and critical vigour of an œuvre that can claim some considerable achievements. Rather, it is to seek to extend the points of comparison the better to gauge that project and those achievements from a current standpoint.

Einstein's position as a thinker and writer is historically fairly unique.[4] He grew up and studied in Germany and was exposed to German philosophy, and in particular aesthetics (historical and contemporary), *Lebensphilosophie* and the cultural criticism of Simmel, the 'empiriocriticism' of Mach, the ideational ferment of Marx, Nietzsche and Freud, and the 'Kulturpessimismus' of German cultural criticism, all received against the backdrop of the epochal distinction between 'Gemeinschaft' and 'Gesellschaft'. This was

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[2] The review of secondary literature below will provide orientation as to the theoretical and interpretive direction taken in this study.

[3] The reasons why the seminal research of the 1970s and eighties, as well as most of the more recent work, has not considered this a project worthy of undertaking will be touched on in the review of secondary literature below.

[4] Short biographical notes have been included at the end of this study. Further biographical material can be found in Conor Joyce, *Carl Einstein in 'Documents' and his Collaboration with Georges Bataille* (Philadelphia: Xlibris, 2003), pp. 17-31 and pp. 199-210; Sibylle Penkert, *Carl Einstein: Beiträge zu einer Monographie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1969); Liliane Meffre, *Carl Einstein (1885-1940): Itinéraires d'une pensée moderne* (Paris: André Dimanche, 1993); and Wilfried Ihrig, 'Vita Carl Einstein', in *Text + Kritik*, 95: Carl Einstein (1987), pp. 80-86.

a Jewish and Protestant German cultural tradition that, with an Idealist orientation, as Conor Joyce points out, conceived of law in terms of abstract forms.[5] Yet Einstein immersed himself, from quite an early age, in French ethnography, anthropology and sociology – part of a Catholic and materialist cultural tradition that conceives of laws in terms of communion through sacrifice.[6] This immersion and his commitment to French art, especially Cubism and Surrealism, provided him with a contrasting horizon of possibilities. Tuned to the possibilities of art as a collective social force and in constant dialogue with works and concepts from German philosophical aesthetics, Einstein produces a mode of writing that, while particular to him, also bridges Surrealism and certain tenets of Critical Theory in a unique way. There are, of course, aspects of Einstein's work that have little to do with Critical Theory. But a major contention of this study will be that an affinity 'in spirit' if not so much 'in letter' is discernible when looking at Einstein's enterprise of a critical reconstruction of a theory of art. In this regard, a stronger comparison with certain aspects of the work of Theodor W. Adorno (1903-1969) than has been suggested in the secondary literature is necessary.

This study will engage with the three major works in the second half of Einstein's career, i.e. from the early 1920s until the late thirties, in which theories of art are developed. These are the encyclopedia volume *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*, *Georges Braque* and *Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen*. It is perhaps somewhat contentious to allege that a theory of art is developed in the last mentioned work. The chapter on that work will show how it indeed suggests and to a limited extent also develops a theory of art *ex negativo*, how this theory relates to the earlier theories, and how it is compromised in terms of its ethical/political dimension.

The *BEB II* project will not be considered in its (fragmentary) entirety. A separate study would be required to allow for the discursive complications of a literary and partly autobiographical work that integrates reflections and comments on art in the context of taking stock of the cultural meltdown of a generation. However, material from the *BEB II* corpus in the archives will be drawn on at various junctures in the study to substantiate or provide an alternative perspective on a point or argument. Similar use will be made of Einstein's correspondence with the Parisian art-dealer and promoter of Cubism, Daniel

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[5] See Joyce, *Carl Einstein in 'Documents'*, pp. 216-17.
[6] Joyce, *Carl Einstein in 'Documents'*, pp. 216-17.

Henry Kahnweiler, the Berlin publisher Ewald Wasmuth, friends, colleagues and partners.

There will be no specific engagement with the question of Einstein's function in the art magazine *Documents* (the reasons for this are given below, page 9), but Einstein's contributions to the magazine will receive some attention in the context of the development of his theory of Surrealism. A text from about 1928, 'Il se pose la question', possibly the basis of a lecture or a presentation and first published in the *Nachlaßband* of Einstein's works, has been ignored by Einstein research to date. The lack of attention to this text is all the more puzzling because it develops an aesthetic theory in its own right, certainly building on the theory of Cubism but departing from it in its consideration of the aesthetic moment of thinking, or the inception of aesthetic form, in isolation from any particular art movement or work. Closely related in places to the text 'Gestalt und Begriff',[7] and of importance in the nexus that will be established between thinking on the sublime and the moment of contingency, 'Il se pose la question' marks a moment of calm in Einstein's work before the stormy encounter with Georges Bataille in the *Documents* venture. As such, it marks also a moment in which the productiveness of tension for the imagination can be carefully and critically appreciated, before it takes on a more vigorous but also insistent, obsessive and apodictic colouring in *Georges Braque*.

Review of secondary literature

The following review of secondary literature on Carl Einstein is not so much intended to provide a critical presentation of the literature as to outline desiderata of research and particularly to situate the line of inquiry pursued in this study within the wider context of published work. The number of studies—full-length books, doctoral theses and articles—that have appeared on Einstein within the past ten years has meant that the number of publications since the centenary in 1985 has more than doubled.[8] In the earlier reception of Einstein the focus was predominantly on Einstein's early work. The novel *Bebuquin* (1906-12), early essays, criticism of Naturalism and nineteenth century theories of the

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[7] This is Sibylle Penkert's title. See Sibylle Penkert, *Carl Einstein: Existenz und Ästhetik: Einführung mit einem Anhang unveröffentlichter Nachlaßtexte*, Verschollene und Vergessene (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1970). The same text (apart from minor editing differences) appears in W 4 as 'Diese Aesthetiker veranlassen uns' (W 4, 194-221).

[8] The most comprehensive bibliography to appear on Carl Einstein is Henner Grube's *Carl Einstein: Eine Bibliographie*, Bibliographische Hefte, 4 (Mainz: von Hase & Koehler, 1997).

novel, the experimental theory of absolute prose and Einstein's relationship to Expressionism were explored.[9]

Heidemarie Oehm's seminal work from 1976, *Die Kunsttheorie Carl Einsteins*, was the first study to rise to the challenge of giving a theoretical reconstruction of Einstein's œuvre from *Bebuquin* and the early legends to *Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen* and the *BEBII* fragments.[10] While providing a meticulous analysis of the development and structure of Einstein's early theory of art, both literary and visual, Oehm also offers a careful interpretation of *Bebuquin* and its narrative structure in relation to Einstein's own theory of the novel. The last third of Oehm's study has proved extremely contentious. There, the criticism launched in *Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen* is read as an indicator of a 'materialist turn' in Einstein's œuvre. This idea of a materialist turn leads to Oehm's postulation of a rigorous division between a pre-1933, subjectivist, basically late Romantic Einstein and a post-1933, materialist Einstein, who critically distances himself from his former theory, leaving it fully behind.[11]

Renewed consideration, with strong historical contextualization, was given Einstein's later writings in a study by Ines Franke-Gremmelspacher.[12] This study has the merit of attending to Einstein's criticism of his earlier position in *Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen* in the context not just of the political developments of the early thirties, as Oehm had maintained, but of a wider critical situation. This wider situation included a crisis in the role of the European intellectual and a sense that the Avant-garde movements were failing to fulfil their ambitions. Franke-Gremmelspacher offers also the first sustained study of the *BEB II* project, considering its affinities to both the earlier theories and later critical concerns of Einstein. In this way, Franke-Gremmelspacher can present

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[9] See for instance Christoph Braun, *Carl Einstein: Zwischen Ästhetik und Anarchismus: Zu Leben und Werk eines expressionistischen Schriftstellers* (Munich: Iudicium, 1987); Joseph L. Brockington, *Vier Pole expressionistischer Prosa: Studien zu den Erzählformen expressionistischer Werke von Kasimir Edschmid, Carl Einstein, Alfred Döblin und August Stramm* (New York: P. Lang, 1987); Andreas Kramer, *Die "verfluchte Heredität loswerden": Studie zu Carl Einsteins "Bebuquin"*, Münstersche Beiträge zur deutschen und nordischen Philologie, 8 (Münster: Kleinheinrich, 1990); Thomas Krämer, *Carl Einsteins "Bebuquin": Romantheorie und Textkonstitution*, Epistemata: Würzburger wissenschaftliche Schriften, Reihe Literaturwissenschaft, 63 (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1991); Eckhard-Ehmke Sohns, *Der Leser Carl Einsteins: Zu einer Kritik der Interpretation in den frühen Texten*, Münchner Studien zur literarischen Kultur in Deutschland, 14 (Frankfurt a. M.: Lang, 1992).

[10] Heidemarie Oehm, *Die Kunsttheorie Carl Einsteins* (Munich: Fink, 1976).

[11] I will return to this aspect of Oehm's work and the criticism of it below.

[12] Ines Franke-Gremmelspacher, *"Notwendigkeit der Kunst"? Zu den späten Schriften Carl Einsteins* (Stuttgart: Hans-Dieter Heinz Akademischer Verlag, 1989).

the continuities and discontinuities of Einstein's work without insisting on any rigorous division or periodization.

The strength of Franke-Gremmelspacher's study—her toleration of internal contradictions and paradoxes within and between the texts—is, however, at the same time its weakness. Her study is unsatisfactory in dealing with the question of how Einstein's concept of art as theorized in *Georges Braque* is to function in the context of modern society and its institution of art. While her interpretation of *Georges Braque* is very helpful, it does not cover the dimension of the viability of Einstein's idea of art as an aesthetic theory. And because this dimension is neglected, a critical assessment—beyond descriptive commentary—of an alternative idea of the work of art that Einstein suggests in *Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen* does not take place either. The alternative idea of art in question is Einstein's idiosyncratic 'realism', which he in fact adapts from his interpretation of Léger in the late 1920s, as reflected especially in the third edition of *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*.

These issues suggest the need for a new look at *Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen* and a sustained study of its problems, both thematic and textual/structural. It is a work Einstein scholars have, on the whole, tended to treat with kid gloves, perhaps on account of its tortuous style, no doubt also on account of the fact that that tortuousness stretches unrelentingly over more than three hundred pages. The only studies that devote to it more than a brief comment in passing are Oehm's *Die Kunsttheorie Carl Einsteins* and Franke-Gremmelspacher's *"Notwendigkeit der Kunst"?*, and an article on the mode and structure of its argumentation by Wolfhart Henckmann.[13]

Within the past ten years, along with a continued interest in the early works, there has been a much-increased interest in Einstein's later writings on visual art and individual artists.[14] The Carl-Einstein-Kolloquium of 2001 provided a forum for the first

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[13] Wolfhart Henckmann, 'Zur Argumentationsweise in Einsteins "Fabrikation der Fiktionen"', in *Carl-Einstein-Kolloquium 1994*, ed. by Klaus H. Kiefer (Frankfurt a. M.: Lang, 1996), pp. 135-61.

[14] Relevant full-length studies include Antje Quast, *Das Neue und die Revolte: Schlüsselbegriffe der Avantgarde bei Guillaume Apollinaire und Carl Einstein* (Bonn: Romanistischer Verlag, 1994), Conor Joyce, *Carl Einstein in 'Documents'* (see footnote 4 above), and Klaus H. Kiefer, *Diskurswandel im Werk Carl Einsteins: Ein Beitrag zur Theorie und Geschichte der europäischen Avantgarde*, Communicatio: Studien zur europäischen Literatur- und Kulturgeschichte, 7 (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1994). Cf. also the diverse articles in the issue of *Études germaniques* devoted to Einstein, *Études germaniques*, 1 (1998). As all of the following articles are from that issue, just the author, title and page span will be given in each case. Georges Didi-Huberman, 'L'anachronisme fabrique l'histoire: sur l'inactualité de Carl Einstein', pp. 29-54. Charles W. Haxthausen, 'Reproduktion und Wiederholung. Benjamin und Einstein: eine kritische Gegenüberstellung', pp. 55-76. Werner E. Drewes, 'Max Raphael und Carl Einstein: Konstellation des

multi-disciplinary engagement with Einstein's contribution to the *Propyläen* encyclopedia of art series, *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*. This colloquium generated studies on Einstein's theory of space, mode of art historiography (i.e. the language and concepts that form his work), and position in relation to other art historians and critics of his era.[15] The contention that Einstein foregoes all ekphrastic writing in his approach to art in the encyclopedia volume (and elsewhere) will be subjected to scrutiny, as it appears tenable only if one accepts a traditional definition of ekphrasis and admits of no critical dialogue with such definitions.[16]

A critical dialogue not only with the concept of ekphrasis but also with that of the sublime is, this study will contend, under way in Einstein's later writings. This is, however, not the first time that the idea of the sublime has been introduced in relation to the work of Carl Einstein. Jochen Schulte-Sasse in his article 'Carl Einstein; or, The Postmodern Transformation of Modernism' taps into Lyotard's postmodern version of the sublime in the context of establishing a distinction between modernism and the Avant-garde/postmodernism.[17] But he does not use the concept of the sublime to its full heuristic potential, a matter also of scope, since an article will only allow a brief unfolding and application of theoretical concepts. Neither, though, does he indicate what I would see as the direct relevance of the sublime for Einstein's own theories, particularly those of his 'Surrealist phase' (i.e. writings from the late 1920s to the mid thirties, including the third edition of *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*, diverse articles

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Aufbruchs in die "Klassische Moderne" im Zeichen der Zeit', pp. 123-58. Joachim Heusinger von Waldegg, 'Von der Geometrie des Lebens zur Kultur der Massen: Carl Einstein und Fernand Léger', pp. 159-70. Christa Lichtenstern, 'Einsteins Begriff der "metamorphotischen Identifikation" und seine Beobachtungen zur surrealistischen Kunst', pp. 237-49. Further articles of particular interest in relation to Einstein's later writings on visual art include Georges Didi-Huberman, '"Tableau = coupure": expérience visuelle, forme et symptôme selon Carl Einstein', in *Les Cahiers du Musée National d'Art Moderne*, 58 (1996), pp. 5-27, and Uwe Fleckner, 'Das zerschlagene Wort: Kunstkritik des Kubismus und "kubistische" Kunstkritik im Werk von Pierre Reverdy, Guillaume Apollinaire und Carl Einstein', in *'Prenez garde à la peinture!' Kunstkritik in Frankreich 1900-1945*, ed. by Uwe Fleckner and Thomas W. Gaehtgens (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1999), pp. 480-535. I am grateful to Dr Uwe Fleckner, who kindly sent me a copy of this essay.

[15] The proceedings of the colloquium have been published as *Die visuelle Wende: Carl Einsteins 'Kunst des 20. Kahrhunderts'*, ed. by Klaus H. Kiefer (Munich: Fink, 2003).

[16] Uwe Fleckner makes this contention is his article, 'Das zerschlagene Wort', p. 523. A new work on Einstein's method of describing images appeared too recently to be integrated into this study. It is German Neundorfer's *"Kritik an Anschauung": Bildbeschreibung im kunstkritischen Werk Carl Einsteins* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2003).

[17] Cf. Jochen Schulte-Sasse, 'Carl Einstein; or, The Postmodern Transformation of Modernism', in *Modernity and the Text: Revisions of German Modernism*, ed. by Andreas Huyssen and David Bathrick (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), pp. 36-59 (pp. 41-42).

and essays, and *Georges Braque*).[18] Schulte-Sasse's article is nonetheless seminal in its thesis of a 'postmodern' Einstein.[19] In fact, the article is bristling with theses that beg further research: the idea of Einstein's later work representing 'one of the most consistent models of a leftist-radical, grass-roots democratic theory of art to date', and the notion of a relation of 'elective affinities' to Walter Benjamin, to mention two more.[20]

There has also been a surge of interest in Einstein's theory of Surrealism. Klaus Kiefer can be credited with having been the first to identify it as such, as well as to consider it in comparison with French theories of Surrealism.[21] Certainly, as Kiefer points out, there is no sense in which Einstein's theory historically rivalled the theories of Breton and Bataille, because Einstein had no following and generated no 'circle' as they did. Despite being well acquainted with many artists and writers in Paris and Berlin and publishing in numerous magazines, in terms of his work and its reception Einstein remained for the most part an isolated figure. But Kiefer elucidates the richness and complexity of Einstein's theory, especially as presented in *Georges Braque*, and demonstrates convincingly how its ethnological and sociological dimensions, drawn against the backdrop of a rigorous critique of Western metaphysics and epistemology, mark out a theoretical terrain later to be ploughed by theories of poststructuralism.

The challenge of figuring out the role Einstein played in the venture that was the Paris art magazine *Documents* (1929-1930) has been met by Conor Joyce's recent study, *Carl Einstein in 'Documents' and his Collaboration with Georges Bataille*. Joyce works closely on the interaction of images and articles in each issue of the magazine, reconstructing the manoeuvres of the younger initiator figure Bataille and the older, comparatively less radical Einstein as opponents in what was at first a game, then a battle. In the process of finding answers to the question about Einstein's role,[22] Joyce's

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[18] On this delineation of a Surrealist phase in Einstein's work see Klaus Kiefer, *Diskurswandel*, pp. 366-536.

[19] I will return to this shortly.

[20] Cf. Schulte-Sasse, 'Carl Einstein; or, The Postmodern Transformation of Modernism', p. 58.

[21] See footnote 18 above.

[22] Practically, Einstein and Bataille co-edited the magazine, with Georges Wildenstein, the publisher, sometimes also acting as editor. Formally, Einstein's role was that of editor, Joyce ultimately maintains. But, as Joyce points out, Einstein's part in the collaboration was also the precondition for the development of Bataille's concepts, which enjoyed a much wider and more productive reception than Einstein's. See Joyce, *Carl Einstein in 'Documents'*, p. 211 and pp. 214-16. Cf. also the article Joyce develops from that study, 'Interpretationsschlüssel zur Pariser Zeitschrift "Documents" – Carl Einsteins "Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts", in *Die visuelle Wende der Moderne: Carl Einsteins 'Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts'*, ed. by

book also offers an insightful interpretation of Einstein's theory of tectonics and the changes it underwent during the collaboration. Joyce thus locates the transformation in the significance of the tectonic, referred to above as being detectable between *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts* and *Georges Braque*, in the art magazine *Documents* and thus in the years 1929-30, in particular 1929. Joyce has provided expert coverage of this area, presenting an extremely plausible central thesis. The *Documents* venture and Einstein's part in it will therefore not be addressed in any specific way in this study.

Returning now to Schulte-Sasse's thesis of a 'postmodern' Einstein: this thesis, briskly presented in Schulte-Sasse's article, is developed on a very large scale in Klaus Kiefer's habilitation *Diskurswandel im Werk Carl Einsteins*.[23] Kiefer's study works with the broadest material base, both primary and secondary, used to date in Einstein research to produce a thesis postulating different discursive phases in Einstein's work, and different discursive strands operating in individual texts. These discursive phases are read with a sense of the development of Einstein's thought, but without any teleological demand. Developments are considered both in relation to one particular discourse and as the thought moves between discourses, using one to pry open another. The different discursive strands are not set in ideological opposition to one another, as the phases Oehm postulated were, and are united only by their deconstructive logic.

Kiefer seems, however, to consider closed the line of inquiry suggested by Schulte-Sasse, that is, a theoretical engagement with a theory of the sublime (Lyotard's) and an assessment (if brief) of Einstein's epistemological critique in the light of dialectical cultural criticism (Adorno and Horkheimer's work). Kiefer selects a different set of poststructuralist and deconstructivist theoretical materials to support his thesis, and he refers to Adorno only occasionally and in passing. Apart from one clause recognizing Schulte-Sasse's 'im Grunde richtige Postmodernismus-These', Kiefer acknowledges Schulte-Sasse's article only negatively.[24] His criticism is directed against Schulte-Sasse's contention that Einstein integrated his epistemology-critical and his materialist approach

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Klaus H. Kiefer (Munich: Fink, 2003), pp. 147-61. This article does not, however, point out or trace the change in the significance of the tectonic that occurs between the three editions of the art encyclopedia.

[23] See footnote 14 above.

[24] See Kiefer, *Diskurswandel*, p. 558.

in *Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen*. This, Kiefer holds, amounts to a compromise with Oehm's 'Materialismus-These'.[25]

Kiefer's entire critique of Oehm's thesis cannot be presented here, but the major points can be synopsized as follows: Oehm's work *Die Kunsttheorie Carl Einsteins* is to be understood in the context of the politicization of 1968 and its aftermath. It represents a totalizing approach, and in its over-valuing of Einstein's allegedly materialist position post-1933, it not only sets twenty-three years of work and publishing (Einstein's 'subjectivist' phase) against about six (his later 'materialist' phase), but also reveals its ideological bias as part of a wave of Marxist literature studies.[26]

This much of Kiefer's critique is valid. He legitimately undermines Oehm's strict periodization also by pointing out that *Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen* is not the first text of its kind in Einstein's œuvre: other strongly ideology-critical texts that precede it include 'De l'Allemagne' from 1921 (W 2, 200-03, German translation: 529-32) and 'Der Verfall der Ideen in Deutschland' from 1924 (W 2, 163-78, German translation: 533-49).[27] Einstein quite rightly did not start out from Marxist doctrine, nor did he develop an independent materialism. But that does not prevent his having a vibrant relationship with certain aspects of materialist thinking. In the chapter on *Georges Braque* in this study a section will discuss Einstein's understanding of history. Reference has already been made above to the way in which concepts develop in his work. My contention is that Kiefer, eager to put a Marxism-oriented theory and history of literature to rest, is keen in his study to minimize attention to a certain dimension of Einstein's thought and work. That is the dimension that works, sometimes to a greater, sometimes to a lesser extent, with dialectics and has common ground—and certainly shares a dialectical insight into the relation of ground and groundlessness—with other dialectical thinkers. Without seeking to resuscitate Oehm's thesis, which would in any case be historically absurd, this study aims to salvage a concern with the dialectical dimensions of Einstein's work implicit in a reading of his work under the sign of 'materialism'.

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[25] Kiefer, *Diskurswandel*, p. 558, footnote 82.
[26] Kiefer, *Diskurswandel*, pp. 543-48. See also p. 524 and p. 532.
[27] Kiefer, *Diskurswandel*, p. 548.

In his later writings Einstein is perhaps at his most 'modernist' (in the sense of a nostalgia for closure[28]) in *Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen*. But this stance, heavily critical of the Avant-garde, and his championing of the Avant-garde at times coincide chronologically, as Kiefer correctly points out.[29] Both stances are mutually determining in a discourse that is suspended between propounding the full experience of contingency and the management of it, between 'Sinnesbefreiung' and 'Ordnungswut', as Inge Baxmann puts it.[30] Suggestive as it is of so many related dialectical pairs, this is one of the enduring conundrums in our own cultural engagements. It is not the case that by exposing the linguistic and therefore conceptual and historical relativity of such pairs current theories have provided solutions to the social, political and cultural problems such pairs accompanied and perpetuated. However much postmodern paradigms demonstrate an awareness of the mutual determination of both aspects, there is a sense in which they break against the same conundrum. In this way, the dialectic, which some theories of the postmodern have wanted to consign to the museum of conceptual tools, emerges as a potent concept for understanding the very relation that obtains between postmodernism and that which it saw itself displacing, modernism.[31] It is in terms of this relation of continuity as well as discontinuity that Einstein's approach to, and transformation of, concepts such as ekphrasis, the sublime and the sovereign subject will be considered.

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[28] Cf. Richard Sheppard, 'The Problematics of European Modernism', in *Theorizing Modernism: Essays in Critical Theory*, ed. by Steve Giles (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 1-51 (p. 3). In chapter 1 this sense of modernism as characterized by a nostalgia for closure will come under discussion.

[29] See Kiefer, *Diskurswandel*, pp. 558-59.

[30] The fifth chapter of Baxmann's study is entitled 'Zwischen Sinnesbefreiung und Ordnungswut'. See Baxmann, *Mythos: Gemeinschaft*, p. 99.

[31] Cf. Albrecht Wellmer, *Zur Dialektik von Moderne und Postmoderne: Vernunftkritik nach Adorno* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1985).

Chapter 1

A Contextual Introduction to the Sublime

The question of contingency: a correlate of the sublime

There has been a tendency in recent years within literary and cultural studies to close the gap somewhat between modernism and postmodernism. We have reached a time in which postmodernism no longer finds itself jostling for recognition as the latest and newest -ism. A more reflected phase has ensued, in which it is not so much a question of being 'for' or 'against' a postmodern society or 'for' or 'against' this or that poststructuralist theory. Rather, the idea of a postmodern society has, in its turn and in obvious conflict with the stances of some of its theorists, begun to be subjected to historical analysis and critique, something that was extremely difficult, if not impossible, while the theories (of poststructuralism) and the character of society (as postmodern) were still in an emergent state.

Theories of postmodern art or of a postmodern society, which tended to define themselves in opposition to modernism, rejecting its alleged melancholy asceticism, have to a certain extent been written back into cultural and political trajectories they very consciously and often polemically wrote themselves out of. This is less the case with poststructuralist theories. Since they broadly speaking began as attempts to comprehend theoretically and historically the genesis, the blind-spots, aporias and theoretical presuppositions of (cultural) modernism in its attempts to get to grips with (social) modernity, they tend to be characterized by an acute awareness of their own status as historically and discursively contingent. Out of the confrontation that occurred—over the past fifteen years and across the diverse disciplines—between the tenets of various poststructuralist theories, concepts of a postmodern society and texts from about 1890-1930, reconsiderations on all sides emerged. There was a reappraisal of modernism, whereby the very idea of a configuration of modernism came to be seen as acutely problematic in itself, and contingent on the particular theoretical concerns applied to the periodization. Likewise, theories of a postmodern society or paradigm did not emerge unaltered from the confrontation with modernist texts: the boundaries between the

modern and the postmodern began to be perceived as porous and susceptible to a dialectical interpretation. Given such circumstances, the following remark by David Bathrick and Andreas Huyssen grasps the matter aptly:

> Perhaps the fault lines of cultural politics today are no longer between modernism and postmodernism, but rather aesthetically, theoretically, and politically opposed readings of twentieth-century culture, whether modern or postmodern.[1]

One of the sets of concepts that can be seen to bridge the three areas of the aesthetic, the theoretical and the political and which is therefore often foregrounded in readings of twentieth-century culture, is the pair closure/openness. Broadly speaking, the hegemonic philosophical paradigms that shaped Western civilization and culture, and the institutions to which these paradigms gave rise, were not only such that the order of closure or finality was valued above the latent or manifest disorder or contingency of openness, but that any residual contingency was systematically oppressed or repressed or both. Much has been written about this, and from various perspectives.[2]

Taking the perspective of the pair mentioned above, closure/openness, as against say the pair order/chaos, has the particular advantage of allowing an easier understanding of how the two terms are seen to collapse in on one another in postmodernist discourse and already become dialectically interdetermined in some areas of modernist discourse. The reason why this is so will become clearer in a moment. In an article examining the problems surrounding the notion of modernism, Richard Sheppard points out, in fact referring to Bathrick and Huyssen's work, that they

> are right to reject simple categorical contrasts, but their own work, speaking as it does of 'the modernist aesthetic of transcendence and epiphany', points to a nostalgia or desire for epiphany, transcendence and closure which has no place within the flat surfaces and eternal present of postmodernism.[3]

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[1] David Bathrick and Andreas Huyssen, 'Modernism and the Experience of Modernity', introduction to *Modernity and the Text: Revisions of German Modernism*, ed. by Andreas Huyssen and David Bathrick (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), pp. 1-16 (p. 4).

[2] No exhaustive list of relevant literature can be provided here, but the work of Michel Foucault (particularly *Madness and Civilization* and *The Order of Things*), Julia Kristeva, and Zygmunt Bauman (*Modernity and Ambivalence*) might be mentioned as instances in which these hegemonic paradigms and the institutions that were generated by them, and in turn perpetuate them, are investigated.

[3] Richard Sheppard, 'The Problematics of European Modernism', in *Theorizing Modernism: Essays in Critical Theory*, ed. by Steve Giles (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 1-51 (p. 3). Sheppard is referring to an

While I understand the rationale, given the complex subject, the problem I would nonetheless like to point out in this comment is the equation of epiphany, transcendence and closure as synonyms. These terms are then used interchangeably to represent an escapist or nostalgic bent that, faced with the prospect of an uncertain or ambivalent reality, would rather flee, if necessary back to a place already critically dismantled by the very discourse that takes flight to it. But it is only from the viewpoint of postmodernism with its alleged 'flat surfaces and eternal present' (and even that would have to be qualified by saying exactly which theories or works of postmodernism – Baudrillard's *America* is perhaps a case in point), that the notion of epiphany, transcendence and closure have come to be grouped in this way. They have come to stand for a 'bad' utopian striving, in other words, the yearning for a beyond with no thought for a way that that beyond is to be reached or brought closer, and no reflection on the discursive preconditions for constructing models of where we are now and what we might aspire to.

Epiphany and transcendence were both written into the tradition of Christianity and from there into the hegemonic discourses of organized religion. This is one side of their lineage in modern art, which became the secular heir to that tradition of the sacred. The other side of the lineage, though, is a tradition which at times runs parallel with that of the hegemonic discourses of organized religion, and at times intersects them: the mystical traditions of contemplation. While both Einstein and Adorno polemicize against a particular notion of contemplation as it is bound into an idea of art appreciation they reject, both are also indebted to mystical traditions of contemplation and the numinous. Epiphany, which comes from Greek 'epiphaneia', meaning something coming to light or appearing, and transcendence, the quality or state of exceeding usual limits, both have an original sense that runs counter to the idea of closure. Epiphany, proximate in meaning to revelation, an unveiling, has more to do with an opening than a closing. Transcendence in the sense of defying or breaking through boundaries also has more to do with opening than closing. The sublime, a category—originally meaning 'just beneath the limit'—that finds its way into the discourse of aesthetics in the eighteenth century,[4] operates, like

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article by Andreas Huyssen, 'Paris/Childhood: The Fragmented Body in Rilke's *Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*', in *Modernity and the Text*, pp. 113-41 (p. 137).

[4] The original context is a treatise on rhetoric, *Peri Hypsos*, dated about 1 CE and ascribed to a certain Longinus. (Longinus, *On the Sublime*, trans. by H. L. Havell with an introduction by Andrew Lang (London: Macmillan, 1890)). It re-enters circulation via a French translation by Nicolas Boileau, published in 1674, with three subsequent French translations appearing in the early eighteenth century.

epiphany and transcendence, at the margins or borders of what is usually considered possible (to experience). The discourse that develops around the idea of a sublime experience as a liminal experience is always also about openness or closure to contingency or typically an ambivalent mixture of both.

Returning to Sheppard's remarks above and the equation of epiphany, transcendence and closure, it appears that further differentiation is required. It is indeed the case that certain works usually counted as modernist evince a desire for closure and finality. It is equally the case that the age of modernism was characterized by a sense of crisis, which in general provokes a response of 'fight or flight'. The different manifestations and combinations of responses—in themes, forms and discourses—to that sense of crisis are probed with insightful results in Inge Baxmann's study, *Mythos: Gemeinschaft: Körper- und Tanzkulturen in der Moderne*.[5] What I wish to emphasize, however, by drawing attention to the way the terms epiphany, transcendence and closure are grouped as synonyms in the quotation from Sheppard is simply the way in which it reveals postmodernism's own allergy to the more nuanced and complex versions of epiphany and transcendence that earlier works or older models have to offer. In this, postmodernism's own tacit desire for closure becomes apparent: it seems to seek an end to the perennial puzzlers about matter and spirit, body and mind, immanence and transcendence, and also about modernism. Postmodernism declares itself beyond the doubts and deliberations of a sceptical and allegedly melancholic modernism, initiated instead into a realm of eternal play.[6] If there is nothing but flat surfaces, eternal present and immanence, however, the very contrasts crucial for any human play are already missing; the outcome of every game is set before any dice are thrown.[7]

There is a tendency in certain of these theories, perhaps in part ascribable to a polemical urge, to reduce massively if not annihilate the significance of an active or

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[5] Inge Baxmann, *Mythos: Gemeinschaft: Körper- und Tanzkulturen in der Moderne* (Munich: Fink, 2000).

[6] Ludic acceptance of an infinite play of signifiers has been theorized by such writers as the later Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida, a boundless proliferation of simulacra by Jean Baudrillard, or an endless fluctuation of libinal intensities by the early Jean-François Lyotard. Lyotard it is, too, who distances himself explicitly from the melancholy moderns: 'Adorno ist melancholisch'. Cf. Wolfgang Welsch, 'Adornos Ästhetik: eine implizite Ästhetik des Erhabenen', in *Das Erhabene: zwischen Grenzerfahrung und Grössenwahn*, ed. by Christine Pries (Weinheim: VCH, Acta Humaniora, 1989), pp. 185-213 (p. 205). Welsch is citing Jean-François Lyotard, *Immaterialität und Postmoderne* (Berlin: Merve, 1985), p. 69.

[7] Gaming is of course a key concept already in modernism, where the necessary relation between play and contingency is captured in the title of a collection of poems from 1897 by Stéphane Mallarmé that gained virtually programmatic status among the Cubists and Surrealists, *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard* ('A throw of the dice will never abolish chance/contingency').

potentially active subject. One could cite Foucault's understanding of power in *Archaeology of Knowledge* as a case in point.[8] The polemical urge is no doubt directed against the tradition of the philosophy of consciousness. If, however, Foucault is read against the background of critiques of the philosophy of consciousness within the German-speaking tradition from the end of the nineteenth to the mid twentieth century (and not just in the discipline of philosophy), one gets a measure of the extent to which he is forcing an open door with his approach to the subject, traditional epistemological paradigms, and history. The following study seeks to revive and reconsider a complex version of, and engagement with, epiphany and transcendence that can be found in the work of Carl Einstein. Read against developments in the concept of the sublime from Kant to Adorno, this reconsideration can perhaps serve to problematize afresh what some recent theoretical ventures have become immune to or have neutralized too hastily in an attempt to reshape conceptual tools.

The 'hallucinative interval': the sublime in disguise?

The 'hallucinative interval' as productive imagination

In *Georges Braque* (written 1931-32, published 1934) Einstein's theory of Cubism feeds into a theory of what he calls the 'hallucinative interval'. This concept of Einstein's is psychologically and ethnologically derived: an intermittent zone between the conscious and the unconscious mind is postulated, which can be accessed through a state in which subject boundaries are loosened. The ethnological dimension gives the zone a phylogenetic significance: not only does one move 'back' into the zone as if moving back into a pre-individuation phase like early childhood (the individual aspect), but as if moving back in time on an ethnologically constructed development-line of humanity (phylogenetic aspect).

In Einstein's work the hallucinative interval functions as both a spatial and temporal metaphor. As a spatial metaphor, it refers to a threshold level or realm between consciousness and unconsciousness (see W 3, 377-78). As a temporal metaphor it designates a momentary state characterized by an absence of awareness of objective time

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[8] Michel Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. by Alan Mark Sheridan Smith (London: Routledge, 1989).

and, concomitantly, an absence of awareness of the self as 'I': 'Es geht [...] um einen seelischen Autonomismus. Vor allem das Ich-Bewußtsein verschwindet völlig und wird aufgelöst. Nun hat man Ekstase und halluzinative Prozesse.'[9] The curious coinage 'Autonomismus', as an amalgam of 'automatism' and 'autonomy' indicates an ambivalence that however works out as follows. The rational, conscious mind is out of action, so the person seems to others who are still conscious as if he/she is a kind of automaton, driven by other forces. Yet the contention is that those who are conscious are quite unaware of the forces (tradition, ideology, etc.) that are in fact driving their conscious interactions with the world. In this sense, they may be conscious but that does not mean being autonomous. Rather, it is the person who is capable of momentarily annihilating his/her consciousness and allowing the experience to affect his/her relations with the world, that gains access to a genuine kind of autonomy.

The hallucinative interval is, according to Einstein, that which unleashes imagination as the moment of (artistic) creativity, as precisely not just a moment of re-creation but of creation. Kant's *Critik der reinen Vernunft* gives a definition of imagination as re-creation: 'Einbildungskraft ist das Vermögen einen Gegenstand auch ohne dessen Gegenwart in der Anschauung vorzustellen.'[10] Parmenides was already saying as much, if not more: 'Consider how the absent (things) are with certainty present to thought.' This still amounts to re-creation, however. It was Socrates who went much further to assert that imagination is the power to represent that which *is not*. In the twentieth century Cornelius Castoriadis builds on this idea in developing his theory of imagination, both individual and social, as that which is capable of *creatio ex nihilo*, and thus the source of all significations and institutions and change therein, i.e. ultimately of society itself.[11] Einstein writes: 'Die Vision [i.e. primary activity of the imagination] ist [...] eine Phase des Realen, nämlich der Beginn neuer Wirklichkeit.' (W 3, 408). Castoriadis advocates reassessing imagination as pervasive in all kinds of thinking or mental states, rational, pre- or super-rational, fully or semi-conscious or asleep; and

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[9] Carl Einstein, 'Probleme heutiger Malerei', published in Sibylle Penkert, *Carl Einstein: Existenz und Ästhetik: Einführung mit einem Anhang unveröffentlichter Nachlaßtexte*, Verschollene und Vergessene (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1970), pp. 51-61, (p. 55).

[10] Immanuel Kant, *Kant's Three Critiques*, with a new introduction by Lewis White Beck, 5 vols (London: Routledge/Thoemmes, 1994), III: *Critik der reinen Vernunft* (text based on the 2nd edn from 1787), §24, p. 151.

imagination as a prerequisite for rational thought.[12] In many of his texts, Einstein is concerned to draw a sharp distinction between reason and imagination, rigorously reaffirming the incommensurability of art and science (or the aesthetic and the cognitive), only to attempt a reintegration of the aesthetic and the ethical. This entails the need to safeguard imagination from any incursions by reason or the rational, as well as reserving the role of imagination for aesthetic ventures (which are to somehow bear the ethical/practical in them) and ignoring or even denying its role in the cognitive. This in effect only exacerbates the dichotomy, the either-or thinking on reason and imagination that has been the hallmark of so much of the history of Western thought. Einstein thus shows himself to be in somewhat earlier stages of wrangling with what Max Weber elucidated as the differentiation of cultural (value) spheres. In certain texts, however, Einstein goes some way towards an inclusive notion of imagination based on a theory of the aesthetic moment of thought.[13] These different approaches will be the topic of discussion in later chapters.

Einstein emphasizes the newness of what emerges since the source lies beyond the confines of the conscious mind. Opposing his own view to Freud's,[14] in which, as Einstein sees it, the unconscious is 'allzu sehr als Masse der Verdrängungen und als Konstante, also eher negativ definiert', Einstein instead believes

> daß gerade in diesem Unbewußten die Chance des Neuen ruht, dieses dauernd sich umbildet und somit progressiv gestellt sein kann. Diese starke Aktivierung des Unbewußten im Schauen und Erschaffen der Gestalten scheint uns gerade die Unerklärbarkeit der Kunstwerke zu bewirken, denn letzten Endes bleibt die Vision eben rätselhaft. (W 3, 382)

In this he grasps the continuity between Romanticism and modernism, and more particularly Surrealism. With reference to the German Romantics, 'diese Mystiker', he notes the emergence of 'eine völlige Umwertung des Bewußten', and further:

> ähnlich, wie diese Missionare das Visionäre voraussagten, so ist in solchen Gedichten,

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[11] Cf. Cornelius Castoriadis, 'Radical imagination and the social instituting imaginary', in *Rethinking Imagination: Culture and Creativity*, ed. by Gillian Robinson and John Rundell (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 136-54.
[12] Ibid.
[13] See for instance 'Diese Aesthetiker veranlassen uns' from the early 1930s (W 4, 194-221).
[14] Einstein's position vis-à-vis the unconscious is closer in certain respects to that of Jung than of Freud. See the section 'The 'hallucinative interval' as productive imagination' below.

> möchte ich fast von diesen Bildern sagen, die zukünftige Anschauung vom Menschen vorausgesagt. Was bedeuten solche Bilder, die ich Ihnen zeigte? Sie sehen den Versuch, über die menschliche Gestalt hinauszukommen, wenn Sie z.B. an die Märchen denken usw. alles das, was man Métamorphose nennt.[15]

This idea of 'Ich-Auflösung', a momentary return to a pre-conscious state, in which ego boundaries are dissolved and what were previously subject and object enter into a free-flowing interchange, is not only found in other theories of Surrealism. It is also found, without the ethnological and art-historical backdrop, as a literary phenomenon in the prose of, among others, Gottfried Benn and Ernst Jünger. In the case of these writers, significant scholarly attention has been given to the question of the outcome of the dissolution of subjectivity: in what state does the subject re-emerge, if at all, from such an ecstatic experience? The dissolution may be consummate, with the entrant lingering, lost, in a kind of primal pre-individual paradise, as in the case of Benn's Dr. Rönne at the end of 'Die Eroberung' and 'Die Reise' in the *Gehirne* novella collection.[16] Or, as Helmut Lethen has argued with regard to certain figures in Ernst Jünger's work, it may be a case of 'armoured subjectivity': the subject re-instates and reaffirms itself triumphantly, as if bolstered by having momentarily let down its guard, and apparently having somehow engineered the collapse of boundaries with the trade-off in mind.[17]

Both outcomes represent, at one level, particular responses to the problem of alienated subjectivity in an 'entzauberte Welt'. They are attempts to defy, by way of the aesthetic, what is perceived as the shrivelled bourgeois subject, with its paltry set of experiential possibilities, and to push the limits of experience anew. Attending to the broader political implications of these two possible outcomes, an affinity with discourses of irrationalism has been detected in the first, that cancels, at one stroke, both conscious selfhood and individual responsibility, and thus plays into the hands of an aestheticized and demagogic politics. The second outcome also implies an aesthetically, because hygienically, conceived notion of the political. Here, however, it is not a question of allowing the primal plunge to dominate, but rather of countering that plunge with an even

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[15] Einstein, 'Probleme heutiger Malerei', in Penkert, *Existenz und Ästhetik*, p. 55.
[16] See Gottfried Benn, *Gesammelte Werke in vier Bänden*, ed. by Dieter Wellershoff, 4 vols (Wiesbaden: Limes, 1958-61), II: *Prosa und Szenen* (1958), p. 27 and p. 36.
[17] See Helmut Lethen. *Cool Conduct: The Culture of Distance in Weimar Germany*, trans. by Don Reneau (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), p. 160f.

more precipitous rise and re-forming of the subject. The questionable virtues of a masochistically brutal self-discipline, asceticism and iron will-power are thus called upon. The existential 'Zwang zur Form' (Lethen) found in Jünger has a political correlate in the hygiene of extreme decisionism as found, for example in the political writings of Carl Schmitt.

In a sense then, what the two possible outcomes suggest politically are codes of conduct for the led and the leaders, respectively, of a demagogic regime.[18] Passive regression on the one hand, the ability to exert absolute discipline and control over it on the other: the question arises whether there is an alternative outcome beyond these two. This is also one of the critical questions begging answers in the post-war period, when the helplessness, or indeed implication, of the radical Avant-garde, and the complicity of the more obviously problematic strains of reactionary art, literature and theory, in the demise of the Weimar Republic gradually came under scrutiny.

Einstein's claim as to the power of art that works unflinchingly with the hallucinative interval appears in various formulations: art becomes 'eine Kraft der Abänderung des Wirklichen' (W 3, 407), 'es geht um Erweiterung der Realität' (W 3, 408), 'Welchen Mutes bedarf es, das konventionell Wirkliche dauernd zu vernichten und dadurch sich zu zwingen—auf schmaler Planke treibend—unablässig neue Realität zu erzeugen' (W 3, 406). Art is nothing less than a force capable of changing reality. The hierarchy of intellection, imagination, perception in the Kantian tradition is upturned. All that power which had, according to earlier systems, been vested in the rational, in the stable and discrete, reflecting subject is once more, so to speak, up for grabs. However, it is not simply the case that that power can be assumed. Einstein's criticism of received epistemological paradigms presents them as various forms of 'grabbing': the emphasis in those paradigms, which include scientific objectivism and most of Enlightenment philosophy, was primarily on appropriation and control (of object by subject; of inner as well as outer nature). What certain texts of Einstein's advocate is precisely to abstain from grabbing:

> Wir üben eine sorgfältigere Kontrolle über unsere Imagination aus, wenn wir es nicht eilig haben, zu Objekten zu gelangen, die wie für alle Welt sichtbare Handlungssignale aussehen. (W 4, 461)

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[18] See also Lethen, *Cool Conduct*, p. 67.

The implication here is that the imagination can only come into its own properly when purposive rationality is out of action. This stipulation of the necessary autonomy of the imagination recalls Kant's insistence on the absence of a purpose in matters of aesthetic judgment. The question of who or what practises the 'sorgfältigere Kontrolle' in the above quotation thus needs to be asked. Is it the subject, and if so, what kind of subject? Einstein's idea is that the power or energy previously invested in metaphysical systems be accessed and channelled to the fullest possible extent—into a humane society. Thus, another question that needs addressing is whether accessing the hallucinative interval is a teleological or an efficient operation. This means asking to whether or to what extent the aesthetic in a given conception is heteronomous or autonomous, whether the goal is pre-set according to an ethical and/or political demand or whether there is room for the experience of the aesthetic to unfold as aesthetic, with any ethical impact occurring as a correlate or effect rather than as a tacit pre-condition. This is, ultimately, also the question of contingency: is a certain content already ascribed to aesthetic experience before it has taken place or is it allowed to occur as contingent or 'aisthetic', as Wolfgang Welsch uses the term?[19]

The stage on which these questions are played out in exemplary fashion is that of the concept of the sublime. The sublime as a codename for indeterminate experience, or an experience that is, initially anyway, indeterminate, is the one refuge for this kind of experience that has traditionally been considered worthy of philosophical reflection. A contextual history of the concept of the sublime, first from Kant to the Romantics and then Adorno, will be presented in what follows, the context being the above questions, the question of the outcome of the sublime moment and the implications it has for subjectivity and aesthetic autonomy, as these are the questions with which the theories of art in Einstein's later writings engage.

Thomas Weiskel, author of *The Romantic Sublime*, opens his study with the following definition:

> The essential claim of the sublime is that man can, in feeling and in speech, transcend the human. What, if anything, lies beyond the human—God or the gods, the daemon or

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[19] On the distinction between 'aesthetic' and 'aisthetic', see Wolfgang Welsch, *Ästhetisches Denken*, 3rd edn (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1993). Cf. also the interview with Wolfgang Welsch, 'Gibt es eine postmoderne Ästhetik?', in *Kunst machen? Gespräche und Essays*, ed. by Florian Rötzer and Sara Rogenhofer (Munich: Boer, 1991), pp. 230-47 (pp. 235-37).

> Nature—is matter for great disagreement. What, if anything, defines the range of the human is scarcely less sure.[20]

Without some notion of the beyond, Weiskel continues shortly thereafter, without 'some credible discourse of the superhuman, the sublime founders; or it becomes a 'problem.' This is as true in Romanticism as in antiquity. [...] A humanistic sublime is an oxymoron.'[21] For Einstein, the sublime certainly does become a problem, as he is at pains to demystify it in the context of a wider critique of metaphysical systems.[22] In Einstein, it is the discourse of the collective unconscious as derived from Jungian psychology that provides the notion of the beyond. This is a peculiar amalgam of a humanism and a discourse of the 'superhuman': it is of course precisely not intended as a discourse of the superhuman, but in its theorizing of a source of motives for human behaviour as beyond our conscious control and its necessarily limited attempts to chart that source, it comes to replace discourses of the superhuman. It is a humanism in the sense that the tools and strategies it offers and develops for managing the unconscious are geared towards an increase in both individual and collective autonomy and responsibility, and thus towards a more humane society.

Before his theory of Surrealism is developed, the beyond has no content in Einstein's conception apart from designating the formless, pre-conceptual, pre-rational realm. But this is sufficient content, as it allows a theory of limits, based on the tectonic, to operate in dialectical opposition to the formless. With the development of the theory of Surrealism, mythical imagery, figures and archaic patterns come to represent its dynamic, ambivalent forms:

> Das Unbewußte und seine Sprache, nämlich der Mythus, zeigen die Nichtübereinstimmung des menschlichen Geschehens mit der gemeinen Wirklichkeit; dies heißt: das banal Reale bedeutet nicht alles Wirkliche und kann darum die Seele nicht befriedigen und löst nicht alle Kräfte des Menschen aus. (W 3, 376)

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[20] Thomas Weiskel, *The Romantic Sublime: Studies in the Structure and Psychology of Transcendence*, paperback edn (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1986), p. 3.
[21] Ibid.
[22] See for instance the comments in his 1921 essay 'Absolute Kunst und absolute Politik': 'Das Absolute als Funktion ist gänzlich unmetafysisch und untranszendent.' 'Carl Einstein: Absolute Kunst und absolute Politik: Aus der Einleitung für den Russischen Maler' in ALT, 253-57 (p. 256). This essay is reprinted in W 4, 146-52 with the title 'Revolution durchbricht Geschichte und Überlieferung'. The sentence quoted is on p. 150.

As Chapter 5 of this study will investigate, the sublime becomes a problem once more precisely when the beyond is given a content apart from formlessness or indeterminacy itself.

The sublime moment: a basic model

The discourse of aesthetics finds its way into the centre of philosophy in the eighteenth century, assuming such significance because, as Terry Eagleton points out, it is shorthand for a whole project for the hegemonic reconstruction of subjects.[23] It is a double-edged concept, at once a genuinely emancipatory force and a kind of 'internalized repression' (Max Horkheimer).[24] Blending freedom and necessity in a 'secularized version of the Almighty', it can be enlisted in what Seyla Benhabib terms the 'successive transformation and reeducation of inner nature'.[25] The category of the sublime, alongside that of the beautiful, gains a new importance as a suitably defused, aestheticized version of the values of the *ancien régime*—traditional patrician values of daring, reverence and ambition—which must be at once cancelled *and* preserved in middle-class life.[26] This is the sublime as rendered by Edmund Burke. The sublime and the beautiful, as the coercive and the consensual, return in Kant, but with new implications for the subject. The role of the sublime as mediator between reason and the sensual implies a political function. What needs to be kept in mind in relation to *Georges Braque* is the overtly aesthetic, or disinterested, and covertly political conception of certain versions of the sublime, as it is this that seems to impel Einstein's theory in the Braque book and differentiates it from that of 'Il se pose la question'.

As a point of departure I propose to look at the basic structure of the sublime moment as it is found in the philosophy/psychology of Burke, Kant and the Romantics. Putting aside for the moment the diversity of these thinkers and the context and consequences of the question of the sublime for each system or movement in its entirety, it is the structure of the sublime as a psychological and semiotic phenomenon that is of interest here to begin with. In this analysis of the structure of the sublime moment, I am following the three-phase model presented by Thomas Weiskel in *The Romantic*

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[23] Cf. Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), p. 21.
[24] Cf. Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, p. 28.
[25] Ibid., p. 21. Eagleton is referring to Seyla Benhabib, *Critique, Norm and Utopia: A Study of the Foundations of Critical Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), p. 82.

Sublime.[27] It offers the advantage of analysing the sublime in terms of a semiotic model as well as a model of subjectivity. The broader implications of the outcome of the sublime moment for the subject (and for the Enlightenment project of reason and autonomy) in both the Kantian version and that of certain Romantic theories will be highlighted. This will establish points of reference for my analysis of Einstein's model of an aesthetic experience that shares significant features with that of the sublime but is never explicitly elaborated as such.

Weiskel, in *The Romantic Sublime*, derives a working definition of the sublime from Kant's description:

> We call an object sublime if the attempt to represent it determines the mind to regard its inability to grasp wholly the object as a symbol of the mind's relation to a transcendent order.[28]

The sublime moment as analysed by Weiskel consists of three phases, or what he calls 'economic states'.[29] Although the sublime moment is unfolded temporally, it is presupposed that this temporality is ultimately fictive or operative.

In the first phase, the mind is in a determinate relation to the object, and is making sense of it at a tacit and matter-of-course level. This relation is habitual and is virtually unconscious or, in the Freudian sense, preconscious. Such a state is characteristic of normal perception or comprehension, it is harmonious; no break or dissonance interrupts representation, which figures an agreement between what is inside and what is outside the mind.

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[26] Cf. Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, p. 54.

[27] Thomas Weiskel, *The Romantic Sublime*, pp. 23-25.

[28] As Kant is concerned exclusively with the natural sublime, what Weiskel has done here is simply to substitute *any* object for *Gegenstand (der Natur)* in Kant's own definition: 'Man kann das Erhabene so beschreiben: es ist ein Gegenstand (der Natur), dessen Vorstellung das Gemüth bestimmt, sich die Unerreichbarkeit der Natur als Darstellung von Ideen zu denken.' Weiskel, *The Romantic Sublime*, pp. 22-23. Weiskel quotes from Kant's 'Analytik des Erhabenen', in Immanuel Kant, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 22 vols (Berlin: Preussische Akademie, 1900-42), V, 244-78 (p. 268), and from 'Analytic of the Sublime', in *Kant's Critique of Aesthetic Judgment*, trans., with introductory essays, notes and analytical index, by James Creed Meredith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911), p. 128.

[29] Rendering the sublime moment as an economic event, a series of changes in the distribution of energy within a constant field, presupposes, as Weiskel freely acknowledges, a homeostatic principle in the mind. Without such a principle, which affords the theoretical possibility of a rough calculation of gain and loss, there is no way, he argues, to 'keep the sublime closed to "mystical" explanations.' (Cf. Weiskel, *The Romantic Sublime*, p. 25) Such a principle can be found in Freudian psychology and is also implicit in Einstein's theory of the reception of the work of art in *Georges Braque* (see W 3, 298-300).

In the second phase, the habitual relation of mind and object suddenly collapses, engendering surprise or astonishment, as there is an immediate intuition of a disturbing disproportion between inner and outer. Suddenly, either mind or object is in excess, and then both are, as the relation between them has given way to radical indeterminacy. An example of this is a natural phenomenon catching us unprepared and unable to grasp its scale, such as a glimpse over a craggy cliff that reveals a vast drop down towards a turbulent ocean. For their sheer enormity, Kant takes as an example the Pyramids. Weiskel uses the example of a section of text which we suddenly come up against while reading along, which exceeds comprehension, holds an excess of signifier for which we can find no adequate signified in our minds. Any such excess on the part of the object renders the representational efficacy of the mind inept, with the result that it can only turn, for its new object, to itself. Weiskel adds the possibility of self-consciousness itself being prior and forcing the break 'when the object (or memory) represented is too insignificant (fails to signify)' or is 'in danger of precipitant attenuation', in other words is already liable to slip away.

The third, or 'reactive' phase of the sublime moment constitutes a qualified withdrawal: The balance of outer and inner is regained by the mind as it establishes a fresh relation between itself and the object. In this new relation, the very indeterminacy that erupted in the second phase comes to symbolize the mind's relation to a transcendent order. What distinguishes the new relation from the homologous relation of habitual perception—that of the first phase before any rupture—is what Weiskel calls its 'meta' character: By entering into a peculiar consciousness of itself on account of a recognition of its own (or, more exactly, the imagination's) limitations, the mind has entered into a special mediated or distanced relationship with the object. In the event of a reversion to habitual perception, however, this third phase is liquidated and the sublime moment subsides or collapses into something else, since 'it is precisely the semiotic character of the sublime moment which preserves the sublimation [the capacity to gain one remove, or Weiskel's 'meta' character] necessary to the sublime.'[30]

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[30] Weiskel, *The Romantic Sublime*, p. 24.

The Kantian sublime

Samuel H. Monk found in Kant's *Critique of Judgment* 'the unconscious goal' of eighteenth century aesthetics.[31] It was Kant who established decisively the discrimination of the aesthetic boundary, so that the aesthetic became apparently a sphere all of its own, while at the same time performing a bridging function between the spheres of pure and of practical reason delineated in the two critiques which preceded the *Critik der Urtheilskraft*. Looking now to the ways in which Kant's version of the sublime corresponds to the three-phase model set out above, it should be observed first that Kant, prior to embarking on his analysis of the sublime proper, draws a sharp distinction between the beautiful and the sublime (CU, §23), according to which the latter is outlined not in positive terms but instead set in opposition to the beautiful.[32] The distinction articulates itself as the divergence between the feminine and the masculine as well as between peace and warfare.[33] This polarization is worth bearing in mind as we approach the Romantic sublime and then the hallucinative interval as elaborated by Einstein.

The beautiful ('das Naturschöne') is perfectly-proportioned, complete, harmonious, benign, 'zweckmäßig' and seems to be destined for man's judgment—made to measure for man's need for a correspondence between nature (the outer) and subjective judgment (the inner). The topos of the beautiful is a sealed or finite space, a space of motherly protection where there is closure. 'Positive Lust' is the affective correlate.

The sublime, conversely, is 'zweckwidrig für unsere Urteilskraft, unangemessen unserem Darstellungsvermögen, und gleichsam gewalttätig für die Einbildungskraft' (CU, 76). It provokes a 'negative Lust' (CU, 76). Here Kant, as Hartmut Böhme has pointed out, is following on the one hand the English and Irish theorists of the sublime, Addison, Steele and Burke, who had also observed its oxymoronic affective form, and on

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[31] Samuel H. Monk, *The Sublime: A Study of Critical Theories in Eighteenth-Century England*, paperback edn, with a new preface by the author (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960), p. 6.

[32] See Immanuel Kant, *Kant's Three Critiques*, with a new introduction by Lewis White Beck, 5 vols (London: Routledge/Thoemmes, 1994), V: *Critik der Urtheilskraft* (text based on the 2nd edn from 1793). The section dealing with the sublime is 'Zweites Buch': 'Analytik des Erhabenen', §23-29, pp. 74-131. In the following it will be referred to as CU in parentheses, followed by the paragraph number and/or page number.

[33] Cf. also Liliana Barakonska and Malgorzata Nitka: 'A Reading of Distance in the Kantian Sublime' in *The Most Sublime Act: Essays on the Sublime*, ed. by David Jarrett and others (London: University of North London Press, 1996), pp. 12-21 (p. 19).

the other hand Moses Mendelssohn's theory of mixed sensations.[34] Unlike the beautiful, in the presence of which the faculties concur, their harmony bringing about complacency and peace of mind, and therefore ambiguously serving the 'Beförderung des Lebens' (CU, 75),[35] the sublime is based on a strange affective oscillation between repulsion and attraction. The reason for this lies in the form of the object: rather than having a stable and unified, limited and balanced form, it shows nature 'in ihrem Chaos oder in ihrer wildesten regellosesten Unordnung und Verwüstung' (CU, 78).[36]

Böhme pinpoints the experience of the sublime according to Kant as 'zuerst eine Erfahrung massiver affektiver Dissonanzen, objektiver und subjektiver Disproportionen und damit einer *Gefahr*: die als chaotisch wahrgenommene Natur könnte unwiderstehlich in das subjektinterne Ordnungsgefüge einschlagen und dieses zum Kollaps bringen', before going on to comment on the pleasurable side of the experience.[37] Also noting the affective ambivalence of the sublime experience, Weiskel on the other hand suggests that a collapse (of comprehension), rather than just impending, actually occurs, due to overexertion or exhaustion of the imagination in attempting to comprehend something vast. However, he exposes this collapse a little later as a fictional or merely operative one, 'because comprehension is not, strictly speaking, an empirical employment of the imagination.'[38] Comprehension ('Zusammenfassung') is the properly aesthetic operation which attempts to combine a series of discretely apprehended intuitions into a single, unified intuition. The sublime dilemma thus unfolds as follows:

> Apprehension can be carried on ad infinitum, but comprehension has a maximum point: 'For if the apprehension has reached a point beyond which the representations of sensuous intuition in the case of the parts first apprehended begin to disappear from the imagination as this advances to the apprehension of yet others, as much, then, is lost at one end as is

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[34] Cf. Hartmut Böhme, 'Das Steinerne. Anmerkungen zur Theorie des Erhabenen aus dem Blick des 'Menschenfremdesten'' in *Das Erhabene: zwischen Grenzerfahrung und Grössenwahn*, ed. Christine Pries (Weinheim: VCH, Acta Humaniora, 1989), pp. 119-41 (p. 120). In the discussion of the outcome of the Kantian sublime which I am unfolding here, I am in part following Böhme's account, as it is succinct without being reductive.

[35] —ambiguously because beauty as a peace-keeping force also implies economy, domesticity: Peacetime is to be distrusted as a time in which 'the spirit of commerce, ignoble greed, cowardice and effeminacy' reign. Peace and the beautiful, then, mark the decline of the masculine, which can hardly coincide with a 'Beförderung des Lebens'. (Cf. Barakonska and Nitka, 'A Reading of Distance in the Kantian Sublime'.) Einstein would readily concur with the second half of this ambiguity: harmony and the benign or unthreatening as necessarily bringing complacency, stagnation, conservatism.

[36] Cf. Böhme, 'Das Steinerne', p. 120.

[37] Böhme, 'Das Steinerne', p. 120.

[38] Weiskel, *The Romantic Sublime*, p. 40.

> gained at the other, and for comprehension we get a maximum which the imagination cannot exceed'. The imagination overextends itself; it is driven to a 'point of excess ... like an abyss in which it fears to lose itself', and it breaks down. The collapse of comprehension results in a feeling of displeasure (*Unlust*) as the imagination is forced to recognize its inadequacy.[39]

What happens at this point, however, is that the inadequacy of imagination is compensated by reason, which intervenes in the crisis to present the idea of totality or infinitude *as an idea* or, more properly, as a 'Schema' (CU, 110). In other words, reason's capacity to abstract secures the subject against (in Böhme's account) or seemingly retrieves it from (in Weiskel's) the encounter with an incomprehensible other, which, because incomprehensible, was undifferentiated and so was perceived as abyssal, engulfing (what Böhme calls the 'Negativreiz'). In this moment of distancing, the subject can not only lay claim to the salvation, via reason, of the imagination but can stand in awe of, or ultimately boast, its own superiority and authority over the absolutely great, which has challenged it and lost. Thus, the sublime experience is 'zweckwidrig' for the imagination, but 'zweckmäßig' for 'die ganze Bestimmung des Gemüths'. Weiskel sums up this outcome in the following way:

> the mind is led to recognize in the idea of the supersensible its ultimate destiny (*Bestimmung*), it experiences therewith 'a simultaneously awakened pleasure', since it finds 'the absolutely great only in the proper estate of the Subject'.[40]

And Böhme concludes similarly:

> die Erfahrung der Schwäche und Dezentrierung des sinnlich-leiblichen Ichs wird zum *Anlasser* eines Prozesses der Selbsbewußtwerdung als intelligibles Vernunft-Subjekt. Die qualitative, nämlich intellektuelle Distanz bringt das Bewußtsein eines über alle Verwüstungen der Natur erhabenen Selbst hervor: das ist die lustvolle Seite des Erhabenen.

In this way, the sublime moment in Kant's analysis involves a privileging of reason over the sensible; it becomes the very founding moment of the rational subject and of Reason as the ultimately invulnerable, unshakeable faculty. On this point, it is noteworthy that in

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[39] Ibid., p. 39. Weiskel is referring to p. 99 and p. 107 of Meredith's translation of Kant's 'Analytik des Erhabenen'. This corresponds to CU, 87-88 and CU, 98 respectively.

Kant it is not nature itself which is sublime, but rather the particular effects it has, by dint of its strength or magnitude, on the subject. And it is precisely via these effects that the subject gains an intuition of its own invincible intelligibility.

Weiskel pushes the issue further, though, on account of what he has revealed as the fictionality of the imagination's collapse. He contends that 'it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that in the [Kantian] sublime, reason posits its own sensible or imaginative frustration in order to discover itself freshly in an attitude of awe.'[41] This points to a problem at the heart of Kant's critique, namely 'how is it that reason operates on two 'levels' of consciousness?', in other words, the question as to where to place consciousness. Noting that Kant takes no account of unconscious determinants and so neither has nor requires a genuinely psychological theory, Weiskel argues that the affective ambivalence of the sublime, which opposes the imagination's feeling of defeat to reason's awe of itself, indicates a 'cognitive alienation within the mind as a whole'. And, following this line of argument to its conclusion,

> We are justified [...] in turning to an emanational logic precisely because Kant in effect abandons his attempt to make comprehension an empirical operation. Hence the real motive or cause of the sublime is not efficient but teleological; we are ultimately referred not to the failure of empirical imagination but to reason's project in requiring this failure. The cause of the sublime is the *aggrandizement of reason at the expense of reality and the imaginative apprehension of reality*.[42]

What can be discovered here at the core of the Kantian analysis of the sublime moment, then, is a remedy for the fear the subject imagines it would feel on encountering Nature at its vastest and most powerful. The imagining of fear is all-important here, as in his analysis of the sublime, Kant specifies that the subject must not be in actual physical danger.[43] The Kantian aesthetic of the sublime is therefore a means of bolstering the subject against potential fear, against the fear of fear, the anxiety of not believing oneself to be in complete control.

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[40] Ibid., p. 39. Weiskel is referring to p. 106 and p. 121 of Meredith's translation of Kant's 'Analytik des Erhabenen'. This corresponds to CU, 100 and CU, 117-18 respectively.
[41] Ibid., pp. 40-41.
[42] Ibid., p. 41. Cf. also Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, pp. 91-92.
[43] Cf. also Weiskel, *The Romantic Sublime*, p. 84 and Tadeusz Rachwal, 'The Unnameable Representations of the Sublime', in *The Most Sublime Act*, pp. 48-59 (p. 50).

Two most problematic questions for the project of Enlightenment are deftly and conveniently answered by Kant's version of the sublime: first, the question of the primacy or superiority of either reason or imagination. Reason wins out on account of its ability to make infinity signify. Infinity is ungraspable to the imagination, we can't provide for ourselves an image of infinity, but we can provide for ourselves a concept of it. Second, the question of control vis-à-vis nature: to master something, one must be certain of being able to master it, of being superior to it, and Kant's sublime yields such self-assurance.

The Romantic sublime

Turning now to the Romantic experience of the sublime, it must of course first be said that there is no single or model Romantic sublime, but certain tendencies, especially as regards what has been outlined above as the third or reactive phase, can be observed to recur. The reactive phase is, in the Kantian model at any rate, the phase that determines the new relation between subject and object as one of regained control, accompanied by a bolstering of identity. That the Romantics should fail to find, find problematic, or even deliberately reject as inauthentic or specious, such a solution born of Enlightenment pathos is hardly surprizing. It is worth considering, though, just how this 'failure' or rejection manifests itself. In order to be able to gauge Einstein's position in relation to this turn in the discourse, we will have to look at just what happens at the end of the second phase.

The work of the Romantics is pervaded—and more than just thematically—by the psychological fortunes of the artist figure or creative talent living and suffering in a tense relation with bourgeois society, in many respects actively pitted against it as against the realm of enshrinement and perpetuation of Enlightenment values and norms. It is among these artist or potential artist figures that we find some of the most telling instances of the sublime experience in its Romantic variant.

There seem to be basically three (variably nuanced) Romantic responses to, or outcomes of, the sublime experience. All three differ significantly from what we might call the self-limiting sublime of pre-Romantic thought (the Kantian outcome). These three kinds of responses will be presented in no particular order. Different variations of the responses appear in both earlier and later Romanticism, so that to propose a chronological development would be mistaken. Even to try and detect a chronological

development (for example, a progressive shifting away from accepted Enlightenment norms) within the works of one particular author in relation to the narrative perspective, i.e. the level of sympathy that the (potential) artist/lost Jüngling/genius/madman enjoys, can prove problematic. This occurs if (as for instance in the work of E.T.A. Hoffmann) we find instead a myriad of positions spanning the spectrum between Enlightenment and Romanticism without ever resting at a simple polarity and also without moving in one direction across the spectrum.

First type of outcome

Looking at what we will take as the first of the three post-Kantian cases, which in some instances represents possibly the most extreme reaction to the problems of development of the enlightened bourgeois subject, we find the figure who has discovered a way in to the sublime, experiencing first something both irresistibly attractive and utterly terrifying. This figure is initially apparently able to extricate himself from the experience along the lines of the Kantian model. But the extrication process is not actually thoroughly accomplished, so that the figure, although for a time perhaps able to suppress it and seemingly live on 'normally', is in fact momentously destabilized by the experience and ripe for a full-scale collapse into what the enlightened world characterizes as madness.

Hartmut Böhme, in his article on 'Das Steinerne und das Erhabene', has charted the Enlightenment and Romantic sublime in association with the petrological and mineralogical topoi which permeate (especially German) Romantic literature. As this article also addresses art, the artist and madness as issues of close proximity to the enigma of the sublime, it is of particular interest in view of the fact that Einstein's *Georges Braque* project appears in certain respects to be following this trajectory.

As an example of a potential artist for whom subject-object relations are significantly different than those of the average enlightened subject, Böhme cites the figure of Christian in Tieck's tale *Der Runenberg*.[44] This example is especially cogent for our purposes, too, as it illustrates what has just been outlined as the first outcome of the sublime.

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[44] See Böhme, 'Das Steinerne', pp. 133-36.

Christian—like so many of his peers, the heroes of other Romantic tales, novels or poems, a sensitive young man on the threshold of adulthood—has the peculiar talent of seeing life and light in stones. He is capable of animation, of 'Beseelung des dem aufgeklärten Betrachter scheinbar Toten. Dadurch werden die Dinge zu lebendigen Wesenheiten und – so Christian – sie "erhellen das Dunkel mit ihrem Lachen"'.[45] Böhme notes how the tables are being turned here: suddenly day and Enlightenment are (in) darkness and it is the animated things—dead matter for the supposedly enlightened—that yield light. It looks like the Kantian sublime is being overcome.[46]

Yet the fate of Christian yields some insights that suggest this first type of outcome is ultimately a dead end. Due to his inability to bring the life he divines inside the stones to the surface—to give it form, in a sense to freeze or petrify it in form—in order to make his vision accessible to his wife and children, or for that matter to anyone outside himself, he and society become thoroughly alienated from each other. His 'privatsprachliche Chiffrierung der Steine' results in an 'abgeschnittenes, in sich gekehrtes Bewußtsein'; his insights find no communicable expression and his vision remains asocial. If we look at Christian's fate in terms of the three-phase model of the sublime moment, it amounts to being abandoned to the second phase. The distance needed to reinstate a new determinate relation, to break the identification between subject (the rational self) and object (in Christian's case the stones) is not gained. And once one is completely abandoned to this indeterminate state (what Julia Kristeva calls the semiotic[47]), the terror traditionally associated with the second phase of the sublime is out of action, as it is the terror of losing one's identity or contours, of losing, and being unable to recover, oneself in the vast flux. Christian no longer has this fear, so neither is he suspended in tension between the sublime and the mode of habitual, determinate subject-object relations. Without that tension, he can no longer participate in what is commonly called normal life. The person who experiences the sublime in this way has problems with, presents problems for, and in a certain sense also gestures towards some

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[45] Böhme, 'Das Steinerne', p. 134. The quotation from *Der Runenberg* can be found in Ludwig Tieck, *Werke*, ed. by Marianne Thalmann (Darmstadt, 1978), II, 81.

[46] Cf. Böhme, 'Das Steinerne', p. 134.

[47] Cf. Julia Kristeva, 'Revolution in Poetic Language', in *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. Toril Moi, trans. by Alice Jardine and Harry Blake (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986): 'the instinctual semiotic, preceding meaning and signification, mobile, amorphous, but already regulated, which we have attempted to represent through child psychoanalysis (particularly at the pre-œdipal stage) and the theory of drives.'

of the problems of, the so-called enlightened world. But because the regressive, autistic character of this outcome of the sublime moment does not allow for any further engagement with 'normal life', it is meaningless—literally, has no meaning—for that life, and remains utterly incommensurate with it.

Second type of outcome

A second type of response to the sublime experience in evidence in works of the Romantic epoch is essentially quite similar to the first, except that the move by the protagonist either definitively to embrace the sublime or to overcome it involves an incident or a physical struggle (with an—imaginary?—tormentor/temptress or someone or something in whom the tormentor/temptress is manifest for the hero), a struggle in which the protagonist loses his life. In such cases the sublime moment terminates in the second phase before there is even the possibility of any kind of propitious outcome. This can be read in a number of, possibly intertwined, ways, for instance as figuring forth, either sympathetically or derisively or an ambivalent mixture of both,[48] the ultimate aporia of the person so thoroughly in touch with or in thrall to his fantasy that, having unlearned the knack of distinguishing inner and outer, he is fatally lost to 'the real world' (this applies by extension to the thoroughly autonomous work of art). It can be read as a more distanced comment on this, or as figuring and/or commenting on the socialization processes and attendant problems and contradictions of the enlightened bourgeois subject.

In the more sympathetic renderings of such an outcome a parallel to Schiller's version of the sublime can be traced: the sublime aesthetic as ethic. The alienation of mind and nature corresponds to an internal estrangement in modern man; the beautiful pertains to the 'human being', the sublime to the 'pure daemon'. Thus, as Weiskel comments on the Schillerian dilemma:

> To be true to 'our *spiritual mission*' is to be false to 'our *humanity*': the conflict has assumed the form of tragedy.[49]

(p. 102) '[T]he kinetic functional stage of the *semiotic* precedes the establishment of the sign; it is not, therefore, cognitive in the sense of being assumed by a knowing, already constituted subject.' (p. 104)

[48] To decide this question one of course needs to examine, among other things, the narrative perspective(s).

[49] Weiskel, *The Romantic Sublime*, p. 48.

The Hobson's choice of remaining 'on good terms with the physical world' which determines our happiness, only to risk strife 'with the moral world that determines our dignity' is just of the kind that plagues so many Romantic protagonists. This struggle can become so acute that man has 'no other means of withstanding the power of nature than to anticipate her and, by a free renunciation of all sensuous interest, to kill himself morally before some physical force does it'—the sublime as suicide.[50] As Weiskel points out, this is one instance underlining the problematic nature of converting an aesthetic into an ethic. Here the attempt leads ultimately to a 'transcendent dead end'.[51]

Third type of outcome

Böhme maintains that it is in the work of the Romantics around 1800 that the risk of modern art is first described: the risk of 'das Erhabene als Wahn und der erhabene Wahn der Poesie'.[52] With reference to Novalis's fragments for a sequel to his novel *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, in which Heinrich, the poet initiate, is to experience a ritual death, 'die orphische Zerstückelung', and go mad, the issue at stake is pinpointed:

> Heinrich wird im Wahnsinn Stein - [Blume] klingender Baum - goldener Widder - Heinrich erräth den Sinn der Welt. Sein freywilliger Wahnsinn.[53]

What is described here as the metamorphoses of madness—and an initiation rite into poetry—is the phenomenon of metempsychosis, the discourse of which Böhme traces to Empedocles. In Novalis, according to Böhme, metempsychosis is 'der Anteil des unausweichlichen Wahnsinns am poetischen Prozeß, durch den in Form von Identitätsvernichtung Anschluß gesucht wird an die Verwandtschaft der Dinge und Lebewesen.'[54] That this sentence is valid, word for word (perhaps just with the more generic 'künstlerischen' in place of 'poetischen') for Einstein's theory of the hallucinative interval too, should be clear from the section above dealing with Einstein's ideas about metamorphosis and the dissolution of the subject (see page 17 above).[55]

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[50] Cf. Weiskel, *The Romantic Sublime*, p. 48.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Böhme, 'Das Steinerne', p. 135.
[53] Cf. Novalis, *Schriften: die Werke Friedrich von Hardenbergs*, ed. by Paul Kluckhohn and Richard Samuel, 4 vols (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1960), I, 344, 341.
[54] Cf. Böhme, 'Das Steinerne', p. 135.
[55] For a detailed discussion of Einstein's concept of metamorphic identification and its Nietzschean roots see Christa Lichtenstern, 'Einsteins Begriff der 'metamorphotischen Identifikation' und seine Beobachtungen zur surrealistischen Kunst', in *Études Germaniques*, 1 (1998), pp. 237-49.

'Poesie', or art, as 'exzentrisches Dasein – Dasein nicht an und für sich, nicht als Einheit des Bewußtseins, nicht als identisches Selbst des 'Ich denke', sondern die ebenso beglückende wie qualvolle Versetzung ins Andere, ein Sein des Anderen',[56] this is equally valid for Einstein. The point at which a potential divergence occurs between the Romantic position(s) and that of Einstein is in the question of what—if anything—happens immediately *after* the 'Ich-Auflösung, die [...] auch die Form des Wahnsinns annehmen kann'—the point at which 'im Zeitalter des Identitätszwanges' the Kantian position has been overturned.[57] Can the 'Form des Wahnsinns' be doffed? In other words, is there a break, clean or otherwise, and a return to subjectivity, 'normal' or otherwise? If so, how? Is there any further development or is the dissolved state the ultimate destination?

A third type of response to the experience of the sublime in Romanticism involves a full sense of the disturbance and indeterminacy of the second phase but also an ability to begin somehow to reconstitute the self, which, still shaken by the seismic turmoil, can then ponder the experience in vague, suggestive terms and images. A partial return from the sublime mode occurs. But it is a return to a broken, scattered self, which has been taken asunder by the event and whose borders remain provisional.

Looking at this response in terms of the three-phase model of the sublime moment, it constitutes a kind of tantalizing game with the borders of identity. However, there are two different ways in which this can operate. The first, which Weiskel, following Keats, calls the 'egotistical sublime', occurs when the revocation and reinstatement of the boundaries of identity is practised more or less at will and without it having any effect on how the subject (as reinstated subject) otherwise engages with the world. Collapse or chaos becomes immanent; the sublime becomes a daily habit. What were polarities in the Kantian analysis—the sensible, natural world and transcendent power—fall together here. They become habitual aspects of Imagination as 'a totalizing consciousness whose medium is sense but whose power is transcendent.'[58]

A consequence of the egotistical sublime, however, as Weiskel points out in relation to Wordsworth, is that the imagination becomes 'the faculty which transforms everything into the money of the mind'. In other words, a principle of exchange is

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[56] Böhme, 'Das Steinerne', p. 136.
[57] Cf. Böhme, 'Das Steinerne', p. 136.
[58] Cf. Weiskel, *The Romantic Sublime*, p. 50.

installed and hypostatized. The price is alienation from particular forms of primary experience. In the next chapter we will see how Einstein's critique of certain artists, notably the Symbolists, is based on just this criticism – a divorce from concrete experience on account of hypostatization of an exchange principle.

Weiskel has observed that an elementary critique of this type of sublime experience can be found in Keats, as well as a critique of its ultimate derivative, what Keats called 'identity'. Weiskel notes that Keats, from the start, found identity a dreaded embarrassment and sought instead 'enchantments that would be "self-destroying"'.[59] Objecting to the 'Wordsworthian or egotistical sublime', Keats describes the exemplary 'poetical Character' as intelligence *without* identity: 'it is not itself—it has no self—it is every thing and nothing—It has no character,' no 'unchangeable attribute'.[60] Weiskel remarks that

> Keats's battle with identity takes various and complicated forms, but he never ceased objecting, on both formal and moral grounds, to a poetic in which the ultimate function of perception and the goal of experience are to aggrandize the consciousness of who we are.[61]

This refers us back to Empedocles and the destruction of identity, the ritual death involved in the initiation into poetry or, more generally, into art. It also refers us forward, though, to Einstein's concept of 'das Halluzinative, d.h. die Zerstörung des bewußten Ichs und der konventionellen Umwelt' (W 3, 371), 'ein Todesprozeß' (W 3, 292), '[eine] Art Selbstmord' (W 3, 294).

It was said that there are two ways in which the third outcome of the sublime moment can operate. The second of these two ways differs just slightly but significantly from that described as the egotistical sublime. It involves, in terms of the three-phase model of the sublime moment, a similar recuperation of subjectivity. The boundaries of identity are reinstalled. And they remain provisional, because the subject learns to revoke and reinstate them. But this time, this is not done as a routine exercise. Rather, an acute tension between modes is preserved. The incomprehensibility, the strangeness of the

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[59] Ibid., p. 51.
[60] Ibid. Weiskel is quoting from a letter from Keats to Richard Woodhouse, 27 October 1818, in *The Letters of John Keats, 1814-1821*, ed. by Hyder Edward Rollins, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958), I, 386-87.
[61] Weiskel, *The Romantic Sublime*, p. 51.

sublime moment remains intact, and the encounter with it remains a struggle, 'Schauen gilt für uns als ein Kampf' (W 3, 305).[62] There is much at stake in the struggle, and the precondition for it is, curiously enough, a strong subject. But as Keats suggested, this is to be a subject with intelligence but without 'identity' in its traditional form.[63] The issue at stake is sovereignty, in its genuine as opposed to its apparent form.

A brief review

It might be useful now, before approaching Einstein's texts, to glance back over the path we haved traced through the pre-Romantic and Romantic sublime. The Kantian sublime, at the core of a project to mediate between the disparate realms of pure and practical reason, yields a resolution, but only at the cost of a heavy repression, as Reason becomes the policeman of sensual perception and experience.

The Romantic sublime navigates endlessly (or, just as often, gets shipwrecked) between the Scylla and Charybdis of, on the one hand, enlightened identity and a secure, if self-repressing, subject and on the other, a state of indeterminacy, which is either terrifying or perpetual and therefore matter-of-fact. Romantic heroes or lyrical subjects, having lost their subjecthood, stop short of or balk at the third phase. Finding a way back to subjecthood, i.e. re-instating subject boundaries, is either an insuperable problem or no problem at all – they stay in the indeterminate state for good. The solidity of the Kantian subject has become suspect, it is no longer tenable. Yet a transcendental vacuum remains. Romantic heroes find their way into this vacuum, but seldom find their way out. In some cases, however, there are signs that a new approach to the aspect of re-instatement of boundaries is afoot. The sublime condition 'works' in the context of Kant's thought; for the Romantics it is problematic and indicative of the resistance to the pounding march of Reason. In the context of modern art Einstein and Adorno will attempt to make the sublime condition work once again, using a renewed approach to the re-instatement of boundaries. This involves intricate theorizing of a dialectic of limits.

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[62] 'Schauen' in the sense of vision, a vision, i.e. the dynamic act based on the hallucinative interval.
[63] The section on Adorno's version of the sublime (Chapter 3, 'Adorno and the Sublime') will investigate why this is so.

Chapter 2

Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts:

An Uncertain Opus Magnum

Schauend ändert man Menschen und Welt.
Carl Einstein, Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts (1931)

Rethinking tectonics

Introduction

Einstein's major work *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts* was commissioned in 1922 and appeared in 1926 as volume 16 of the *Propyläen* encyclopedia series for the history of art. It was Einstein's largest undertaking to date: the volumes of the series included, on average, four hundred plates, with a preceding text of one to two hundred pages, usually written by prominent academics. By the mid-twenties Einstein had gained considerable experience and expertise in the field of art criticism and history, and without being allied to any institution, had earned himself a reputation as a stringent judge of contemporary painting and sculpture.[1] Having begun about 1910 with reflections on literary form, settling the score with the tenets of Symbolism and the literature of 'décadence', by the middle of that decade he was devoting most of his attention to the visual arts.

With the planning of the encyclopedia volume he was given free rein: the choice of artists and plates was entirely up to him. Its preparation involved extensive correspondence, not all of which has survived, with artists, dealers and, presumably, museums and collectors. Einstein also stepped up his visits to studios, where he had access to the artists' most current works, and read extensively in contemporary studies of

[1] A wry comment of his, in a letter from about May 1923 (i.e. a few weeks after the contract with Propyläen had been finalized) to his then partner, Tony Simon-Wolfskehl, reflects his view of his own success: 'Den Bebuquin [i.e. his first novel] mußte ich mit einer Hungerkrankheit bezahlen, jeder Verleger schmiss mich raus. [...] Heute wo ich ein Plattkopf bin – ists die grosse Sache.' (CEA, 401)

art and artists. A friend of Einstein's, the Dutch journalist Nico Rost, has left an account of Einstein at work on the encyclopedia volume in the house he lived in with his then partner, the countess Aga von Hagen, in the wooded Berlin suburb of Frohnau:

> Er arbeitete damals für den *Propyläen-Verlag* an einer Geschichte der westeuropäischen Malerei, und überall in seinem Zimmer lagen Mappen mit Zeichnungen und Photos von: Derain, Matisse, Picasso und Braque, aber auch von Utrillo, Chagall, Modigliani und vielen anderen. Von all diesen Künstlern besass er auch hunderte von Briefen mit autobiograpischen Notizen über ihre Entwicklung und ihre Arbeit, und ich durfte so oft und so lang ich wollte darin herumschmökern. Er brachte mir vor allem bei, die Werke des Juan Gris und Léger besser zu würdigen und lieh mir die ersten Ausgaben von *La révolution surréaliste*.[2]

This is during work on the first edition; *La révolution surréaliste* had begun to appear in 1924. Some indication of the public acclaim of *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*, a second, revised edition appeared in 1928 and a third, newly revised, in 1931. The Cubism of Picasso and Braque, and its origins in the French art that preceded it, are to the fore in the work, in the first two editions at any rate. But Einstein was increasingly open also to the tenets of Surrealism. This is evident particularly in the third edition, in which the work of Paul Klee, André Masson and Juan Miró gains a significance to equal, if not rival, that of the Cubists.

Considerable attention has already been given in the secondary literature, particularly in studies on Einstein's early work, to his critique of the Classical aesthetic doctrine of moderation, 'die ästhetische Lehre vom Maß', in which the overriding considerations are of harmony, symmetry, stasis and formal balance in a work that testifies to unity and integration of all parts into the whole. Indeed, on the very first page of K, Einstein launches this critique anew, and with polemical gusto:

> Das klassische Maß war zu Mäßigkeit und Mangel an Begabung verkommen, und die Ewigkeit stiller Größe hatte zu lange blöd gelächelt. (K 3, 39)

The parody targets the classical values of 'edle Einfalt und stille Größe', which were postulated by Johann Joachim Winckelmann in his aesthetic study of Greek antiquity, *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in der Malerei und*

Bildhauerkunst (1755). These values designated the ideal of beauty, and became the hallmark, of the Classicism of the age of Goethe and Schiller (the epoch known in German literary history as 'Klassik'). '[B]löd gelächelt' can be taken to refer to the stoical stance favoured by this aesthetic doctrine, which rejected expression or representation of unfettered outbursts of emotion, propounding instead their rigorous formal refinement according to the notion of form as harmony, stasis, balance:

> Gemeinsame Merkmale des Kunstschaffens der deutschen Klassik sind das Streben nach Gestaltung von Typischem, von sittlicher Ordnung, Größe und Klarheit, von Harmonie zwischen dem Leiblichen und Geistig-Seelischen, von Natur und Kunst, des Einklangs des Welt- und Menschenbildes u. a. m. unter Beachtung von Geschlossenheit und strengem Maß der Kunstformen.[3]

One can easily make the case that by the 1920s, when Einstein was writing, indeed by the late nineteenth century, a critical turn against Classicism was already dramatically under way in European art. Or one can take it further back and cite the criticism initiated by the 'Sturm und Drang' movement, developed by the Romantics inside and outside Germany, and radicalized towards the end of the nineteenth century. One might then be tempted to maintain that Einstein is forcing an open door with his criticism. But this would be to miss its specific target.

For centuries, aesthetics had been confined, in the main, to the strictures of a philosophical discipline, with norms, forms and prohibitions perpetuated and presided over by a discursively guarded institution. As Einstein was beginning his career, however, aesthetics was something that seemed increasingly to be emerging *de facto* from praxis in the art world in its widest sense, as the experimenters reflected tentatively, then more confidently, on their discoveries. What is more, they increasingly integrated such reflections into the works themselves, thus blurring the line between 'artwork' and 'criticism' or 'theory' even more than the Romantics had done before them. With the speedy developments in the arts during the latter half of the nineteenth and first quarter of the twentieth century taking the cultural world by storm, the related disciplines of the (institutional) history and criticism of art had, for the most part, simply not kept pace.

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[2] This quotation is from a German translation of Nico Rost's report held in the archive (CEA, 506). The Dutch original is 'Mijn vriend Carl Einstein' (CEA, 505).

[3] Under 'Klassik' in *Knaurs Lexikon der Weltliteratur: Autoren, Werke, Sachbegriffe*, updated, revised and edited by Diether Krywalski (Munich: Droemer Knaur, 1992), p. 663.

There were of course 'salon' art critics, who were recognized 'experts in matters of taste' and mediated between new art and the public. But Einstein rejects all notions of the critic that presuppose a didactic or commercial role, hence also that tradition of 'salon' critics. Among them, and in the discipline of the history of art at an institutional level, the osmotic influence of a Marx or a Nietzsche had yet to be felt. In other words, questions of the order of 'whose history?' and 'history for what?' remained largely unasked—and, on account of institutional safeguard mechanisms, unaskable. The target of Einstein's criticism is thus in the first place this at best out-of-touch, at worst reactionary state of affairs within the bastions that traditionally oversaw aesthetic standards. Before a full-scale crisis of authority befell these traditional institutions, a certain malaise prevailed, as they were faced with the ever more subversive and provocative activities of as yet marginal groups and individuals. Reactions, or critical responses, fell broadly speaking into three categories (corresponding roughly to the reactions, at a more general level, to the accelerated modernization and massification of European society). These were:

1) a defensive and reactionary snubbing of all that appeared threateningly 'new' in art, or expressions of outrage at its 'vulgarity' or 'aesthetic inadequacy', accompanied by a retreat into the dogmatism of older values;
2) an attempt to integrate new tendencies in art into the system of older canonical norms by means of willful misinterpretation or selective reception. This amounted to a denial of the actual extent and radicality of change and, while stemming a legitimation crisis, it could at times defuse the radical spark of certain works and movements;
3) an effort to pry open the older system and widen the received concept of art to include and explore newer artworks and indeed new concepts of the 'work of art', new movements and media, in an expanded concept of culture. Such efforts were made much less by art critics and historians within the traditional institutions than by writers, critics and theorists working alongside or amongst the visual artists. Among the consequences of such efforts was of course the exposure of the traditional institutions of aesthetic authority to a crisis of legitimation. The ability of any given work on aesthetics or organ dealing with aesthetic matters, such as a magazine, a group or school, a gallery, to take on this challenge, is a good measure of the extent to which such a work or organ will be studied today with more than purely historical interest.

These are of course heuristic distinctions and can often be found in combination in any particular writer, critic or art movement or indeed political aesthetic programme. Einstein tends, again broadly speaking, towards the third type of reaction.

As for the Classical doctrine of moderation, he finds it stifling and anachronistic at the aesthetic level, and dismisses it, in his later Braque monograph, at the sociological and ethnological level as 'ein verkleideter Hybrisglaube' and 'das Ergebnis religiöser Angst zur ästhetischen Doktrin verputzt' (W 3, 287). This critique already emerges strongly and graphically in *Bebuquin* (1906-1912), when Böhm advises Bebuquin on how to maximize creativity and escape the attachment to things:

> Gehen Sie nicht mehr auf zwei Beinen. Warum amputieren Sie nicht eins heroisch unter der Bettdecke weg? Genuß verlangt Selbstbeherrschung und Qual. Grundsatz: vermeiden Sie das Gleichgewicht. (W 1, 97)

Later, in his 'Abschied von der Symmetrie', Bebuquin recounts the tale of his 'letzte Liebschaft': his 'letzte Geliebte' was a Knidan vase, which ended up in fragments one night, after a struggle to the death (see W 1, 106).

Parallel literary notions of, for instance, the rounded, complete character or individual that grows in an orderly, linear way within their own personal history and fits into a continuous, unproblematic and teleological concept of supra-personal history, were likewise vehemently rejected by the young Einstein. As is by now well known, this critique of straightforward harmony or reconciliation[4] constitutes a life-long structuring motif of Einstein's thinking in matters of aesthetics and the history of art. He rejects a teleological narrative of forms and styles, in which the continuity and development of traditions is taken for granted and in which no questions are put about the dialectic of art's part in the rupturing of historical time and the way in which culture—society, politics, economics—breaks and reforms art's defining contours. What he demands instead is a sociological historiography of art, which has an acute awareness of its own historical significance and that of its subject matter.

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[4] I say 'straightforward' because, as this study will endeavour to show, the notion of reconciliation is not thoroughly rejected. The Adornian term 'reconciliation' is used deliberately: later chapters in this study will determine how justifiably this term can be shared between Adorno and Einstein.

In working on the encyclopedia volume, Einstein intended to get to the nub of what was happening in art, as he wrote to Kahnweiler at the beginning of the project, in 1922: 'In der Kunstgeschichte möchte ich einigermaßen etwas definitives geben.' (EKC, 9)[5] Despite his own occasional flippant comments, notably in his correspondence, suggesting that he takes the matter much more lightly than one would otherwise assume, art for him is a thoroughly serious matter. In this sense he is indebted to the Kantian tradition: aesthetic judgment admits of no slippage towards pleasure or agreeableness, ornament or play. His judgments are rigorous and uncompromising, and he does not mince his words:

> Meine Kunstgeschichte wird für manche Größe peinlich sein; man wird den Unterschied lernen zwischen dem Peintre chameau aux couilles, dem Peintre des Gateaux etc. Aber ich werde mich freuen, in vielem mit Ihnen [d.i. Kahnweiler] d'accord zu sein in diesem Buch. [...] Mein Gott, wie ich diese fünfzig Pfennig Moderne schätze. Auch die peintres poëtes und so verschiedene werde ich guillotinieren. Das Buch wird gründlich sein. (EKC, 11)

This had immediate as well as longer term consequences. In the short term, it resulted in an attack on Einstein's person by the sculptor Ernesto de Fiori.[6]

In the longer term, the rigour of Einstein's aesthetic judgments has led to a vindication, for the most part, by subsequent generations of art historians and a flourish of interest in all his writings towards the end of the twentieth and into the twenty-first century. His sense of what mattered in the art of his own time, what was of great and what of little significance, is, more than broadly-speaking, shared in our own time, as well as his assessments of individual artists. The work does, however, give a movement

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[5] Another letter (CEA, 394), to Tony Simon-Wolfskehl, quoted below in footnote 9, relativizes this expressed intention, however.

[6] Shortly after the first edition of *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts* had appeared in print, the sculptor entered the Galerie Flechtheim on the Lützowufer in Berlin, where Einstein and the ethnologist Eckart von Sydow were preparing an exhibition on primitive art. In the encyclopedia volume, Einstein had characterized de Fiori's work as somewhat pedantic and academic, timid and conventional, and had more or less returned a verdict of mediocrity (see K 1, 166), which has not been overturned by art historians since. After a brief exchange of words, de Fiori, enraged, flung a copy of the hardbound five hundred and seventy-six page work at Einstein's head. Further details of the incident and the reactions of public and press can be read in Uwe Fleckner and Thomas W. Gaehtgens's introduction to the 1996 edition of *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts.* (Uwe Fleckner and Thomas W. Gaehtgens, '"Schauend ändert man Menschen und Welt." Carl Einstein und die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts' (K 3, 7-32), pp. 7-8. Suffice it to say here that Einstein was clearly prepared to make no concessions when it came to the principles of his criticism, even if it meant provoking rancour or ill will—and he had met or knew personally many of the artists about whom he wrote.

short shrift that from today's perspective would no doubt merit inclusion: Dada. Among its members, even more puzzlingly, were some of the artists whom Einstein knew best personally. In a recently published article, Andreas Kramer tackles this puzzle, exploring Einstein's relationship to individual Dadaists and tracing his involvement in the movement itself.[7] Kramer investigates possible reasons behind Einstein's minimal coverage of the movement, ultimately suggesting that the ambivalence of his discourse and its premises prevented a more fruitful reception of Dada on Einstein's part. Klaus H. Kiefer suggests that by 1920/21 Einstein had lost interest in Dada, viewing it by 1924 as a historical phenomenon,[8] which had made its point and in the process lost its impact and, with that, its potential and its viability.

It is, then, perhaps not quite as Kahnweiler puts it at one point in a letter to Einstein about the freshly published encyclopedia volume: 'Sie haben damit absolut Endgültiges über die Kunst unserer Zeit geschrieben.' (EKC, 27)[9] But elsewhere in the same letter the artdealer certainly hits the mark: 'Ich bin sicher, daß Sie mit dem Buche auch der Sache an sich [d.h. dem Schreiben über Kunst] einen großen Dienst geleistet haben.' (EKC, 27)

It was mentioned above that by the middle of the second decade of the twentieth century Einstein was devoting most of his attention to the visual arts. As modern art forged into the terrain of non-referential possibilities (in the case of the visual arts one might also say non-figurative possibilities) and in each medium began to reflect, work-internally, on the limits of that medium, the formal constitution of a work was foregrounded more and more. A connection can be made between these tendencies in the visual arts, comparable tendencies in the literature of the late nineteenth century (Symbolism is the obvious example) and the emergence, in eastern Europe and Russia, of the Formalist School of Criticism and, in central Europe, of the structural linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure. Form had of course, since the very beginning of the discourse

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[7] See Andreas Kramer, '"Versuch zur Freiheit"? Carl Einsteins Verhältnis zu Dada', in *Die visuelle Wende der Moderne: Carl Einsteins 'Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts'*, ed. by Klaus H. Kiefer (Munich: Fink, 2003), pp. 163-78.

[8] Kiefer, *Diskurswandel im Werk Carl Einsteins: ein Beitrag zur Theorie und Geschichte der europäischen Avantgarde*, Communicatio: Studien zur europäischen Literatur- und Kulturgeschichte, 7 (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1994), p. 269.

[9] Cf. Einstein's own remarks in a letter to Tony Simon-Wolfskehl from late 1923 or early 1924: 'Man hat sich nun schliesslich und endlich das Zeug zur Kunstgeschihcte auf den Tisch gelegt – und so werde ich nun dies Zeug runterhauen; durchaus wissend nichts endgültiges aus einer halben Existenz zu geben. Schliesslich man wird sehen. Wir alle machen nur Fragmente.' (CEA, 394)

around art, been named, along with content, as a decisive criterion of the work of art. However, in the early twentieth century, form's significance became all the more acute, as the floodgates were opened to all kinds of content or subject matter previously excluded by the dictates of 'taste'.

Einstein was therefore not alone at that time in according form a privileged significance, indeed in making it the ultimate criterion of the work of art. Widespread acclaim came for him with the publication, in 1915, of a seminal work on African sculpture, entitled *Negerplastik*, which was the first work of its kind to discuss African sculpture as art, rather than simply as documents of 'primitive culture' and tribal ritual.[10] The emphasis is therefore on the formal constitution or construction of the artefact rather than its content, what it allegedly represented, or indeed its social function (indeterminable, as Einstein recognized undaunted, in the case of the African totems and masks). This meant looking at the sculpture exclusively in terms of concepts of space, forms, and styles. A conceptual framework European in origin, to be sure, but the curious conceit of *Negerplastik* is Einstein's demonstration of his acute awareness of the genealogy of those concepts of space, forms and styles, while at the same time using them to decentre the Eurocentric tradition in which they originated. The work presents a collision of two readings, a reading of space in Cubism and a reading of space in African sculpture. What it achieves is an undermining of contemporary preconceptions about the boundaries of the phenomenon 'art', a radicalization of the principle of *l'art pour l'art*, which in fact pushed it out beyond itself,[11] and an exposure of the constructedness of the notion of continuity, historical and geographical, in writing history of art. Although Einstein was to reconsider, with the publication of *Afrikanische Plastik* in 1921, the relevance of ethnography for the history of art and their potential for mutual

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[10] Certainly, the influences of so-called primitive art had already been at first seeping, then pouring into the work of the Avant-garde from the first decade of the twentieth century onwards. Picasso is now widely held to have painted *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* (1907) with reference to an African mask. Cf. for instance Yves-Alain Bois, 'The Semiology of Cubism', in *Picasso and Braque: A Symposium*, ed. by Lynn Zelevansky (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1992), pp. 169-221. Many such masks, statues and icons were in circulation in Paris, brought back from the colonies by sailors, travellers and traders. The prevailing fashion of exoticism, introduced in no small way by the paintings of Gauguin and the Fauves, could thus gain ground, as more and more concrete, physical manifestations of far-away cultures arrived. While Gauguin dealt with the 'primitive' thematically, in brightly coloured paintings that were broadly speaking—despite their simplicity and sometimes apparent flatness—loyal to the received rules of representation, the Cubists began to flout these received rules, using space in a way that was more comparable to some African sculpture than to anything the West had turned out since the Renaissance.

[11] Cf. also Kiefer, *Diskurswandel*, pp. 181-82.

illumination,[12] *Negerplastik*, in its emphasis on form and its simultaneous rethink of what constitutes form, remains fundamental to Einstein's subsequent art criticism and theory. There are subtle and not-so-subtle shifts in his concept of form from his early to middle to late work, but an insistence on successful form as the criterion by which to divide good from bad art, or rather art from non-art,[13] prevails in his theoretical and critical writing on art. As the following will show, Einstein's (changing) concept of form is itself a matter of complexity and ambivalence, as it is developed in conscious opposition to certain received notions of form and of the function of the work of art.

A newcomer to his work, in particular to *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts* with its forty plates and over four hundred illustrations, will likely be struck by the conspicuous absence of description of any painting. In *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts* this is to some extent a deliberate strategy on the part of Einstein and to some extent also a necessary correlate or consequence of his previously developed views on the history and theory of art. As it is a crucial issue and one that is intimately related to the issue of form, it will be given more explicit attention further on in this chapter. First, the devlopment of an ambivalence in Einstein's notion of form in K will be traced and illustrated with reference to the figures of Braque and Picasso and what Einstein calls 'die romantische Generation'. My contention is that the work in its entirety harbours a rift, a rift moreover denied even in some of the most recent Einstein scholarship.[14] The ambivalence in focus

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[12] The following quotations, the first from *Negerplastik* (1915), the second from *Afrikanische Plastik* (1921), document Einstein's reconsideration of the significance of ethnography: 'Kunst als ein Mittel zu anthropologischen oder ethnographischen Einsichten anzusehen, erscheint mir dubios, da die künstlerische Darstellung kaum etwas über die Tatsachen aussagt, woran eine solche wissenschaftliche Kenntnis gebunden ist.' (W 1, 247) 'Die Ethnographie hat ihre erste Aufgabe gelöst, indem sie die Gesamtkomplexe der Forschung aufstellte. Sie verändert nun Methode und Gesicht, damit Einzelfragen behandelt werden. Aus der Differenzierung der Völkerkunde gewinnt der Kunsthistoriker neue Aufgaben.' (W 2, 62)

[13] In *Ästhetische Theorie* Adorno draws this distinction between good and bad art as between art and non-art: 'Der Begriff eines schlechten Kunstwerks hat etwas Widersinniges: wo es schlecht wird, wo ihm seine immanente Konstitution mißlingt, verfehlt es seinen Begriff und sinkt unter das Apriori von Kunst herab.' (A 7, 246)

[14] Liliane Meffre, in her recent study, *Carl Einstein (1885-1940): Itinéraires d'une pensée moderne* (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2002), relies on positive evidence to support her assertion that 'il est évident que le point d'ancrage de *L'art du XX^e siècle* c'est le Cubisme et que tout l'ouvrage est construit en vue de cette unique démonstration: le Cubisme est le seul art capable de transformer l'homme et le monde. Les autres avant-gardes [...] ne semblent avoir de valeur qu'en tant qu'asymptotes du Cubisme [...]' (p. 120). She cites, for example, the expansion of the Cubism section from the first to the second, and from the second to the third edition, and the fact that from the second edition onwards that section is dedicated to the great Cubist collector G. F. Reber (see p. 119). Rather than 'rentrer dans le vif du sujet' (which she intends to do after providing such evidence), she is, it seems, content to stick with her initial claim and not engage too closely with the text of K 3, which belies that claim.

here, it will be argued, is decisive for the subsequent theoretical turns Einstein's concept of form takes.

A fork in the path: Braque and Léger, Picasso and the 'romantic generation'

Context

'Man sagte, als der Kubismus von ihnen geschaffen und ausgearbeitet wurde: Picasso und Braque' (K 3, 136). This is the introductory sentence of the Braque chapter in the section 'Der Kubismus', with which Einstein calls for a more nuanced reception. The sentence remains unaltered in the second (1928) and third (1931) edition. It draws our attention to the order of the names, which is significant in itself, in terms of reflecting a broad consensus in reception. All the more significant, then, is the fact that Einstein himself plays with this order. In the first and second editions he writes disparagingly of the imitative use of Cubism: 'man lieh zu molliger Duselei die Krücken aus' (K 1, 62). 'Doch', he continues, 'solch erbärmliches Vermischen berührt nie die Malerei der *Braque und Picasso* und vermag sie nicht zu kompromittieren.' (K 1, 62; K 2, 61, italics N.C.) By contrast, in the third edition we read at this point in the text 'berührt nie die Malerei der *Picasso und Braque*' (K 3, 98, italics N.C.). In 1926 Einstein still writes 'Seine [Braques] Stilleben sind *das Beste* heutiger Malerei' (K 1, 77, italics N.C.). By 1931 this has become the somewhat less enthusiastic 'Seine Stilleben *gehören zum Besten* heutiger Malerei' (K 3, 139, italics N.C.).

Let us however take a closer look at the matter. Rather than lauding the one painter to the denigration of the other or playing one off against the other, Einstein attempts, in all three editions of K, to confront the specificity of Braque's and Picasso's work within the discovery and development of Cubism and to assess the individual and relative merits of each. In so doing, however, he also assesses the relative merits of the method and means each painter employs. It is here that the reader can begin to discern a fork in the path Einstein plots to successful form and significant work.

A Cubist painting is of course painted in two dimensions on a flat canvas. But spatially that is where its similarity to a traditional painting ends. The traditional work uses Renaissance perspective to achieve the illusion of depth and thus the effect of the third dimension. Cubism renounces this technique, representing space instead by varying

and juxtaposing viewpoints, by crossing optical axes or superimposing them on each other. Within the section on Cubism in K, Einstein summarizes the technique as follows:

> Man kann das kubistische Bild, und hierin liegt seine revolutionierende Bedeutung, als die Vereinheitlichung optisch abrupten, vielfältigen Sehens definieren, als Zusammenfassung verschiedener Sehachsen, die ein Volumen umschreiben. (K 3, 97)

The result is a complex visual form, which integrates movement by presenting facets from differing planes or axes simultaneously in the one image (see K 3, 98). Such visual form, i.e. the work of the Cubist painters, is adequate to the time in which it is emerging, Einstein maintains.

> Die kubistischen Bilder entsprechen dem allgemeinen Charakter der Zeit. 1. Man macht sich von den natürlichen Bedingungen möglichst unabhängig. (Man vergleiche dies mit dem technischen Charakter der Zeit.) 2. Man formuliert dynamische Beziehungen und Aktzusammenhänge. 3. Die Einschaltung der irrationalen Halluzinationen. 4 Der Versuch, trotz Abspaltung zu kollektiv gültigen Formen zu gelangen, bei gleichzeitiger stärkerer Isolierung des Individuums. (K 3, 117)

To support this contention he mentions some tendencies of the epoch. One is the reaction against mechanical positivism ('der vor allem die Objekte sah und die Prämisse des Menschen ausschloß' (K 3, 117)). A second is the ebb of nature painting ('da die Natur ihren religiösen Charakter verloren hatte' (ibid.)). And, elsewhere in the text, a third can be found, namely the increasing tendency to think in terms of relations and functions, rather than essences, elements, causes and effects: 'das klassisch-statische Weltbild war in ein funktionales und vieldeutiges verwandelt worden' (K 3, 158).

Isolation and hallucination, together with a formative impulse, are to defy the tendency towards repetition that has prevailed in art down through the ages. Such repetition is, for Einstein, the bane of art and in effect art's antithesis. It simply reflects an anthropological given, according to Einstein, namely the all-too-human attempt at defence against death/the unpredictable by repeating and creating models of order:

> Allenthalben wird das Schöpferische im Menschen durch die Neigung zur Wiederholung gehemmt; jedoch behauptet er sich dadurch gegen Wechsel und Tod, so daß man Wiederholung und Typenbildung nicht als rhythmische Laune, sondern als Verteidigung gegen den Tod werten kann. (K 3, 123)

The tectonic forms[15] are an instance of such repetition or formation of types, according to Einstein's social-psychologically and ethnologically derived theory. They thus mark the fear of the unpredictable and discontinuous and embody the desire for durability or continuity:

> Den Meisten erstarrt das Tektonische zu hoffnungslos wiederholtem Schema, begreifbar, da jenes als Zeichen der Angst und des Wunsches nach Dauer erfaßt wird. (K 3, 123)

They have a compensatory function, Einstein maintains, because they intercept the isolated, unconscious, hallucinative stage and urge towards conscious formation:

> Diese tektonischen Formen besitzen kollektive Geltung, und hiermit wird das Subjektive des isolierten Schauens kompensiert; darum schwingen diese Bilder zwischen den entscheidenden, seelischen Polen. Die kollektiven, tektonischen Formen erheben die subjektiven Gesichte [d.h. subjektiv Gesehenes] zu normativer Geltung und führen über das Stadium unbewußter Besessenheit zur bewußten Formbildung. Aus der Zone des Leidens gelangt man zu aktiver, willensmäßiger Gestaltung [...] Das halluzinative und isolierte Schauen ist nun kompensiert. (K 3, 116)

The tectonic forms have collective validity, according to Einstein, precisely because they are minimal symbols of the basic forms and functions in nature and the human body:

> Diese tektonischen Formen besitzen kollektive Geltung [...]. In [ihnen] ruhen die alten Symbole des Zeugens und Gebärens, des Lebens und Sterbens. Diese tektonischen Motive gehören beiden sexuellen Zonen an, sind männlich und weiblich [...]. (K 3, 116)

Here Einstein's affinity to Jung is apparent: for Jung, time/eternity and space are united as a backdrop to the collective unconscious, which is the reservoir of human experience, both actual and potential, and its components, the archetypes. The archetypes are patterns of energy with image-making potential, a kind of common psychic inheritance of all humanity. But Jung stresses their immanence (in contrast to Platonic ideas), while

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[15] Einstein comes to use 'Tektonik' interchangeably with 'eine Geometrie der Formen', a geometry of forms. To recall, the tectonic forms—basic geometric forms such as the circle, cube, triangle or pyramid, the rudiments of architecture—represent, in Einstein's theory the boundary zone between form and formlessness or figuration and the non-figurative. With 'das Tektonische' and 'die tektonischen Formen' Einstein is drawing on a long and rich tradition in German history of art. Conor Joyce has traced this tradition in accurate detail in an appendix to his study *Carl Einstein in 'Documents' and his collaboration with Georges Bataille* (Philadelphia: Xlibris, 2003), pp. 279-96.

holding that they defy representation.[16] In Freud's view, the unconscious is created by repression, and this is a personal process derived from lived experience. In Jung's view, it has a collective base, which means that the unconscious possesses innate structures that greatly affect and perhaps determine its contents. The notion of compensation Einstein uses is derived also from Jung.[17] It has been pointed out, however, that Jung's ideas about the collective unconscious and archetypes are inspired by F. W. Schelling's impassioned philosophy of nature and our fundamental bisexuality.[18] Like the Romantics we find here the stress on the dynamic interplay of opposites in the evolution of consciousness. In Einstein, too, the idea of fundamental bisexuality looms large. An investigation into which source, Jung or Schelling and other Romantic thinkers, is the more momentous for Einstein would warrant a separate study including a close scrutiny of Einstein's theoretical terminology.

The two quotations on tectonic forms from K 3 given above are not yet present in the two earlier editions of K. At this point in the text Einstein adds more than a full page on tectonics to the third edition. Later in this study the importance of the stress on the compensatory function of the tectonic will be considered.

Tectonics can be schematized, used according to a tried and trusted formula, with the result, however, that they lose their potential relation to the dynamic. Conventional forms stagnate, according to Einstein, and stave off any unconventionalized perceptual experience. Used minimally, as they are in Cubism, however, the tectonic forms are liminal forms, which are to mediate between the dynamic hallucinative experience and the stasis of marks on canvas. The hallucinative interval is itself a threshold level or realm Einstein postulates between consciousness and unconsciousness (see W3, 377-78). As such minimal forms, tectonics intimate the border between form and formless.

While tectonic forms are already implicated in a dialectical play here with the dynamic hallucinative instant, the following sentence Einstein writes about the tectonic is significant in terms of his later thinking on the tectonic, language and reason:

> Das Tektonische, dies Machtmittel gegen die Natur, wendet sich dann gegen den

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[16] On Jungian archetypes and archetypal images and how the two differ, see Steven F. Walker, *Jung and the Jungians on Myth: An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 10-15.
[17] On Jungian compensation see Steven F. Walker, *Jung and the Jungians*, pp. 19-24.

> Menschen, der, wenn einmal die schützende Beschwörungsformel Erfolg brachte, sklavisch sie wiederholt und zum Fetisch seiner formalen Riten erhebt. (K 3, 123)

Replacing 'das Tektonische' with 'die Vernunft', we have a sentence that would be quite at home in Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, which was written more than a decade later.[19] The later chapters of this study will show that this affinity is neither incidental nor accidental.

Just as Adorno suggests a parallel or indeed continuity between 'primitive' man and modern man in the use of the identity logic fundamental to abstract reason (A 3, 25-33),[20] so Einstein suggests a parallel between 'primitive' and modern use of the tectonic. In all cases, it is a question of means of managing nature, which, according to the Greek model of *techné*, would include collective rituals, metaphysical systems, modern science, and technology in its usual meaning.[21] What distinguishes the modern artist, however, from 'primitive' users of the tectonic is that the modern artist is differently situated metaphysically: he has become keenly aware of his own role in creating and sustaining metaphysical systems. Hence his iconoclastic tendencies:

> Es bezeugt die entschlossene Gottlosigkeit des heutigen Menschen, daß er leidenschaftlich versucht, die Tabus der Zeichen zu erschüttern, die in religiösen Zeiten ehrfürchtig geschützt wurden. Man metaphysiert nicht mehr seine Produkte, sondern bezweifelt diese und ändert sie ab [...] Der Primitive oder der Mensch der Kollektivkultur hingegen ängstigt sich vor seinen eigenen Schöpfungen, die er zu autoritären Kräften steigert. (K 3, 123)

In the following, the varying significance of the concept of tectonic forms will be probed in relation to Einstein's assessment of Braque, Picasso, Léger and the emerging

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[18] See Claire Douglas, 'The historical context of analytical psychology', in *The Cambridge Companion to Jung*, ed. Polly Young-Eisendrath and Terence Dawson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 23.

[19] Cf. for instance the sentence: 'Unter der nivellierenden Herrschaft des Abstrakten, die alles in der Natur zum Wiederholbaren macht, und der Industrie, für die sie es zurichtet, wurden schließlich die Befreiten selbst zu jenem 'Trupp', den Hegel als das Resultat der Aufklärung bezeichnet hat.' (A 3, 29)

[20] For a fuller discussion of this point, see also Chapter 3, 'Adornian mimesis: the backward-looking dimension'.

[21] Inge Baxmann points out how the Greek model of *techné* underwent a revival in the 1920s in the context of both a rejection of mechanized and functional uses of the body and attempts to restore 'Gemeinschaft' and direct sensual communication. Inge Baxmann, *Mythos: Gemeinschaft: Körper- und Tanzkulturen in der Moderne* (Munich: Fink, 2000), pp. 103-07 and 255-56.

Surrealist painters, whom Einstein calls 'die romantische Generation'.[22] First Braque and Picasso will be considered, as it is in relation to these two painters that Einstein's concept of the tectonic forms is at its most complex and intricate. Léger will then be discussed, as the significance of tectonics in his work is, in a sense, an extreme and simplified version of what it was in the case of Braque. The significance of tectonics in the case of the 'romantische Generation' will then be considered, as it represents an extreme and undialectical, so once again simplified version of what it was in the case of Picasso. The fork in the path detectable when the three editions of K are read comparatively thus runs initially, but only slightly, between Braque and Picasso and in the third edition much more acutely between Braque and Léger on the one side and Picasso and the Surrealists on the other. Different outcomes of the sublime moment can be seen to germinate in Einstein's interpretations of Braque and Picasso, the Surrealists and Léger. Concomitantly, different models of subjectivity, openness or closure to contingency, and aesthetic autonomy or heteronomy are being developed in each case. In a sense, then, the positions are being sketched for the later writings of Einstein's that substantially involve theorizing art: 'Il se pose la question', *Georges Braque* and *Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen*. A set of options is worked out in K; these options are then worked out in individual detail and taken to their (sometimes aporetic) limit in the later writings.

Braque: tectonic forms and 'bewusstes Sichbegrenzen'

In comparison to the boundlessly protean Picasso, Einstein emphasizes the moderation of the French-born painter Georges Braque: 'seine Arbeiten blieben von der klassischen belle mesure beherrscht' (K 3, 136). This feature of 'belle mesure' runs through the entire Braque chapter and, it must be understood, is positively evaluated. The assessment of Braque's method is characterized by phrases such as 'die lateinische mesure', 'klassisches Gleichgewicht', 'technische Vollendung', 'Selbstbeherrschung', 'bewusstes

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[22] Einstein most likely uses the term 'romantische Generation' precisely to avoid using the term 'Surrealism', which had been monopolized by Breton. In *Georges Braque* Einstein distances himself even from the term, taking issue with what he sees as its metaphysical overtones ('sur-réel', see W 3, 324 and Chapter 4, 'A theory of imagination and the unconscious'). Cf. also Klaus Kiefer: 'Eingedenk der geschichtlichen Relativität von Epochenbegriffen kann 'Romantische Generation' [...] problemlos mit 'Surrealismus' identifiziert werden, wodurch auch deutlich wird, dass Einstein eine der überzeugendsten Surrealismus-Theorien konzipiert hat.' Klaus H. Kiefer, 'Zur Einführung', introduction to *Die Visuelle Wende der Moderne: Carl Einsteins 'Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts'*, ed. by Klaus H. Kiefer (Munich: Fink, 2003), pp. 7-18 (p.15).

Sichbegrenzen', 'geglichene Versöhnung', and even a 'fast religiöse Conscience nach malerischer Vollendung'.

Given the context of Einstein's vigorous critique of Classicism and the doctrine of moderation and harmony, as outlined above (page 40f.), how are such phrases about Braque as have just been listed to be interpreted? The pair of terms 'klassisch' and 'klassizistisch', which are used in polemical opposition to one another, and Einstein's interpretation of Cézanne, can serve as clues.

As regards the first: 'das Klassizistische' refers to the 'Classical', where this is simply the adjective from 'Classicism'. This Classicism began as the aesthetic model and style from the mid to late eighteenth century, but of course had its own model in the forms of Greek and Roman antiquity. Einstein sees it as prevailing now only in a degenerate condition: as an academic or institutional doctrine, in which firmly established and inviolable notions of form predominate and considerations of the technical are to the fore.[23] It must be highlighted that Einstein's criticism of Classicism is therefore polemically charged and has more to do with a criticism of the 'bieder' and pastiche use of allegedly Classical forms than with the actual tenets of Classicism as they were expounded in the eighteenth century. To work in this style in the twentieth century is to work in a way that is inadequate to the times. The result is not art, Einstein insists, but 'Bibelots' (see K 3, 120 and elsewhere), trinkets and baubles, decorative items, which stand in no living relation to the society and era in which they appear and require no genuine investment of questioning and creative energy. Originally, Classicism was of course in no way a defence of decoration and ornament, quite the contrary. But polemics are geared towards a contemporary audience, and in Einstein's time a defence of Classicism was the hallmark of the 'Bildungsbürger' and thus ran counter to all that was sacred in bohémien and 'radical' artist circles.

In contrast to 'das Klassizistische', 'das Klassische', which might usefully be translated as the 'classic' and in the case of Braque is positively evaluated, has to do with successful form beyond the dictates of a ready-made doctrine and beyond the confines of arrangement and ornament. In this context, Einstein draws a distinction between Cubism

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[23] One would have to add, however, that a rigorously consistent use of this distinction between 'klassisch' and 'klassizistisch' is sought in vain by the reader, as indeed is a pure terminological consistency in Einstein's writings generally. Throughout the Braque section the distinction is sustained; in the section on

on the one hand and Fauvism and Expressionism on the other. Whereas the Fauves and Expressionists, and before them the Impressionists, were concerned with the sensation of colour, the Cubists tackled what Einstein considers the more fundamental issue, namely form, the third dimension, which gives body or volume:

> Die Fauves oder Expressionisten verallgemeinerten oder bildeten die zweidimensionale Farbsensation, wobei die primären raum- und körperbildenden Kräfte ausgeschaltet wurden. (K 3, 99)[24]

The Fauves and Expressionists are therefore, in Einstein's eyes, in danger of producing purely decorative work, unlike the Cubists:

> Somit ist der Kubismus aller dekorativen Ornamentik entgegengesetzt [...]. (K 3, 99)

Used in reference to Braque, 'klassisch' is Einstein's word for emphasizing Braque's ability to find his own forms and to develop these in the course of time according to his own needs, and take them to their full maturity:

> Er schuf sich eine Grammatik erfundener Formen, eine variable Syntax, und immer reicher wird sie verwebt und verbunden. (K 3, 139)

Braque creates his own supply of forms, with their own significance in relation to each other, just like the various parts of speech in a language. He can, like any master painter before him, work with these forms, combining and developing them and pushing them to their limits. But he remains unfettered by the conventional forms handed down from previous generations. Braque can thus work in a way that is 'klassisch' without having recourse to the canon of 'klassizistische' norms.

Braque avoids using a current work to negate or establish an ironic or relativizing perspective on a previous one:

> somit erweist sich die Reihe seiner Bilder als stete Folge; kaum ein Bild, das ein anderes verneinte; nur die Frage reiner Qualität, völligeren Gelingens herrscht. (K 3, 139)

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the 'romantic generation', however, we read that Cubism broke through 'das klassische Raumklischee' (K 3, 160).

[24] It should be noted that Einstein is far from overlooking or downplaying the achievements of Impressionism. On the very next page (i.e. K 3, 100), as if by way of reminder, he summarizes those achievements once more. See also the opening section of K, 'Die Vorbedingungen'.

Picasso, on the other hand, always eager to return to square one and put everything in question, 'überrast seine Interpretation von gestern' (ibid.). With Picasso, the ingenious stroke, 'der sprengende Einfall' (K 3, 138), triumphs time and again; Braque prefers to reveal 'nichts von der angestrengt abwägenden Mühe' (ibid.). Einstein speaks of the precise control and uncompromising patience of the French painter.

Such quotations and comments bring to mind the age-old topos of the opposition between genius and diligent, conscientious craftsman. Einstein's critique of the aesthetics of genius in the context of bourgeois ideology and the constitution of the subject is only fully unfolded later, in the Braque book. Already here in his history of art, however, precisely that opposition of genius and diligent craftsman is critically subverted. Einstein indeed ascribes to Braque's work a 'Verfeinerung' and the 'volle Kraft des Handwerks' (K 3, 138-39). Einstein is, furthermore, aware that in assessing Braque's work he is not alone in emphasizing the craftsmanship.[25] For Einstein, however, what is decisive about Braque's painting lies elsewhere, namely in what he calls 'ein Umbilden der Anschauung' (K 3, 137), a reform of perception, that is sought by breaking up or spreading the motif over multiple surfaces: 'die flächenhafte, vielfältige Aufteilung des Motivs, die tektonisch, selbständige Durchführung' (ibid.). This fundamental aspect, which in fact refers to Braque's part in the Cubist breakthrough, comes into its own already in the introductory part of the section on Cubism in K, however. Here in the Braque chapter, the French painter's idiom or characteristic ways of working are specifically considered and interpreted. The measuredness, the solemnity of Braque's works indicates the painter's scepticism, Einstein claims, especially scepticism against wit, cleverness, ingenuity, which can compromize the challenging quest for form and are seen as easy solutions. Braque, according to Einstein, consciously foregoes 'das Interessant-Heroische' (K 3, 139).

A link can be found here, in this alleged renunciation of ingenuity, to the second clue, which has been named as 'Cézanne'. In the 'Vorbedingungen' of the third edition we read:

> Undisziplinierte Reaktionäre betonen in seinem Werk die impressionistische Technik. Gegenwartsfanatiker hingegen das Konstruktive. Mit beiden einseitigen Definitionen

> verkürzt man Cézanne um sein Ganzes und Persönliches und unterschlägt das eigentümlich Krisenhafte seiner Malerei, die trotz aller Vollendung oft im Problematischen und Unvollendeten verharrt. Cézanne schuf dem Impressionismus eine logische Methode, kraft der es ihm gelang, über die Impression zu dauerhafterem Aufbau zu dringen. Man darf ihn den umgekehrten Klassiker nennen. (K 3, 53; similar but not quite as extensive in K 1, 20)

In Cézanne Einstein recognizes the mutual constitution of evolution and revolution. This interpretation of Cézanne's position illuminates Einstein's interpretation of Braque: Einstein stresses both the role Braque played in the discovery of Cubism and his ability to bring that discovery resolutely and painstakingly to full maturity. It is a matter, therefore, of breakthrough and perseverance, of forging ahead, but likewise of building. Einstein lauds what he sees as the precise control, the discipline, of Braque's way of working, the exclusion of all drama and everything private (see K 3, 140). That, he maintains, is an achievement in itself: *not* to submit to the impulse to rush ahead without having thoroughly explored the tasks in hand:

> Braque ist der Romane, der puristisch sich beschränkte und bewußt sich der Vollendung des Handwerks opferte. Eine Resignation, die vielleicht ebenso schwierig wie jedes Wagnis ist [...]. (K 3, 131)[26]

'Gegenwartsfanatiker', Einstein states, emphasize the constructive dimension in Cézanne's work. While avoiding such a lop-sided assessment, Einstein recognizes the value of the constructive dimension of Cubism. This is especially apparent in his treatment of collage, which appears only in the third edition (see K 3, 120; 130; 137). Einstein accredits Braque with the discovery of the technique of collage or, initially, pasted papers, 'papiers collés'. Among today's scholars of Cubism there is now consensus on this point.[27] One valuable aspect of collage for Einstein is that it allows the temptations of 'pretiöse Handschrift' to be resisted more easily (see K 3, 137). What

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[25] It may be that he has in mind a work published in Potsdam in 1924 as part of the Handbuch der Kunstwissenschaft series, Hans Hildebrandt's *Die Kunst des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. by A. E. Brinkmann (Potsdam: Athenaion, 1924), p. 386 ff.

[26] This comment is the same in K 2 (see K 2, 85), but does not yet appear in K 1. In other words, it is added as the Picasso chapter is greatly extended, perhaps to underscore the difference but comparable merit in the way that Braque and Picasso, respectively, work and in what they produce.

[27] Cf. the contributions to *Picasso and Braque: A Symposium*, ed. by Lynn Zelevansky (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1992), which differ strongly on other points. The first collage is dated September

Einstein means by this is that collage counters the painter's temptation to lapse into an idiosyncratic style, to find and use a signature brushstroke or way of applying colour and simply deliver variations of the same work, thriving on the fetish value that signature style can muster in the marketplace (see also K 3, 120). Such a way of painting would mean that technique alone would be valued, whereas form and the development of form would amount to nothing. Collage, by contrast, offers new opportunities for form:

> Nur wenige begriffen die Bedeutung dieser papiers collés, worin man knappe Synthese erzwang und die verblühten Reize des Handwerks keß zerhieb. Die Formsuggestion arbeitete nun ungehemmter, da man das überlieferte Handwerk abgehängt hatte, das die Erzeugung neuer Formen verhindern konnte. (K 3, 121)

Of further, and particular, significance for Einstein is the way in which, within these new formal opportunities, the constructive dimension is strengthened and greater freedom is gained with respect to the motif (see K 3, 137). To put it another way, what Einstein sees in collage is an increase in the capacity for destroying traditional referentiality and foregrounding the relationality of the individual elements. The fact that morsels of 'reality'—buttons, bits of wood, train tickets etc.—are included in the work, pasted onto the canvas or onto other bits of paper, has a curious effect, coming as it does after the Cubists have drastically undermined traditional referentiality. The reintroduction of scraps of daily reality in collage serves to underscore the impossibility of reading the work in any straightforwardly mimetic way and in a sense is a measure of the distance that has already been covered by Cubism in its move away from traditional representational norms:

> Im Einfügen nachgebildeter oder tatsächlicher Dinge, die vielleicht dem Konstruktiven begegnen, ist wohl der Ausgang der Veristen zu sehen. (K 3, 130)

Such scraps of daily reality of course come complete with their own spatial demands—they have already their own two or three dimensions and, if three, give their own impression of depth—and they can be played off against further elements in the work. Juxtaposition, collision, conflict—these are features not only of collage but of its close relative in the visual arts, montage. In both, there is explicit, conscious and visible

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1912. See Christine Poggi's contribution, 'Braque's Early 'Papiers Collés': The Certainties of 'Faux Bois'', pp. 129-68 (pp. 144 and 150-51).

construction. And when Braque is the case in point, there is no question of anything occurring haphazardly. Not referring exclusively to the collages, Einstein, in the third edition, describes Braque's method as follows:

> Braques Methode war nicht die des jähen Sprungs. Sein Tempo ist durch den Wunsch nach bedeutender Vollendung bestimmt. Das Glück der überfallenden Halluzination weicht einer fast religiösen Conscience nach malerischer Vollendung. Das Gemälde ist vollendet, wenn die Erschütterung verborgen ist. (K 3, 141)[28]

Such passages suggest a concept of form that combines the fleeting instant of what Einstein later (i.e. in *Georges Braque*) unfolds in more detail as 'das Halluzinative' with a scrupulous formative impulse that requires a careful use of tectonics. The fleeting instant is made to hide in the form; this is how 'bedeutende Vollendung', meaningful or significant completion, 'malerische Vollendung', painterly completion, can be interpreted. And yet such significant, painterly completion cannot, it is to be assumed, be achieved without the fleeting instant having occurred or leaving its mark. '[V]erborgen', Einstein writes, not 'verschwunden'. 'Verborgen' can mean secret, concealed, covert, veiled or latent.[29] Braque works 'die Erschütterung', the shock, painstakingly into the form, so that the work harbours it, bears it within itself, without however having it as content. It is by means of such construction that modern art connects with what is fleeting and disturbing about aesthetic appearance. It holds very precariously and tenuously a memory or a trace of what is fleeting or disturbing. And that memory or trace is held only as form.

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[28] Given Einstein's very deliberate theorization of the 'hallucinative' as an agonal state (see in particular *Georges Braque*), it would fit here to understand '[d]as Glück' as contingency, luck or the utterly unpredictable, rather than as bliss or happiness. However, the passage actually dates from 1929 and was published as part of the text 'Tableaux récents de Georges Braque' in *Documents*, 6 (1929). A German version also exists which, although published a little later, in *Die Kunstauktion*, 14 (1930), may be the original on which Einstein based the French translation. The curious issue is that in the French translation 'das Glück' in fact appears as 'le bonheur', which can mean bliss, happiness or good fortune. The relatively neutral sense of 'good fortune' might be preferred, as it could also simply imply the good fortune of having such artistic talent.

The reason the issue is of such interest is that the sublime state is often described as a state of utter agony *and* utter bliss, the latter aspect however receiving short shrift or indeed not appearing at all in Einstein's version of the sublime. One possible explanation is that Einstein, at pains to deliver art from any direct connection with pleasure or entertainment, fears that stressing the 'bliss' dimension of the sublime instant might appear to reintroduce just that connection.

[29] For 'verborgen' the French version (see previous footnote) has 'voilée', which translates back into English as veiled.

Such an affirmative response to the strengthening of the constructive dimension, which relies heavily on the tectonic forms, is particular only to the middle phase of Einstein's theoretical development, however. As his theory of Surrealism gains ground, it is progressively sidelined. It suggests a response to the sublime moment like the strong (not the 'egotistical') version of the third type of outcome. Yet in the heavy emphasis on formal perfection and completion and the scrupulous attention to 'hiding' the 'Erschütterung', there is a hint of the triumphant, Kantian outcome.

Picasso: tectonic forms and the open dialectic of form – destroy – reform

As an exemplary figure countering this tendency to remain in thrall to one's own creations and achievements, Einstein presents Picasso, the turbulent genius, arch sceptic and self-recreator. For Einstein, who vociferates polemically against every sort of determinism thrown up by the nineteenth century, Picasso embodies the contrary force of invention, production and transformation of reality. To this protean dynamic, a signature style or manner are anathema:

> Picasso verbraucht Formen und Erfindungen wie Kleider. [...] [Er] hatte begriffen, daß jede Form und jedes Erlebnis seine Ganzheit erst im Gegensatz gewinnt, und somit führt er seine Psychogramme bis zur bewußten tektonischen Form; denn Bewußtmachen heißt einen seelischen Vorgang abschließen. (K 3, 112)

> Picasso will nicht der Dupierte einer Manier sein, und sein Pluralismus der Stile dringt aus einer Skepsis, einem Widerwillen, sich zu fixieren. (K 3, 124)

Likewise traditional notions of identity and an artist's identity:

> Der Starke setzt seine Identität aufs Spiel; mit ihr bezahlt er die Verwandlung des Werkes. Picasso schleudert seine Person wie einen Ball ins Weite, um jene im Sprung am andern Ufer aufzufangen. Vielleicht erreicht man eine kurze Identität im Bild, um sie dann in einer neuen Werkreihe zu zerbrechen. (K 3, 124)

> Wohl keiner der heutigen Maler hat gleich intensiv mit sich verkehrt wie Picasso; oft verlosch ihm die peripherische Welt, doch immer holte er aus seiner Besessenheit eine Form hervor, womit er ein Stück Welt verzauberte. (K 3, 131)

Picasso's fluency allows him to employ—and defer employing—the tectonic forms with more ease than Braque. Einstein highlights the dialectical tension maintained between 'Gestalt' and tectonics. Before taking this point any further, let us briefly interject with a comment on the term 'Gestalt'.

The basic epistemological ideas that generated *Gestalt* psychology were in general circulation in Germany by the 1920s.[30] Einstein's notion of 'Gestalt' shares with *Gestalt* theory the idea of a non-summative conception of elements within a whole. The Austrian physicist Ernst Mach (1838-1916), whose work was very significant for Einstein (see the section 'The limits of image and text' in this chapter) had a conception of 'Gestalt' based on the idea of a whole that is not inflicted or imposed on the parts, but comes into being by way of a balance of forces. An example is the configurations of stimuli in perception. The balance is gained through the 'Gestalt' and, in contrast to rigid or absolute forms, can be easily lost and regained.[31] This fluidity characterizes Einstein's notion of 'Gestalt' also, and allows it to interact dialectically with the tectonic forms. Of interest in the history of the term 'Gestalt' is also Kant's version of it. For him, 'Gestalt' belongs to 'interesseloses Wohlgefallen', *the* stipulation in relation to aesthetic judgment. 'Gestalt' is 'schöne Gegenständlichkeit als reine Form, z.B. Lineatur, denn wäre sie Materie, z.B. Farbe, so würde sie Reiz oder Rührung hervorrufen, d.h. interessieren'.[32] The opposition form – colour is often topical in discussions of Einstein's aesthetics,[33] and Kant's stipulation of disinterested pleasure is still operative for Einstein, even if other aspects of Kant's theory are in question (see also Chapter 3, page 143).

Resuming the point about Picasso's fluidity and forms: the dialectical tension between 'Gestalt' and tectonics was pertinent in the case of Braque, too, but is much more so in the case of Picasso. Picasso's sole durable characteristic, i.e. the only thing that makes his 'identity', according to Einstein, is 'mantische Besessenheit' (K 3, 135),

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[30] On these basic ideas that were in general circulation, see Mitchell G. Ash, *Gestalt Psychology in German Culture, 1890-1967* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 123-24.

[31] The work in which Mach develops these ideas is *Die Analyse der Empfindungen und das Verhältnis des Physischen zum Psychischen*, orig. 1886, 2nd edn (Jena: Fischer, 1900). See the entry 'Gestalt' in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, ed. by Joachim Ritter (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1971-), III: G-H (1974), pp. 539-547 (p. 547).

[32] *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, III: G-H, p. 539-40.

[33] See for instance Ernst Osterkamp, 'Däubler oder die Farbe – Einstein oder die Form. Bildbeschreibung zwischen Expressionismus und Kubismus', in *Beschreibungskunst – Kunstbeschreibung: Ekphrasis von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. by Gottfried Böhm and Helmut Pfotenhauer (Munich: Fink, 1995), pp. 543-69.

mantic possession or possessedness, in other words the very fact of never being identical with any self, always in flux and moving between different selves that are not 'his' in any traditionally conceived way. On Einstein's interpretation, then, he is akin to Keats's 'poetical Character', as outlined in Thomas Weiskel's study of the Romantic sublime. (See Chapter 1, page 37.) This similarity reflects a strong affinity and continuity between Romanticism and modernism on the question of poetic identity. But it also suggests—and this is reaffirmed by the reference to 'der Starke' in the above quotation—that this is a case of the third outcome of the sublime moment, and a definite case of the strong version of it, at that. Picasso is in a sense also like Nietzsche's man made entirely of masks: remove the last mask, Nietzsche declares provocatively, refuting all depth-oriented/metaphysical notions of identity, and you remove the man. Picasso is to be found in, among and between all of his various styles and guises, not beneath, behind or beyond them. In this sense, he embodies, and has clearly grasped, the relationality and relativism of the world into which he has been born, which is also the relationality of the sign systems he uses. Einstein does not state this explicitly but couches it instead in terms of a rehabilitation of the fragmentary and stylistic pluralism, and an invention and relentless reinvention of reality:

> Picasso hat das Fragmentarische der einzelnen Stile begriffen, die allzuviel ausschließen; darum ersinnt er verschiedene Lösungen und meditiert in weiten, anscheinend gegensätzlichen Spannungen. (K 3, 124)

> Picasso zeigt, daß das Wirkliche durch den Menschen erfunden wird und immer von neuem wieder erfunden wird, da es dauernd abstirbt. Picasso hat durch mantische Besessenheit mythische Bildungen und Zustände erreicht. Der Mensch ist nicht mehr Spiegel, sondern Möglichkeit des Künftigen. [...] [Picasso] beweist, daß der Mensch und die Welt täglich vom Menschen erfunden werden. (K 3, 135)

Léger: tectonic forms and 'blanker Mythus der Maschine'

Einstein's chapter on the Normandy painter Fernand Léger is unusual. It is contained within the section 'Der Kubismus', and tectonic forms are certainly topical in the chapter. Yet this painter seems to arouse Einstein's enthusiasm and admiration for reasons quite different from those advanced in the cases of Cubism, 'Der Blaue Reiter' and 'Die romantische Generation'.

'Ein Architekt, ein Präziseur, ein Mann für das Kollektive' (K 3, 155), and 'Standardeur, Typusbildner, Organisator' (K 3, 154): this is how Einstein presents Léger. The word 'Standardeur' especially catches the reader's attention. 'Die Ausnahme' and 'das Wunder', pitted sometimes implicitly, sometimes explicitly against 'standard', 'convention', 'the normal' and 'the typical', had been core concepts in Einstein's early aesthetics, and had endured through the development of his theory of Cubism and into his Surrealist aesthetics. Now Einstein writes, paradoxically: 'Das Wunderbare, Außerordentliche für Léger ist der Typ' (K 3, 153), indicating not only a very different idea of painting from, for instance, that recounted in relation to Picasso, but also somewhat differing criteria of evaluation. Einstein's appraisal of Léger thus represents an extraneous strand woven among the positive evaluations in the textual fabric of *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*. It will be considered here in detail because it resurges in a later work, *Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen*. There it provides the basis for an option to which Einstein has recourse once his critique of the various Avant-gardes has otherwise swept the stage.

'Commun sens' and 'das Kollektive' are keywords in Einstein's interpretation of Léger's work. 'Commun sens' is used in the context of Léger's relation to things. An idiosyncratic blend of French and English, it perhaps emphasizes the notion that such a straightforward view of things would at any rate be unavailable to painters in the philosophy/metaphysics-laden German tradition. It also points to Léger's communal or mass-oriented approach, in which the tectonic forms feature as communally binding or a kind of lowest common denominator of representation. Both of these aspects will be discussed shortly.

'Der Subjektive,' Einstein writes, 'der die Sachkonventionen pessimistisch oder visionär verwirft, ist ihm [Léger] fremd.' (K 3, 154) The implicit comparison here is with analytic Cubism, with its tendency to disassemble or destroy the object, and synthetic Cubism and Surrealism, with their tendency to depart from empirical objects and produce imagined or visionary figures. In contrast to the critical and oppositional stance these directions suggest, Léger is optimistic and affirmative: 'Malen heißt hier nicht Zerstören, sondern Hervorheben und optimistisches Bejahen der Struktur der Schöpfung, ihrer arthaften, dauernden Eigenschaften.' (K 3, 155) Léger's quest is thus seen as diametrically opposed to that of the Surrealists: he seeks common denominators, things that bind and endure; they seek exceptions—exceptional states and insights, and fleeting

figures and objects that confound the empirical. This leads Einstein to locate the decisive difference between Léger on the one hand and the Cubists and surrrealists on the other in the relation to things presented in their respective works.

Léger paints with an eye for life 'in einer Welt ohne Schatten, angstlos und ohne Frage' (K 3, 150). There is no room for ambivalence in the glaring clarity of electric light (see K 3, 150, 155). Einstein apparently admires Léger for his attention to the given, the obvious, the surface, as opposed to the concealed, the obscure, the depth. For Léger, objects are unproblematic 'genormte Tatsachen; Sehen und Bewußtsein präzise Wahrnehmungsinstrumente' (K 3, 153). Delving into an unconscious or hallucinative zone holds no promise of freedom or a new reality. For the Surrealists, by contrast, objects are symptoms, the symptoms of a particular psychic state, whether a dream or hallucination, and mysteriously meaningful for waking life. Objects for the Surrealists have a magical or fetishized significance; they are laden with threat, anxiety, hope or promise and have a tense, pulsional quality.[34] Léger can paint 'Körper an Körper naiv nahe gesehen' (K 3, 153). For him there is no such anxiety; 'Mensch' and 'Ding' are 'gleichberechtigte Partner'.

The significance of this last phrase can be brought out with two other quotations, which indicate Einstein's own reception of the psychophysical research of Ernst Mach and others, but also his detection of similar points of departure in Léger. The first is: 'Wir sind tätige Komplexe zwischen anderen gleichberechtigten Kräftequellen.' (K 3, 153)[35] The second: 'Léger findet, daß der Mensch von den Dingen imprägniert ist, wie diese vom Menschen; beide sind untrennbar verbunden.' (K 3, 153) In Léger's understanding, things are on a par with one in one's surroundings:

> Der Mensch ist Objekt unter Objekten und bedingt durch eine Majorität unabhängiger Kräfte und Formen. Bewußtsein und Deutung (Interpretation) gelten nur als winzige Brechung verglichen mit dem ungeheueren Ansturm objektiver Gebilde, die typisch und dauernd sich wiederholen. [...] Nicht das Privaterlebnis entscheidet, sondern der kollektive Standard, und das Bewußtsein ist das Mittel zur Normung der Erfahrungen. (K 3, 152)

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[34] In this sense Einstein's epithet for Léger, 'Fanatiker der Objekte' (K 3, 152) would actually seem to fit the Surrealists better, as their relation to things was fanatical in the sense of obsessive and intense. But Einstein simply wants to stress the way in which Léger treats all things and bodies equally and has no room

This quotation shows that for Einstein the discrepancy between Léger and the Surrealists vis-à-vis objects is predicated on differing responses to a shared point of departure: the understanding of the human being as determined by forces largely beyond its control.

Léger's apparently equanimous and undisturbed relation to things seems all the more astounding to Einstein for being so contrary to the prevailing era. In an article on fetishism in the nineteenth century, Hartmut Böhme summarizes the historical situation aptly:

> Man kann behaupten, daß das neunzehnte Jahrhundert [...] das Säculum der Dinge ist. Dingstatistiken weisen aus, daß gegenüber dem achtzehnten Jahrhundert die Anzahl der verfügbaren Dinge zum Beispiel in einem Haushalt außerordentlich zunimmt [footnote]. Die Industrialisierung führte zu einer Vermehrung künstlicher Dinge im täglichen Gebrauch und Verbrauch nicht nur bei Oberschichten. [...] Niemals zuvor war die dingliche Umwelt vergleichbar dicht, mannigfaltig, verlockend, künstlich, faszinierend. Man sammelte, hantierte, besorgte, begehrte, stellte aus, verbrauchte, benutzte, kaufte und verkaufte, hortete und verschwendete, ordnete und klassifizierte, bewertete und schätzte Dinge in einer alltagsgeschichtlich vorbildlosen Manie und Intensität. [...] [J]e dichter das Netz der Dinge ist, das die Menschen umgibt, umso eher stellt sich eine unheimliche Erfahrung ein, nämlich im Zentrum eines ungeheuren Energiefeldes zu stehen, das die Subjektform determiniert. [...] Reifikation und Alienation des Ich sind die Begriffe, mit denen der Rückstoß des ungeheuren *take-off* der Dinge verrechnet wird.[36]

In Einstein's chapter on Léger, this potentially threatening and destabilizing relationship to things is reflected in the description of how the painter works and how the peculiarly tactile quality of his work develops:

> Diesem realistischen Normannen rücken die Dinge auf den Leib [...]. [...] Da man die Dinge so greifbar nahe um sich spürt, wird die flächige Deutung nicht mehr genügen, sondern man empfindet alles plastisch nahe zum Fassen und Greifen. (K 3, 149)

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for 'subjectivism' or 'individualism'. To Einstein the Surrealists would instead be perhaps 'Fanatiker der subjektiven Assoziationen'.

[35] On Einstein's relation to Mach, see the section 'The limits of image and text' below.

[36] Hartmut Böhme, 'Fetischismus im neunzehnten Jahrhundert: Wissenschaftshistorische Analysen zur Karriere eines Konzepts', in *Das schwierige neunzehnte Jahrhundert: germanistische Tagung zum 65. Geburtstag von Eda Sagarra im August 1998*, ed. by Jürgen Barkhoff, Gilbert Carr and Roger Paulin, with a foreword by Wolfgang Frühwald, Studien und Texte zur Sozialgeschichte der Literatur, 77 (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2000), pp. 445-65 (pp. 445-47). In evidence of the increase in things, Böhme cites Gottfried Korff, 'Umgang mit Dingen', in *Lebens-Formen: Alltagsobjekte als Darstellung von Lebensstilveränderungen am Beispiel der Wohnung und Bekleidung der "Neuen Mittelschichten"*, ed. by

However, the further Einstein goes into this description, the more contradictory things become. In the very next sentences Einstein maintains:

> Léger entscheidet sich hier für den commun sens, und er studiert die Dinge gemäß der Arbeitsart der Alten. Beginnt mit sorgfältigen, ausgeführten Zeichnungen, einem farbigen Entwurf, usw. (Ibid.)

This again suggests equanimity, lack of any threat. A calm decision 'für den commun sens' is made. But then we read:

> Gegen solche Objektnähe verteidigt er sich durch tektonische Bewältigung. In diesen Bildern steht etwas wie Angst vor Unordnung oder Zufall. Alles Irrationale ist ausgeschaltet und man ist von gezüchteten Dingen und Gestalten umgeben. [...] Man will der Verzauberung durch die Dinge entgehen, um nicht von ihnen überwältigt zu werden. (Ibid.)

Here we suddenly have the scene of a risky struggle with limits once more, familiar from the chapters on Picasso and Braque. Not only does this contradict the notion of Léger's opting for a common sense approach and characterization as someone who lives 'in einer Welt ohne Schatten, angstlos und ohne Frage' (K 3, 150). It also stands opposed, in certain key respects, to Einstein's usual basic criteria of assessment. The idea that 'Angst vor Unordnung oder Zufall' should determine or be present in a work is, for Einstein, usually grounds for criticism. Likewise, the comment 'man schaltet jede Dynamik mehr und mehr aus und rettet sich in das sicher ruhende und dauernde Ergebnis' (K 3, 149), would usually be found in a negative evaluation of Einstein's. Instances that rely heavily on these two parameters are his recurrent criticisms of Classicism as well as his negative assessments of certain artists of his time, e.g. the 'Brücke' group (an assessment of which can be found within the section on 'Die Deutschen' in K).

How, then, can Einstein's enthusiasm for Léger be accounted for? To Einstein Léger is the painter who paints for the people and for his own time, in which he is fully immersed. He is therefore the legitimate successor of Henri Rousseau, 'naiv', 'optimistisch [und] eindeutig' (K 3, 153; 155), and far from all scepticism and dialectic (see K 3, 151; 155). Léger derives his basic forms from modern industrial surroundings,

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the 'Fächergruppe Designwirtschaft' (Berlin: Hochschule der Künste, Presse und Informationsstelle, 1991), pp. 35-51.

in which masses and machines multiply among streets, factories and 'Häuserblocks'. He takes cues from aspects of urban life, the 'Stadtkollektivität': 'Signale', 'Motoren', 'Zahnrad', Fabrik', 'Metro', 'Atelier', 'Partei' (K 3, 150; 152). All of these, whether machine parts or aspects of modern architecture, offer direct opportunities for being worked into a language of representation built around tectonic forms. Man, machine and architecture are amalgamated in Léger's images of the metropole:

> Der tektonische Stadtmensch [...] – der Übermotor – ist Mitte des Bildes; denn die Stadt ist Ausdruck und Werk des Menschen [...]; nichts menschlicher als das Stadtkonstruktive und das harte Kalkül; in der Angst sucht der Mensch das Wiederholbare, das ihm nur im Entschluß zu sorgsamer Rechnung möglich wird. (K 3, 150)

Einstein's elevation of 'das Stadtkonstruktive' and 'das harte Kalkül' to the status of the supremely human seems at odds with his 'kulturpessimistische' views on calculation and other features of urban life and mentality expressed elsewhere. A critical passage is the following, as it throws light on these apparent contradictions:

> Im Krieg mag Léger die Gewalt der Maschine und heutiger Organisation begriffen haben. Nun faßt er das Aktuelle mit besonderer Kraft und er arbeitet die 'éléments mécaniques', worin er die Technik und motorende Kraft des Heute verbildlicht. Er zeigt, daß die technischen Gebilde, die unser Leben beeinflussen und mitformen, noch andere Kräftequellen als nächsten Nutzen und Zweck enthalten und solche Formen einem neuen Sehen entsprechen; blanker Mythus der Maschine. (K 3, 149)

The reference to the war suggests the direction of the thought: it moves towards a new model of (social) order. 'Maschine und Kalkül' (K 3, 150) are to be used as a kind of counter-spell in response to the threatening ubiquity of machine and calculation in modern urban life and the alienation and reification they bring.[37] A kind of reversed organicism is at work, the myth of the machine, which, in reflecting the 'Stadtkollektivität', is to restore 'Gemeinschaft'.

The question is not whether this is an appropriate or effective response to the diagnosed or perceived problems, but rather how the discursive underpinnings of this assessment of Léger relate to those of Einstein's assessments of other artists and also

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[37] This idea of a counter-spell, is reflected—and in much the same context—in Einstein's plans for a partly autobiographical novel, *BEB II*: 'BEB will sich in die primitive des arbeiters retten und in die staerkste fantasieloseste realitaet; diese als rettung, als gegengift.' (CEA, 43)

how they square with the model of subjectivity and stance on contingency detectable in Einstein's other writings. As Inge Baxmann points out in her study *Mythos: Gemeinschaft: Körper- und Tanzkulturen in der Moderne*, the spectrum of positions on technology in aesthetic programmes and in the works of individual artists and writers of the time stretches from dreams of a return to pre-industrial forms of life and production to ideas of a reconstruction of the human body as a technical organism,[38] with gradations of subtlety included, I would add. But it is wrongheaded, I would further add, to seek a correlation between positions on this spectrum and positions on the political spectrum. Whether a writer or a movement can be considered progressive or reactionary is less a matter of their declared or generally accepted political colours than of how their specific discourse functions within the discursive parameters of the era and in relation to the shared conceptual resources available at the time. Furthermore, in the course of sustained study of any such artist, writer or movement, it will often be found that while in certain respects progressive impulses are at work (e.g. in matters of innovation in form), in others reactionary tendencies hold sway (e.g. in ideas about how the work is to be disseminated or reproduced).

In light of these considerations, the following comments, which initially show a more ambivalent puzzle emerging than the contradiction discussed a moment ago, can be interpreted:

> Stadt und Maschine spiegeln den Menschen, seine Bewußtheit, seinen Optimismus und seine Kraft, die er in der Maschine vervielfältigt und ballt. In diesem anthropozentrischen Block behauptet er sich gegen Magie und gefährliche Natur. Man baut die Festung gegen das Ungewisse und den Tod. Und so errichtet man die Stadt aus Maschine und Kalkül; man versucht stärkste, farbige Klärung durch gegensätzliches und gewaltsames Licht, elektrisch und klar, so daß man in einer Welt ohne Schatten, angstlos und ohne Frage lebt. (K 3, 150)

Technology and constructive 'Gestalt' formation appear here as defence mechanisms against nature, where nature is perceived chiefly as threatening, on account of the nature of the body and the certainty of death. From this quotation it becomes clear that the shadow-free, fear-free world of Léger is not as simple as it may at first have seemed. It is bought at a high price: it is the result of force and dogged effort. It involves building a

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[38] See Inge Baxmann, *Mythos: Gemeinschaft*, p. 103.

fortress against all intrusions of nature, actual and potential, and repressing mortality and vulnerability. As a model of subjectivity, it is embattled. It erects a bulwark against contingency.[39] And as a model of the sublime encounter,[40] it points to a Kantian triumph. It calls to mind the armoured subjectivity and decisionism ('Léger entscheidet sich …', 'Nun faßt er das Aktuelle mit besonderer Kraft …' (K 3, 149)) theorized particularly in relation to Weimar writers and thinkers of the extreme Right.[41] But it therefore also shows how Left and Right are inadequate categorizations in a scene in which remedies are sought in utopian models of 'Gemeinschaft' for overcoming the menacing intrusions on the body that modern urban living entails. Whether it be the 'warm' model of interpersonal care, obligation and trust or the 'cool' model, a 'Kriegsgemeinschaft' of armoured subjects, men as machines, each as circumspect and self-reliant as the next, is a matter of textual specificity. But as a strategy devised to counteract alienation and anomie, both take the same form.

Paul Klee, 'Die romantische Generation': tectonic forms in abeyance

With the expansion of the piece on Klee in the section 'Der Blaue Reiter' and with the section 'Die romantische Generation', the third edition of K heralds the beginning of Einstein's Surrealist aesthetic theory. In fact, in the previous two editions, 'Der Blaue Reiter' did not occupy a section of its own but was subsumed instead under the rubric 'Die Deutschen'. The third edition of *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts* is thus no longer, as the two previous editions had substantially been, an integral or fully coherent apology of Cubism. In it, instead, Einstein's Cubism-oriented aesthetic theory is overlaid with his burgeoning Surrealist theory. The third edition of K is a work, therefore, which pulls in two directions at once: the initial theory of Cubism is certainly not rejected nor is it even revised; appendages, however, suggest a new direction is being taken.

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[39] Note also the sentence 'Der dynamische Charakter der subjektiven Einstellung, die vor allem das Tun und Sichbewegen wertet, wird, um das Gleiten einzugrenzen und zu stoppen, zu elementaren statischen Typen verfestet' (K 3, 151). The metaphor of slipping, of having no foothold, pervades late nineteenth and early twentieth literary experiences of modern life – and critiques of language. In modernism its obverse is often 'form' or 'Gestalt', which is sought in fear of ambiguity, disintegration and dilution or infiltration. In the following chapters, Einstein's ideas on form will be studied in this and other respects.

[40] The phrases 'tektonische Bewältigung', 'eine heftige, begrenzende Nähe der Objekte' and 'diesem […] Normannen rücken die Dinge auf den Leib' (K 3, 149) suggest such an encounter is afoot.

[41] See Helmut Lethen. *Cool Conduct. The Culture of Distance in Weimar Germany*, trans. by Don Reneau (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), esp. p. 160f.

One of the early reviewers of the work in its third edition (most reviews had of course appeared with the first edition), Will Grohmann, in fact spotted this, without having been in a position to pinpoint the conceptual shift and trace the indications of it across the three editions:

> Einsteins 'Kunstgeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts' ist noch immer das wichtigste Werk über die Kunst unserer Zeit. In der dritten Auflage (9.-12. Tausend, 1931) ist die Kritik noch genauer, der Stoff ist erweitert worden, und einige Kapitel wurden überarbeitet. Einstein hat auch völlig neue Kapitel hinzugefügt. Die Veränderungen sind so einschneidend, daß man fast von einem neuen Buch sprechen könnte.[42]

If Einstein, with the third edition, was to present an up-to-date work which was to take into account the most recent developments in the visual arts, i.e. if his work was not to show its age already by the time a third of the century had elapsed, then Surrealism warranted attention. And it was not only painters such as Masson and Miró and sculptors like Giacometti and Arp who needed to be considered. By the mid to late 1920s Braque and Picasso were developing in new ways, which needed to be reflected in the new edition and assessed in relation to their Cubist feats. The thesis being advanced here is that Einstein indeed makes room for the innovations of Surrealism in the third edition, but that in the process his own criteria of evaluation are also subjected to significant revision.

The (anti-)monograph *Georges Braque*, written about 1931-32, is usually interpreted as the maturation of Einstein's Surrealist aesthetic. There, the theory of Cubism is not abandoned either but feeds into, or indeed grows into, a theory of Surrealism. In the third edition of K, however, the two theories, one already fully expounded, the other in germinal form, stand juxtaposed. And for the time being—or at least until the publication of the Braque book—it remains open whether and how they are to be connected in Einstein's aesthetic theory. In fact, at one point in K, in a passage that offers for consideration one or two further aspects of the 'Wiederholung' versus 'Neues' question,[43] Einstein himself indirectly draws attention to this issue:

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[42] Will Grohmann, 'Einsteins *Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*', in *Das Neue Frankfurt*, 11/12 (1931), 216. Reprinted in K 3, 861-62.

[43] This question, fundamental to Einstein's approach to the history of art, appears increasingly from the second half of the 1920s onwards in the form of 'Tautologie' versus 'Neues'. See for instance the opening sentence of the fragment 'Il se pose la question' (W 4, 177-94, German translation 451-65), a work which will be considered in detail in Chapter 4.

> Letzten Endes besteht der wichtige Teil des geschichtlichen Ablaufes nicht in Wiederholung, sondern Zerstörung des Gegebenen und Hervorbringung des Neuen, obwohl die konservierende Anstrengung bei weitem die Fähigkeit zu tatsächlicher Produktion übertrifft; eine Tatsache, die uns Kunst geradezu als reaktionär erscheinen läßt. Ich bin mir bewußt, mit dieser Einschätzung des imaginativen Efforts in Deutschland wie in Frankreich eine Perspektive der Nähe zu geben, denn später wird man verbindende Stufen und Übergänge hineinsehen; eine Folge der gegenseitigen Anpassung von Bild und Welt. (K 3, 243)

Of particular interest are the last few clauses: 'denn später wird man …', where it makes sense to read 'hineinsehen' not as to look or see into, since there is no 'in' before 'verbindende Stufen', but instead as a coinage along the lines of 'hineinlesen', to read something into something. This can be taken as a theoretical or metatextual comment on the practice of art historiography: a near perspective can be given, a close-up study made of contemporary work (which is what Einstein maintains he is doing by writing K), while with the passage of time connections are read into—or, as Einstein puts it for the visual arts, seen into—the documents of the past by the art historian. In this way attempts are made to adapt 'Bild' and 'Welt' to each other, or image and world, art and interpretation, mythos and logos.[44] The fact that Einstein uses the word 'hineinsehen' and not simply 'sehen' indicates his awareness of the subjective nature of all historiography.[45] In no sense are the 'verbindende Stufen und Übergänge' ontologically 'there'; they do not exist in any fundamental way at all, as squirrels and plug-sockets, saltiness and darkness exist. They exist only hermeneutically, i.e., as hermeneutic constructs. Were they to exist in any universal or eternal way, one assumes that they could indeed, if only later, at least be uncovered, if not straightforwardly seen ('wird man … sehen', which Einstein does not

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[44] It might appear from the quotation under discussion that Einstein considers a straightforward 'gegenseitige Anpassung' of 'Bild' and 'Welt' possible. It will become clearer as this study proceeds that the case is anything but straightforward, and possible only in a particular sense. Certainly, in banal terms, image and world condition one another. In very general terms, images which are already in existence—e.g. as paintings—of course stay as they are, but one might still want to say they 'adapt' to the world by the world adapting to them and indeed while the world is adapting to them. Hence one can argue, for example, that a Futurist painting evokes a very different reaction nowadays than it did when first hung in a gallery, and also, that that different reaction then becomes part of the Futurist painting. But the issue gets murkier once one turns the enquiry, as Einstein does, to how proximate 'Welt' and 'Bild' can ever be, i.e. to the problem of incommensurability of the orders of 'things-in-themselves' and representations, or as the issue was put in modernism, temporal and spatial experience and representations of temporal and spatial experience.

[45] For further exposition of this point, see Chapter 5, 'Einstein's critique of historicism and its implications for art history'.

write). To say that they inhabit a different ontological level than squirrels etc. is, of course, to say nothing about their potential or their actual power.

The question of Cubism and/or Surrealism, it is being argued here, hinges for Einstein on the concept of form. And this in turn is initially, anyway, predicated on the function, or activation, of the tectonic. While the kind of form typical of Braque's work was the declared favourite in the earlier editions of K, in K 3 the matter becomes more ambivalent. We have already seen how Picasso's ingenuity and mutability are gaining in appeal. But in the case of Picasso the notion of form as dialectical is retained:

> Der Fatalität des Unbewußten stellt er den Willen zu genauer Gestalt entgegen und so sind seine Bilder zwischen die beiden Pole gespannt. Man kann hier von einer inneren Dialektik, einem seelisch polymorphen Bau sprechen. (K 3, 135)

His mercurial quality, however, is already one step further in the direction of Klee and the 'romantic generation'. All the same, any reference to an animistic, metamorphic, or in Einstein's idiom 'metamorphotic', quality is sought in vain in the Picasso chapter, and in the section 'Die romantische Generation' Einstein differentiates between Picasso and 'die Jungen' as follows: 'Picasso [stellt] das Ergebnis des seelischen Ablaufs dar, statt den Prozeß selbst zu fixieren.' (K 3, 169). Picasso, in a sense then, constitutes here one of those 'verbindende Stufen und Übergänge' Einstein spoke of in the passage cited above. Clearly, this is an instance in which very little historical distance is taken before such a connection is made.

So, in the case of Braque's form there was 'klassisches Gleichgewicht', 'technische Vollendung', 'Selbstbeherrschung', 'bewusstes Sichbegrenzen', 'geglichene Versöhnung'. With Picasso, the fragmentary is rehabilitated and upgraded. Form is dialectical and playful: one work can comment on and cancel out another. Picasso is protected from permanent atomization ('haltloses Sichzersplittern' (K 3, 124)) on account of a determination to form ('der Entschluß zur Formulierung' (ibid.)). We might even say, to inflict form.[46] With Picasso there is 'Halluzination', 'Gestaltbildung', 'Mantik', 'neue Mythologie', certainly, but no 'Metamorphose'. That begins rather with Marc and Klee and continues with Masson and Miró.

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[46] Einstein writes in this context: '[Man] könnte Kunstwerke geradezu als Mittel zu gewaltsamer Verdrängung bezeichnen.' (K 3, 124) What is repressed, according to Einstein, is the onslaught of psychic flux in the hallucinative instant.

The group 'Der Blaue Reiter' was formed in Munich in 1911 by Franz Marc, Vassily Kandinsky and Paul Klee, who were later joined by Alexei Jawlensky, August Macke, Alban Berg and Arnold Schönberg. The presence of the two composers is telling, along with the fact that some of the members of the group were painters as well as poets: the group was united in the search for a kind of unifying basis to all the arts, an idea throwing back to the 'Gesamtkunstwerk' notion of the German Romantics. Einstein sees the group's work as measuring up to his criteria for significant contemporary art, 'eine Umbildung der seelischen Struktur' being the *sine qua non*:

> Es entscheidet, daß es diesen Leuten um Wichtigeres als nur um Malerei ging, nämlich um eine Umbildung der seelischen Struktur. [...] Rücksichtsloser als die anderen Deutschen versuchten Marc, Kandinsky und Klee in die Bilder eine abgeänderte menschliche Haltung zu tragen. (K 3, 241)

Einstein states in the introductory paragraphs to the section 'Der Blaue Reiter':

> Es geht hier zunächst nicht um eine Kritik des einzelnen oder um die Auswertung der Probleme durch einzelne, sondern: der 'blaue Reiter' war eine Gemeinschaft von Männern, die der deutschen Kunst ein durchaus neues Ziel setzten [...]. (K 3, 241)

Einstein proceeds to expound the hallmarks of the group, as he understands them:

> Endlich stellen die Deutschen das Problem der autonomen Malerei und der frei entwickelten, halluzinativen Prozesse. [...] Endlich faßte man den Mut, hemmende und verbrauchte Übereinkünfte zu zerstören, und wagte, entdeckte Gesichte rückhaltlos aufzuzeichnen. Man versuchte das Prozeßhafte des inneren Schauens festzuhalten, dynamisierte das Bild, damit ein visionäres Geschehen unmittelbar im Bild selber handle. (K 3, 241)

It would go beyond the scope of this study to explore Einstein's assessment of each painter. Suffice it to say, therefore, that it becomes increasingly clear on reading the section in its entirety, that, of the three painters Einstein discusses, the painter to whom he ascribes these hallmarks with the fewest, in fact with no reservations whatsoever is Paul Klee. The First World War deprived the world of watching Franz Marc's work develop ('so besitzen wir von ihm nur ein beginnendes Werk' (K 3, 242)). The assessment of Marc and Kandinsky winds up at what quickly becomes a familiar lament of Einstein's: the absence of consequent form and the resulting tendency towards

ornament or decoration rather than art.[47] For Einstein this means a lack of engagement with consciousness and reality, and thus amounts to the practising of art as a quasi-mystical but ultimately regressive withdrawal from the world:

> Marc wie Kandinsky ermangeln der Gegengewichte ihrer gestaltverzehrenden Mystik. Im Bild überspielt ekstatische Leere und Hingerissenheit die grob-schwache Gestalt, und die metaphysische Abstraktion läuft etwas leer in schmückenden Ornamenten. (K 3, 249)

> Eine monumentale Gläubigkeit läßt [bei Marc] erste Form hinaufschleudern, der aber beherrschte Kontrapunktik fehlt; Kosmik und Ekstase im Absoluten enden tragisch im pathetischen, etwas mechanischen Entwurf. (K 3, 250)

> Von Marc und Kandinsky her drohte eines: Malerei als Rückzug. (K 3, 259)

Paul Klee, however, stands apart. What Einstein misses in many contemporary artists, explicitly including Kandinsky, is 'Verwandlung und Neubildung der Realität' (K 3, 259). For Einstein this is something the Cubists held great promise of delivering, and something Picasso, in particular, was actually beginning to deliver by the time revision for K 3 was under way. Klee, Einstein believes, is getting there by different means:

> Klee gab der deutschen Kunst eine wichtige Wendung. Endlich löste man sich aus der negativen Phase der Objektzerstörung. [...] Mit Klee wird ein menschlich wichtiges Problem erhoben, nämlich das der Verwandlung und Neubildung der Welt durch den Menschen. Dieser gewinnt hierdurch die magische Gewalt zurück, die er lange nicht mehr anzuwenden gewagt hatte. (K 3, 262)

The keywords here are 'magische Gewalt', also described as 'metamorphotische Kraft' (ibid.). The precondition for this magic power is the ability to identify fully with some other thing or body, an ability shared, Einstein holds, by children, 'primitives' and certain artists, but not, for instance, by Kandinsky. In Einstein's view, which he unfolds at some length in the Kandinsky section (see K 3, 254-57), this painter obstructs just such a full identification and the possible representation of dynamic processes by having

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[47] This assessment is reflected at an informal level in a letter of Einstein's from about May 1923 to his then partner, Tony Simon-Wolfskehl: 'Au fond ist Kandinsky eine Tante, die Seele spinnt. Seine Form ist doch sehr Steinersche Suggestion. Der Märchenknabe Klee ist besser.' (CEA, 399) Kandinsky was close to Rudolf Steiner's Theosophy/Anthroposophy, which Einstein knew and indeed had already parodied in *Bebuquin*. Hence the phrase 'Steinersche Suggestion'.

conceptual elements intervene. These elements stave off the forming of a 'Gestalt' and the painter compensates instead with entirely abstract figures and formulations, a ready-made arsenal of variations, amounting to little more than colour arrangements:

> Kandinsky fordert eben das Anerkennen seiner lyrischen Deutung, er verlangt nach dem Zuschauer, 'der das Bild direkt auf sich wirken läßt'. Entweder man übernimmt die subjektive Deutung, die zu mystisch geahntem Gesetz aufgewertet wird, unterwirft sich einer behaupteten inneren Notwendigkeit oder sieht nur ein mehr oder minder geschmackvolles Arrangement. (K 3, 257)[48]

The magic power referred to in the quotation before this last one involves, by contrast, the creation of a new reality by allowing a free flow, an uninhibited intermingling, between subject and object. The boundaries between internal and external world collapse, thus also the boundaries between animal, vegetable, mineral, astrological and human life (see K 3, 265). Elements from all of these realms can participate in the complex 'metamorphotic drama'. It follows its own dynamic, unfolds and is committed to paper or canvas without heed of established aesthetic norms and conventions, by way of what Einstein calls 'Technik des Trance' (K 3, 262).

In writing about Klee, Einstein refers to the process of 'bildnerische[r] Umbau' as involving three forces or phases:

> 1. das mediale Niederschreiben, d.h. ungehemmtes Nachgeben gegenüber noch nicht angepaßten seelischen Prozessen [...]; 2. die tektonischen Kräfte, d.h. die Bewußtseinsmachung der Visionen und die Einordnung der isolierten Erlebnisse in kollektiv gültige Zeichen; 3. die Identifikation mit einer neuen Gestalt, also die metamorphotische Kraft. (K 3, 262)

There appears to be a subtle change under way in the evaluation of the various aspects of the artistic procedure. Rather than the full emphasis lying on the multiperspectival

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[48] One might argue that the same criticism could be levelled at Klee. The crucial difference, for Einstein, however, lies in the fact that Kandinsky's figures are fully abstract and geometrical, bearing no relation to things in the world, while Klee's are darkly suggestive of all kinds of (dream) images and things, even when he pares down the image to a mere line drawing or the most rudimentary of signs, as for instance in his drawing *Der Beladene*. What Einstein promotes is a transformation of representation as Klee accomplishes it. Kandinsky is part of a trend, in Einstein's view, which is driven by a purgative impulse to rid the painting of all residual references to reality. This trend culminates, as Einstein points out, in the minimalist and, he would add, nihilistic work of painters such as Malevich. (See the chapter on 'Die Russen' in K.) This is a trend Einstein comprehends in terms of the logic of its development from

'simultané' of mature Cubist works and their revolutionary construction of painterly space, 'Gestalt' seems, in places, to be elevated to the detriment of 'Tektonik', where 'Gestalt' can involve simply line-drawing or writing: 'mediales Schreiben'.

> Im medialen Schriftbild wird sich die Gestalt als Endergebnis automatisch oder wie zufällig bilden, das Niederschreiben ist ein Suchen nach Gestalt, während beim Tektonischen das Gestaltmäßige häufig Voraussetzung ist und willenshaft erzwungen wird und man von Beginn an einer festgelegten Ordnung sich anvertraut. (K 3, 265)

> [...] die tektonischen Figuren [sind] Ergebnisse der Traumabwehr und des Willens. (K 3, 264)

The expostulatory move is implicitly a move away from 'festgelegte Ordnung' and 'Willen' towards 'automatisch[e]' or 'zufällig[e] Bildung'. We are hovering here between the two kinds of type three outcome of the sublime encounter: the egotistical and the strong version of a response to the event of heterogeneity.

Again, Einstein is edging closer to defending an undoing of the kind of form postulated in relation to Cubism, form as dual, requiring both expressive and constructive elements. But this happens very tentatively, and while the Klee chapter marks a further step in the shift, it is in fact not the place where the clearest re-valuation happens. With Klee, the tectonic—and with it, the idea of collectively binding signs—is obviously still intended as a force to be reckoned with. Between the 'Psychogramm' and efforts to retain the dynamic quality of the visual event on the one hand, and 'das Tektonische' on the other, Einstein contends, the visual artist has at his disposal two elements, which, if gifted (like Klee), he uses contrapuntally[49] or in dialectical fusion:

> Im passiven Niederschreiben äußert sich die Leidensfähigkeit, die mediale Kraft [...]. Im Tektonischen versuchen wir gegen den schweifenden Traum uns zu verteidigen, ihm gewaltsame Grenzen und Ecken aufzuzwingen. [...] Man tritt in die tektonische Phase, wenn man Erlebnisse dadurch hemmt und kontrolliert, daß man sie allgemeineren, verharrenden, bauhaft siedlerischen Formen einordnet. Der bildende Künstler verfügt hier

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analytical Cubism, but it is a direction he does not deem worthy of pursuit, as its conclusions appear clear from the outset.

[49] The use of musical terminology here might be interpreted as a correction Einstein addresses to Kandinsky and his apologists, the tenor of which would be, that music and visual art can be considered analogically, with the proviso that the analogy must run via the only genuine common denominator, namely form.

über zwei Elemente [...]. (K 3, 264)

> So zeichnen sich bei Klee zwei gegensätzliche Schichten der Seele gegeneinander ab und hieraus entsteht eine kontrapunktische Stimmung [...], nämlich gegensätzlich gespannter Humor. (ibid.)

Thus, although we have seen how the concept of form postulated with regard to Klee's work nudges away from Einstein's Cubist conception, the final verdict on Klee in K 3 involves an affirmation of form, where this form consists of two dialectically implicated elements:

> Bei Klee bedeutet [die] Primitivierung nicht schmückende Glätte oder Formverlust, sondern gründlich veränderten Zustand. (K 3, 269)

The tables are turned

Einstein's analysis of the work of Braque, Picasso and Klee dwells on each painter's specific capacity for form and the mode of realization of that form in the painter's work. The role of the tectonic has been traced in each case. The thesis being presented here is that while the first and second editions of K operate according to an assessment of the Cubist spatial revolution as *the* defining moment of twentieth century art, thus making not so much Cubism per se but the fundamental significance of the Cubist breakthrough the yardstick, the third edition deviates from this mode of valuation. Einstein broadens the scope of the third edition to include extra material on Picasso and Klee and a section on the Surrealists Masson, Miró and Gaston-Louis Roux. Certainly, he is dealing with subject matter here that differs significantly from Cubist forms. But by including an assessment of these painters he is not simply augmenting the first and second edition. With Picasso, Klee and the Surrealist painters in mind, the third edition engages with the core of the first and second, and emerges as a much altered work. In the revision, the thrust of the work shifts. The move is from an outright apology for Cubism and a rigorous attention to spatial form, to an ambivalent evaluation of the relative merits of the classically Cubist work as opposed to the less geometric, less 'tectonic', less spatially constructed, more 'immediate' painted writings and drawings of Surrealism.

Cubism had transformed the representation of space by deconstructing Renaissance perspectivism and demonstrating that spatial relations need have no fixed

magnitude. But it had remained related to classical art, according to Einstein, because it still relied on a static construction of signs. Its legacy was thus the task of transforming also the perception of the 'real' and the construction of figures:

> Das Schauen war funktional geworden, jedoch noch in eine statischen Aufbau der Zeichen gebunden; hierin liegt die Verwandtschaft des Kubismus zur klassischen Kunst. (K 3, 159)

Following briskly on Cubism's reform of space and destruction of the object, which had come after Impressionism's concentration on colour sensation and the atomizing of form into patches of light, dark and colour, came 'die Frage nach dem Gegenstand, nach einem neuen Vorstellungsinhalt' (K 3, 164), or more precisely:

> Nun mußte man sich fragen: welches waren die Kräfte, die zu solcher Destruktion gezwungen hatten, und welche Objekte oder Analogien von Vorstellungen waren an die Stelle der nicht mehr seelisch wirksamen Objekte zu setzen? Diese Zerstörung war durch [...] ein Freiwerden der Verdrängungen bedingt. [...] Zwei Grundprozesse weisen weniger verfälscht [als die übliche künstlerische Disziplin] solche Verdrängungen auf: der Traum und das Unbewußte. Nutzte man diese Bezirke, so mußte man die Wendung zur halluzinativen Kunst vollziehen. (K 3, 164)

With this 'Wendung', Einstein is making way for the eruption of the irrational into the realms of consciousness and reason, via art. The artist gives free rein to psychic processes which access buried collective and archaic layers of the human psyche. Nietzsche and Freud are clearly the forbears here: Nietzsche with his emphasis on instinctual life, Freud with his discovery of the potential that the dream world and the life of the unconscious hold for conscious life. Einstein acknowledges this (see K 3, 45-46; 164). Of course, the title Einstein gives the section on the painters of Surrealism, 'Die romantische Generation', is an indication of the longer tradition evoked here. The early German Romantics of the late eighteenth century likewise, if without scientific terminology, made way for the forces and impulses of the unconscious, and championed holistic thinking as against purposive rationality and calculation. They valued intuition over scientific knowledge and night over day, with all the attendant associations.

> Wachsein gilt nun als gehemmter Traum, als verminderte Halluzination, während das Unbewußte oder der Automatismus der Analogien nun zum wichtigen Mittel des Findens und Erfindens erhoben wird; man kehrt zur Mantik zurück. Gleich wie im Traum zeichnet

> man Analogien auf, das heißt, Beziehungen, die nicht dem vernunftgebundenen, kausalen Ablauf angehören, sondern die in besessenem Zwang abrupt einander folgen [...]. (K 3, 165)

Einstein understands this kind of art as being predicated on an autistic detachment from reality. It is around this idea that his theory of regression is developed. The egotistical sublime seems to be close at hand:

> Wir stellen nochmals fest, die autistischen Merkmale überwiegen in dieser Kunst. Jedoch werden diese durch ein Moment stark eingeschränkt, nämlich durch die Regression, den seelischen Archaismus. Sobald man die Kräfte des Traumes und des Unbewußten weckt, wirken Atavismen, alte Verdrängungen, die lange, kaum benutzt, ruhten. (K 3, 165)

Regression is thus seen to counter automatism; the newest art is based on experience probing the dream and the unconscious, which meets with the oldest of atavisms. Einstein suggests there are three (external) ways in which the artists he has in mind attempt to defend themselves against 'solch überstarke Abspaltung' as occurs when the hallucinative zone is activated. What all three amount to, at any rate, is an attempt to return to a collective basis, in other words to get beyond autism:

> Diese Jungen schlossen sich gruppenweise zusammen; man kompensiert den starken Autismus durch eine Neigung zu kollektiver Politik; man führt die Erlebnisse [...] auf eine allgemeine Basis, nämlich das Sexuelle, zurück. (K 3, 167)

The role the tectonic comes to play in this context is that of (internal) censor: the tectonic forms, as the minimal forms that correspond to the most basic shapes of the human body and of things we see in nature, are seen to belong to an archaic layer of consciousness, which is shared by all. The more the new is accessed in the hallucinative instant, the more strongly regression is activated to counter or stem the tide of the new, thus giving rise to an enormous tension within the individual.[50]

The Cubist revolution was, it seems now, insufficient, even in Einstein's eyes. A further and more subversive transformation of the concept of the human ensues with the onset of the dynamic, unstructured work of the Surrealists:

> Wagte man es aber, irrationale seelische Vorgänge, also Geschehnisse aus den Bezirken

> des Traumes und des Unbewußten, einzuführen, so mußte damit auch die Vorstellung vom Menschen von neuem abgeändert werden. Der Mensch war nicht mehr dies Bild von Ordnung, nicht mehr ein stabiler Typus, sondern ein Bündel schwer überschaubarer Vorgänge, die man allzu lange verheimlicht hatte, um das Ebenbild Gottes intakt zu erhalten. [...] Also wenn man die Verdrängungen nachzeichnet und abreagiert, wird das rationale Bild vom Menschen erschüttert [...]. (K 3, 163)

Subsequent chapters of this study will investigate Einstein's view of the rational in more detail: mostly, he sees it as the dominant mode, which must be overcome, but this does not hold for *Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen.* A key sentence in this section 'Die romantische Generation', the last in the following quotation, shows Einstein implicitly drawing a parallel between the censorship imposed on the visionary experience by reason and that imposed by the tectonic forms. The tectonic comes to be seen in a negative light, not as something enabling successful form but as something hindering the artist in rendering the hallucinative experience to full capacity. It is placed in the vicinity of purposive rationality and is seen as a residue of ordering systems:

> Nun wird man in Psychogrammen den Gesichten folgen. Nicht mehr das Wachsein und die Kontrolle sind gewertet, sondern das ungehemmte Nachgeben [...]. Die Zensur durch die Vernunft wird abgewehrt und damit auch die tektonischen oder klassischen Hemmungen. (K 3, 165)

The line has been crossed: the evaluation of the tectonic has moved from the distinctly positive to the dialectically necessary to the ultimately negative.

> Das Tektonische, das allzu rasch den Prozeß hemmt und eine vorgefaßte Auslese erzwingt, wird kaum noch gewertet, höchstens noch als Stauung im allzu rapiden Zwang der Prozesse. (K 3, 167)

It is certainly the case that Einstein is postulating this shift in evaluation with regard to the Surrealist painters themselves. But tracing Einstein's own ideas about and evaluation of the tectonic, it becomes apparent that he is increasingly persuaded by how the Surrealist painters work and increasingly committed to lending their project the full weight of his theoretical insights and expertise. His assessment of Léger appears

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[50] Later in this study, in Chapter 5, a further differentiation Einstein makes, namely between tectonics and a more profound regression, will be addressed.

somewhat extraneous in this context, yet its significance will become clear in the chapter below on *Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen.*

Conclusion

The theoretical underpinning of Einstein's interpretation of Masson and Miró, both in K 3 and in certain articles which appeared in *Documents* (i.e. the late 1920s or very early thirties),[51] stands in close proximity to that of Braque in the Braque book, which is partly also an interpretation of Braque's later work. However, both of these interpretations—the Masson and Miró interpretations, and the later Braque interpretation—stand in remarkable contrast, in certain respects, to the Braque interpretation in K expounded above. A number of keywords can be used to summarize this opposition. Those concepts which still have positive connotations in the Braque chapter of K 3 (published in 1931, prepared most likely in 1929-30) are negatively evaluated in the section on 'Die romantische Generation' in K 3, in other contemporaneous writings on Masson and Miró, and in *Georges Braque*. The first concept in each of the following pairs refers to the positively evaluated terms in the Braque chapter. The second refers to the concepts that come to replace them (i.e. their inverse).

formal considerations : pure perception,
painterly completion or perfection : the fragment or unfinished work,
formal unity and balance : the hallucinative and the dissolution of boundaries between subject and object,
slowness or a measured way of working : working uninhibitedly and committing 'die seelischen Ereignisse' to paper or canvas more swiftly and more immediately,
the tectonic (although this is still permitted in a minimal or residual way as a last line of defence) : dynamism and free drawing,
conscious control or volition : fatality or coercion,
construction : finding the 'Gestalt',

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[51] The relevant articles in *Documents* are 'André Masson, étude ethnologique' (W 3, 25-30) and 'Joan Miró (Papiers collés à la galerie Pierre)' (W 3, 134-37).

exclusion of all drama : the drama of the event, 'le drame de la transmutation' (W 3, 29).

The first concepts (formal considerations, painterly completion or perfection, etc.) could be integrated into the first, and to a great degree also the second, edition of K. But they are either deliberately weakened in K 3 or left to stand in unresolved conflict with the second concepts in the list, so that the Braque chapter and the section 'Die romantische Generation' point to conflicting theoretical underpinnings. It is clearly not the case that the three versions of K taken together represent a cohesive and unequivocal theory of Cubism. The significance of tectonic forms in the cases of Braque and Picasso is quite similar. Within that similarity, however, a slight tendency towards closure in the case of Braque can be detected, while in the case of Picasso the tendency is definitely towards openness to contingency. But when the logic of the two close assessments is drawn out into the extreme opposition of Léger and the 'romantic generation', the closure and openness to contingency become much more obvious. In a sense, then, Einstein's interpretation of Léger can be read as a reaction to his reception of Surrealism, whereby an option would be kept available for a kind of art that would shore up and offer protection against the radical openness to contingency of the Surrealists, should it be required. This strategy reflects a hallmark of the age: across Europe in the 1920s models of society and culture and aesthetic concepts were suspended between liberation of the senses and a compulsion to order.[52]

Einstein asserts in the section on the 'romantic generation' that in previous times the processual was to be excluded from works of visual art (see K 3, 167); the final product was to evince no trace of the manufacturing of the work. One might think here also of Einstein's own early recommendation in relation to literature: 'Man gebe konzentrierte Resultate – keine Wege' (W 1, 44). That now stands at odds with his current position. Now, instead of making the initial impulse or shock disappear or even veiling it with care, it is a question of drawing or rather dashing down 'diejenigen Zeichen [...] welche aus besonders schmerzhaftem Erlebnis [...] sich herausschleudern' (W 3, 374). An instantaneous metamorphic identification is at the core of the event, as Einstein expounds particularly in relation to Masson. And it is in relation to Masson, too,

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[52] Cf. Inge Baxmann, *Mythos: Gemeinschaft.*

that Einstein ultimately comes to theorize the tectonic solution and the psychogrammatic solution not as mutually developing forces but instead as mutually exclusive alternatives. Here is the first of those alternatives:

> Nous énonçons ici deux manières de donner des suites de formes hallucinatoires. Nous avons déjà parlé des compensations possibles de l'isolement.[53] Nous constatons qu'une autre compensation autiste est possible, qui consiste dans l'emploi des formes tectoniques. Les processus hallucinatoires sont limités par des barrières de formes et des signes typiques sont utilisés qui transforment une création isolée en un fait de valeur générale. (W 3, 27)[54]

And here is the second:

> Mais il est également possible de se laisser aller au cours du fleuve des dynamismes: c'est alors qu'on arrive à un *psychogramme* (écriture spontanée). Et l'on essaie de creer un équivalent à la vitesse des processus psychologiques. Dans la hâte de la figuration, on renonce à donner une structure achevée de l'espace. Il n'y a pas d'ordre extérieur au *psychogramme*. L'emploi des surfaces planes a facilité le procédé extatique. (W 3, 27)

Little doubt is left as to Einstein's new orientation when he draws the article on Masson to an end in the following way:

> Les limites des objets ont disparu. L'homme n'observe plus. [...] La simultanéité optique est remplacée par les analogies. [...] Et c'est avant tout dans cette métamorphose le drame de la transmutation qu'on retient. [...] Dans d'autres tableaux les formes trouvent un ordre tectonique, afin que le peintre trouve une défense et évite d'être détruit par le dynamisme de ses hallucinations. Mais une analyse des formes n'est pas notre but. (W 3, 29)

The fact that Einstein claims that an analysis of forms is not his goal is a further indication of the significant shift in direction. Indeed, that claim has something of a defensive quality about it, considering Einstein's prior writings. It is to be seen in the light of the fact that the article on Masson was published in the second issue of

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[53] The possible forms of compensation, or safeguards against excessive isolation, Einstein had mentioned previously in the same article (and indeed in the section on the 'romantic generation' in K 3) are: 1. the identification of the unconscious or the hallucination with sexual activity, and 2. a collectivist political stance. Both are familiar to the present-day reader from the documents of French Surrealism.

[54] 'Den halluzinatorischen Formen kann auf zweierlei Weise stattgegeben werden. Wir sprachen berierts von den möglichen Kompensationen der Isolierung. Wir sehen nunmehr, daß noch eine weitere autistische Kompensation möglich ist, die in der Verwendung tektonischer Formen besteht. Die halluzinatorischen

Documents: as Conor Joyce convincingly argues in his recently published study *Carl Einstein in 'Documents' and his collaboration with Georges Bataille*, form is one of the key concepts in the submerged conflict between Einstein and Bataille, which plays itself out in their respective contributions to the magazine.[55]

The shift in direction is also evident in the use of the notion of fleeing or avoidance. Previously, Einstein had assessed the tendency to work in a dynamic, psychographic way as a flight from technical civilisation (see for example K 3, 168), with the negative implication that such flight meant avoiding necessary conflict and finding an easy way out, a primitive utopian paradise. Here, however, in the article on Masson, it is to tectonics that one has recourse or returns for shelter if one cannot face head-on the full force of the hallucination. The tables are thus turned to the detriment of tectonic form.

The limits of image and text

> *Wir koennen stile und kunstwerke vag beschreiben;*
> *soweit visuelles sich in worte fassen laesst;und*
> *unser beschreiben wird alle die vorteile und*
> *nachteile unserer metaforischen gerissenheit weisen.*
> Carl Einstein, Texte aus dem Nachlaß I

As was clarified in the last section, Einstein uses the concept of tectonics, which are minimal forms, as a kind of bridge between the otherwise incommensurate orders of form and formless. One point of departure for Einstein in his revision of traditional aesthetic categories is an insistence on 'Bild' as opposed to 'Abbild', in other words, the presentation of an image that does not rely on imitation or traditional mimesis. This holds for literature as well as the visual arts in his theory, as will soon become clearer. Here again, a distinction between two orders taken to be incommensurate is in operation. But

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Prozesse werden formal begrenzt, und es werden typische Zeichen verwendet, die die isolierte Schöpfung zu einem allgemeingültigen Wert werden lassen.' (W 3, 542)

[55] See Introduction, footnote 22.

this is a distinction that has its own historical place and significance, as this section will show.

'Bild', 'image', has its own distinctive place among the possibilities of linguistic expression. This is the case even though the function of image and word is not clearly differentiated, both having been traditionally understood to bear an imitative relation to 'reality'. Epistemologically speaking, 'Bild' is a byword for an idea or notion, 'Gedanke', 'Begriff', 'Idee', and for a percept, 'Vorstellung'. In other words, it is a metaphor and, what is more, one that confounds attempts to distinguish between percept and concept. This is one of the reasons why Einstein puts to work a whole array of other terms and concepts, and deliberately avoids the use of 'Bild' in certain contexts. As it is a metaphor, though, 'Bild' already also points towards the sphere of language. In the history of theories about the image or 'Bild', the world of images and the world of words or language are connected, in so far as it is the significative or semiotic quality structuring both that comes under discussion.

The flurry of psycho-physical research carried out under the banner of empirio-criticism in Austria towards the end of the nineteenth century evinces a keen interest in questions of the relationship between, for example, perception and imagination, perception and conceptualization. It also marks a metaphorical shift in the way in which the entity that processes an image is thought, if indeed it is an entity at all, and how the process itself might be accounted for. Considerable research, both outside and inside Einstein studies, has been devoted to this metaphorical shift.[56] The shift involved, in brief, the rejection of the idea of a stable, unified and ultimately self-positing subject central to the Cartesian tradition, in favour of an aggregate without inner unity or purpose.

In *Die Analyse der Empfindungen und das Verhältnis des Physischen zum Psychischen* of 1886, the physicist Ernst Mach declared that the empirical world was just a collection of physiological sensations, of various elements—temperatures, pressures, colours, tones, spaces, times—that only differed from each other by being relatively constant or ephemeral. Likewise, what we call 'I', the ego, with all its moods and

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[56] Within Einstein studies, see Heidemarie Oehm, *Die Kunsttheorie Carl Einsteins*, pp. 11-28. More generally, see Dietmar Voss, 'Metamorphosen des Imaginären: nachmoderne Blicke auf Ästhetik, Poesie und Gesellschaft', in *Postmoderne: Zeichen eines kulturellen Wandels*, ed. by Andreas Huyssen and Klaus R. Scherpe, 5th edn (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1997), pp. 219-50.

memories, was really just a bundle of sensations, some very fleeting, some more durable, but nothing absolutely stable. The label 'I' is used for the sake of convenience, but according to Mach, this thing called 'I' is not a thing or entity at all, but a handy fiction. The ego or 'I', rather than *having* sensations of this or that, simply *is* those various sensations and has no other substance or being.

It is not very often that Einstein makes overt statements regarding his theoretical affiliations or scholarly debts. In a letter to the Parisian art-dealer Daniel Henry Kahnweiler, now referred to by Einstein scholars simply as the 'Kahnweilerbrief' and dated about April 1923, in other words shortly before commencing work on the encyclopedia volume, Einstein expands his ideas on Cubism and its potential for literature.[57] In a discussion of qualitative temporal and spatial perceptions, he claims a theoretical proximity to Mach, but interestingly follows it with what amounts almost to a disclaimer:

> Theoretisch am nächsten steht mir vielleicht Mach, der aber wo es über das physiologische hinausgeht leider versagt und garnicht die Sprache in Betracht zieht. Und gerade, weil die Sache bei der Sprache anfängt, wollte ich die Geschichte eines Mannes schreiben und zwar keines 'Intellektuellen', der die tote Sprache wie eine wirklich tötende Sache empfindet gegenüber seinen Erlebnissen. (W 4, 157-58)

This particular quote in fact suggests a stronger affinity to the language sceptic Fritz Mauthner than to Mach. Mach, while sympathetic to the work of his one-time student Mauthner, does not push language criticism to an extreme of pessimism.[58] Mach's understanding of the ego or 'I' as a provisional construct is adopted by Mauthner, who observes, 'was in uns denkt ist die Sprache' and 'Sprache ist unsere Wirklichkeit'.[59] These are clearly insights shared by later twentieth century language philosophy and pragmatism. Yet while Mach, like the neopositivists after him, advocates freeing words from their metaphysical baggage, and holds onto the connection between language and scientific conceptuality, Mauthner renounces such pragmatism and ultimately seeks liberation from language.

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[57] Carl Einstein, 'Ich dachte mir da eine Sache' (letter to Daniel Henry Kahnweiler from ca. April 1923), reprinted in W 4, 153-61.
[58] See Ernst Mach, *Erkenntnis und Irrtum: Skizzen zur Psychologie der Forschung* (Leipzig: Barth, 1905), especially chapter 8, 'Der Begriff'.
[59] Fritz Mauthner, *Beiträge zu einer Kritik der Sprache*, 3 vols (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1901-02), I: *Zur Sprache und zur Psychologie*, p. 42.

With respect to the idea of transmission of images, and this far Mach certainly does go in his considerations, the shift in metaphors is from an organically conceived, image-grounding subject to a technically conceived, image-producing aggregate. The first is based on the notion of a connection that has grown organically and presents itself as a necessary unity; the second rests on the principle of the production of a series of parts, without the inner unity of the older model.

A rupture in the flow

Let us think now of the case of images given in language, e.g. the content of literary descriptions, images in a poem, or images used in ordinary, everyday speech. Considered in terms of Mach's ideas about the subject and perception, the reproduction of images from one aggregate to another involves a process or dynamic of succession. Speech partners being such aggregates, in the reproduction of images in a conversation from one to another, it is clear that in this dynamic, too, there are different parts or aspects to the conveying of an image. These include the acoustic and semantic aspects of each individual word and of the words in connection to one another, i.e. morphology and syntax. These are interpreted by the listener/reader in everyday contexts more or less to his/her satisfaction vis-à-vis the conversation or text in question. In the case of images in the usual use of language, the listener/reader is not and does not become conscious of that successive procedure, because it is ingrained by force of habit. The listener/reader rather gets the sense that he/she is understanding things 'immediately', 'spontaneously', 'without thinking', and the communicative satisfaction is immediate. The fact that that satisfaction goes virtually unnoticed is indicative of its presence: generally-speaking, communication is going well as long as it can proceed more or less effortlessly.

It is when images flout or defy convention that the power they have to impact on the mind can no longer be suppressed. This is the point of departure for Einstein with the idea of an extension of the Cubist revolution in painting to the realm of literature:[60] he is interested in the rupture that provokes productive imagination. Certainly, the freedom of thought that instantaneously opens up can be emphasized, but the instance can just as easily present a troublesome or disturbing interruption, an intrusion that obstructs mutual

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[60] 'Ich weiß schon sehr lang, daß die Sache, die man 'Kubismus' nennt, weit über das Malen hinausgeht', he writes in the 'Kahnweilerbrief' (W 4, 153).

understanding. At this point, the linguistic image becomes a challenge, and the task it presents becomes conscious. It is not enough simply to repeat qualities and differences that are already familiar or available to the imagination. These must instead be posited, or made available in the first place. The image-creating process bringing words to the flux of impressions involves a creative conversion or translation of the sensuous material into a form accessible for comprehension, whereby the flux is necessarily arrested and some fixed form settled on.

This is a creative process that can occur incidentally when an interruption to comprehension as outlined above presents itself. It is the synthetic aspect of aesthetic understanding. The process can, however, also be appropriated and turned into an end in itself.[61] The tension between sense perception and thought, perceiving and conceiving—one could likewise say between apprehending and comprehending or between 'material' and 'formal' impulses—brings operations on linguistic images to life. This tension or opposition can, however, easily get lost in poetic practice. What takes over is an abstract, generalizing language of images or figures, rhetorical and 'floating', which virtually extinguishes all concrete experience. In pre-modernist times, such a generalizing language of figures had an index of traditionally 'poetic' metaphors and symbols on which to draw.

Creative rupture as revolutionary force

It was against such 'petrification' of language in literary practice that the now canonical writers and poets of the late nineteenth century rebelled. Spurred on in some cases by contemporaneous research in physics, psychophysics and philosophy yielding new ideas about time, space and perception, they sought to reinvigorate language, using innovative techniques and oblique imagery, oblique at least in the eyes of those schooled in traditional rhetoric and poetry. By forcing the reader to confront and engage with their

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[61] Cf. on this point Thomas Weiskel's designation of the 'egotistical sublime' (particularly in relation to Wordsworth) as a case of the sublime experience that becomes a regular exercise, a kind of repeated indulgence of the imagination's capacity for sliding in an indeterminate realm where sensual perception is overwhelming: 'In the egotistical sublime the two Kantian poles of sensible nature and eschatological destination collapse inward and become 'habitual' attributes of what was to be called Imagination—a totalizing consciousness whose medium is sense but whose power is transcendent. Apocalypse becomes immanent; the sublime, a daily habit.' Thomas Weiskel, *The Romantic Sublime: Studies in the Structure and Psychology of Transcendence*, paperback edn (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1986), p. 50.

defiances of convention, they provoked the kind of creative ruptures in communication outlined above, and forged new approaches to reading.

These writers were on a kind of genealogical mission for a more primary figurativeness that would be a figurative presentation of experience rather than mere *re*presentation (i.e. using well-worn constellations in the imagination). Their quest was for 'language in a state of becoming'.[62] This was to provide an immediate expression of emotive experiencing, rather than a retrospective reportage of something experienced, ordered according to traditional aesthetic demands. It was a question of tapping into those 'seelische Energien' (W 3, 268; 292), 'komplexe, lebendige Kräfte' (W 3, 286), which the increasing rationalization of the modern world was perceived to have systematically repressed:

> *Seelisch* heißen diese Energien nicht im Sinn eines bloß innerweltlichen Potentials. Gerade ihnen obliegt es, Wirklichkeit zu schaffen. Sie wirken im Automatismus, oder besser: verlaufen als unwillkürliche Bewegung, die unabhängig vom Bewußtsein und lebenswichtigen, sozusagen 'vegetative' Vorgänge für die Gesamtfunktion des Organismus steuert.[63]

As one of the basic ideas structuring his discourse, Einstein shares this emphasis on the somatic with Nietzsche, who strove to reassert the manifold functions and potential of the body above and beyond that tiny portion the conscious mind constituted.[64] Einstein similarly refers to that portion as 'winziger Ausschnitt', 'schmale Auslese', 'ein spätes Differenzierungsprodukt', 'ein Verteidigungszustand' (W 3, 291). Nietzsche seeks to overcome the drive to truth in both its moral and epistemological variants, and make it give way to an 'Artisten-Metaphysik' of pure appearance. Einstein, having experienced *décadence* first-hand, and well acquainted with some of the consequences of 'flattening out' the spirit of Nietzsche,[65] is adamant that art retain an ethical demand, without

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[62] The phrase 'langage *à l'état naissant*' is Paul Valéry's. Paul Valéry, 'L'Enseignement de la poétique au collège de France', (1937), in *Œuvres*, ed. by Jean Hytier, 2 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1977-80), I, 1438-43 (p. 1440).

[63] Hans Joachim Dethlefs, 'Die Überwindung des Ästhetischen. Über Carl Einsteins Braque-Projekt', in *Text + Kritik*, 95 (1987): Carl Einstein, 23-43 (p. 32).

[64] See Friedrich Nietzsche, 'Über Wahrheit und Lüge im außermoralischen Sinne', in *Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. by Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, 9 vols (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1972-), III.2: *Nachgelassene Schriften 1870-1873*, pp. 367-84 (p. 371f.).

[65] This notion of flattening out the spirit of Nietzsche comes from Gottfried Benn, for a long time a close friend of Einstein's. In his essay 'Nietzsche – nach fünfzig Jahren' Benn writes, somewhat tendentiously: 'Eigentlich hat alles, was meine Generation diskutierte, innerlich sich auseinanderdachte, man kann sagen:

however becoming engaged art/propaganda (see below, page 99f.). While Nietzsche does battle with a (Pauline) Christian heritage intent on mortification of the flesh, Einstein takes on the reification of images and the way they have come to eclipse 'Wirklichkeit', which harbours much more than the narrowly rational. 'Die seelische Folge gilt und nicht die rational erklärende', as Einstein remarks in relation to Mallarmé's 'metaphorische Ketten', but clearly also referring to his own approach to writing:

> Er [Mallarmé] schaltete das gegenständlich Komplette aus zugunsten des gespannten Zusammenklangs der Bilder, die sich dem Leser zu artistisch selbständiger, gedichteter Folge verweben. [...] Das sentimental Stoffliche, die motivische Einheit verschwinden im Strom der Analogien. Man vermeidet banales Beschreiben mittelbarer Tatsachen und schafft eine halluzinative Folge von Zeichen, die dem visionären Ablauf entspricht. (K 3, 47)

For Einstein, however, the mission to revolutionize aesthetic language by no means ended with Mallarmé's achievements, significant though they were. Introducing the passage quoted above, Einstein begins, 'Mallarmé, der zu zaghaft mit dem Impressionismus verbunden wird', and in the very next paragraph, Einstein points out what he sees as the limits of Impressionism (painterly as well as literary – Mallarmé is obviously included):

> Allerdings zeigte sich bald das Unzulängliche und Beschränkte dieses Artistentums, da man nicht gewagt hatte, die Bedingungen des Daseins selber abzuändern. Die Impressionisten gelangten trotz ihrer Versuche nicht zur großen Komposition, die anderes als eine aktuelle Technik erfordert. (K 3, 47)

In the ensuing paragraphs, in which he clarifies the issue, the focus is more on Impressionist painting again: 'Man hatte eine Flächentechnik gefunden (und diese war wichtig genug), doch keine entscheidende Raumkonzeption' (K 3, 48).

Dismantling grammar in painting and writing

Einstein's assessment of Impressionism throws light on his assessment of contemporary literature. In *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts* he interprets Impressionism as an initial

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erlitt, man kann auch sagen: breittrat – alles das hatte sich bereits bei Nietzsche ausgesprochen und erschöpft, definitive Formulierung gefunden, alles Weitere war Exegese.' Gottfried Benn, 'Nietzsche –

attempt to transmit an image as it is being processed by the act of vision. Impressionism falls short of Einstein's demands by concentrating only on two dimensions. It deals with the question of light and movement but neglects the question of depth or volume. What it does accomplish, however, are the first stages in dismantling what one could call, by analogy, the traditional grammar of painting. One could say that the grammar of painting is the way in which line and colour are used to create figure and ground, shape and form, and make marks on a canvas signify. The traditional grammar of painting involved using solid areas of more or less homogeneous colour and mimetically reproducing discrete objects in reality. Impressionism had discovered light and its impact on form. It had dismantled the discrete objects, using light to break up the solid areas of colour, and reducing form to a fleeting suggestion of form given by the proximity of light and colour or the mutual alteration of adjacent colours. Einstein summarizes Impressionist developments superbly, embedding them carefully in the spirit of their time:

> Die starren Bild- und Dingeigenschaften zerschmelzen nun im Licht. Das Dauernde wird gelöst. Lokalfarbe und Valeur vergehen im farbig direkten Licht; der Umriß wird durch die Bewegung des Lichts gelöst. Die Plastik geschlossener Körper zerschmilzt in den feinen Schwingungen der Farbteile. Durch die Analyse Taines war der Mensch zu einem 'Symptom des Milieus' umgewertet worden, gleich wie die einzelnen Ereignissee nur noch als Zeichen genereller Ströme galten. Ebenso hat Monet den Gegenstand zum farbigen Zeichen des Lichts gemindert und umgebildet, zu einem Geschehen des Lichts, also zum Symptom einer allgemeineren Kraft. (K 3, 42)

Einstein concludes that these developments reflected an age that had a profound belief in science:

> Gerade diese Rückführung der Farbe auf das Licht entsprach der herrschenden, beschreibenden Naturwissenschaft; die kopernikanische Sonne war nun auch für die Malerei Zentralkörper geworden. (K 3, 42)

While the painters were busy dismantling the conventions of their own medium, writers, Einstein contends, lacked the courage to go much further than swapping an old index of accepted 'aesthetic' images for a new one:

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nach fünfzig Jahren', in *Gesammelte Werke in vier Bänden*, ed. by Dieter Wellershoff (Wiesbaden: Limes, 1961), IV, 482.

> [...] Die Litteraten hinken ja so jammerhaft mit ihrer Lyrik und den kleinen Kinosuggestionen hinter Malerei und Wissenschaft her. Ich weiss schon sehr lange, dass nicht nur eine Umbildung des Sehens und somit des Effekts von Bewegungen möglich ist, sondern auch eine Umbildung des sprachlichen Aequivalents und der Empfindungen. Die Litteraten glauben sehr modern zu sein, wenn sie statt Veilchen Automobile oder Aeroplane nehmen. (W 4, 153)

In other words, they shirked the task of interrogating *all* the conventions of 'literary language' and failed to dismantle grammar, something Einstein saw as a necessary corrrelate of the dismantling of the idea of a stable ego as undertaken by Mach:

> Person bedeutete nun eine labile Geschehnisgruppe, die von anderen seelischen Gruppen oder Ereignissen durchquert wird. Damit wird aber das substanzenhafte stabile Ich aufgegeben, und an seine Stelle tritt ein labiles Funktionssimultané. Solchem Wagnis müßte endlich ein Abbruch der Grammatik entsprechen, da die sprachlichen Konventionen die Darstellung wichtiger Prozesse und Beziehungen ausschließt [sic]. (W 3, 331)

It is not easy to understand how Einstein could judge this issue of the writers' failure so absolutely. He was, after all, by the time of writing *Georges Braque* at any rate, aware of the work of leaders of the literary Avant-garde such as James Joyce and Gertrude Stein.[66] From the point of view of linguistic convention, coinages and more or less drastic departures from grammatical norms are characteristic of their work.[67] They confront the reader with alternative ways of interpreting an experience, and they *de facto* make alternative ways of writing that experience possible and viable. Going further back, it would be far from absurd to explore relationships between the language use of August

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[66] Einstein collaborated with Eugène Jolas on the magazine *transition* in Paris, along with Joyce and others. Certainly during this time Einstein came to recognize Joyce's work, especially *Ulysses*, but also *Work in Progress*, which appeared in instalments in the magazine, later to be published as *Finnegan's Wake*. Cf. Dougald McMillan, *transition: The History of a Literary Era 1927-1938* (London: Calder and Boyars, 1975), p. 53-55 and 179f. Cf. also Kiefer, *Diskurswandel*, p. 516. Kiefer and other Einstein scholars point out the absence of any study on Einstein and Joyce. At least one such work has apparently escaped their attention. See Patrick Healy's introduction to his *The Modern and the Wake. James Joyce's 'Finnegan's Wake' and Carl Einstein's 'Bebuquin'* (Dublin: Lilliput, 1992).

[67] Einstein would of course take issue with this characterization, as it takes as its point of reference those very norms whose status as norm is to be overcome. 'Man geht nicht von einem überkommenen Sein aus, zumal [...] Deformation gerade durch ein naturalistisches Sehen bedingt ist.' (K 3, 95) In Einstein's view this is the case for the artist who works by 'deforming', as well as for the critic who refers to certain aspects of a painting as deformations: 'Rasch droht man mit dem Schlagwort 'Deformation', ist beunruhigt oder empört, da die gewohnte Folge biologischer Nützlichkeitsmomente im Bilde sich verflüchtigt.' (K 3, 93)

Stramm or Jakob van Hoddis and that of Einstein himself. It is tempting to think, and probable to a certain extent, that such judgements of Einstein's were armed with a polemical charge.[68] The early twentieth century had, as every age has, its fair share of mediocre writers whose works sold in vast quantities. What was new in that era, no doubt glaringly so, and objectionable to Einstein, was the rapidly expanding industry of criticism, which served the function, among others, of priming the public for the next big seller in a likewise rapidly expanding market of art/entertainment products. Here and there, mostly in private letters, one does find evidence of Einstein's recognition of some of his literary contemporaries.[69] More reticent when it came to naming authors in his published writings, there the move away from the written word and towards the painted sign is, however, strongly in evidence.

Failure of language

'Abschied von der Realität'

We are now in a position to identify two opposing ways in which Einstein perceives language as it is used in the world around him and by his contemporaries, be they specialists in science, writers, journalists, bureaucrats, or just the 'plain reader', to be inadequate. The first is the petrifaction associated with a mechanized use of language, either conceptual or aesthetic. Einstein discovers a mechanized or reified use of conceptual language in the language of various public discourses, such as science, administration and bureaucracy. But he locates it also in philosophy and the history of art, just those disciplines that, to his mind, are supposed to retain an extra-keen and critical awareness of how they are applying concepts, and why. He discovers a mechanized use of aesthetic language—in other words, a language which is no longer aesthetic at all but merely hackneyed—in many of the literary efforts of the day. His criticism of failed attempts at aesthetic language hinges on the problem of exclusive

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[68] This is borne out somewhat by the fact that a similar charge as the one just quoted from *Georges Braque* is made in K 3 against writers. It is preceded in this case by a lapidary concession, but the fact that the charge is maintained suggests ultimate—and perhaps unjustified—dissatisfaction on the part of Einstein: 'Ähnliche Tendenzen, die unmittelbare Zeichenfolge auszusprechen, finden wir bei den Dichtern der Surrealistischen Gruppe. Als mutigste Arbeit heben wir das Grand Jeu von [Benjamin] Péret hervor. Allerdings wagten die Poeten noch nicht, die Bindung der Grammatik abzuwerfen.' (K 3, 167)

[69] See footnote 76 on Swift, Flaubert, etc. below.

attention to motif, plot or external description rather than to the inner process of how an experience unfolds in heterogeneous time, or lived 'inner' time:

> [...] jeder empfindet wie in ihm Zeitgefühl variiert, zu und abnimmt, an Stärke, an Umfassung an Deutung in Zeitrichtung usf. Und die Kombination der Worte und Ereignisse laufen in Romanen so, als rutsche ein Ereignis hinter dem andern her in gleichem Tempo, gleicher zeitlicher Ausdeutung usf. Statt des Zeitgefühls setzt man Sentiment, jemand erinnert sich wehmütig der Geliebten, oder stellt Betrachtungen an. Tatsächlich aber erlebt man genau gesehen anders [...]. (W 4, 155)[70]

What Einstein laments here is a 'safe' language usage that means sticking narrowly to prescribed convention, describing events in a neatly ordered, retrospective mode and not venturing into any confrontation with the question of how well or whether this gives a sense of anything experienced at all:

> um den sprachlichen Ausdruck zu erhalten, aus Angst vor der Sprache geht man nicht an das Erlebnis ran, sondern setzt die Worte, die Gegenstände eher als Empfindungen ausdrücken [...]. (W 4, 155)

Using words to express 'Gegenstände' rather than 'Empfindungen' means taking a conventional view of discrete, ready-constituted things, as opposed to emphasizing the mutual constitution of destabilized pulsional aggregates—formerly subject and object—in a dynamic imaginative experience.

The second way in which Einstein perceives language as used by his contemporaries to be inadequate is implied in what was described above as a loss of the polarity inherent in the creative language process, and the hypertrophy of abstract, 'floating', rhetorical language. In this case, however, it is not to the rhetorical flights of, for instance, poetry written in conformity with traditional aesthetic demands that Einstein addresses his criticism. Rather, he sees just such a hypertrophy of 'floating' imagery

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[70] This and the next quotation are from the so-called 'Kahnweilerbrief', in which Einstein expands his ideas on Cubism and its potential for literature. The letter has been dated around April 1923 by Sibylle Penkert, who first published it as 'Carl Einstein an Daniel Henry Kahnweiler. Brief von ca. April 1923 (PNL)'. See Sibylle Penkert, *Carl Einstein: Beiträge zu einer Monographie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1969), p. 139. PNL stands for Pariser Nachlaß, which was transferred to CEA in the Akademie der Künste, Berlin in 1971. The letter is reprinted in W 4, 153-61 under the title 'Ich dachte mir da eine Sache'.

happening in the hermetic poetry of Symbolism and *l'art pour l'art* (Mallarmé, Rilke, the 'George-Kreis', excluding George himself[71]).

This was the movement that had begun as a reaction against Naturalism and what was perceived as its excessive psychologizing and hypertrophied objectivization, its slavishly mimetic and scientific devotion to the details of outer reality. The feeling was that Naturalism, for all its attempts to be accurate about reality, somehow actually left that reality untouched. Plenty was said about each thing, but the things themselves remained mute. Yet in those movements that reacted against Naturalism, in Symbolism and in Impressionism, which he deems Symbolism's visual counterpart,[72] Einstein identifies a shared failure, the failure to meet one of his demands vis-à-vis the function of art, namely 'die Bedingungen des Daseins selber abzuändern' (K 3, 47).

This is in no way a straightforward ascription of a political programme to art. The revolutionary demand is a demand for a new 'Gestaltung des Sehens'. It is therefore also epistemological in nature, as the question of how we see reality is part of the question of how we make that reality. That is always also the question of how we make it mean something for us, in other words, the question of knowledge. Inside this epistemological quest nestles an ethical demand, a moral-practical one, to be precise. This is true for Einstein: the work of art is to widen the horizons of possible perception and experience. And in doing so, it is to move mankind closer to overcoming the experiential atrophy effected by the twin evils or lies of sensory repression and reification, and to finding new

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[71] The hypertrophy of 'floating' imagery reflects a suspension above the mundane reality of the everyday world practised by the dandy. Einstein is wise to the cultic or religious dimension of, for instance, the 'Georgekreis'. See his satirical essay 'Die Verkündigung' (W 1, 74-79) from 1911, which however lets the judgement on George hang in ambivalence, and the fragment 'George' (W 4, 105-16) from about the same time, unpublished during Einstein's lifetime, which berates the 'Georgekreis' with the exception of George himself and the critic Friedrich Gundolf. On Einstein's criticism of the George-Kreis and ambivalent relationship to Stefan George, see Thomas Krämer, 'Carl Einstein und Stefan George', in *Carl-Einstein-Kolloquium 1994*, ed. by Klaus H. Kiefer (Frankfurt a. M.: Lang, 1996), pp. 29-40.

[72] Einstein counts Mallarmé and George as Symbolists; Richard Hamann and Jost Hermand in their study *Stilkunst um 1900* discuss Mallarmé and George within a section entitled 'Neoimpressionismus' and with reference to *l'art pour l'art*. See Richard Hamann and Jost Hermand, *Stilkunst um 1900*, Epochen deutscher Kultur von 1870 bis zur Gegenwart, 4 (Munich: Nymphenburger Verlagshandlung, 1973), pp. 222-44 (esp. pp, 229-36). Like Einstein, they note the tendency of this kind of literature to leave concrete experience behind (see p. 230 and p.236). Hugo Friedrich guards against a hasty equation of Symbolist techniques in poetry with Impressionist techniques in painting, but nonetheless shares the view of Mallarmé's poetry as divorced from reality: 'Man sollte nicht, wie das zuweilen geschieht, ein solches Verfahren impressionistisch nennen. Es entspringt nicht einem Empfangen von Eindrücken, sondern ist selber Ein-drücken erdichteter Figuren in ein schon völlig entrealisiertes Material.' Hugo Friedrich, *Die Struktur der modernen Lyrik: von der Mitte des neunzehnten bis zur Mitte des 20. Jahrhunderts*, orig. 1956, 3rd edn of the expanded new edn (Hamburg, Rowohlt, 1970), p. 138.

things beyond the 'order of things'. With Einstein, art is 'Tun', it is all about action, movement in and outside the mind, and challenging and defying the passivity imposed by various determinisms and systems of (representational) order and control. Hence his criticism of some works, in *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*: they lack a 'geistige Vision' or a visionary 'Grundvorstellung' (K 3, 150). Yet Einstein does not allow this moral-practical demand to sink his art criticism in ideology or propaganda. He is extremely circumspect and wary of tying any political agenda to his idea of the function of art. He operates analytically on the conception of the work of art, and while he uses his theory of Cubism as a basis, it is as a flexible basis in the analysis.

To recall Einstein's comparison of Impressionism and Symbolism: 'Der genetischen Technik der impressionistischen Maler entsprach im Gedicht die Folge bildhafter Analogien' (K 3, 45). Out of Einstein's clarification of the shortcomings of Impressionism, it is not difficult to read an implicit criticism of Symbolism:

> Ein solches Vorgehen birgt zweifellos eine Art artistischen Nihilismus gegenüber dem konventionell Gegenständlichen. Eine technische Artistik, dank welcher Kunst heute in vielem geradezu Isolierung bedeutet. (K 3, 47)

The 'nihilistic' tendency of Impressionism to suspend the conventional object and to subject the viewer to that very suspension, is paralleled by the tendency of language in Symbolism to lose contact with 'reality', subjecting the reader instead to a whirlwind of images, obscure and puzzling metaphors, that keep shifting, never settle and seem instead only to accelerate.[73]

In a posthumously published fragment, Einstein remarks on this suspension of the object and acceleration of metaphors as an initial phase in changing ideas about art, calling it 'Abschied von der Realitaet':

> Zunaechst wird man versuchen, die gegebene Realitaet zu vernichten, also Kunst bedeutet hier [...] ein Mittel die Todesgeschwindigkeit der Welt zu vergroessern. Eine Tendenz, die bereits im Symbolismus schwach und schattenhaft wirkte. (W 4, 220)

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[73] It is important to note that this critique of a Symbolist approach to language is already there in the two prior editions of K (see K 2, 22 and K 1, 15-16). In other words, it already anchors Einstein's differentiated approach to Cubism. But it is also that critique of Symbolism that re-emerges in *Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen,* radicalized and generalized, to underpin a deconstruction of the opposition between the particular and the general, contemplation and abstraction, and artistic use of signs and the circulation of commodities under capitalism. See Chapter 6, 'The Avant-garde's failure on account of social structure: economic factors'.

Although the figures or images themselves remain fleeting and refuse to be fixed, the overall effect is of a constant state of suspension. The reader remains unstably suspended between an indistinct image, the preceding one and the following one, all of which refuse to crystallize. Instead, they flow into each other so that the reader would be at a loss to say where one image began and another replaced it. An equivalent can be found here to what Weiskel in *The Romantic Sublime* refers to as the reader's sublime: a moment of indeterminacy or arrest of meaning, in which there is an excess of signifier, for which no adequate signified can be found.[74] The signifiers float in a semantic vacuum that defies attempts to pin them to any signified, let alone any referent in the 'real world'. Language used in this way becomes, according to Einstein, entirely decorative, powerless and phantasmal. It seems to reel off into its own dizzying orbit, sweeping the reader away with it, but leaving concrete experience outside, virtually untouched. Hence the sense of suspension. This speeding standstill corresponds to an arcane or hermetic literature that demands virtuoso intellectual exercises and expert esoteric acrobatics, as the creative hiatuses mount up one after the next. Einstein's concern is with this phenomenon becoming a formula that requires only the production of variations to maintain the interest of the public, the 'egotistical' sublime in the service of the market. Poetry, or art more generally, thus becomes the business of a mandarin retreat rather than a living practice that weaves itself through living people's lives, effecting subtle changes in perception and thought. Consistent with his observations linking the promotion of loyalty to nature in representation with power political mechanisms, political conformism and conservativism (see W 4, 226), Einstein holds that art as such a mandarin retreat is likewise politically conservative, whatever its stated colours. Hence his caveat, 'man [hatte] nicht gewagt, die Bedingungen des Daseins selber abzuändern' (K 3, 47).

The Scylla and Charybdis of signifier use

Looking now at the relationship between the two language problems that Einstein perceives, it seems he sees them as running parallel: 'das artistische Erlebnis torkelt im leeren neben einer mechanischen Civilisation' (W 4, 173), as he remarks in a fragment from 1926. Here, he may be in a deeply pessimistic moment, in which he sees 'die imaginative Freiheit der Kunst' (ibid.) remaining forever 'neben' 'mechanische

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[74] See Thomas Weiskel, *The Romantic Sublime*, pp. 28-29.

Civilisation' and thus having no effect whatsoever on it. What is more likely, however, considering the rest of the fragment, is that with 'das artistische Erlebnis' he is referring to a particular kind of artistic experience: just the kind that fails to break out of its own dizzying spin ('torkelt im leeren'), i.e. the artistic experience as a language problem. In *Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen*, Einstein refers to artists whose work envisages such an effect as 'Derwische' (FF, 310/218), which captures both the ascetic attitude of the artists and the whirling, dizzying impact of their work.

The two language problems can better be understood as two sides of the same coin. On the one side is the problem of signifiers being used in ways that make them too inflexible in relation to signifieds and referents. As Bebuquin laments:

> Wann verstehe ich,/ daß man, um zu leben,/ um Person zu sein,/ nur ein Ding kennen darf. O Reize zu spüren, wie mannigfach Worte und Meinungen sind; und wie schmerzlich nur eine Deutung zu erlernen. (W 1, 99)

Language is thus perceived as petrified and petrifying. This is essentially the problem of reification of language, much discussed in early twentieth century language criticism, and the sense that experiences of modern life go beyond what the confines of traditionally 'aesthetic' language and conventional grammar allow. The Russian Formalists' notion of 'ostraneniye', or 'making strange', as a move to combat this deadlock runs in a similar direction. Viktor Shklovsky's seminal essay 'Art as Device' puts forward and develops this notion as follows:

> And so, in order to return sensation to our limbs, in order to make us feel objects, to make a stone feel stony, man has been given the tool of art. The purpose of art, then, is to lead us to a knowledge of a thing through the organ of sight instead of recognition. By 'enstranging' objects and complicating form, the device of art makes perception long and 'laborious'. The perceptual process in art has a purpose all its own and ought to be extended to the fullest. *Art is a means of experiencing the process of creativity. The artifact itself is quite unimportant.*[75]

Two features of this position are of critical importance also for Einstein. Art as a means to knowledge of a thing through sight as against recognition is central to Einstein's

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[75] Viktor Shklovsky, 'Art as Device', in *Theory of Prose*, introduced by Gerard L. Bruns, trans. with an introduction by Benjamin Sher (Normal, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 1998), pp. 1-14 (p. 6). On Sher's

theory of Cubism. Throughout his career Einstein subscribes to an idea of art as a means of experiencing the process of creativity, with the emphasis on what is nascent as against images that are already familiar and things that already exist.

On the other side is the problem of signifiers being too flexible, being used in an entirely arbitrary way. Unhinged, they refer only to further signifiers in a kind of manic spin of dissemination, a flux of permanent becoming. This is acutely the case with some kinds of literary language as compared with everyday language. Poststructuralist theory reveals all language to have as a constitutive feature this potential of sliding endlessly, in a play of difference and deferral (combined in Derrida's term 'différance'). Einstein identifies the slippage phenomenon, yet while he encourages the creativity of the aesthetic moment of indeterminacy in the visual arts, he at the same time wants to reign it in in the case of language to avoid 'Wahnsinn'. Visual art has, in his theory, its own damming mechanism, namely tectonics. Language has perhaps a parallel in grammar, he claims, but his demand with regard to literary innovation is precisely to do away with grammar. While he promotes contingency in the visual arts, his theory runs into insuperable and unproductive contradictions in the case of language. The question thus needs to be put whether—despite his declared language scepticism and concentration on the visual arts—a tacit recognition of language as the primary means of interacting with the world is in fact at work. A posthumously published fragment, possibly from the early 1930s, suggests that this is the case: 'Bild als Schrift Sprache u Mitteilung – Grammatik des Sehens wie des Sprechens – die sprachliche Verständigung wichtiger.' (W 4, 330)

Where Einstein sees strength in literary works, he sees language and creative imagination in use for their own sake, but having at the same time an impact that reaches out of a self-consciously literary world closed in upon itself.[76] Irruptive creative impulses can achieve this, but only if they are allowed to function in a properly aesthetic way. For

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rationale for using 'enstranging' where previous translators used 'defamiliarizing' or 'making strange', see his introduction, 'Shklovsky and the Revolution', pp. xv-xxi (pp. xiii-ix).

[76] For Einstein's views on his literary contemporaries and forebears see his letters to Tony Simon-Wolfskehl from 1923 (CEA, 389; 398). Swift, Flaubert, André Gide and Paul Claudel are metioned in some of Einstein's early essays (see W 1, 147; 87; 55f.), and in the letters to Tony Simon-Wolfskehl Döblin, Thomas Mann, E. T. A. Hoffmann and especially Gottfried Benn are praised, while Sternheim and Edschmid are denigrated (CEA, 389). Cervantes, Swift and Rabelais are mentioned with enthusiastic approval (CEA, 398). *Don Quixote* is 'ein grausames Buch', 'leidenschaftliche Kälte und eben jusqu'au bout'. Einstein would like to develop his own writing in the direction of Swift and Cervantes and mentions the plans for the continuation of his *Bebuquin* project in the same context: 'Vielleicht bin ich grössenwahnsinnig aber ich spreche nur von Absicht nicht Gelingen.'

Einstein, if they occur in a genuine way at all, they will necessarily be an end in themselves. Whether it is on the productive or the receptive side, their creative potential will only be tapped in instances in which they are not perceived only as paralyzing disturbances, and by people who can make something of them. Instances in which an artist deliberately seeks their effects so that the artwork revolves around them and severs all relations with concrete experience may look like instances in which they are functioning as an end in themselves. But Einstein does not grant this. He detects here, as we saw a moment ago, nothing but a style solidifying, and discounts its significance on the grounds that it has become a formula, something utterly at odds with the very notion of the creative potential of the aesthetic moment.[77] What he advocates is not *l'art pour l'art*, nor literature that plays to its audience, but not 'engaged literature' either.[78]

This is apparent at many points in his work, but particularly so in the following sardonic quotation from a text written about 1930 but only published in the recent 'Nachlaß' volume of the Berlin edition. It in fact refers to painting, but can also be taken to refer to art in a more general way. In front of a house, two people have been busy depicting it while a third has been lying in the grass reading a book.

> der eine malt – das Haus sieht trostlos aus: er hat davor paar elende abgearbeitete Bauern gemalt – das Bild des anderen zeigt das alte Haus aber anheimelnd, paar schmucke Schäferin<n>en von musizierenden Burschen begleitet, geben dem Bild etwas vergnügtes.
>
> der Maler A – sagt 'natürlich, Du malst für die Bourgeois'. der Maler B – erwidert 'und du malst Elend um Propaganda zu machen<'>. der Mann C sagt – Herrgott, das ist nur ein Haus, wozu das ganze Getue –. A u B – wenn Du das Haus so genau kennst – warum stellst Du es nicht dar. C: aber Esel – ich bin doch ein Bildhauer… (W 4, 224).

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[77] As research on *l'art pour l'art* and dandyism has shown, and as Einstein already suspected, many such instances constitute an instrumentalization of 'art', binding it into a wider social and ideological nexus that demanded an idea of art as apart, art as substitute metaphysics. For Einstein's virulent critique of this aesthetic 'Rentnertum', see Chapter 6, 'The reactionary cult of the exceptional'. Cf. also Gert Mattenklott, *Bilderdienst. Ästhetische Opposition bei Beardsley und George* (Munich: Rogner & Bernhard, 1970), p. 191f. and Norbert Bolz, *Auszug aus der entzauberten Welt* (Munich: Fink, 1989), p. 154f.

[78] Einstein's polemics against certain Expressionist writers and painters (e.g. the 'Brücke' group) and against the Russian Constructivists and Suprematists bear this out (see in particular K 3, 206-09; 236-40). For an instance of where Einstein moves close to an apology for a more narrowly political art, however, see his 1921 essay on Russian art 'Absolute Kunst und absolute Politik', which the 'Russen' section of *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*, however, revokes. It is reprinted under the heading 'Revolution durchbricht Geschichte und Überlieferung' in W 4, 146-52.

In rejecting engaged art Einstein disallows the artist to take a political demand into the content of the work, or to let such a demand determine its form. However, if the category of political demand is widened sufficiently for it to become a moral or ethical demand, the issue becomes much more complex. Einstein himself argues for a re-infusion of morality into art (see especially *Georges Braque*) and, although he again would not allow that to be understood as morality determining a work's form, it could certainly inform that form.

What he advocates, then, is literature that suffuses its commitment to the 'real world' with its fierce dedication to the art that it itself is. And this, for Einstein, is a question of form. As we saw above, however, he does not find this challenge met by Mallarmé, who at the time was generally being hailed with having effected a revolution in literary language but whose achievements Einstein can only to a certain extent admire. In fact, to judge by various comments he makes on the literature of the day, as well as the tenor of the 'Kahnweilerbrief', it seems as if Einstein holds out little hope for the ability of the written word to fill the role he designates for art.

Seeing a possible solution

The nascent image

So although Einstein advocates a certain approach to literature, he actually seems to become progressively less interested in the prospect of words—literature—bearing the fruit of such an approach. As was indicated in the earlier part of this chapter, from around the time he writes *Negerplastik* (published 1915), Einstein begins to move ever further into the realm of the visual arts. In *Negerplastik* he had developed his own aesthetic theory, based around an absolute category, 'das Plastische'. It is this category which, with minor adjustments, comes to be replaced by 'das Tektonische' in the Cubism section of *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*. And it is in the concept of 'das Tektonische' that he finds, initially anyway, a viable alternative to the deadlock of the word.

Einstein, as has already been explained, understands tectonic symbols to have an archaic, collective basis. The notion of collective underpinning is crucial for Einstein from the time of inception of his concept of the tectonic until the late 1920s, when that concept gets curiously fraught. His interpretation of tectonics will be considered in greater detail in Chapter 5. It is important in the present context because it provides him

with a phenomenon whereby the communication of an experience can take place on a level other than the language of words, which cannot but refer. With words there is, generally speaking, always a more or less definite referent beyond the signifier-signified relationship. Einstein sees the potential for a more unprejudiced, primal way of communicating an experience[79] in the use of the—originally architectural but since Cubism—painterly language of tectonics, which is, he maintains, uninhibited by the referent problem. Were one to attempt to use words for this, one would constantly be faced with the contradiction of the fact that the words are 'always already there' and pointing to something already discretely extant, not emergent or new. Or, one could simply make up words and defy the rules of grammar. But this would mean producing something that remains in its own autistic world, a problem Einstein saw in the nihilistic tendencies of Impressionism and Symbolism. Einstein's conception of tectonics as collective allows him to step around this dilemma. It is in the context of this contrastive interpretation of linguistic and figurative semiosis and Einstein's rejection of the traditionally maintained proximity between 'Sprache'/'Wort' and 'Bild' that his switch from aiming to transmit 'langage *à l'état naissant*' (Valéry) to aiming to transmit 'image *à l'état naissant*' becomes understandable. In context, the phrase from Valéry reads as follows:

> La formation de figures est indivisible de celle du langage lui-même, dont tous les mots "abstraits" sont obtenus par quelque abus ou quelque transport de signification, suivi d'un oubli du sens primitif. Le poète qui multiple les figures ne fait donc que retrouver en lui-même le langage *à l'état naissant*.[80]

Valéry's insistence on the indivisibility of the formation of figures from that of language separates him from the pre-*Georges-Braque* Einstein. Before that work, Einstein's thinking on language is bound more tightly into a language-sceptical paradigm. And even once the concept of 'dichten' and 'Dichtung' emerge in the Braque book, the move away from the distinctly pessimistic notion of language and towards a theory that encompasses image/figure *and* word as ultimately embedded in language is anything but clear-cut.

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[79] Certainly the ghostly concept of 'Ursprung', so ubiquitous in the cellar of many a Weimar text, is at work here too. What is of interest here is the form or guise that quest for 'Ursprung' takes and how and why that guise changes in the course of Einstein's later works.

[80] Paul Valéry, 'L'Enseignement de la poétique au collège de France', p. 1440.

Rather, Einstein holds to the idea of a figure that is pre-linguistically informed and all but conceals that fact in its expression.

An end to 'Wiedererkennen' and 'Vergleich'

What about the relationship between text and image? Einstein, a close friend of Georges Braque and of Kahnweiler, an acquaintance of many in the Parisian avantgarde circles and collaborator with Georges Bataille on the magazine *Documents*, was working, so to speak, at the coalface of experimental art during the first third of the twentieth century. As a historian, theorist and critic of art, Einstein's task was of course primarily to *write* about art. For Einstein, though, this could never be a matter of course. The very nature of his understanding of subjectivity and so of Cubism meant that the art historian and critic's task, too, could not escape transformation.

With Nietzsche and the proponents of *Lebensphilosophie*, Einstein sees art partaking of life in a most direct way. Einstein sees all images reaching towards the flux of life, but also many being thwarted in their striving by various different factors. Writing his history of art of the twentieth century, he reserves places of priority for particular kinds of art. In other words, he must assess the art of his day according to certain criteria, and, if his work is to be authentic, he must transmit or attempt to transmit the judgements he reaches to the reader. But how are such judgements to be made and transmitted once the traditional criteria of aesthetic evaluation, and the grounds upon which such criteria rested, have been swept aside?

Einstein is among the first aesthetic thinkers to take full consideration of the fact that every judgement (on art) is, but is not exclusively, historically and socially determined. While he advocates an end to mandarin aestheticism and a rehabilitation of *aisthesis* as the sensual that, to his mind, was systematically repressed in the Western tradition of aesthetics, his insistence on a further dimension to the matter—beyond what is historically, socially or psychologically determined—continues a tradition of aesthetic expertise as a certain kind of initiate capability. Thus, as Christoph Braun in his study *Carl Einstein: Zwischen Ästhetik und Anarchismus* notes in a passage on Einstein's new concept of reality, Einstein is far from advocating an 'anarchic' approach to art that would legitimize any and all responses to a work of art, and any and all ideas about what constitutes art:

> Gegen die angebliche Scheinobjektivität rationaler Weltbetrachtung, 'von den

> mannigfachen Deutungen überkommenen Gegenstandes' durch sprachlich bedingte Abstraktionen vom Lebensprozeß abgetrennt [...], stellt Einsteins Kubismus-Vorstellung das lebendig Subjektive. [...] 'Man verwechsle solch Subjektives nicht mit anarchischem Individualismus', warnt Einstein deshalb vor dem Mißverständnis, er trete für eine beliebig dem Einzelnen überlassene Sicht der Welt ein.[81]

The question guiding this section of enquiry is therefore as follows: how does Einstein respond to the problem of how to legitimize his judgements on art and what form does this problem take, if any, in his work, in particular in his encyclopedia volume *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*?

Einstein has a quintessentially modernist fixation on 'the new'. As Klaus Kiefer notes,

> Carl Einsteins Fanatismus gilt von Anfang an dem Neuen [...], er verknüpft es mit dem Prinzip der 'Revolte' [...] und beschreibt es affirmativ als 'Katastrophe' [...].[82]

'Wiederholung' versus 'Neues', Kiefer elsewhere very aptly calls Einstein's Hamlet-question.[83] Antje Quast has written a study of Einstein and Apollinaire based on the two concepts 'the new' and 'revolt'.[84] Einstein's revision of art historiography and his critical aesthetics are predicated on the notion of 'bilden' or 'gestalten' as opposed to 'abbilden'. He propounds an a-mimetic idea of the work of art, a-mimetic as non-representational or opposed to traditional ideas of mimesis.[85]

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[81] Christoph Braun, *Carl Einstein. Zwischen Ästhetik und Anarchismus: Zu Leben und Werk eines expressionistischen Schriftstellers* (Munich: Iudicium, 1987), p. 266. Braun is quoting K 1, 58.

[82] Kiefer, *Diskurswandel*, p. 350. 'Das Neue' (W 1, 28 and elsewhere), 'die Revolte' (W 1, 370 and elsewhere), and 'die Katastrophe' (W 2, 228 and elsewhere) are pivotal concepts not only for Einstein's early aesthetics and epistemological critique, but in fact underpin his entire project epistemologically. Other critics have also pointed this out. Hans Joachim Dethlefs notes: 'Sich 'katastrophal auszusprechen' nennt Einstein die Gebärde des Revoltierenden. Sie führt ihn in die Katastrophe der weltlosen Vereinzelung, wenn nicht zum Aufstand ein stabilisierendes und konstruktives Moment [das Neue *–N.C.*] hinzutritt.' Hans Joachim Dethlefs, *Carl Einstein: Konstruktion und Zerschlagung einer ästhetischen Theorie* (Frankfurt a. M.: Campus, 1985), p. 16-17. Cf. also Jochen Schulte-Sasse: 'For Einstein 'revolt' is a principle of deconstructionist rhetoric; it is for purely epistemological reasons the only 'form of emotion or thought' justifying the hope that aesthetic modernism could also have a political effect.' Jochen Schulte-Sasse, 'Carl Einstein; or, The Postmodern Transformation of Modernism', p. 39.

[83] Kiefer, *Diskurswandel*, p. 470.

[84] Antje Quast, *Das Neue und die Revolte: Schlüsselbegriffe der Avantgarde bei Guillaume Apollinaire und Carl Einstein* (Bonn: Romanistischer Verlag, 1994).

[85] See Einstein's remarks in an undated fragment, possibly from about 1932, on the issue of 'Nachahmung': 'Bild als Schrift Sprache und Mitteilung – Grammatik des Sehens wie des Sprechens [...] früher der Schriftcode der Bilder, woraus sich der Code der Motive bildete. Darum nicht 'Nachahmung' der Natur, sondern nachbilden der magisch wirkungsvollen KW [=Kunstwerke]; also die empirische Nachahmung der Natur häufig um sich zu 'erneuern' während heute das Nachahmen der 'inneren' Natur –

Given Einstein's interest in Cubism in the context of this departure from (traditional) mimesis, it is easy to see how the shift in Einstein's valuation of the tectonic corresponds to a theoretical underpinning of an attempt to push the destruction of comparison and similarity (see K 3, 95) yet one step further. Cubism brought the progressive destruction of the motif and thus of the 'Abbildungsfunktion' of art. In its analytical phase, the object was broken down and so thoroughly reconfigured spatially ('simultané') as to be barely recognizable to the eye approaching it with the criteria of a Renaissance model of spatial representation. In the collages, as was noted in an earlier part of this chapter, and in Cubism's synthetic phase, traditional naturalist representation had been drastically defied, and new a-mimetic objects emerged. Einstein saw Surrealist painting pushing further again towards liberating the imagination in the production of its own objects: production, not reproduction was the name of the game; the 'Gestalt' or 'Psychogramm' was to be hurled out onto paper or canvas with little to no input from the rational, ordering mind.

Destruction of comparison and similarity is not only a crucial principle in Einstein's evaluation of the work of art, in other words a, or even *the*, theme in his discourse on art. The principle of destruction of comparability is, paradoxically, a structuring principle also of his writing on art. As he rethinks aesthetics in the wider context of a critique of Western categories of epistemology, Einstein's project tears at the fabric of Western metaphysics. He tackles the philosophy of consciousness, its reified categories of subject and object and univalent notion of truth and reality, and the nineteenth century paradigm of history as continuous and teleological. Einstein's scholarly roots are in the German tradition of philosophical aesthetics.[86] Along with his critique of the subject and his social-psychological dismantling of bourgeois individualism, however, Einstein conducts his own critique of the concept of original genius bequeathed and popularized by earlier generations. On the grounds of this critique, art criticism cannot be, and should not aspire to be, the unrivalled empathizing of the critic with the genius that is the artist. This is the paradigm handed down by the Early Romantics: the consummate expression of genius empathy in a criticism that would

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eine Erweiterung unserer Empirik zur 'Erneuerung' dient. – frage das 'psychische' führt zur Regression.' (W 4, 330)

be at the same time the highest form of knowledge and also of art itself. As Braun clarifies in his study probing Einstein's relationship to Kant, Schopenhauer, Hegel and Nietzsche, Einstein likewise rejects the Hegelian hierarchy, whereby religion aspires to art, which in turn aspires to the purity of the philosophical concept:

> An diesem [i.e. Hegels] Vorzug der Philosophie vor Kunst und Religion hält Einstein nicht fest, sondern kritisiert mit Schopenhauer die Sprache der abstrakten Begriffe.[87]

Einstein does not simply reverse the hierarchy and declare philosophy redundant. But he is at pains to point out how previous philosophical approaches and systems tended to smother what is artistic or aesthetic about art; in other words, how they failed to approach art on any terms but their own. Philosophy's approach to art was therefore colonizing or imperialistic: the aesthetic sphere was made to submit to the force of conceptualization and identitary logic. The critical question is therefore whether a new approach can be found which will not repeat this tyrannical mistake. What art criticism can and must be, according to Einstein, is an evaluative analysis of artistic forms that understands itself—its analysis, its evaluations and their preconditions—as historically determined. But that is not all: these forms are not to be researched for their own sake and in order that they might be categorized in a kind of 'Morphologie zeitlich verschieden gelagerter Gruppen' (W 4, 367). When this happens, the original reasons why one might wish to know anything about past forms—i.e. the confrontation with current problems—gets lost amid the categorizing activity:

> das eigentliche geschichtliche, das Tun der Menschen, warum u aus welchen gruenden Menschen gerade so bildeten oder malten, welchen Sinn solches Tun für sie enthielt, dies bleibt verborgen. dh. die geschichtliche Bewegung bleibt unerkannt u so ist Kunstgeschichte eher eine art Geologie [...]. (W 4, 367)

In line with Nietzsche's reassessment of the task of historiography, Einstein asks

> ob es nicht möglich sei, die Morphologie der Objekte in eine Geschichte ihrer Produktion und Consummation zu verwandeln, [...] den Kunsterzeugenden Menschen in seiner ganzen Komplexität in die Mitte des Kunstgeschehens zu rücken u KG aus einer

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[86] Cf. Jochen Schulte-Sasse, 'Carl Einstein; or, The Postmodern Transformation of Modernism', p. 36-39. On Einstein's early scholarly roots in humanism and his break from these, see Klaus H. Kiefer, '"BEB II" – ein Phantombild', in *Text + Kritik*, 95: Carl Einstein (1987), 44-66 (especially p. 60).
[87] Christoph Braun, *Carl Einstein: Zwischen Ästhetik und Anarchismus*, p. 32.

> historischen Klassifizierung der Objekte in eine Geschichte der menschlichen Tätigkeit abzuaendern. (W 4, 367)[88]

Klaus Kiefer, in a section entitled 'Platonismus und ästhetische Gesetzlichkeit' in his study *Diskurswandel im Werk Carl Einsteins*, likewise discusses Einstein's reception of Kant, Hegel and German Idealism as a creative rejection that confronts anew the question of what it means to make an aesthetic judgement. Kiefer quotes Einstein as follows:

> Kunstgesetze ergeben sich nicht aus den Begriffen, die dem Urteil über Kunst zugrundeliegen; vielmehr bauen sich die Kunstgesetze auf den Grundformen auf, die einem möglichen Kunstwerk zugrunde liegen. Unter dem Einflusse der Philosophie erhob man, diese überschätzend, die Lehre vom Kunsturteil zur Grundlage der Ästhetik und glaubte so das der Kunst Eigene konstruieren zu können. Es ist dies die Folge der Lehre, daß Philosophie Wissenschaftslehre von den Begriffen sei, die unserem Erkennen zugrunde liegen, so daß man daraus schloß, Ästhetik sei die Lehre von den Begriffen, die dem künstlerischen Urteil zugrunde liegen. Hier zeigen sich deutlich die Folgen eines indirekten Verfahrens, daß nicht die gegebenen Tatsachen zu Voraussetzungen erhoben werden, sondern ein surrogierter psychologischer Verlauf oder intellektueller Bestand, dessen Funktion wiederum gleichsam metaphysische Substrate unterlegt werden. (W 1, 214)

From the last quotation 'intellektueller Bestand' and from the previous one 'die Sprache der abstrakten Begriffe': these are synonyms in Einstein for one half of what Patrick Healy calls Einstein's 'antinomy par excellence[,] that between life and abstract categories of explanation',[89] which of course corresponds to the antinomy mentioned above, 'Neues' versus 'Wiederholung'. Unlike much of the crudely ideological or politically motivated anti-intellectualism that abounded at the time, Einstein's rejection of intellectual inventory and the language of abstract concepts is predicated on a complex understanding and theory of how conceptual language contributes to the problem of reification not only of language but of images, too. On no account is Einstein against thinking; rather, he seeks to expose certain limited kinds of thought and how they are perpetuated and made to predominate.

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[88] On the relationship between Nietzsche's and Einstein's conception of historiography, see the section in Chapter 5 entitled 'Einstein's critiques of determinism and progress'.
[89] Patrick Healy, *The Modern and the Wake* (Dublin: Lilliput, 1992), p. 6.

As can be seen from the last quotation, Einstein is seeking some way of getting at the work of art that would not be an indirect procedure. He is concerned about 'die gegebenen Tatsachen' and wishes to see these raised to replace concepts and 'Kunstgesetze' as the precondition of an aesthetic judgement. Kiefer has pointed out how Einstein can use Mach's empirio-criticism to 'destabilize' Kant's idea of an aesthetic judgement based 'auf Gründen a priori'. Already early on in his career Einstein had reconsidered Kant's temporal and spatial apriorism through the eyes of *Lebensphilosophie*, concluding that time and space are 'Formen des Wahrgenommenen' and not 'Formen der Wahrnehmung'.[90] According to this line of thinking,

> Die Dinge wie das ich sind nur Elementen- oder Empfindungskomplexe, die in der Tat – wie Einstein auch betont – a posteriori nach Prinzipien der Denkökonomie gegliedert werden.

The upshot, as Kiefer continues, is:

> Wesensverschiedenheit zwischen Psychischem und Physischem, Vorstellung und Objekt, Innerem und Äußerem, besteht nicht; der Unterschied entspringt nur verschiedenen Gesichtspunkten bzw. Bearbeitungsweisen des Materials.[91]

The Machian conviction that no such 'Wesensverschiedenheit' existed between those pairs mentioned in the quotation could be taken as the starting-point of a challenge to negate or overcome the difference on account of varying 'Bearbeitungsweisen des Materials'. And certain branches of the Avant-garde certainly continued in this vein. One might think, for instance, of Henry Moore's *Reclining Figure* from 1951, which seems to take a cue from the phenomenon of the moebius strip in collapsing interior and exterior of a spatial, perhaps human, form.

Einstein is, however, aware that there is no simple way to annul the differences that arise from varying 'Bearbeitungsweisen des Materials'. Einstein set great store by developments in the visual arts. Painting seemed to be escaping or defying its own conventions and providing ever greater potential for cutting through reification to approach immediate experience. What had become acutely questionable to him, as to

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[90] The notes date from the time Einstein spent studying in Berlin (about 1904). 'Kant sagte: Zeit u Raum sind Formen der Wahrnehmung)(- nein sind Formen des Wahrgenommenen. das Wahrnehmen: der Prozeß.' Quoted in Oehm, *Die Kunsttheorie Carl Einsteins*, p. 71.
[91] Kiefer, *Diskurswandel*, p. 108.

many of his generation, was the ability of words to do this, or even register it. Einstein's answer is in one respect ambivalent, in another clear. First the ambivalence: in places he seems to deny in principle the possibility of words providing the potential he finds in painting; elsewhere he seems to set comparable store by the word, and demands that it reform itself in order to re-earn its status. Where Einstein is clear, however, is on the point of whether words can communicate what a work in the same or another medium does: the relationship here, he contends, is one of incommensurability.

This is the problem he confronts head-on as a theoretician, historian and critic of art: the instant of aesthetic experience will for him always be radically incommensurate with the judgement of art as it is presented in conceptual form.

> Es ist darüber klar zu sein – daß der Gegenstand einer Betrachtung von vornherein ein gedachter ist – der durchaus andere Qualitäten hat als der erlebte – daß jedoch Bindungen bestehen müssen zwischen dem erlebten und dem vorgestellen. (W 4, 139)

The instant of aesthetic experience—when related to a work of art—is of course already a (partial) judgement of that given work. In that the experience occurs at all, it is a *de facto* judgement of the work as fulfilling an essential criterion of art, namely as something that is capable of producing or provoking an aesthetic response. But the problem, for Einstein, occurs with the attempt to use description—descriptive language—to convey 'das Gestalthafte', or that which makes the work of art more than the sum of its parts:

> Aus diesem Gegensatz von Begriff und Gestalt ergibt sich die Unmoeglichkeit einer beschreibenden Aesthetik, da beide Komplexe gruendlichst inadequat sich verhalten. Eine beschreibende Aesthetik bedeutet uns einen Versuch, das Gestalthafte zu entgestalten. (W 4, 219)

The inadequacy addressed here between the non-conceptuality of the work of art and a descriptive aesthetics correlates with the incommensurability of the Cubist work as compared with a work based on a traditional model of spatial representation. Thus Ernst Osterkamp in his article 'Däubler oder die Farbe – Einstein oder die Form. Bildbeschreibung zwischen Expressionismus und Kubismus' can assert that Einstein's mode of writing on art is predicated on his encounter with Cubism. Osterkamp uses

Theodor Däubler's evocative procedure, with the example of Kandinsky, as a foil for Einstein's manner of writing about an image.

> Bildbeschreibung ist für Einstein [...] gerade nicht eine Evokation des inneren Klangs im Medium des Farberlebnisses, sondern sie ist für ihn denkbar nur als eine analytische Rekonstruktion der Form, aus der, analog zur Relativierung der Farbe im Formganzen, jede Ausdrucksrelation und jede psychologische Dimension verbannt wird. Damit hat aber das Einsteinsche Beschreibungsverfahren – wenn bei ihm von Beschreibung überhaupt noch die Rede sein darf! – sein künstlerisches Paradigma [...] im französischen Kubismus (während Däublers Verfahren gerade bei Kandinsky seinen Erfüllungsort fand). Einsteins Verfahren deskriptiver Bildvergegenwärtigung ist ohne seine Begegnung mit dem Kubismus nicht zu verstehen.[92]

This is a good clarification of how Einstein approaches the issue of writing on images, yet a residual sense of awkwardness and inaptitude on the part of Osterkamp comes across in the interjection 'wenn bei ihm von Beschreibung überhaupt noch die Rede sein darf!' and in the phrase 'Verfahren deskriptiver Bildvergegenwärtigung'. This last phrase tries to capture the idea of making an image present in words without resorting to language that would hypostatize what the image figures forth. Clearly, here again, presenting rather than *re*presenting is at issue. Osterkamp seems to hesitate in ascribing use of any kind of descriptive language to Einstein. The interjection suggests Osterkamp wants to vindicate Einstein's claims about description in relation to his own art historiography, namely that all description should be dropped because inadequate and even inappropriate when confronting images. And yet Osterkamp seems uncomfortable with any absolute assessment to that effect. At any rate, he proceeds to use the words 'Beschreibung' and 'Bildbeschreibung' in the ensuing pages of his discussion of Einstein's art criticism.[93] The remainder of this section will focus on this problem of descriptive language and 'accessing' the image.

A Cubist painting will tend to be read historically within a certain culture as differentiated from, or standing in opposition to, that which it representationally is not, and which came before it (namely a naturalistic, perspectival depiction of something),

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[92] Ernst Osterkamp, 'Däubler oder die Farbe – Einstein oder die Form. Bildbeschreibung zwischen Expressionismus und Kubismus', in *Beschreibungskunst – Kunstbeschreibung: Ekphrasis von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. by Gottfried Böhm and Helmut Pfotenhauer (Munich: Fink, 1995), pp. 543-69 (p. 556).
[93] Ibid., p. 558f.

and later also as differentiated from that which has come after it. In the same way Einstein's innovative approach to the writing of art history and criticism is in one respect locked in a deictic gesture. A newcomer to his writings at the time when they appeared, in particular to his *Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts* with its forty plates and over 400 illustrations, would undoubtedly have been struck by the conspicuous absence of both a more traditional kind of description of paintings and an evocative conjuring of the image typical of Expressionist critics, Däubler to the fore. The more experienced reader of his criticism nowadays, too, is constantly more or less aware of what the text is 'not doing'. It is as if the text were pointing to itself or doubling back on itself and saying, 'Look what cannot be done by means of a text'. But this is a double deictic gesture, as the 'Look' exhortation is also the incentive to look to the painting itself. For Einstein, the point of departure was the issue of whether the experience of a work of art—or how the work actually impacts on the recipient—could be rendered in words.

Excavating the image

What Einstein attempts is a kind of excavation of the image: he wants to clear an area around the painting, do away with all emotive or evocative musings, which to him only smother the work, and allow the image rather to step forth 'in its own right'. The text of his encyclopedia volume cannot, therefore, be *about* painting(s) in the traditional sense. With his writing on art he wants to avoid 'writing over' the image with language; the materiality of the painting, the brute sensuous data, will appear only in the painting, not in the writing. Typically for a formalist aesthetics, he rejects an effusive or expressive response to the work—Romantic/Expressionist trends—as an invalid way to do criticism. He does not locate art and its significance in the intention of the artist, nor in what the work might represent, nor in what it might express. Shifting the experience and judgement of art into the execution of the work, he makes the artist as well as the viewer into a function of the work itself. He thus distances himself on the one hand from a psychological and psychologizing approach, which would see the psychological processes of the viewer as relevant for the image (see W 1, 214-15). On the other hand he distances himself also from a logic- or reason-based approach, which would grasp conceptual or concept-like aspects of the image and thus produce conceptual antinomies

that would replace or displace the work (see W 1, 215-16).[94] The significance of art for Einstein, to the extent that anything can be said or written about it, lies instead in the formal relationship of the elements that the work itself evinces. He determines art and art criticism as follows:

> Gegenstand der Kunst sind nicht Objekte, sondern das gestaltete Sehen. In das notwendige Sehen, nicht in die zufälligen Objekte ist das Schwergewicht zu legen. Von hier aus gelangt man zu den objetiven Elementen dessen, was apriorische Kunsterkenntnis ist, die sich im Urteil über Kunst nur a posteriori ausspielt. Der Erkenntnisakt, d.h. die Umbildung der Weltvorstellung geschieht weder durch das Schaffen des Kunstwerks oder das Betrachten, vielmehr durch das Kunstwerk selbst. Denn Erkenntnis, die über ein kritisches Verhalten hinausgeht, heißt nichts anderes, als Schaffen von Inhalten, die an sich gesetzmäßig, d.h. transzendent sind. (W 1, 215)

Art as 'Erkenntnis' that goes beyond critical procedures into the creative and productive is always already criticism (embedded in the 'material' of language or sense perception). It is at the same time both determinate and indeterminate, immanent and gesturing beyond, tied to both subject and object. (See also page 137f. below)

Ernst Osterkamp makes the point in his article on Einstein and Däubler that the influence of the aperspectival art of Cubism on Einstein's perception of images generally, and procedure of describing an image in particular, can be seen in the specific 'Schreibgestus' of the encyclopedia volume. What Osterkamp means by this he explains as follows. To begin with, the authorial subject and his own personal experience of the artwork are bracketed out. Likewise the artistic subject. Just as the subject becomes dissolved in the creative act, so too does the artistic subject disappear in the language of the text into the impersonal form, 'man' (one) or even the passive voice. Osterkamp gives an example from an article of Einstein's from 1928 on Picasso, entitled simply 'Picasso'.[95] One could likewise cite Einstein on Emil Nolde: 'die Farbflächen werden durch groblineare Zäsuren getrennt und verbunden. [...] Man eilt gejagt zu einfachster Lösung, um die überstarke Vision abzustoßen.' (K 3, 203) Osterkamp contends that this

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[94] The text cited here, 'Anmerkungen', is from 1914 and so belongs to an earlier phase in Einstein's career. That does not diminish its relevance, however, as it around this time that Einstein is beginning to clarify a position for himself on visual art (*Negerplastik* is in the wings). Of the original manuscript, comprising seventeen pages, the first two pages are filed under 'Picasso', the other fifteen under 'Totalität'. There are notes to accompany each section, again filed under 'Picasso' and 'Totalität'. These can be found in CEA, 296 and 297 respectively. The plans for the essay date from 1907 and 1910.

[95] The article is reprinted in W 2, 517-25. The sentences Osterkamp cites can be found on p. 518.

procedure involves the translation of images created according to a constructivistic visual aesthetic into a constructivistic literary aesthetic, in other words the development of an analogical procedure in writing to the Cubist procedure in painting:

> So überführen Einsteins Bildbeschreibungen ästhetischen Subjektivismus immer in Konstruktion, mehr noch, sie übersetzen Bilder nach Maßgabe einer konstruktivistischen Bildästhetik in eine konstruktivistische Schreibästhetik: in jene a-mimetische, anti-psychologische Prosa, die auch Einsteins am Kubismus geschultes dichterisches Werk prägt.[96]

So the aim is a stringent reconstruction of form rather than a description of any content of a painting, effect of a work or intention of an artist.

Ekphrasis in question

Let us return to the point above that the text of Einstein's encyclopedia volume cannot—for reasons that have now been clarified—be *about* painting(s) in the traditional sense. Uwe Fleckner, in his persuasive essay '*Das zerschlagene Wort.* Kunstkritik des Kubismus und 'kubistische' Kunstkritik', follows this line of thought to the conclusion that Einstein's work is not just criticism of Cubism but Cubistic criticism.[97] Like the paintings, it demands considerable constructive and creative input by the reader. In Einstein's work literature, criticism and science (as 'Kunstwissenschaft') thus interlock indistinguishably.

En route to this conclusion Fleckner makes the point that in Einstein's view the art historian, and so of course he (i.e. Einstein) himself, must forego any kind of ekphrastic writing. Traditionally ekphrasis 'turns the depicted moment into a story of what the painting represents' and the traditionally ekphrastic impulse is 'to deliver in words the story signified by the pregnant moment of graphic art'.[98] For Einstein, however, that pregnant moment is not accessible to language, nor does it signify any 'story': language can speak *about* it as long as it likes; it will never speak *it*. What Einstein targets, so, is the endless paraphrasing of the artwork and the accumulation of cliché and anecdote that

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[96] Ernst Osterkamp, 'Däubler oder die Farbe', p. 559.

[97] See Uwe Fleckner, 'Das zerschlagene Wort: Kunstkritik des Kubismus und "kubistische" Kunstkritik im Werk von Pierre Reverdy, Guillaume Apollinaire und Carl Einstein', in *'Prenez garde à la peinture!' Kunstkritik in Frankreich 1900-1945*, ed. by Uwe Fleckner and Thomas W. Gaehtgens (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1999), pp. 480-535.

he sees as constituting the bulk of academic writing about art.[99] He demands, according to Fleckner, an end to ekphrasis:

> Einstein fordert nicht etwa ein sorgfältigeres Beschreiben des Kunstwerks, er fordert den Verzicht auf ein ekphrastisches Schreiben überhaupt [...].[100]

In the closing paragraph of his article, Fleckner draws together the consequences of what he calls Einstein's 'Ablehnung jeglicher Ekphrasis'.[101] But Fleckner also shows how, in the face of the language-sceptical aporia, Einstein uses a peculiar blend of reflexive and descriptive language in the text of *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*. And when it comes to suggesting what this kind of language does, Fleckner gives an example that belies his claim of Einstein's 'Ablehnung jeglicher Ekphrasis':

> [D]ie Gemälde Fernand Légers [werden] mit elliptischen, durch harten Rhythmus strukturierten Satzkonstruktionen evoziert [...].[102]

In an argument that wishes to present Einstein as defying all ekphrastic writing, all language that would attempt to copy, conjure, suggest or recreate the image itself, the word 'evoziert' seems curiously out of place. Fleckner does not focus in on how that evocation might differ from an ekphrastic mode. Incidentally, the example Fleckner then gives of Einstein's 'evocation' of Léger's painting, 'Mensch – Gewehr – Blatt – Karte' (K 3, 153), is an instance of iconicity: the abrupt series of words points to the sharply punctuated, precisely delineated or abrupt way in which the figures are off-set against their ground in Léger's painting (see also the quotation from the Léger chapter commented on below, page 118). Without using the concepts of ekphrasis, pictorialism and iconicity, it is difficult to get any sense of how Einstein's way of writing about art differs from any other way.

Furthermore, the idea that Einstein renounces all psychological interpretation certainly holds for his intentions, his theoretical self-positioning. But if one looks scrupulously at the quotation Fleckner uses to demonstrate how Einstein characterizes neo-Impressionist painting, it is clear that a quietly unacknowledged psychological

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[98] James A. W. Heffernan, *Museum of Words. The Poetics of Ekphrasis from Homer to Ashbery* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 183; 182.
[99] See also Fleckner, 'Das zerschlagene Wort', pp. 523-24.
[100] Fleckner, 'Das zerschlagene Wort', p. 523.
[101] Fleckner, 'Das zerschlagene Wort', p. 529.

interpretation is at work: 'horizontale Linien künden Ruhe, steigende Kurven jubeln Freude, sinkende Linien bezeichnen Trauer' (K 3, 62). There is no reason, other than silenced psychological convention, that rising curves should be related to joy. They could, on this way of thinking, just as easily connote growing anxiety, for instance. Likewise, sinking or falling lines have no necessary correlate in sorrow or grief. They might just as easily suggest relief.

Note that Fleckner deliberately omits the beginning of the quoted sentence, which runs: 'Die Liniendominante wird durch den Gegenstand bestimmt' (K 3, 62). Fleckner's claim that Einstein's sentences on neo-Impressionism are 'von einer eher ornamentalen Satzführung geprägt' suffers when we read the sentence as a whole: the part beginning 'horizontale Linien' comes across more as a list. Besides, Fleckner himself waters down his claim with the word 'eher'.

My contention here is that what Fleckner characterizes as Einstein's peculiar solution to the problem of how to write art history in the face of a profound language scepticism[103] does not justify his claim of Einstein's 'Ablehnung jeglicher Ekphrasis'. Fleckner is reaching conclusions about Einstein's writing that Einstein himself built into his credo. He is using the claims one can find in Einstein's theoretical self-positioning as a yardstick, which is of course a perfectly legitimate procedure. But he is at times too willing to allow these claims to dictate the conclusions.

Ekphrasis revised

It seems that rather than simply jettisoning ekphrasis as the basis of critical or historical writing about art, Einstein's text is at some level retaining and problematizing it. What needs further consideration is the concept of ekphrasis itself.

This is one instance of an approach that will be used throughout this study. A fair reading of Einstein's texts requires the reader to be alert to the various ways in which the texts operate. While Einstein rejects, often with a polemical flourish, certain concepts and aspects of the tradition of aesthetics and of art historiography, this does not mean that those concepts or aspects are simply banished from or non-existent in his texts. On the contrary, where such obvious and vociferous rejection occurs, the reader can identify the

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[102] Fleckner, 'Das zerschlagene Wort', p. 526. Fleckner is quoting K 3, 153.

concept that is being rejected and so prepare to identify a creative recuperation of that concept, possibly in the same text, more likely in another or others. The fact that Einstein rejects a certain concept does not mean, then, that he will not use it. He may use it in his own transformed way. And that transformation will more than likely have been a subterranean procedure. Direct insight into that procedure will be denied to the reader. This has to do with Einstein's abiding mistrust of concepts. He avoids daylight labour on the concept, Adorno's 'Arbeit am Begriff' (see Chapter 3, page 155f.) and yet he accomplishes transformations all the same. This will become especially clear in the later chapters focusing on the sublime.

So where does that leave Einstein's own writing in *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts* in relation to ekphrasis? James Heffernan, in his *Museum of Words*, defines ekphrasis in distinction from iconicity and pictorialism.[104] Iconicity is, he says, 'any 'natural' or 'motivated' similarity between words and what they signify'.[105] In other words, an icon is a sign that signifies by virtue of sharing a property or properties with what it represents. Examples of this are onomatopoeia and visually significant shapes such as occur in concrete poetry.[106] Certain kinds of syntax can be iconic, too, e.g. Caesar's 'I came, I saw, I conquered'. Here the order of clauses corresponds to the chronological order of events they signify.[107] Pictorialism suggests or conveys visual images in language. It attempts to use language to generate images in the mind similar to those in the painted picture. Pictorialism and iconicity may *remind* us of graphic representation. But as ways of mingling literature and the visual arts, they differ from ekphrasis. Both pictorialism and iconicity aim chiefly to represent natural objects, human figures and artifacts – in other words some*thing* represented. To recall the ekphrasis definition from above: traditionally ekphrasis 'turns the depicted moment into a story of what the painting represents' and the traditionally ekphrastic impulse is 'to deliver in words the story signified by the pregnant moment of graphic art'. Ekphrasis therefore does not aim to say what *is in* a painting, to describe this or that feature or figure. It aims

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[103] 'Die Gestaltungslösung, mit der Einstein seine Kunstgeschichtsschreibung aus der [...] sprachskeptischen Aporie befreit, besteht in einem eigentümlichen Ineinander von beschriebenem und beschreibendem Stil.' Fleckner, 'Das zerschlagene Wort', p. 526.
[104] Heffernan, *Museum of Words*, p. 3.
[105] See Heffernan, *Museum of Words*, p. 192, note 8.
[106] Ibid.
[107] Ibid. Heffernan takes this example from Roman Jakobson, *Selected Writings* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971-) II: *Word and Language*, pp. 345-59.

rather to impart what a painting *is* in the fullest sense, what the significance of a painting is, where its power to move us lies. And it does this not by abstractly saying its power lies here or there, but instead by evoking that power with the power of words. Ekphrasis, traditionally, wants to get at the essence of a work.

Modernism must however deem this an inapt task, because of its bugbear, language scepticism. So we find in Einstein's œuvre remarks such as: 'wir koennen stile und kunstwerke vag beschreiben; soweit visuelles sich in worte fassen laesst; und unser beschreiben wird alle die vorteile und nachteile unserer metaforischen gerissenheit weisen.' (W 4, 229) The situation for Einstein the modernist is that language will never get at what we can visually experience at all; it will only send us sliding on the icy surface of truth-as-metaphor, as Nietzsche had already presented it in his essay 'Über Wahrheit und Lüge im außermoralischen Sinne'.[108]

Literary modernism and what were to become the fields of study we now know as linguistics and semiotics took a reflexive turn and began to contemplate their own medium, language. Likewise in painting, the focus narrowed in on the medium itself: the flat, two-dimensional surface of the canvas, the quiddity of colour, texture, space, ground, figure. In modern ekphrastic writing these two turns come together. James Heffernan pinpoints this in his observation that modern—and postmodern—ekphrasis tackles works of art which have taken a reflexive turn and contemplate their own medium. In other words, modern ekphrasis engages with the issue of representation itself. As Heffernan argues in relation to Homer's account of Achilles' shield, though, this is a question of degree: classical ekphrasis also evinced an interest in the difference between representation and reality.[109]

Heffernan clarifies his point of departure in opposition to two dominant notions of ekphrasis. Murray Krieger's seminal essay on ekphrasis from 1967 and subsequent developments of his theory Heffernan criticizes because, he says, 'it actually stretches ekphrasis to the breaking point: to the point where it no longer serves to contain any particular body of literature and merely becomes a new name for formalism'.[110] This theory of ekphrasis thus makes the term too broad. Michael Davidson's critical

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[108] Friedrich Nietzsche, 'Über Wahrheit und Lüge im außermoralischen Sinne', p. 374.
[109] Heffernan, *Museum of Words*, p. 4.
[110] Ibid., p. 2.

reformulation seeks to redress the problem, but polarizes classical and contemporary ekphrasis so that they stand opposed to each other and share no defining features:

> [...] he [Davidson] leaves us with no coherent sense of the synchronic mode that might contain them both, as well as with an oversimplified view of classical ekphrasis, which typically treats the work of art as considerably *more* than a static object.[111]

Heffernan sees fit to recast the theory in such a way that the term can accommodate historical change but remains a mode that can be defined in its own specificity and differentiated from other ways of mixing literature and the visual arts:

> The weaknesses of these two theories [Krieger's and Davidson's] [...] help us to see what we need. If ekphrasis is to be defined as a mode, the definition must be sharp enough to identify a distinguishable body of literature and yet also elastic enough to reach from classicism to postmodernism, from Homer to Ashbery.[112]

Revising the traditional definition of ekphrasis, Heffernan calls it now 'the verbal representation of visual representation'. It 'explicitly represents [visual] representation itself. What ekphrasis represents in words, therefore, must itself be *representational*.'[113]

Taking an example now from Einstein, it becomes apparent that Heffernan's concept of ekphrasis fits, and that the drastic conclusion that Einstein dispenses with *all* ekphrasis can only be reached with a suitably narrow and inflexible concept of ekphrasis in mind.

The example is from the chapter on Fernand Léger in *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*. Einstein mentions three paintings by Léger in the sentence before the following quotation, two of which are reproduced in the illustration section of the work. But he does not proceed to write about any particular one. He gives instead the following:

> Die Farbe wird nicht beschreibend verwandt; Léger ordnet diese in heftigen Kontrasten; um die Bewegtheit des Bildes zu erhöhen, setzt er gegen die Flächen geometrisierende, plastische Körper, eine Fuge schwingender Volumina. [...] [D]ie Farbe setzt präzis ab, wird genau durch Weiß, gleich äußerster Farbe, oder neutralen Ton abgegrenzt. (K 3, 148)

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[111] Ibid., p. 3.
[112] Ibid.
[113] Heffernan, *Museum of Words*, pp. 3-4.

Already in the first sentence of the quotation—almost as if to herald the innovative ekphrastic solution—we have a reminding signal of Einstein's rejection of a more traditional kind of description. He is referring now not to description in the language of the critic, but to description in painting: colour in Léger's painting is not used in the traditional mode of adding further precision and verisimilitude to the illusion of a plastic form that constitutes the painting's theme or subject matter. Instead, colour is ordered into stark contrasts, Einstein writes. The writing simply says how the painting represents. It does not say what it represents, i.e. what it means or what is depicted or what the forms refer to. Nor does it say what the affective impact of the painting is. The reader is not made to see what colours are contrasted. (True, white and neutral tones are mentioned later in the quote, but that is because they can remain unspecified and defy the characterization a red or a blue would demand. Thus, they too can be seen to have a formal function.) Nor is any sense of an emotive effect of such colour contrast suggested. Against the flat surfaces, geometric, plastic figures are painted. 'Geometrisierend' is a coinage of Einstein's. Rather than just 'geometric' it means geometrizing, approaching the geometrical. Again here, with the reference to how the sense of movement or dynamism is increased by setting the figures off against the flat surfaces, the words tell how the painting represents, without, however, claiming to tell any full story. With 'eine Fuge schwingender Volumina' Einstein combines ekphrasis and the language of musical composition: the swinging or oscillating voluminous forms are seen to constitute a fugue, a highly-structured form of contrapuntal musical composition in which two melodic themes are continuously interwoven to develop into a single structure. 'Volumina' represents the visual representation of volume or plastic forms; 'schwingend' represents the visual dynamism of smaller and larger forms, perhaps on different planes in the space of the painting.

This is just one example of many in the work. It shows how Einstein has recast ekphrastic writing in accordance with his own ideas about form in the painterly medium and how to write about such form.

Ernst Osterkamp, whose article on Däubler and Einstein was referred to earlier, arrives at a similar interpretation of how Einstein goes about describing a painted image. Osterkamp notes how the constructive painterly aesthetic of Cubism is brought to bear on the descriptive procedure: 'konstruktive Bildästhetik und konstruktives

Beschreibungsverfahren [werden] deckungsgleich'.[114] He calls it 'Beschreibung als 'tektonische Vision''[115]. But he does not venture to discuss it in terms of any concept of ekphrasis. This is perhaps because his focus is on contrasting Däubler's way of approaching a painted image in language (emphasis on colour, telling a story for the painting, conjuring it) with Einstein's (emphasis on spatial form, no story) and extrapolating about the politics of the time. The article certainly gives an insight into the competing modes of art criticism in Einstein's immediate environs. But because Osterkamp does not explicitly use any concept of ekphrasis, the overarching context in which Einstein's transformed mode of describing images is embedded, the continuity and discontinuity in a wider historical frame, do not emerge.

A further point Heffernan makes about ekphrastic writing touches just the problematic area Einstein is staking off:

> Ekphrasis [...] is a literary mode that turns on the antagonism [...] between verbal and visual representation. [...] To represent a painting or sculpted figure in words is to evoke its power—the power to fix, excite, amaze, entrance, disturb, or intimidate the viewer—even as language strives to keep that power under control.[116]

It is precisely at this point that the leverage of Einstein's transformed mode of ekphrastic writing can be detected. The controlling force of language as that which strives to contain the image is being challenged. If the relation between literature and the visual arts is 'essentially *paragonal*, a struggle for dominance between the image and the word',[117] then Einstein is seeking an entente in which they could acknowledge their heterogeneity and cease rivalry. Einstein wants to allow the image to remain an image in its fullest sense, stripped of none of its power to fix, excite, amaze, etc. For that is the truth, to Einstein, of what an image is and does. What Einstein sees as the problem of freezing in language, in other words, that an image is dynamic and productive until it is transposed into language or until language gives an account of it, is a particularly modernist problem and related to its prevalent language scepticism. It is, with that, a question of point of

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[114] Osterkamp, 'Däubler oder die Farbe', p. 560.
[115] Ibid., p. 559.
[116] Heffernan, *Museum of Words*, p. 7. The reader may object that part of the criticism of Fleckner above turned on the use of the word 'evoke' ('evozieren'). But there is a significant difference, in this context, between 'die Gemälde [...] evozieren', which is what Fleckner writes, and evoking the power of a painting or paintings.

view. Certainly, each interpretation of an image, if it attempts to say what the image is and what it does, how it works and what it contains, arrests the indeterminacy of the image as image, closing that image's openness to interpretation by realizing one interpretation of it. But it is only if such an interpretation makes claims to being the final or only legitimate or valid interpretation that an arrest of the image occurs. Otherwise, the necessarily partial interpretation that has been realized actually also becomes part of the dynamic nexus of the work of art. It becomes part of what the work of art is, as it is testimony to a way in which the work has been received at a certain time in a certain place. It can serve as a point of reference for further interpretations of the same or other works, and thus weaves itself into the thickening fabric of cultural experience, without which there would be no artwork in the first instance.

It is curious, in this context, how Heffernan argues in just the opposite direction, speaking of 'pictorial stasis' in relation to visual art and referring to the ekphrastic impulse as 'dynamic'. Again, it is a question of vantage point, or theoretical positioning. With 'pictorial stasis' Heffernan is presumably referring to the purely physical or material nature of the artefact (as paint on a surface of canvas, etc.), rather than to an agglomerate with psychophysical potential, as is closer to Einstein's way of seeing it.

Einstein's insistence on respecting the gulf between text and image leads him to write not so much about images as for and against them, according to aesthetic criteria—criteria of form—which are avowedly developed in conceptual terms, but always in conjunction with the experience of the concrete work itself and requiring only its formal integrity, 'Form als die tektonische Organisation sämtlicher Bildelemente zur künstlerischen Gesamtgestalt', as Osterkamp aptly calls it.[118]

Einstein's texts demand a substantial creative input from his reader but, as with the paintings, always in relation to form as the *sine qua non*: the works which he castigates are those which, through lack of or fault in form, invite the viewer to complete the work anecdotally or to invest it with metaphysical significance. Einstein finds traditional ekphrasis inadequate. He rejects the understanding of it as 'telling in full', which is the root meaning of the word and has clear totalizing implications, i.e. that the word could indeed fully grasp the image. Having also rejected the mystifications of

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[117] Heffernan, *Museum of Words*, p. 1, in reference to William J. T. Mitchell's study *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).
[118] See Osterkamp, 'Däubler oder die Farbe', p. 556.

genius-empathy and aesthetic criteria claiming objectivity and eternal validity, Einstein takes form as his guiding light. This occurs at a highly self-conscious level in his critical works.

It seems, then, at the end of this discussion, that it is Fleckner rather than Einstein who conceives the notion of ekphrasis too narrowly. Einstein certainly rejects the idea of 'telling in full'. But that does not prevent him from attempting a certain kind of ekphrastic solution himself. While Fleckner wishes to do justice to the innovation and critical and literary merits of Einstein's 'Cubistic criticism', with a particular focus on the text of the encyclopedia volume, he ends up underrating it. Einstein's text does more in terms of a subterranean critical engagement with the concept of ekphrasis than Fleckner vouches for.

The ekphrastic mode Einstein employs has relinquished its totalizing impulse. It is less ambitious. It goes so far and no further: it can evoke the power of the painting, but it cannot re-present—make present—the painting itself. It does not stand for the work; it stands only for the fact that there is a work and that that work presents or represents. This conviction, rooted in the understanding of word and image as ultimately incommensurable, is demonstrated by the text of *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*. The text says this about text and image, but more by what it does than by what it says. That is one of its less immediately recognizable literary—and theoretical—merits, and one that anticipates more recent debates about the question of representation and re-presentation.

One might think, in this context, of Derrida's dialogical piece on a painting of shoes by Van Gogh, 'Restitutions', which has Heidegger's reading of such a painting in 'Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes' (1935/36) in mind.[119] Einstein, Heidegger and Derrida share an interest in the questions of truth and representation in the context of the history of Western metaphysics. In 'Restitutions', like in Einstein's text, the form of the text gives a sense of the yawning gap between the painted image and the written word. With his renunciation of all kinds of 'Weiterdichten', 'bildfremdes Sinnieren', 'Philosopheme und Paraphrasen' (K 3, 204), Einstein puts himself on guard against any expressive, literary or narrowly epistemological response to the painted image. Attention to the

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[119] See Jacques Derrida, 'Restitutions', in Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, trans. by Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), pp. 255-382.

image itself as a formal aesthetic event must be the beginning and the end of the art critic's task.

Without making any broader claims for the similarity of Derrida's and Einstein's procedures, an affinity can be detected in their vigilance regarding such 'bildfremdes Sinnieren'. In the context of his work, Einstein highlights 'Weiterdichten' and the admittance of 'Philosopheme und Paraphrasen' because they represent a problem for a formalist aesthetics: in the eyes of the formalist they are fundamental flaws. Derrida, in the context of his work, highlights Heidegger's 'bildfremdes Sinnieren' (the ideologically motivated attribution of the shoes and interpretation of the significance of the soil or earth connection) because it represents a problem for the discourse in which it arises: Heidegger's discourse, Derrida observes, sets up propositions which it cannot fulfil. The text of 'Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes', according to Derrida, gives the lie to Heidegger's claims about penetrating to the essence of the painting's significance, and further problematizes the notion of truth. Heidegger's reading of the painted image of the shoes tacitly loads them with certain ideological weights and writes them into a Western philosophical tradition of appropriation and determination, all the while purporting to simply allow the painting to disclose itself, to uncover its truth to us – the naked quiddity of the shoes, which Heidegger already clothes as 'ein Paar Bauernschuhe'.[120]

Within his specifically epistemological enquiry about whether and how a work of art can disclose truth or a certain kind of truth, Heidegger engages an ekphrastic mode that is typical of pre-modernist as well as some postmodern writing about art. It is an ekphrastic mode that makes explicit a story visual art tells only by implication. When this kind of writing is used in a pre-modernist text, it may have pretensions to objectivity, to revealing some essential or ultimately binding truth about the work under discussion. It will be more or less unaware of its own historicity and ideological and discursive situation. A post-modern text can use a similarly 'obstetric' ekphrastic mode (i.e. delivering a story from the pregnant moment of visual art[121]), trading, however, on the understanding that objectivity is and was only ever a pretension, a power-hungry fallacy, that all readings of a work are historically and ideologically pre-determined, equally

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[120] Martin Heidegger, 'Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes', in *Holzwege*, 6th, revised edn (Frankfurt a. M.: Klostermann, 1980), pp. 1-72 (p. 17). Heidegger writes: 'Van Goghs Gemälde ist die Eröffnung dessen, was das Zeug, das Paar Bauernschuhe, in Wahrheit ist. Dieses Seiende tritt in die Unverborgenheit seines Seins heraus.' (p. 20) Heidegger calls the event 'ein Geschehen der Wahrheit am Werk' (p. 20).

subjective and equally ungrounded, so equally legitimate. Heidegger's discourse is of course also problematizing the issues of historicity and grounding. But Derrida's deconstructive reading shows how Heidegger's reading of the shoes leans unwittingly, and despite his profoundest efforts, towards what has just been described as a typically pre-modernist use of a certain kind of ekphrastic mode.

Einstein's anxiety about this kind of ekphrastic mode, his allergic reaction triggering soon familiar tirades each time he detects it, is symptomatic of a dilemma that underpins his biography as well as his œuvre. Einstein understands the totalizing ekphrastic mode as an attempt to bind the painted image, pin it down once and for all, in a narrative that would cancel its indeterminacy, its heterogeneity or that which makes it liable to 'fix, excite, amaze, entrance, disturb or intimidate the viewer'.[122] It could be said that for Einstein the image is the untame, its heterogeneity only ever conceived and conceivable in terms of what it is not. In his plans for an autobiographical novel, *BEB II*, Einstein writes that Beb (the phenotypical (anti-)hero with autobiographical traits) was 'immer auf der flucht vor einem bindenden milieu'. In a typical twist of the anxious flight, this also entails a constant 'flucht *zu* einem bindenden milieu' – the rigour of the collectivist demand within Einstein's formalist aesthetics, which, as the chapter on *Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen* will show, can skew the aesthetic theory into endorsing only one kind of art.

Conclusion

Einstein's encyclopedia volume is not only grounded in his convictions about the necessary 'revolutionizing' of word and image and the way in which words approach painted images, but reflects these at a textual level, thus fusing literary and critical modes of writing. One can also contend, as Fleckner does, that science, too, in the sense of a science of art ('Kunstwissenschaft') is intermingled here.[123] But that is precisely because concepts of science have been critiqued and transformed by thinkers of succeeding generations, and along just those faultlines which Einstein was at pains to point out.

What Einstein succeeds in doing above and beyond this, however, is creating a language with which to confront modern painting without having recourse to narrating

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[121] On these terms see also Heffernan, *Museum of Words*, p. 5.
[122] Heffernan, *Museum of Words*, p. 7.
[123] See Fleckner, 'Das zerschlagene Wort', p. 529.

the figures or 'deformations'. (For Einstein, remember, all talk of deformation is inadequate to modern painting, as it tacitly measures with the yardstick of naturalistic imitation.) A comment Max Hermann-Neiße made in a 1916 review of Einstein's work up until that year is pertinent here. The comment was most likely made with Einstein's early novel *Bebuquin* in mind, but it is equally relevant for Einstein's writing on art:

> Man darf ja auch nicht vergessen, daß Einstein sich faktisch erst die seinem Wollen entsprechende neue Sprache schaffen mußte.[124]

In tandem with his theory of spatial form Einstein develops a flexible repertoire of concepts and categories with which to approach modern art without at the same time stifling its wilful resistance to concepts and categories. Extending a comment of Antje Quast's, Einstein 'entwickelt in Auseinandersetzung mit dem erkenntniskritischen [und kunsthistorischen und -kritischen] Vokabular ganz eigene ästhetische Kategorien, die das klassische philosophische [und kunsthistorische und -kritische] Begriffsinstrumentarium obsolet machen oder transformieren'.[125] With this approach, Einstein is actively but very carefully countering what Boris Groys described in a recent article as the disempowerment of the recipient that the art of the historical Avant-gardes was set on effecting.[126] And Einstein was doing this already at the time when that art was emerging.

One of the crucial factors for Einstein in creating such a language or approach is to leave a space for the incommensurate, the unsayable, that which is beyond the conceptual order. Already within his theory of Cubism he is clearing such a space. The instant or point beyond, before or beneath[127] what he has jettisoned as Kantian spatial and temporal apriorism is an instance of the sublime. The sublime (literally: just beneath the limit) is a threshold; space and time—now as cultural constructs instead of experiential categories given a priori—constitute the limit from one side, spacelessness

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[124] Max Hermann-Neiße, 'Carl Einstein', in *Die neue Entscheidung. Aufsätze und Kritiken* (Frankfurt a. M.: Zweitausendeins, 1988), pp. 347-51 (p. 349). The review was firt published in *Die weißen Blätter*.

[125] Antje Quast, *Das Neue und die Revolte*, p. 111. The quotation includes a footnote, in which Quast fairly criticizes Oehm's attribution of a subjectivist theory of art to Einstein up until *Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen*: 'In diesem Sinne ließe sich etwa Oehm kritisieren, die mit ihrem Begriff einer subjektivistischen Kunsttheorie Einsteins nicht beachtet, daß diese Kategorien Einsteins Ansatz garnicht treffen.' (Quast, p. 111, footnote 125)

[126] See Boris Groys, 'Werbung für den Kommumismus', *Die Zeit* no. 10, 27 February 2003, p. 38. This point will be drawn out in the chapter below on *Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen* and tested for different phases of Einstein's writing.

[127] Temporal and topographical metaphors are all language affords us to designate what is to be designated, and what is without space or time.

and timelessness, or infinity, from the other side. From this angle it is easy to see how for Einstein the spatial-temporal 'simultané' of Cubism—or the minimal tectonic forms and the vision fused into 'Gestalt' or successful form—constitute the cut-off point, the cutting line that has space and time on one side and spacelessness and timelessness on the other. Bearing in mind the dialectic of the boundary, that cutting line simultaneously divides and unites space/time and infinity.[128]

A quotation from an early essay, 'Das Traktat vom Wort und dem Kreuz' (1911), grouped under 'Texte zur Erkenntnistheorie und Kunstkritik' in the volume of Einstein's works assigned to texts unpublished during his life-time, gives an indication—if a dark one—of the issues at stake:

> Die Frage aller Dinge ist zu einen mit der nach dem Schaffen oder besser nach dem Werk, weil Arbeit und Werk das gleiche ist. Wann überkommt uns das Wort anders.
>
> Dies sagt uns das Werk, aber es kann nicht sprechen weil es dessen nicht bedarf. (W 4, 137-38)

A few tentative comments on this quotation will open onto the coming chapters. In the first sentence Einstein initially corrects 'Schaffen' to 'Werk', then paradoxically equates 'Arbeit' and 'Werk'. This is only an apparent contradiction, because in the course of Einstein's aesthetic and ethnological thinking the concept of 'Werk' is under reconstruction. No longer considered a static artefact ('Gegenstand der Kunst sind nicht Objekte, sondern das gestaltete Sehen.' (W 1, 215), 'Die Dynamisierung des Bildes. [...] Der fruchtbare Moment.' (W 4, 317)), 'Werk' is written into a functional nexus, in which it only gains significance in relation to the dynamic event of the aesthetic experience itself.

The sentence 'Wann überkommt uns das Wort anders' is ambivalent. 'Anders' can be read as an adverb, in which case we would have: 'When does/When will the word overcome us differently/in a different way?'. 'Anders' can of course also be the word referred to: 'When will the word 'other' overcome us/spread over us?'. In *Bebuquin*

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[128] On the significance of the cut in the context of the dialectic of the boundary and the differentiation between form and formless, see the section on 'The colossal', a discussion which sets out from Kant's analysis of the sublime, in Jacques Derrida's 'Parergon', in Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, trans. by Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), pp. 15-147 (pp. 119-21). The section 'The colossal' is pp. 119-47.

(1906-1912) Einstein had written: 'Negation besagt gar nichts, ebensowenig die Bejahung. Das Künstlerische beginnt mit dem Worte anders.' (W 1, 101) Here, 'anders' is clearly not acting as an adverb but is the word referred to: 'The artistic begins with the word 'different'/'otherwise'.' This is another version of 'the new' – it departs from both loyalty/slavish imitation ('Bejahung') and oppositional dependency ('Negation').

All the same, the first interpretation, with 'anders' as an adverb, is, I think, the likelier of the two offered above, since 'das Wort' already figures in the title and in the first half of the essay.[129] 'Dies sagt uns das Werk' – it is unclear to what exactly 'dies' refers, perhaps only to the sentence immediately before it, 'Wann überkommt uns das Wort anders'. If this is the case, it could be read as saying that the artwork asks (us?) when the word, or the crucial moment of a work, will overcome us differently. Put another way, the artwork is testimony to the potential for things to be otherwise. But the question, if it is a question, has no question mark. The sentence does not seem interrogative at all. It seems not to have to linger for a response, seems to have come into being without thought for a reply, maybe like the work. Or perhaps already with the foreboding of a negative reply. A question without a question mark can give a sense of resignation, with the tone of a hopeless sigh more than a curious demand. And yet the question itself points unrelentingly to the possibility of something new.

'[A]ber es kann nicht sprechen, weil es dessen nicht bedarf' – the work's speechlessness, its silence is anything but a flaw, a need. But Einstein is an art critic and art historian. In other words, though acknowledging that the work of art does not need to speak, he is anything but silent about art. Yet while the work may not need to speak, and while an awe-stricken silence may be a perfectly plausible personal response to a given work of art, it does not dismiss the art critic or historian. Those terms, too, art critic and art historian, are under major reconstruction for the duration of Einstein's career. To him, they do not entail the task of making works of art speak, as they do in the totalizing ekphrastic mode discussed above. As Einstein had written already in 1906,

> Der Reiz jeder Beschreibung besteht hierin, daß man bald ein [sic] Parallelismus, bald eine Kontrapunktik der Organe gewahrt, deren einer Teil mit dem Kunstwerk und seinen Intentionen nichts gemein [hat]. [...] Jedes Sprechen oder Schreiben über ein Kunstwerk

setzt irgendwo einen Mangel voraus. (W 4, 267-68)

Not to capitulate before this insight but to write in and with 'Mangel' is the challenge Einstein sees for a historically valid writing on art. With this consciousness of 'Mangel' we have an inkling of a concept of (aesthetic) knowledge that has begun to resist totalizing demands. The following chapters will explore which versions of Einstein's theory of aesthetic experience as an instance of the sublime carry through this challenge of resisting totalizing demands.

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[129] 'Das Wort' in this early essay is the germ of the work. It arises in the artist, who leaves everything behind to receive it. 'Der Künstler, der alles hinter sich hat, kennt nur das Wort und ist leer. Das Wort nahm ihm alle Kraft. Und er steht da / und spricht.' (W 1, 136)

Chapter 3

Einstein and Adorno: Towards the Sublime, a Covert Enterprise

> *Ich sehe im Systematischen stets die Grenze, wo ein Problem auftaucht, das von einem System nicht bewältigt werden kann.*
> Carl Einstein, undated letter to Ewald Wasmuth

> *[In der] dialektische[n] Bewegung zwischen den rationalen und irrationalen, naemlich den halluzinativen Kraeften, verliert jede Erkenntnis ihren endgueltigen Sinn [...]. Damit aber wird jede Erkenntnis vorläufig und labil.*
> Carl Einstein, 'Gestalt und Begriff'/'Diese Aesthetiker veranlassen uns', undated, probably early 1930s

> *Denn wohl vermag der Geist es nicht, die Totalität des Wirklichen zu erzeugen oder zu begreifen; aber er vermag es, im kleinen einzudringen, im kleinen die Maße des bloß Seienden zu sprengen.*
> Adorno, 'Die Aktualität der Philosophie' (1931)

> *Es steht heute der Philosoph der zerfallenen Sprache gegenüber. Sein Material sind die Trümmer der Worte, an die Geschichte ihn bindet.*
> Adorno, 'Thesen über die Sprache des Philosophen' (1931)

Introduction

The above quotations from Adorno suggest in condensed form his understanding of the task of philosophy and the role language has to play in that task. The quotations from Einstein suggest in condensed form his understanding of philosophy, especially epistemology, its limits and the task of criticism. In the reference to rational and irrational forces in the second quotation, Einstein alludes to the role of conceptualization and language in epistemological questions. Sibylle Penkert gave the text from which the

second quotation is taken the apt title of 'Gestalt und Begriff'.[1] In that text 'Gestalt' and 'Begriff' are set in opposition but dialectically mediated by way of the hypothesis, which Einstein theorizes as a kind of quantum leap, an equivalent in the scientific realm to the discontinuity in the imagination at the moment of inception of a work of art. He thus presents an idea of the aesthetic moment of thought as shared across the age-old art-science divide. That aesthetic moment is production in the imagination, rather than only reproduction of what is already familiar.

In the course of this chapter the significance these points of departure hold for Einstein's understanding of the function and potential of the work of art will be considered in relation to that of Adorno. In the critical literature on Einstein limited attention has been paid to the relationship between Einstein's body of thought and the work of the Frankfurt School thinkers.[2] It is perhaps not the most obvious relationship to investigate in attempting to assess Einstein's later works. The Frankfurt School was a school of social research, Adorno intellectually a relatively loosely affiliated member, a philosopher, aesthetician and culture critic, and Einstein a historian and critic of art by profession, but of course also a cross-disciplinary thinker and writer. Both were writing and publishing on aesthetic matters in the 1930s. Adorno was eighteen years younger than Einstein. One of the main impulses behind this study, it will be remembered, is the contention that Einstein's ideas and theories are somewhat closer to certain peculiarly German strains of philosophical thought than has generally been taken to be the case in much of the secondary literature. An initial comparison with Adorno might yield the following list of shared concerns: a critical engagement with the legacy of German Idealism and with a peculiarly German tradition imbricating the aesthetic and the

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[1] Cf. Sibylle Penkert, *Carl Einstein: Existenz und Ästhetik: Einführung mit einem Anhang unveröffentlichter Nachlaßtexte*, Verschollene und Vergessene (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1970). The text is reprinted as 'Diese Aesthetiker veranlassen uns' in W 4, 194-221.

[2] A fairly recent study by Jean-Maurice Monnoyer, *Walter Benjamin, Carl Einstein et les art primitifs* (Pau: Publications de l'Université de Pau, 1999) offers some valuable insights into the relationship between the two thinkers' views on the primitive, the document, reproduction and the work of art in the context of the sacred and the secular. Likewise Charles W. Haxthausen's article, 'Reproduktion und Wiederholung. Benjamin und Einstein: eine kritische Gegenüberstellung', in *Études germaniques*, 1 (1998), 55-76. The helpful but limited contributions of Heidemarie Oehm and Klaus Kiefer also deserve mention here. They predominantly take the form of comments made in passing on a difference or similarity to some point in Adorno or Benjamin. Cf. Heidemarie Oehm, *Die Kunsttheorie Carl Einsteins* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1976), pp. 31, 33, 39, 58, 64, 137 and 177f.; Klaus H. Kiefer, *Diskurswandel im Werk Carl Einsteins: Ein Beitrag zur Theorie und Geschichte der europäischen Avantgarde*, Communicatio: Studien zur europäischen Literatur- und Kulturgeschichte, 7 (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1994), pp. 322, 396, 420, 442. Further studies of relevance will be dealt with shortly within the body of the text.

political; a vibrant critique of language; phylogenetic (ethnological) inquiry into the beginnings of reason and rationality, and the significance of magical practices; a basically sympathetic but critical approach to the work of the Avant-garde.

What will be presented in the following pages is no exhaustive assessment of the relationship of Einstein's work to that of Adorno, much less to that of each of the Frankfurt School thinkers. Although such an assessment would be worthwhile, undoubtedly fruitful and map out as yet largely uncharted terrain in Einstein studies, it would exceed the scope of this study. I propose instead to investigate, with reference to *Dialektik der Aufklärung* and certain of Adorno's early epistemology-critical texts, a number of areas of affinity and disparity between Einstein and Adorno as regards certain key issues for their respective aesthetic theories. The criticism of one of the basic tools of traditional philosophy, the copula 'is', as Adorno elaborates it in *Negative Dialektik* will be examined in relation to Einstein's criticism in 'Diese Aesthetiker veranlassen uns' ('Gestalt und Begriff'). A reading of *Ästhetische Theorie* as an aesthetics of the sublime, in which genuine sovereignty of the subject is predicated on the aesthetic moment of thought, will provide a context in which to examine, in the next two chapters, Einstein's posthumously published text 'Il se pose la question' and *Georges Braque* (published in 1934) in terms of concepts of the sublime. This chapter is thus intended to prepare the way for the thesis that Einstein's model of aesthetic experience in 'Il se pose la question' similarly forms the basis to a model of genuinely sovereign subjectivity, but that this is neither a definite nor a definitive moment in Einstein's theorizing. Einstein proceeds, in later texts, to undo the model in various ways, answering the demands of an increasingly critical and fraught social, economic and political situation, but also pursuing a failing search for adequate conceptual tools with which to bind the theory of sovereign subjectivity into a theory of artistic praxis as social praxis. Thematic affinities and disparities will predominate in this chapter; in the next two, structural and discursive issues will be drawn into the investigation.

Review of the relevant research

It was mentioned above that the critical literature on Einstein pays little heed to the relationship between his body of thought and the work of the Frankfurt School thinkers. Heidemarie Oehm's study from 1976, *Die Kunsttheorie Carl Einsteins*, ground-breaking

though it was in other respects, does not go beyond the mention of incidental congruities between Einstein's ideas and those of Benjamin and Adorno. For instance, discussing how the object is disintegrated in Cubism and abandoned in Kandinsky, Oehm mentions the connection Einstein makes between art since Mallarmé on the one hand and negative theology on the other, and draws an analogy to Walter Benjamin.[3] There is a reference to Benjamin's and Adorno's reception of Baudelaire's 'sensation du neuf' in connection with Einstein's concept of revolt.[4] The previously mentioned analogy to Benjamin is later qualified, however, as Oehm probes Einstein's concept of revolt, concluding that the latter is not so much explicable in terms of Judaic messianism or Bakunin's theory of anarchism, but instead accords with a historical-theological model of thought typical of the epoch and discernible in the work of Benjamin and Georg Heym. More interesting from the point of view of the present study are the references to Adorno: the point is made that whereas Adorno, in *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, views the self-obliteration of the empirical ego as a temptation to surrender the conscious self, for Einstein it is rather a question of 'eine Art Selbstmord', 'Selbstopfer', a harrowing process of execution of the empirical ego that requires a gruelling 'kathartisches Training'.[5] Elsewhere in Oehm's study, Adorno's *Negative Dialektik* is drawn into the context of Einstein's concept of madness: in *Negative Dialektik* '[werden] Depersonalisierung und Schizophrenie als die geschichtsphilosoph-ische Wahrheit des Subjekts ausgemacht.' A parallel is suggested, but not elaborated, with regard to a shared critique of self-identical subjectivity.[6] Oehm's study is recognized in Einstein scholarship especially for its novel, if problematic, thesis of Einstein's 'materialistic turn',[7] i.e. his alleged materialist revision, during the 1930s, of his position as a writer and of his prior 'subjectivist' theory of art and epistemology. In the light of this fact it is striking that comparisons with other materialist thinkers of the time are not given more scope.[8]

In his article 'Carl Einstein; or, The Postmodern Transformation of Modernism', Jochen Schulte-Sasse hints at an assessment of the relationship between Einstein and the

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[3] Oehm, *Die Kunsttheorie Carl Einsteins*, p. 39.
[4] Ibid., p. 58.
[5] Ibid., p. 33.
[6] Ibid., p. 137.
[7] Ibid., pp. 159-202.
[8] Even the slightly more substantial comparisons with Lukács and Brecht relativize this conclusion only marginally. Cf. Oehm, *Die Kunsttheorie Carl Einsteins*, pp. 187, 193, 194 and 198.

early Adorno (in his seminal collaboration with Horkheimer, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*).[9] Schulte-Sasse limits himself, however, to a couple of remarks centred around an affinity he detects: Einstein's observations regarding the overemphasis in modernity on the conscious ego, and on concepts, which train and tame experience and destroy formative powers, his insights into the paralysis induced by reason and into the construction of 'deadly systems', foreshadow some of the fundamental insights of Adorno and Horkheimer. Not only does Schulte-Sasse contend, if somewhat vaguely, that '[a]ll the important insights contained in [...] *Dialectic of Enlightenment* [are] present or at least suggested in Einstein'. He also maintains that Einstein's 'analysis of conceptualization as the reduction of experience (*Erfahrung*) to what can be repeated and controlled through its repetition is considerably more advanced than the analysis in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*'.[10] In *Dialektik der Aufklärung* Adorno and Horkheimer do, however, observe that with the demise of specific representability and the rise of conceptual logic, the boundaries of possible experience are drawn, its horizons narrowed:

> Was anders wäre, wird gleich gemacht. Das ist das Verdikt, das die Grenzen möglicher Erfahrung kritisch aufrichtet. [...] Aufklärung [...] schneidet das Inkommensurable weg. Nicht bloß werden im Gedanken die Qualitäten aufgelöst, sondern die Menschen zur realen Konformität gezwungen. (A 3, 28-29)

Considering what Adorno and Horkheimer also have to say about repetition and the semblance of control through repeatability in *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (see A 3, 28-29), it is difficult to see the basis for Schulte-Sasse's conclusion. If anything, it is the parity of positions here that is striking, and perhaps even more so the fact that these matters were fundamental to Einstein's writing of art criticism and art history a decade and more prior to the writing of *Dialektik der Aufklärung*.

There is, nonetheless, a sense in which Einstein's inquiry goes beyond that of Adorno and Horkheimer's. But it is not the sense suggested by Schulte-Sasse. It is rather the extent to which Einstein's observations contribute to an anthropologically founded study of cultural phenomena. This is apparent, for example, in Einstein's interpretation of science as a constant effort to keep fear at bay and to create stability and security (see W

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[9] Cf. Jochen Schulte-Sasse, 'Carl Einstein; or, The Postmodern Transformation of Modernism', in *Modernity and the Text: Revisions of German Modernism*, ed. by Andreas Huyssen and David Bathrick (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), pp. 36-59.

[10] Cf. Jochen Schulte-Sasse, 'Carl Einstein; or, The Postmodern Transformation of Modernism', p.45.

4, 202-04), and thus a functional equivalent of the religious systems it allegedly overcame. In the same text, 'Diese Aesthetiker veranlassen uns', Einstein describes how science is based on the distance-creating mechanisms of anthropomorphism:

> Anthropomorphismus heißt Distanz oder Differenzbildung, also Verstaerkung der bewußten Ichzone durch Entfunktionalisierung des Geschehens. Nun bildet man die statischen Fixierungen wie Begriff und Zahl; diese sind an die spaete Erwerbung des Ichs gebunden, womit der labile Personkomplex statisch kostümiert wurde. (W 4, 207)

Einstein defines conceptualization as 'Abwehr des Toetlichen und Lebendigen' (W 4, 195), so likewise a move to manage fear. And in *Georges Braque* he describes Classical aesthetic values as 'ein verkleideter Hybrisglaube' and 'das Ergebnis religiöser Angst zur ästhetischen Doktrin verputzt' (W 3, 287). The parallels to Einstein's observations in a recent study of the role of fear in cultural phenomena are striking:

> Ob real oder symbolisch, räumlich oder zeitlich: Distanzierung und Selbstdistanzierung sind in allen Angstbewältigungstechniken die entscheidende Leistung. [...] Bedenkt man, dass Distanzierung und Isolation des Objekts die Grundgesten der Naturwissenschaften darstellen, so drängt sich der Gedanke auf, dass auch die Wissenschaften einem untergründigen Auftrag folgen: nämlich Angst zu bewältigen und Sicherheit zu erzeugen – ein Auftrag, worin sie den Religionen, deren Gegenspieler sie sind, insgeheim folgen. Wissenschaft als Erlösung von Angst.[11]

Klaus Kiefer comments in a similar vein to Schulte-Sasse on Einstein's insights into the remythologization or refictionalization of rationality: As a result of this remythologization, rationality can be seen to fall far short of achieving what was claimed for it by the discourse of Enlightenment. Instead, the predominance of the function of the sign in all cultural areas, indeed in all world cultures, deprivileges Western reason and science and aligns them with the myriad of myths which they had presumed to have overcome. Kiefer contends however that this view of Einstein's stands opposed to the way in which Horkheimer and Adorno thought the dialectic of Enlightenment.[12] As regards the underlying project of maintaining the legitimacy of reason, it indeed often looks as if the two approaches are straightforwardly at odds. However, Kiefer's

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[11] Hartmut Böhme, 'Leibliche und kulturelle Codierungen der Angst', in *Große Gefühle: Bausteine menschlichen Verhaltens*, Suhrkamp Taschenbuch 3230, ed. by ZDF-Nachtstudio (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 2000), pp. 214-39, (p.228).

subsequent comment suggests, without explicitly pointing up the relativization, that what Einstein had in mind was actually, if not in the letter, nevertheless in the spirit of Horkheimer and Adorno's project:

> nur gestattet sich der "Ethnologe des Weißen" Einstein, die "mythologie blanche" genetisch und funktional zu hinterfragen und zu bewerten.[13]

Such a genetic and evaluative investigation into what Jacques Derrida calls 'mythologie blanche', a deconstructive approach to just that most powerful of myths, reason itself, seems to be under way in Einstein, and precisely not without the use of the tools that that very reason can provide, even if those tools are used in an unorthodox, arbitrary, polemical and implosive way. In this respect, the difference from Horkheimer and Adorno would then be more one of style than of substance.

Underground connections: Einstein and the early Adorno

The analysis of the relevant secondary literature has indicated that some more sustained research into the relationship between Einstein and Adorno is required. The following aims to cover critically some of the areas of particular proximity. The thrust of this section is twofold. The focus is on Einstein's linguistic and epistemological critiques and how they relate to Adorno's early critique of epistemology and language. First, Einstein's understanding and use of the concept will be outlined in relation to that of Adorno. Einstein's idea of form will be drawn in, as it yields much for an understanding of the role he assigns to concepts. Second, the relationship between subject and object, between universal and particular and whole and parts as Einstein rethinks it will be examined in light of Adorno's revision of those relations. Einstein's early essay on totality will be included, as it not only engages directly with the historically problematic concept of totality, but also redrafts it in such a way as to point towards the significance of the concept of the sublime for his thought.

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[12] Cf. Kiefer, *Diskurswandel*, p. 514.

Language and conceptualization: convergence and divergence

Chapter 2 dealt with Einstein's epistemological critique as elaborated against the backdrop of Ernst Mach's dissolution of the subject and *Lebensphilosophie*, and his language scepticism that takes the turn-of-the-century crisis of language vigorously into the twentieth century and widens the scope of its concerns. The reader is asked to bear in mind the wider context in which these issues were discussed in the earlier chapter.

A first point of divergence will highlight one of the chief issues at stake not only in the epistemological and linguistic critique of both Einstein and Adorno, but also in their understanding of aesthetics. While both undertake a stringent critique of language, their positions vis-à-vis the concept, while converging at a basic level, clearly differ significantly. Adorno, to be sure, was no stranger to the views propounded by early twentieth century language critics. To mention but a couple of milestones with which he was familiar: Hugo von Hofmannsthal;[14] Karl Kraus, whose polemical and satirical writings pointed up the insidious collusion between certain linguistic practices and the power not only of stagnant institutions such as the court and the military, but also of that very body which purported to provide impartial information, the press; Ludwig Wittgenstein, whose early work implied a complete rejection of the neo-Kantian model of epistemology; Georg Lukács, who in *History and Class Consciousness* had developed a powerful critique of linguistic reification; and Walter Benjamin, whose convictions about the divine and objective nature of truth led him to hold that philosophy must be grounded in a theological theory of language, as only in language could such truth communicate itself. Adorno, likewise, would not separate truth from linguistic considerations. And he, too, strove to rethink the role of the concept.

Einstein's notion of form yields much for an understanding of his notion of the concept. In his œuvre form is, right from the beginning, one of those ideas, like 'myth', 'totality' and 'the real', which not only holds a key significance in any attempt to understand his criticism and theory of art, but also undergoes a development. Matias Martínez-Seekamp considers it 'unangemessen', inappropriate, to unite 'in *einer* Theoriekonstruktion' Einstein's engagement with the problem of form up until the time

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[13] Ibid.

[14] Hofmannsthal's 'Letter of Lord Chandos' (1902), in which the power of language to link words to things, signifiers to referents in the world 'out there', is radically called into question, rarely escapes attention in this context.

of the First World War and his theoretical approach of the 1920s, shaped as it is by the adoption of psychoanalytical ideas.[15] This assertion will not be contravened here with any unified theoretical construction. However, it is possible to use certain durable aspects of Einstein's early idea of form to shed light on his understanding of concepts and conceptualization.

The significance of a work of art for Einstein, to the extent that anything meaningful can be said or written about it, lies in the formal relationship of the elements that the work itself evinces. He seeks to avoid a psychological and psychologizing approach, on the one hand, and a reason-based approach, which would grasp conceptual or concept-like aspects of the image, producing conceptual antinomies that would then replace or displace the work. Einstein makes the artist as well as the viewer into a function of the work itself. A quotation from 'Anmerkungen' (1914), an essay on art and the experience and judgement of the work of art, was given already in an earlier chapter. I return to it now since it is decisive for Einstein's early ideas on form and concepts. He determines art and art criticism in that essay as follows:

> Gegenstand der Kunst sind nicht Objekte, sondern das gestaltete Sehen. In das notwendige Sehen, nicht in die zufälligen Objekte ist das Schwergewicht zu legen. Von hier aus gelangt man zu den objektiven Elementen dessen, was apriorische Kunsterkenntnis ist, die sich im Urteil über Kunst nur a posteriori ausspielt. Der Erkenntnisakt, d.h. die Umbildung der Weltvorstellung, geschieht weder durch das Schaffen des Kunstwerks oder das Betrachten, vielmehr durch das Kunstwerk selbst. Denn Erkenntnis, die über ein kritisches Verhalten hinausgeht, heißt nichts anderes, als Schaffen von Inhalten, die an sich gesetzmäßig, d.h. transzendent sind. (W 1, 215)

What Einstein calls 'apriorische Kunsterkenntnis' here is an idea of aesthetic experience as an experience of form that is, however, pre-conceptual or non-conceptual. The 'Urteil über Kunst' is the conceptualized version of this experience, which can only ever approximate the initial experience. A number of Einstein scholars have pointed out how the idea of 'Kunsterkenntnis' as developed here in an epistemological context is derived in some measure from the writings of Konrad Fiedler. For instance, in Einstein's definition of 'Erkennen', 'cognition', as 'ein Schaffen von geordneten Inhalten, d.h. totalen Systemen' (W 1, 217), Matias Martínez-Seekamp notes the proximity of Fiedler's

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[15] Cf. Matias Martínez-Seekamp, '"Ferien von der Kausalität"? Zum Gegensatz von "Kausalität" und

concept of 'Erkennen' to Einstein's. For Fiedler, as for Einstein, 'Erkennen' does not mean simply passively taking account of discrete, independent entities or facts as the world presents them. It is rather an activity that requires a productive input. The object of 'Erkenntnis' is not already given; it must be constituted in the first place in and by the very act of cognition.

This insight into the fact that cognition is constitutive of what is cognized slowly infiltrated both 'hard' and 'soft' sciences from the beginning of the twentieth century onwards. As a point of departure for theorizing aesthetic experience and aesthetic judgement, it is shared by Adorno and Einstein. Clearly a fairly basic and general point of contact, it nonetheless opens up for both a certain line of enquiry and sets them grappling with some similar questions.

Another area of interest in the present context is the notion of the concept or philosophical category as murderous (see W 4, 200). Einstein holds the concept in contempt. Conceptualization amounts, in his view, to a procrustean procedure of leveling the particular, or wrenching it into the form of the general, in a move that constitutes the major step in the ordering operations of identitary thinking. The prime benefit of such thinking is stability, the security afforded by being able to compare, classify and group experiences (of things and people in the world, of inner impulses and emotional states, and of the relations that obtain at any given instant between the former and the latter). One can rely on the repeatability of such classificatory moves, so that the threat of encountering the unknown dissolves in the anticipation of its immediate subsumption under the known. Conceptualization, along with rationalization, thus constitutes a stabilizing and, as Einstein polemically describes it, murderous force (W 4, 200). One might say that he conceives of it as the opium of the people. It keeps people in a kind of suspended animation. It is anaesthetic, he maintains, in the sense that it numbs the individual to genuine experience, experience that could present something new and so challenge the perceptual apparatus and make an impact. It leads to the marginalization and repression of what is other to oneself (nature outside oneself) and what is other within oneself (nature within).

Klaus Kiefer indicates how Fiedler and Einstein overlap here too: Fiedler had identified the 'Tautologieproblem' that Einstein thematizes time and again, and the motif

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"Form" bei Carl Einstein', in *Text + Kritik*, 95: Carl Einstein (1987), pp. 13-22 (p. 14).

of '"Tötung" der Welt durch Begriffe' is present in Fiedler's work, too.[16] 'Er [der Wissenschaftler] verliert die Welt, indem er sie erwirbt', as Fiedler writes in an essay from 1876, 'Über die Beurteilung von Werken der bildenden Kunst'.[17] Fiedler also claims parity between art and science: 'Die Kunst ist so gut Forschung wie die Wissenschaft und die Wissenschaft ist so gut Gestaltung wie die Kunst.'[18] In Einstein's work this parity is reflected in the notion of the hypothesis, which, as a discontinuous leap, links the creative moment of science to that of art (see W 4, 204-05; 207-11). As Kiefer notes succinctly,

> Fiedler öffnet Einstein das Auge für eine unbegriffliche ästhetische Wahrnehmung als Basis von Aussagen, die Anschauung nicht als Mittel mißbraucht, um 'zum Begriff' zu gelangen.[19]

Both Fiedler and Einstein therefore confront the challenge of writing about the work of art without subjecting it to the rigours of a pre-assembled conceptual framework. This does not mean concepts are not used; it just means the properly aesthetic experience is not hurriedly translated into conceptual terms to comply with theoretical demands, and the concept is given an altered, more modest, provisional and reflected role in criticism.

Einstein makes it clear, in any case, that, for all his polemical demonizing of conceptualization, he is aware that it is merely a symptom, in its historically apt guise, of what lies at the root of the atrophy he diagnoses in culture. He sees the root of that atrophy in the fear of confronting the other in its utter otherness and engaging with it on its own terms, and in the attendant anxiety about bolstering selfhood and keeping it bolstered.

The construction of 'deadly systems' Einstein theorizes can thus be charged to precisely this fear, in a sense the grounding moment or motive of civilization. The reification of subject and object, their rigid distinction from one another, enabling the subject to identify and subjugate the object, results in a world in which grasping is the supreme epistemological paradigm, with all the violence, intellectual, emotional and physical, that that implies. Klaus Kiefer demonstrates exhaustively how Einstein's own

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[16] See Kiefer, *Diskurswandel*, p. 120. Kiefer is referring to Konrad Fiedler, 'Über die Beurteilung von Werken der bildenden Kunst', in Fiedler, *Schriften über Kunst*, with an introduction by Hans Eckstein (Cologne, 1977), p. 52.
[17] Kiefer, *Diskurswandel,* p. 120. Kiefer is quoting Fiedler, 'Über die Beurteilung', p. 56.
[18] Kiefer, *Diskurswandel,* p. 120. Kiefer is quoting Fiedler, 'Über die Beurteilung', p. 54.

writing can be read as an intricate weave of discursive strands that are differently weighted at different times in his career, a weave that thus subverts any attempt to narrow its multivalence.[20] This underscores not only the dynamic force of the writing, but also a conscious attempt to abandon the constraints of any particular discipline. That conceptual rigour in its traditional sense should be a casualty in this war on homogenization is not the only consequence that can ensue, as Adorno's work shows. Yet what Einstein's work evinces is more a lack of terminological rigour than of conceptual rigour.

It is interesting to note, for instance, how certain words are very seldom found in Einstein's writings, except perhaps where they are the direct target of a polemical attack. 'Nature' is one of these. My contention is that there is a kind of allergic reaction at work in this and similar instances: Einstein apparently manoeuvres around certain words that are conspicuously historically loaded. On no account, however, can this be equated with a tabooizing on his part: his avoidance of the fraught word in no way prevents him from reworking the related concept in a subterranean feud. From this, Adorno's strategy differs markedly. The cunning he attributes to Odysseus in *Dialektik der Aufklärung*: 'Man klammert sich ans Wort, um die Sache zu ändern' (A 3, 79) is telling. It is the cunning of reason, 'die List der Vernunft'. The instruction can be paraphrased as follows: stick to the letter of the law in order to amend its spirit; battle with the letter and you are lost to it. In an earlier essay, 'Thesen über die Sprache des Philosophen' (1931), Adorno had insisted on the necessity of retaining and critically reworking traditional terminology, precisely with an eye to its historically ensnared or compromised dimension. The philosopher must face the challenge presented by the inadequacy of philosophical language to social reality, and avoid two temptations. The first is to work naively, accepting a word as given, and thus valid in its traditional sense, while in fact the relation between the word and what it is supposed to convey has become problematic. The second, of which Heidegger stands accused, is to invent a word in order to circumvent the compromised historical version of it (cf. A 1, 369).

Yet Einstein's 'List' is a different one; he gets around the choice that Adorno's instruction presents. To say that Einstein's work lacks terminological rigour (Adorno

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[19] Kiefer, *Diskurswandel,* p. 123. Kiefer is quoting Fiedler, 'Über die Beurteilung', p. 50.
[20] See Kiefer, *Diskurswandel.*

would see it as battling with the letter of the law that is language) is not the same as saying that his writing or the development of his ideas lacks consistency. There is consistency as well as substantial development of concepts in his work, despite the fact that his idea of the concept is not dialectical, at least not in any obvious way. As has already been clarified in relation to his concept of ekphrasis, though, his understanding and use of concepts can in fact usefully be thought of in dialectical terms. The crucial point is that the development of concepts proceeds often in a displaced manner: it is not the concept as traditionally known that is explored, criticized and developed, but instead a cognate term or a term that is related to the traditional term or idea in Einstein's own conceptual and categoric repertoire. Conceptual rigour in its traditional sense—as tied to terminology—is absent in Einstein's discourse, and the suspension of concepts between various discourses, the fluid and osmotic character of Einstein's language, produces a kind of scintillation of the concept that defies fixity and subverts systematization. If the 'displaced' conceptual developments are to amount to anything more than just an impression or conviction about the œuvre, then they need careful interpretive (re)construction, at the cost, no doubt, of undoing some subversion of systematization.

Rethinking some key concepts: subject and object, universal and particular

The subversion of systematization as a critical strategy is given much attention in certain of Adorno's early essays. The essays that will be referred to in the following are 'Die Aktualität der Philosophie', Adorno's inaugural lecture of 1931, 'Thesen über die Sprache des Philosophen' (1931) and the later 'Der Essay als Form' (1958). The nexus of interest is that between Adorno's approach to the question of what purpose philosophy can still serve and the function of language vis-à-vis that purpose. Adorno is asking whether, after the failure of the great efforts at systematic philosophy of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, there can still be an adequacy between the cardinal questions of philosophy and the possibility of their being answered (A 1, 331). In other words, can—and how can—philosophy proceed which has truth, and not a bolstering of the reigning intellectual and social status quo, as its quest? For Adorno, this matter is inseparable from the significance of the necessarily linguistic or, more precisely, conceptual procedure of attempting to bring forth this truth. So, in probing the nature and potential

of philosophical language, he is re-framing the first question in terms of the self-reflexivity of the philosophical project, which has truth as its aim but which is also bound to make this truth appear in and through conceptual language, even though the truth itself is not conceptual in character and cannot be reduced to, or contained by, concepts.

It is already apparent from the above that Adorno's notion of truth is linked to resistance, resistance to the tendency to closure of the reigning intellectual and social status quo. A problem is raised about the relation between truth and concepts. In 'Diese Aesthetiker veranlassen uns' the problem Einstein raises is about the relation between 'Gestalt' and 'Begriff'. While Einstein does not operate with the notion of 'truth', there are many ways in which his idea of 'Gestalt' addresses notions of truth. 'Gestalt', understood as a mark of how, both individually and collectively, experience and thought come about ('das komplex Animistische', 'der Denkvorgang' (W 4, 197)), gestures towards that which gets lost, repressed, marginalized in those operations that yield the result of the process as 'das statische Weltbild', 'die anthropozentrische Einstellung' (W 4, 196-97). The traditional narrative project of the subject is identity, giving the reassurance of continuity between past, present and future experience and thought; the traditional narrative project of society is its discourses of history, religion, law, politics and the human sciences, binding together past, present and future of a society as seamlessly as possible into one meaning. 'Gestalt' can therefore be seen to point to those aspects in the history of both the individual subject and society that remain excluded from the conscious narrative project of each. Both in Adorno's approach to a mediation of truth and concepts in his early essays and in Einstein's approach to a mediation of 'Gestalt' and 'Begriff', a rethink of the relation between subject and object and between universal and particular are key moves.

Two interrelated issues concern us here. The first is the relationship between the inquirer and the object of inquiry, i.e. the subject-object relation in the pursuit of knowledge and truth and in the context of aesthetic experience. The second is the first issue restated in terms of the method and language of philosophy, i.e. the question of the relation between universal and particular in the context of making statements that hang together to produce a philosophical position. These are the key issues because they allow us to discern Einstein's and Adorno's respective stances on whether and how we can have knowledge of an object that would entail more than foisting our own concerns onto it, i.e. instrumentalizing it. This is a core question when it comes to examining and

evaluating aesthetic experience if the work of art is to have something other than culinary, pornographic or escapist value, a Kantian stipulation ('interesseloses Wohlgefallen') followed by Adorno in *Ästhetische Theorie*[21] and by Einstein (see for instance W 3, 328; 357-58) at, by turns, an explicit and implicit level in diverse writings on aesthetics and on particular aesthetic subjects. This question of aesthetic knowledge of an object was therefore a core issue already in Chapter 2, where the problems of evaluating aesthetic experience were addressed in relation to Einstein.

Adorno's opening statement in the essay 'Die Aktualität der Philosophie', his inaugural lecture at Frankfurt University in 1931, sets the programmatic tone and serves as both a warning and a challenge to the prospective philosopher:

> Wer heute philosophische Arbeit als Beruf wählt, muß von Anbeginn auf die Illusion verzichten, mit der früher die philosophischen Entwürfe einsetzten: daß es möglich sei, in Kraft des Denkens die Totalität des Wirklichen zu ergreifen. (A 1, 325)

It can no longer be a question of grasping the totality of the real. The crisis of Idealism amounts to a crisis of the philosophical demand for totality. The autonomous *ratio*, as Adorno explains, was to be able to develop the concept of reality, and reality itself in its entirety, out of itself. This was the thesis of all idealistic systems. But this thesis has dissolved, and with it, the notion of an all-powerful subject. Without the scope here to explore Adorno's critiques of phenomenology and ontology, one can summarize that what Adorno is taking issue with is any concept of b/Being or truth outside history. All of the models he criticizes stand accused of starting from an assumption which, to his mind, is the very point that demands the utmost reflexive critical attention.[22] This assumption is that thinking on the one hand, and Being as totality on the other, are adequate to, or commensurate with, each other, so that the idea of Being might be open to

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[21] 'Autonom ist künstlerische Erfahrung einzig, wo sie den genießenden Geschmack abwirft. [...] die Emanzipation der Kunst von den Erzeugnissen der Küche oder der Pornographie ist irrevokabel.' (A 7, 26); 'Ästhetik heute divergiert [...] von dem, was sie behandelt, verdächtig des zuschauerhaft Genießenden, womöglich Schmeckenden.' (A 7, 495)

[22] A critique of the validity of each individual accusation cannot be presented here. For individual evaluations of Adorno's position vis-à-vis Heidegger see Josef Früchtl, 'Zeit und Erfahrung: Adorno's Revision der Revision Heideggers', in *Martin Heidegger: Innen- und Aussensichten*, ed. by Forum für Philosophie, Bad Homburg (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1989), pp. 291-312; Christoph Menke, *Die Souveränität der Kunst: Ästhetische Erfahrung nach Adorno und Derrida*, (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1991), esp. pp. 147-50, 155-56; Thomas Huhn, 'The Movement of Mimesis: Heidegger's "Origin of the Work of Art" in relation to Adorno and Lyotard', in *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 22 (1996), 45-69; and Patrick

questioning in the first place. On the contrary, Adorno argues, it is this commensurability which has disintegrated. And this disintegration demands a new approach to the question of the relation between thinking subject and the object of that thought.

One of the consequences of Adorno's demarcation of the line between the sciences and philosophy, between research and interpretation, in 'Die Aktualität der Philosophie'[23] is the need to rethink rigorously one of the fundaments of the Western tradition of philosophical thinking and writing, namely the relation between universal and particular. The received paradigm allowed the particular to represent the universal in a closed and unproblematic way, and allowed the universal, for its part, to subsume the particular under it in imperialistic and homogenizing fashion. Adorno localizes the totalizing drive of philosophical systems of the past in precisely such moves.

As will be elaborated in more detail in the section below entitled 'Adorno and the Sublime' (see page 161f.), the question of the relation between universal and particular, whole and part, is crucial to Adorno's notion of aesthetic form. Einstein reflects on this problem in his early ideas about form in a way that prevails also in much of his later work and prefigures Adorno's approach. Returning now to part of the quotation from 'Anmerkungen' given above, this issue will be addressed:

> Der Erkenntnisakt, d.h. die Umbildung der Weltvorstellung, geschieht weder durch das Schaffen des Kunstwerks oder das Betrachten, vielmehr durch das Kunstwerk selbst. Denn Erkenntnis, die über ein kritisches Verhalten hinausgeht, heißt nichts anderes, als Schaffen von Inhalten, die an sich gesetzmäßig, d.h. transzendent sind. (W 1, 215)

What Einstein calls 'das Schaffen von Inhalten' has to do with the way in which various elements or perceptions are worked together as a complex. It indicates how, in this theory of the work of art, the traditional conception of the relationship between parts and whole is revised, with the result that the traditional version of the distinction between form and content collapses. The form is no longer simply the unity that structures content or the whole understood as anterior and superior to the parts. It is from the experience of the particulars in relation to each other that aesthetic experience begins, as Einstein writes in

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McHugh, 'Ecstasy and Exile: Cultural Theory between Heidegger and Adorno', in *Cultural Critique*, 25 (1993), 121-52.

[23] '[D]ie Einzelwissenschaft [nimmt] ihre Befunde, jedenfalls ihre letzten und tiefsten Befunde als unauflöslich und in sich ruhend hin, während Philosophie den ersten Befund bereits, der ihr begegnet, als

the essay 'Totalität' (1914): 'Kunst erkenntnismäßig betrachtet, geht nicht auf Begriffe, sondern auf die konkreten Elemente der Darstellung.' (W 1, 219) That essay can be read as an attempt by Einstein to go beyond a Hegelian notion of identity or totality. Totality as Einstein construes it operates as a concept for the otherwise irreducible relation between parts and whole, particularity and unity:

> Totalität ist ein in keiner Weise ableitbarer Begriff, der weder aus Teilen gewonnen, noch auf eine höhere Einheit zurückgeführt werden kann. (W 1, 218)

In this sense, 'Totalität' is a concept comparable with aesthetic form, or perhaps a concept of which aesthetic form is one dimension.

In another part of the same essay, Einstein also writes of how within 'Gebilde der geistigen Welt' 'qualitative Gesetze' are established. These he understands as:

> Gesetze, [...] die nicht quantitativ variieren, sondern intensiv, [...] nicht endlos wiederkommen, sondern qualitativ sich verwandeln, so daß es möglich ist, solche Gesetze auf den zeitlichen Verlauf anzuwenden, [...] ohne daß man genötigt ist, das Individuelle der Tatsachen zu zerstören. (W 1, 217)

The idea of doing justice to 'das Individuelle der Tatsachen', the concrete specificity of the elements in a work, without dispensing with all notions of 'Gesetze' gives rise here to the idea of 'qualitative Gesetze'. This idea combines the intuitive and conceptual in a way that points forward to Adorno's notion of aesthetic form as a fusion of mimesis and construction that never quite settles the divergence between them (cf. A 7, 180).

Earlier still in Einstein's œuvre, namely in *Bebuquin*, we find the following within a meditation on form, presumably Bebuquin's but it is not certain:

> Die Form weist auch über die Kausalität hinaus, zugleich besitzt sie vorzüglichere Eigenschaften, als die Idee; sie ist mehr als ein Prozeß. Vor allem aber vermag sie sich mit jedem Organ und Ding zu verbinden; da ihre Verpflichtung an die Gegenstände eine denkbar lose ist, gebietet sie diesen ohne Vergewaltigung. In ihr beendet sich die christliche Verneinung der Gestalt; gerade jene wird von ihr erstrebt [...]. Die Anschauung gewinnt in ihr eine Kraft, die vorher dem Begriff allein zugesprochen wurde. (W 1, 102)

Zeichen auffaßt, das zu enträtseln ihr obliegt. Schlicht gesagt: die Idee der Wissenschaft ist Forschung, die der Philosophie Deutung.' (A 1, 334)

The remark that form 'weist [...] über die Kausalität hinaus' is pitted against the aesthetics of Naturalism, for instance against the conception of the naturalist novel as presented in Emile Zola's *Le roman expérimental* from 1879.[24] Ascribing to form 'vorzüglichere Eigenschaften, als die Idee' implicitly targets those strains in Romantic thought, Hegel above all, in which art with its forms and figures will forever trail behind philosophy with its 'pure' ideas and concepts. The final sentence in the quotation reinforces this.

The comment on the relation between form and things—material or matter—is also of interest. Form can connect with all kinds of things, all sorts of matter, because it is not obliged or committed to any particular thing or any sort of matter. In other words, form does not need any special kind of matter in order to be successful. This foreshadows Adorno's critique of the cultic elevation of artworks which concern themselves 'mit irgendwelchen erhabenen Vorgängen' (A 7, 224). (See also page 167f. below.) On this thinking, what the artwork does formally is the yardstick of its significance, not some notion of the greatness or status of its content. Einstein registers how modern art debunks the relevance of the 'what' in favour of the 'how', a critical point also in Adorno's revision of the sublime.

Form as Einstein understands it 'gebietet [den Gegenständen] ohne Vergewaltigung'. In other words, there is no question of form being imposed or foisted on the material from above; form must rather allow the material or the individual elements to thrive in their own sensuous specificity.[25] This was negated by the Christian tradition of repressing the sensuous, material aspects of experience in favour of spirit and monumental form. Einstein's concern here is to restore to 'Anschauung' (intuition as a faculty between perception and conceptualization) a power previously attributed only to the concept (see above quotation from W 1, 102). We have already established the connection between 'Totalität' and 'Form' in Einstein's diction of this time. In the essay 'Totalität' he writes: 'Die Totalität ermöglicht die konkrete Anschauung.' (W 1, 218) And further:

> Totalitäten unterscheiden sich voneinander durch Intensität, d.h. je kräftiger und reicher der Bezug ihrer Inhalte ist, je mehr diese selbst vielseitige Elemente darstellen. (W 1, 220)

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[24] On this point see Martínez-Seekamp, '"Ferien von der Kausalität"?', p. 15.

Thinking of 'Totalität' here as form in a work of art, it is clear that something much more complex than any traditional notion of the relation between form and content and between parts and whole is at issue. Einstein associates the quantitative with repetition, seeing it therefore as inadequate for (re)presenting temporal processes (see W 1, 221). 'Die zeitliche Anschauung', however, 'stellt immer eine neue Konstellation dar', he contends, using a term that becomes key for Adorno (cf. for instance A 1, 335 and A 6, 62) and is related to the latter's concepts of 'Konfiguration' (A 1, 368-69), 'Rätsel' (A 1, 334-35) and 'Enigma' (A 7, 182-86, 188-94).[26] Adorno's concept of 'Konfiguration', as a dialectically enfolded fusion of concept and matter, bears an anology to Einstein's later idea of 'Gestalt' insofar as the configuration always exceeds the sum of its parts. It cannot be reduced to the concepts and material involved in its constitution, as neither of these could stand in isolation without being different from the way they are by dint of their being part of the configuration. Likewise, Einstein's 'Gestalt', initially anyway, encompasses a dialectical fusion of hallucination and tectonics that cannot be reduced to either.[27]

The essay 'Totalität' is one instance of Einstein's attempting to stick to the letter of the law in order to amend its spirit: Einstein's idea of totality revises older conceptions of the term and undoes their tendency towards closure. It in no way coincides with totalitarian notions of totality. It evinces a pluralizing rather than homogenizing tendency, but without hypostatizing that either:

> Trotz der stets qualitativen Verschiedenheit zersplittert unser Sein nicht, da es als Qualitatives eine der verschiedenen Totalitäten darstellt. (W 1, 221)

And, in a move that takes the issues at hand into the context of a submerged engagement with the (Kantian) sublime, Einstein writes:

> Sie [die Totalität] hat als Intensität nichts mit der extensiven Größe des räumlich

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[25] Cf. Adorno's remarks in *Ästhetische Theorie* on form's relation to the material elements of a work (A 7, 180).

[26] The term 'constellation' is originally used by Walter Benjamin in relation to the dialectical image. For instructive commentary on the relationship between Walter Benjamin's idea of constellation and Adorno's, cf. Shierry Weber Nicholson, '*Aesthetic Theory's* Mimesis of Walter Benjamin' and in particular the first section of Richard Wolin's essay 'Benjamin, Adorno, Surrealism', both of which appear in *The Semblance of Subjectivity: Essays in Adorno's Aesthetic Theory*, ed. by Tom Huhn and Lambert Zuidervaart (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1997), pp. 55-91 and pp. 93-122 resp.

> Unendlichen zu schaffen, dessen Abgeleitetes das Zeitlich-Unendliche der Physiker ist. (W 1, 218)

Kant's version of the sublime in nature differentiates between the 'mathematical sublime' and the 'dynamical sublime'. The mathematical sublime is concerned with the effect of magnitude (spatial and temporal infinity) on the imagination and is referred to the faculty of cognition. The dynamical sublime is concerned with the effect of power ('Macht') on the imagination and is referred to the faculty of desire.[28] It is interesting that Einstein should seek to annul the significance of extension—spatial and temporal infinity—and emphasize that of intensity, and by implication that of power and desire. The implications of this will become increasingly clear in the course of this and the next chapters. It is the sublime as a question of power that is reconstructed in Adorno's aesthetic theory; it appears that Einstein's re-routing of aesthetics moves in the same direction.

Towards the sublime

In the context of their respective critiques of reified society and 'Schönheitsbetrieb' (Einstein) or 'Kulturindustrie' (Adorno), both Einstein and Adorno accord a special status to the work of art for its transformative potential vis-à-vis modern society. Both set about re-routing aesthetics on the grounds of their respective epistemological convictions, which yield a particular understanding of the function of art within modern society. As was indicated briefly at the beginning of the chapter, for both this entails a distinct rupture with traditional, and more particularly Idealist, aesthetics. Not only is a rethinking of the basic procedures and concepts in order (e.g. aesthetic unity, totality, subject and object, form and content, universal and particular, construction and intuition, as we have seen), but a critical confrontation with the very idea of writing 'about' art and aesthetic experience is also required. If the work of art is to have social implications at all, a fundamental question concerning the communicability of aesthetic experience arises. Two steps will be taken in the following in order to outline the problem of the communicability of aesthetic experience, and thus the access to freedom, these being the

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[27] The weakening of the tectonic aspect was traced in Chapter 2 and will be dealt with in more detail later in this study.

[28] Cf. also Thomas Weiskel, *The Romantic Sublime: Studies in the Structure and Psychology of Transcendence*, paperback edn (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1986), p. 38.

core issues which align Einstein's and Adorno's aesthetic projects in connection with the concept of the sublime.

The first step uses Adorno's famous essay on the essay, 'Der Essay als Form' (1958), to show how the problem of communicability of the truth of the artwork is optimistically resolved by recourse to conceptual configuration, which has the best of both worlds, the scientific and the aesthetic. 'Der Essay als Form' concedes—and at the same time champions—the essay as a hybrid form, moving somewhere between science and art. Adorno himself insists in this essay on the historically given and thus irreversible division between science and art or the arts. The essay, though, can defy discursive logic and access the possibilities of the pre-conceptual without itself becoming art. The relationship between conceptual and poetic language in criticism will be addressed in the case of both Adorno and Einstein. In Adorno's 'Der Essay als Form', the question of the essay's philosophical legitimacy is adroitly silenced—one might say side-stepped—by appealing to a critique of totalization. What emerges is a defence of something akin to the Romantic fragment, but shorn of the commitment to an aesthetics of genius or originality. The affirmation of provisionality will be considered in relation to Einstein.

The second step sees Adorno confronting the issue of philosophical rigour with fresh vigour in *Negative Dialektik*. No exhaustive account of this will be given; rather, a few succinct quotations relating to the conceptual and the non-conceptual will be considered in light of their significance for the question of communicability of truth. Einstein and Adorno's shared critique of the basic tool of traditional philosophy will be considered in some detail.

These two steps will take us to where Adorno develops the questions of philosophical rigour and the communicability of art's truth most fully in relation to each other, namely in his (fragmentary) philosophical aesthetics, *Ästhetische Theorie*. Committed as Adorno's thought is to a subversion of systematic completeness, the demands of philosophical legitimacy could, however, hardly be taken more seriously than here. It is here that Adorno's tools for out-manoeuvring the traditional grounding of aesthetics are fully honed.

Conceptual and poetic language in criticism

Einstein and Adorno share the conviction that the (successful modern) work of art harbours a pre-conceptual core that defies adequate translation into concepts. With

Einstein, one sometimes gets the impression that he understands the reception process as allowing for something like a complete retracing of the work as it was conceived, in other words, allowing the recipient an immediate and consummate experience of the work, a thorough identification without recourse to conceptual apparatus. This impression, I would contend, owes much to Einstein's polemical stance regarding concepts and conceptual thought, and something also to the utopian conception of the social revolutionary power of the work of art that can be found, for instance, in *Georges Braque*. Although it can be traced to many instances in *Georges Braque* (for instance W 3, 381; 388; 393) and elsewhere, this impression stands opposed not only to Einstein's theory in 'Il se pose la question' but also to his own practice of writing art history and criticism. His own writing exhibits a relentless skirmish or contest with language to get it to defy not only the reification that has blunted its power to reach towards concrete experience, but also the romanticizing diction and attempted re-mystification of language as evinced in some of the Expressionist writing on art.

For Adorno the pre-conceptual core of the work of art is at once its expressive being-for-itself and that which renders it opaque to discursive language that attempts to master it:

> Durch den Ausdruck sperrt sich Kunst dem Füranderessein, das ihn so begierig verschlingt, und spricht an sich: das ist ihr mimetischer Vollzug. (A 7, 171)

Adorno observes that 'new art', i.e. modern art, strives to turn communicative language into mimetic language. The true language of art is speechless, he contends, and this speechlessness has precedence over the significative factor. The language of the artwork is 'im Verhältnis zur signifikativen ein Älteres aber Uneingelöstes' (A 7, 172). An artwork is thus expressive not where it expresses the subject, in other words, not where the artist intends to be expressive or to channel something of his or her experience into the work, but instead where the work itself resonates with the earliest history of subjectivity and animation, in other words, where intentional control and construction on the part of the producer end:

> Ausdruck haben sie [d.h. die Kunstwerke], nicht wo sie das Subjekt mitteilen, sondern wo sie von der Urgeschichte der Subjektivität, der von Beseelung erzittern [...]. (A 7, 172)

> Der Ausdruck der Kunstwerke ist das nicht Subjektive am Subjekt, dessen eigener Ausdruck weniger als sein Abdruck [...]. (Ibid.)

This dimension of the work of art is what Adorno also calls 'das Nichtbegriffliche'. It is the moment that escapes conceptual construction. But, committed as he is to the idea that art can contain cognitive truth that can have social implications, Adorno is determined to take the work beyond an understanding of it as exclusively expressive. It is not to remain utterly opaque to discursive language; rather discursive language is to undergo some drastic modifications that will widen its horizon.

In Adorno's rethinking of philosophical methodology in his early essays, the conceptual and sensate moments of the experience of the object were to converge in a dialectical image or constellation. This meant reaffirming the impact of the pre-conceptual on the cognitive and reducing the power of instrumentalizing language. Now we find Adorno confronting the problem of how the conceptual and the non-conceptual come together in aesthetic experience. Adorno's essay on the essay, 'Der Essay als Form', is directed against the scientific and systematic claims of traditional academic criticism. Already in 'Die Aktualität der Philosophie' Adorno had refuted the idea of eternal fundamental truths holding sway over and through history, replacing it with a historical conception, whereby truth stands in an intimate and inseparable relation to historical circumstance. One of the consequences of this insight is that the place and the origin of our values remain indefinite (cf. A 1, 326). In this historical situation, the way to get at truth is solely by way of a movement from error to error, '[eine] Bewegung von Irrtum zu Irrtum' (A 1, 328). Adorno has re-wrought the notion of truth itself: in his usage, it is radically historicized, it has lost its super-historical aspirations or pretensions. In Chapter 5, the parallels to Einstein's conception of history will become clear. Einstein, like Adorno, registers the provisionality of knowledge:

> [In der] dialektische[n] Bewegung zwischen den rationalen und irrationalen, naemlich den halluzinativen Kraeften, verliert jede Erkenntnis ihren endgueltigen Sinn [...]. Damit aber wird jede Erkenntnis vorläufig und labil. (W 4, 210-11)

Einstein, however, also recognizes the provisionality of every form, and the fact that the realization of one form means the negation of others: 'Toute forme précise est un assassinat des autres versions.' (W 3, 172) He defends an understanding of forms and images as fragments, which nonetheless gain 'ihre wesentliche Bedeutung aus der

aufrührerischen Kraft, die sie bergen, und den subversiven Energien, die sie ausstrahlen' (W 3, 258).

Emphasizing the distinguishing feature of the essay form—its deliberate incompleteness and the fragmentary quality that refuses to comply with the demands of systematic treatment—Adorno determines it as concentrating instead on just those aspects that find no place in philosophical or scientific studies. It takes as its remit the dimension of reflection. But it tolerates no further prescription of its province:

> Der Essay aber läßt sich sein Ressort nicht vorschreiben. Anstatt wissenschaftlich etwas zu leisten oder künstlerisch etwas zu schaffen, spiegelt noch seine Anstrengung die Muße des Kindlichen wider, der ohne Skrupel sich entflammt an dem, was andere schon getan haben. [...] Glück und Spiel sind ihm wesentlich. (A 11, 10)

Adorno is careful, nonetheless, to insist on the distinction between the essay and poetry as regards use of language, and marks his distance in this matter from Lukács, who had called the essay 'eine Kunstform' (cf. A 11, 11). The essay should be wary of the temptation to slip into a pseudo-poetic mode of trying to immerse itself in its object by imitating the language of that object.

Here, the affinity to Einstein is troubled, as Einstein's own position in this regard is difficult. It is clear that Einstein has little time for critics who attempt to 'repaint' Expressionist images with words: he berates them for their arbitrary 'Weiterdichten' (K 3, 204). In his own criticism, however, as we have seen in Chapter 2, Einstein, for his part, is using a revised and formally informed version of 'painting with words'. 'Weiterdichten' in its arbitrary sense is vetoed by keen attention to the formal moments of the work. There is of course also an element of performative contradiction, whereby Einstein continues to insist polemically on the utter inadequacy of conceptual thought for the purpose of accessing or communicating aesthetic experience, all the while continuing to work with concepts to just that end. Although this weakens his art criticism only from the perspective of discursive rigour, it certainly does complicate it. The reader needs to be sensitive not only to the relationship between the rhetorical layers and strategies and the theoretical or immanently critical moments, but also to the shifting and development, over time and from text to text, of the conceptual figures he uses, e.g. 'totality', 'form', 'technique', 'the classical' (these last two were considered above in Chapter 2, the first two were considered earlier in this chapter).

Returning to Adorno, we find him envisaging the successful essay treading a fine line between conceptual and poetic language. He is certainly upholding the need for conceptual criticism, but has assigned to concepts a function different from the one they were to fulfil in traditional philosophical discourse. In the essay concepts can remain undefined. Rather than preventing them from approaching truth, this allows them to do so, as they work in a configuration through which the non-conceptual can be articulated. The radical move here is with Adorno's concept of truth: the essay dispenses with the traditional notion of truth and 'sucht die Wahrheitsgehalte als selber geschichtliche' (A 11, 19):

> Der Essay aber will nicht das Ewige im Vergänglichen aufsuchen und abdestillieren, sondern eher das Vergängliche verewigen. (A 11, 18)

> Der geläufige Einwand gegen ihn, er sei stückhaft und zufällig, postuliert selber die Gegebenheit von Totalität, damit aber Identität von Subjekt und Objekt, und gebärdet sich, als wäre man des Ganzen mächtig. (Ibid.)

Adorno does not only identify this kind of intellectual arrogance and historical inadequacy in such objections levelled against the essay. More generally, he discovers, like Einstein, the complicity between science's notion of the concept as 'clean', as something which can be defined and delineated exhaustively, and science's need to bolster its claim to supremacy. The relation between the scientific concept and domination is disclosed:

> Der Vorstellung des Begriffs als einer tabula rasa bedarf die Wissenschaft, um ihren Herrschaftsanspruch zu festigen; als den der Macht, welche einzig den Tisch besetzt. [...] [Der Essay] zieht ohne Apologie den Einwand auf sich, man wisse nicht über allem Zweifel, was man unter den Begriffen sich vorzustellen habe. Denn er durchschaut, daß das Verlangen nach strikten Definitionen längst dazu herhält, durch festsetzende Manipulationen der Begriffsbedeutungen das Irritierende und Gefährliche der Sachen wegzuschaffen, die in den Begriffen leben. (A 11, 20)

But on no account does Adorno take this as a reason to dispense with the concept. It makes the conceptual work all the more fraught but, as Adorno insists, it also pushes it into the foreground (cf. ibid.).

Nor does it mean dispensing with the aspiration to disciplined and responsible philosophical work, for that matter. Adorno's remarks about the bad essay, which concerns itself not with the object itself but with the personality of the artist, or with the psychology of the creative individual, in other words is uncritically beholden to an aesthetics of genius, recall many of Einstein's comments in the early pages of *Georges Braque*. 'Persönlichkeitsfimmel' was one of Einstein's biggest bugbears. Indeed, the polemical force that accompanies Adorno's remarks here suggests they could be grafted seamlessly onto some of Einstein's. Here are Adorno's remarks:

> Der Abhub verstehender Psychologie wird fusioniert mit gängigen Kategorien aus der Weltanschauung des Bildungsphilisters, wie der Persönlichkeit und dem Irrationalen. Dergleichen Essays verwechseln sich selber mit jenem Feuilleton, mit dem die Feinde der Form diese verwechseln. (A 11, 12-13)

Bearing in mind also Adorno's denunciation of 'Kulturbetrieb von Prominenz, Erfolg und Prestige marktmäßiger Erzeugnisse' (A 11, 12), here are Einstein's remarks:

> Man hat die Bilder mit Umschreibungen verhüllt und vermauert. Kunstwerke ersticken in den Schlagworten und ihr ungemeines ergreist an der üblichen Terminologie. Die durch Billigkeit betäubende Paraphrase wird sodann infektiös auf andere Monomotive mechanisch übertragen – vérole des mots – und so wuchert die Klischeemonographie, peinliches Beispiel kommerziell geschäftiger Trägheit; Namen, Zahlen und Adjektive sind auszuwechseln, der Rest paßt immer wie im ewigen Kalender. (W 3, 256)[29]

Adorno is wise to—and wary of—the tendency of intellectual freedom that has pulled itself loose from the unfreedom of academic discipline to become unfree itself and do little more than submit to or indulge the pre-existent needs of the customer. The element of irresponsibility crucial to any truth must be coupled with a responsibility towards the object of inquiry. The separation of art and science or discursive knowledge is irreversible, Adorno insists, and this, he suggests, is what those critics who indulge in pseudo-poetic musings or undisciplined and irresponsible studies have failed to grasp:

> ein Bewußtsein, dem Anschauung und Begriff, Bild und Zeichen eins wären, ist, wenn anders es je existierte, mit keinem Zauberschlag wiederherstellbar, und seine Restitution fiele zurück ins Chaotische. (A 11, 13)

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[29] The editors provide a footnote for 'vérole des mots': 'Syphillis der Wörter' (W 3, 410, footnote 12).

Adorno here underscores his distance from a naively utopian position. The thrust of 'Der Essay als Form' is nevertheless still positive, namely that truth must and can be articulated through untruth. But this truth is not a correspondence between reality and language.[30] There can be no question, to Adorno's mind, of language functioning as a means of identification. Instead, it is precisely from the hiatus between the object and the linguistic representation of it that the essay draws its critical strength. The essay's innermost formal law is that of heresy, 'Ketzerei' (A 11, 33), and its language is supremely critical because, in proto-deconstructive fashion, it not only flouts the traditional requirement of defining a position, but can also, with a cavalier disregard for systematic conclusiveness, saw away at the very branch it is sitting on:

> Er [der Essay] zehrt die Theorien auf, die ihm nah sind; seine Tendenz ist stets die zur Liquidation der Meinung, auch der, mit der er selbst anhebt. (A 11, 27)

Einstein's œuvre in its fragmentary entirety is a model for just such a-systematic inconclusiveness. Between the texts that make up Einstein's œuvre, tensions and re-orientations can be discerned that make it clear these texts are battling with, and are ultimately not beholden to, an epistemology of closure. Einstein's fundamental theoretical concerns endure; his texts amend and rescind one another. Hans Joachim Dethlefs has described Einstein's procedure therefore as follows: 'sich zu den eigenen Voraussetzungen mit der Hilfe dieser Voraussetzungen in Gegensatz setzen'.[31]

Concepts and beyond: the demands of negative dialectics

Einstein and Adorno's shared criticism of the basic tool of traditional philosophy

In the previous section, the thrust of 'Der Essay als Form' was stated as the conviction that truth must and can be articulated through untruth. Adorno further probes and develops this conviction, with a view to subjecting it even more rigorously to the

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[30] Cf. also *Negative Dialektik*: 'Nur Begriffe können vollbringen, was der Begriff verhindert. [...] Der bestimmbare Fehler aller Begriffe nötigt, andere herbeizuzitieren; darin entspringen jene Konstellationen, an die allein von der Hoffnung des Namens etwas überging. Ihm nähert die Sprache der Philosophie sich durch seine Negation. Was sie an den Worten kritisiert, ihren Anspruch unmittelbarer Wahrheit, ist stets fast die Ideologie positiver, seiender Identität von Wort und Sache.' (A 6, 62)

[31] Hans Joachim Dethlefs, 'Die Überwindung des Ästhetischen: Über Carl Einsteins Braque-Projekt', in *Text + Kritik*, 95: Carl Einstein (1987), pp. 23-43 (pp. 30-31). This description of Einstein's textual procedure will receive fuller commentary in Chapter 6, 'Einstein's antithetical argument structure'.

demands of philosophical legitimacy, or indeed with a view to re-conceiving the demands of philosophical legitimacy more thoroughly in the terms of that conviction, in *Negative Dialektik* (1966-67). In *Negative Dialektik* Adorno defines dialectics with reference to the difference between concepts and objects, underscoring the problem of all philosophy in its attempts to establish identity by way of statements. The language philosophy uses, with its ever-increasing conceptual nuance, arises from the inevitable but problematic desire to get nearer to the pre-linguistic realm. But, Adorno points out, by subjecting the non-conceptual to their stamp of identity, such attempts, rather than nearing it, marginalize, repress, and eliminate it. An instance of such repression, Adorno holds, resuming his critique of Heidegger, is the hypostatization of the copula 'is' (see A 6, 108f.).

Heidegger raises the copula 'is' to a first principle of origin, arguing that in a judgement such as 'A is X' there is an irreducible element that can be abstracted as Being. Adorno sees this as an attempt on Heidegger's part to transcend the dualism of the judgement in his striving for Being.

> Heidegger gelangt bis an die Grenze der dialektischen Einsicht in die Nichtidentität in der Identität. Aber den Widerspruch im Seinsbegriff trägt er nicht aus. Er unterdrückt ihn. Was irgend unter Sein gedacht werden kann, spottet der Identität des Begriffs mit dem von ihm Gemeinten; Heidegger jedoch traktiert es als Identität, reines es selbst Sein, bar seiner Andersheit. Die Nichtidentität in der absoluten Identität vertuscht er wie eine Familienschande. (A 6, 110-11)

For Adorno what is important is to ensure that the moment of non-identity in the judgement is not repressed, but instead emphasized to allow the subject-object dialectic to appear. In this way, every statement such as the above 'A is X' has only provisional validity: it harbours a kind of promise that holds the equation in suspense while interrogating its actual historical circumstances.

Einstein's line of argument in the posthumously published text, 'Diese Aesthetiker veranlassen uns' (W 4, 194-221), shows some striking parallels, at times in letter and in spirit, at times in spirit more than in letter, and often in more general terms, regarding the issue of epistemological validity claims and the elimination of inherent contradictions and conflicts. In the early 1930s, then, Einstein had launched a critique of

the 'A is X' judgement. It needs to be quoted at some length in order to do the argument justice:

> Mit jeder Erkenntnis und jedem Urteil vollzieht man eine Wegbewegung aus dem Konkreten. Im Urteilspraedikat wird bereits ein Wort gesetzt, das anderen Geschehnisgruppen angehoert und zu diesen ueberleitet. [...] Stets wird man durch Generalisierung und Schluß die erlebten Gegenstaende ausschalten oder strukturhaft abaendern. Der logische Schluß enthaelt eine Angleichung verschiedener Zustaende durch Eliminierung der unbequemen Merkmale, wobei wir festellen, dass Erkennen einen Versuch bedeutet, dynamische Fragmente durch Entkonkretisierung zu Ganzheiten umzufaelschen, damit die Bedingtheit der Erkenntnisse verborgen sei. (W 4, 200)

Einstein points out one of philosophy's methodological failings, at the root of which is, he claims, a drive to posit and galvanize continuity:

> Jede Problemstellung enthaelt den peinlichen Sachbestand, dass zunaechst ein X als problematisch behandelt wird, waehrend die Gesamtheit der anderen Fragen gleichzeitig als unproblematisch hingestellt wird. Hier fasst man eine methodische Faelschung der Philosophie. [...] Wollte man aber die Erkenntnis zu einem allgemein geltenden System umfaelschen, so galt es, die Antinomien und Konflikte hinwegzuräumen und damit eine Kontinuitaet des Geschehens zu erreichen.' (W 4, 202-03)

As we have seen, Einstein, like Adorno, stresses the provisional character of all philosophical knowledge (W 4, 210-11). For Einstein, however, this appears to be more a matter for continued scepticism and less a challenge to conceptual work to overcome the limitations of concepts. In this regard, one might say that Einstein and Adorno coincide to a considerable extent in their diagnoses of the ills of philosophy, but not in their remedies.

And yet Einstein is no outright irrationalist; he does not, for all his polemics against the concept, advocate abandoning thinking. What he advocates is a revision of the idea of thinking to allow it to include the rationally inconceivable and irreducible leaps of the mind that give birth to genuinely new knowledge. This will be demonstrated in detail in Chapter 4. There, the connection to a revised notion of sovereign subjectivity will be considered; it is just such a notion that drives Adorno's re-working of the concept of the sublime. It can therefore be provisionally contended that broadly, or at a 'macro' level, their remedies, and not only their diagnoses coincide. But at a 'micro' level their respective means to those remedies differ somewhat: Einstein's conception emerges from

a context informed partly by *Lebensphilosophie*, ethnology and sociology, and by a pessimistic language criticism that sometimes causes him to manoeuvre around historically problematic concepts rather than confronting them head-on.

Contradiction and paradox: from saying the unsayable to seeing the invisible

Adorno, it has been established, holds on steadfastly to the notion of conceptual procedures or work that he himself had described as problematic. But this work appears under a different sign in his conception of dialectics: he stresses contradiction rather than synthesis:

> Der Widerspruch ist das Nichtidentische unter dem Aspekt der Nichtidentität; der Primat des Widerspruchsprinzips in der Dialektik mißt das Heterogene am Einheitsdenken. Indem es auf seine Grenze aufprallt, übersteigt es sich. (A 6, 17)

Yet this radical consciousness of non-identity needs to be expressed in philosophical, i.e. conceptual language. The toughest—and most pressing—challenge for philosophy thus presents itself as (against Wittgenstein) 'zu sagen, was nicht sich sagen läßt' (A 6, 21) or 'das Unausdrückbare auszudrücken' (A 6, 114). This is a demand that implicates the body, too: as Adorno points out in *Negative Dialektik*, the 'physis' is the basis of all philosophizing, which however has traditionally constructed itself around an elimination of this fact:

> Die subjekt-immanente Rekonstruktion der Dingwelt hätte die Basis ihrer Hierarchie, eben die Empfindung, nicht ohne die Physis, die autarkische Erkenntnistheorie erst über ihr aufbauen möchte. Irreduzibel ist das somatische Moment als das nicht rein cognitive an der Erkenntnis. [...] Traditionelle Philosophie hat das ihr Heterogene durch den Zuschnitt ihrer Kategorien verhext. Weder Subjekt noch Objekt sind ein nach der Hegelschen Redeweise bloß 'Gesetztes'. (A 6, 194)

The reified antagonism of subject and object, which a renewed sublime experience is to challenge, is thus not to be taken to be insurmountable:

> Das erst erklärt vollends, warum der Antagonismus, den Philosophie in die Worte Subjekt und Objekt kleidete, nicht als Ursachverhalt zu deuten sei. Sonst würde der Geist zum schlechthin Anderen des Körpers gemacht, im Widerspruch zu seinem immanent Somatischen [...]. (A 6, 194)

Undoing the acceptance of the reified antagonism of subject and object is, for Adorno, a first step towards understanding the constructedness, as opposed to any natural givenness, of all human affairs. What needs to be understood if there is to be even a possibility of change is that the status quo is perpetuated first and foremost by a continued investment in its power on the part of that majority which has in fact the least access to any kind of social or political power. The perpetuation is predicated on the normative power of the factual. It is parallelled in philosophy by the surrender to the non-conceptual, which culminates in a fetishization of it. Yet in philosophy, that fetishization veers around into a tyranny against the non-conceptual and a systematic repression of it at all costs:

> Philosophie schöpft, was irgend sie noch legitimiert, aus einem Negativen: daß jenes Unauflösliche, vor dem sie kapitulierte und von dem der Idealismus abgleitet, in seinem So-und-nicht-anders-Sein doch wiederum ein Fetisch ist, der der Irrevokabilität des Seienden. Er zergeht vor der Einsicht, daß es nicht einfach so und nicht anders ist, sondern unter Bedingungen wurde. Dies Werden verschwindet und wohnt in der Sache, so wenig auf deren Begriff stillzustellen, wie von seinem Resultat abzuspalten und zu vergessen. (A 6, 62)[32]

In the face of this pervasive tendency toward a fetishized and therefore deterministic and fatalistic understanding of being and beings,[33] the task of negative dialectics is to redeem the possible, which has been eliminated from things, made virtually invisible in them, to the point of persisting only as a fleeting glance, a look that they still secrete for those who care to seek it:

> Womit negative Dialektik ihre verhärteten Gegenstände durchdringt, ist die Möglichkeit,

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[32] Adorno says of this 'Werden' immediately after the sentences quoted above that it is similar to 'zeitliche Erfahrung'. This is of interest in light of the fact that it is through his engagement with problematics of 'zeitliche Erfahrung' in literature and painting that Carl Einstein comes to the epistemologically nuanced stance in 'Il se pose la question' (W 4, 177-93) regarding the coming-into-being of concepts and the failure to understand the broader potential of cognition.

[33] On Einstein's parallel critique of deterministic and therefore ultimately conservative theories of history, humanity and society, see Chapter 5, 'Einstein's critiques of determinism and progress' and Chapter 6, 'Reactions to massification'. Einstein and Adorno share an insight into the prevalence of the fetish mechanism in modern society and how it keeps the notion of determinism alive, thus keeping at bay even the thought that things could be otherwise. In the quotation above Adorno ascribes the fetish mechanism directly to the philosophers themselves. In *Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen* Einstein ascribes it to the relation the populace has to the intellectual produce the philosophers etc. have on offer: 'Die Intellektuellen rechneten mit der Enttäuschtheit der Menschen und verkauften Feticheuren gleich imaginativ erfüllte

um die ihre Wirklichkeit betrogen hat und die doch aus einem jeden blickt. (A 6, 62)

Adorno's recourse to the visual metaphor ('blickt') at this point not only calls to mind his aesthetic theory, in which 'Schein' and 'blicken' are critical concepts. It also underscores the impact of the renewed subject-object relationship: the possibility residing in the object is that which in the object looks back at the curious subject. But the use of the visual metaphor also recalls an aspect of the Romantic literary tradition, the eye metaphor, found in the Tieck story discussed in Chapter 1 and treated in Hartmut Böhme's article 'Das Steinerne: Anmerkungen zur Theorie des Erhabenen aus dem Blick des "Menschenfremdesten"'.[34]

This idea of something looking back can be found in Einstein's theory of Cubist painting. There is something looking back at the viewer of the painting. Within a similarly renewed subject-object relationship, the painting confronts the curious viewer with the process of viewing itself, in other words, turns the viewer's gaze out onto that viewer. The painting thus effects a new kind of secularized aura.

Seeing—'die Kraft des Schauens wiederfinde[n]' (W 3, 375)—and the sublime converge in a certain sense in Einstein's theory, too. The ability to see something otherwise unseen is at the core of his renewed idea of aesthetic experience. That experience is predicated on access to 'die unsichtbaren Kraefte' (W 4, 358) or simply 'das Unsichtbare' (W 3, 374), which designates, in Einstein's theory, the wealth of potential assumed to lie beyond conscious experience and conceptualization. It is this potential that is harboured by the successful work of art, in which, as Einstein says, 'das noch nicht Seiende' gains 'besondere Kraft' (W 3, 374). Adorno, in *Ästhetische Theorie*, writes also of the utopian power residing in the work of art, and the impeded route to, or extremely vulnerable potential of, that utopian power. It is governed by 'das Finstere': 'Weil aber der Kunst ihre Utopie, das noch nicht Seiende, schwarz verhängt ist, bleibt sie durch all ihre Vermittlung hindurch Erinnerung, die an das Mögliche gegen das Wirkliche, das jenes verdrängte' (A 7, 204). The intricacy and paradoxical nature of

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Wunschträume als Heilmittel. Damit verhinderten sie vielleicht, daß die faktische Unzufriedenheit ernstere Folgen zeitigte.' (FF, 70/108)

[34] Hartmut Böhme, 'Das Steinerne: Anmerkungen zur Theorie des Erhabenen aus dem Blick des 'Menschenfremdesten'', in *Das Erhabene: zwischen Grenzerfahrung und Grössenwahn*, ed. by Christine Pries (Weinheim: VCH, Acta Humaniora, 1989), pp. 119-142.

Adorno's notion of utopia will need to be borne in mind when approaching Einstein's in relation to 'Il se pose la question' and *Georges Braque*.

Like Adorno's 'Nichtbegriffliche', too, the potential Einstein ascribes to the work of art will not allow itself to be accessed with the usual tools of cognition. Those tools and what they produce bypass it by the very nature of their constitution: they belong to a different order from it. If it is to be accessed at all, a different approach is required. Adorno and Einstein coincide in their recourse to a theory based in part on phylogenetic argument: they share the conviction that older mimetic practices such as those involved in magic and animism may have something to offer reified experience, cognition and society, in terms of a corrective. Between the next section, which focuses on Adorno's aesthetic theory as an aesthetic of the sublime, and the next chapters, which focus on Einstein's changing position with regard to form and subjectivity, the proximity of Einstein's theory to that of Adorno's will be critically explored.

Adorno and the sublime

Introduction

The issues under discussion in the previous sections explored the proximity between Einstein and Adorno, but have also provided a lead-in to an elucidation of Adorno's ideas in *Ästhetische Theorie* on and as an aesthetics of the sublime. The authentic work of art is, for Adorno, one chink in the wall of the 'Massenbetrug' perpetrated by the culture industry, one glimpse at how the world might look freed from the snare of blind domination. *Ästhetische Theorie* must therefore confront, in relation to the concept of beauty and the work of art in society, the issues of chief concern since *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, namely the imbrication of subjectivity, domination/repression, and representation:

> Die Distanz des Subjekts zum Objekt, Voraussetzung der Abstraktion, gründet in der Distanz zur Sache, die der Herr durch den Beherrschten gewinnt. [...] Die Allgemeinheit der Gedanken, wie die diskursive Logik sie entwickelt, die Herrschaft in der Sphäre des Begriffs, erhebt sich auf dem Fundament der Herrschaft in der Wirklichkeit. (A 3, 30)

But *Ästhetische Theorie* must now also confront the question of whether and how philosophy, and now more pertinently aesthetics, can manoeuvre its way out of this

conundrum. These are the important issues Einstein's aesthetics grapple with also, his troubled and polemical stance on the concept notwithstanding. Taking cues from some of the recent research on Adorno's *Ästhetische Theorie*, notably Albrecht Wellmer's 'Adorno, die Moderne und das Erhabene' and Wolfgang Welsch's 'Adornos Ästhetik: eine implizite Ästhetik des Erhabenen', the case will be made for re-reading what has often been conceived of and interpreted as an aesthetic theory of reconciliation.[35] It will be read instead as a theory that is not only predicated on disjunction, paradox and incommensurability, but actually requires these moments to persist, in a movement that projects the theory out beyond itself, a dynamic that reflects that of the feeling of sublime experience itself. This connection between the paradox inherent in the *feeling* or *experience* of the sublime and the infiltration of a *theory* of the sublime has been underlined by Christine Pries:

> Das Paradox entsteht, weil mit dem Erhabenen in all seinen Ausprägungen etwas Unmögliches versucht wird, nämlich die Benennung von etwas Unnennbarem, kantisch gesprochen: die Darstellung von etwas Undarstellbarem (der Idee). Wenn das Erhabene selbst immer schon etwas Unnennbares zu bezeichnen sucht und mehr oder weniger daran scheitert bzw. wenn dieses Unnennbare sich nur in einem *Gefühl* äußert, dann erscheint es kaum aussichtsreich, dies in einer Theorie des Erhabenen auf den Begriff bringen zu wollen. Die Theorie des Erhabenen müßte gewissermaßen selbst erhaben sein.[36]

A theory of the sublime becoming of necessity a sublime theory means that in some way the theory would exceed itself, drive itself into a paralyzing contradiction with itself, cause itself to lurch headlong into its own inadequacy, as the imagination does when faced with the excessive impact of the unnameable or unrepresentable that is the *sine qua non* of the sublime experience. The fact that the unnameable comes only in the form of a *feeling* will be of special significance in what follows.

At this point the underlying aim here might be recalled. Initially the significance of the sublime for the concept of form in Adorno's theory will be uncovered. Einstein's concept of form was considered earlier in this chapter; it will also feature again in the

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[35] Albrecht Wellmer, 'Adorno, die Moderne und das Erhabene', in *Ästhetik im Widerstreit: Interventionen zum Werk von Jean-François Lyotard*, ed. by Wolfgang Welsch and Christine Pries (Weinheim: VCH, Acta Humaniora, 1991), pp. 45-66. Wolfgang Welsch, 'Adornos Ästhetik: eine implizite Ästhetik des Erhabenen', in *Das Erhabene: zwischen Grenzerfahrung und Grössenwahn*, ed. by Christine Pries, (Weinheim: VCH, Acta Humaniora, 1989), pp. 185-213.

[36] *Das Erhabene*, p. 6.

next chapters. The current focus on Adorno and his concept of form will allow a more thorough understanding of the tensions and problems in Einstein's late works as they relate to each other. With this aim in mind, a useful starting point is to gauge why both Adorno and Einstein have *more or less covert* recourse to a paradigm or concept with an important function in the historical tradition of aesthetics since the eighteenth century.

The quiet sublime

Adorno's recourse to the sublime is less covert than Einstein's. Adorno's aesthetic theory certainly does not at any point declare itself to be an aesthetics of the sublime. A critical and strategic dis- and reassembly of what constitutes the sublime experience takes place in the section 'Das Erhabene in Natur und Kunst; Erhabenes und Spiel' in the chapter 'Zur Theorie des Kunstwerks' of *Ästhetische Theorie* (cf. A 7, 293-96), but nowhere is there an explicit indication that what is theorized there is, in import, to stand pars pro toto for the entire work. In that section we find Adorno, as his self-imposed task demands, confronting head-on the decayed language of philosophy and neither working with a word the meaning of which is quietly accepted as given, nor inventing a word in order to side-step a historically 'compromised' or loaded one. Adorno's work takes the decayed terms of philosophy and philosophical aesthetics to task with their historical baggage in tow and attempts to recast what they could usefully mean in a changed context. That context is one in which philosophy must still be 'done'; the later Adorno stubbornly defends the task of philosophy without providing it with a positive programme, and without even assuming its legitimacy to be beyond question. In a sense, it remains for philosophy to do what it never successfully can. For Adorno philosophy, and particularly aesthetics, as will become clearer by the end of this chapter, is 'Sisyphusarbeit' (A 6, 114).[37] That is the quintessential contradictory project, and paradox certainly has a great role to play in it. It is the infinite challenge, the open-endedness, the self-transcendence

[37] It is possible that Adorno derived this term as a name for the work of the philosopher from the French Surrealist Louis Aragon. In *Le paysan de Paris* Aragon writes: 'Une philosophie ne saurit *réussir*. C'est à la grandeur de son objet qu'elle emprunte sa propre grandeur, elle la conserve dans l'échec. Aussi dans l'instant que je constate celui de l'idéalisme transcendental, je salue cette entreprise [...] comme une étape nécessaire de l'esprit. Dans sa marche vers le concret qu'il ne s'embarrasse pas pourtant de l'assentiment passager donné à un système. Il n'y a plus de repos pour Sisyphe, mais sa pierre ne retombe pas, elle monte, et ne doit cesser de monter.' Louis Aragon, *Le paysan de Paris* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), pp. 239-40.

of art and theory which is nonetheless never a final self-transcendence,[38] that Adorno's thinking on the sublime at once demonstrates and advocates.

In purely positivistic terms, the words 'das Schöne', the beautiful, and 'Versöhnung', reconciliation, appear with much greater frequency than 'das Erhabene', the sublime, in the body of text that is *Ästhetische Theorie*. And it is indeed the case that Adorno's main focus, even as he redrafts the planes of aesthetic theory, is the beautiful. But what will be argued here is that 'das Schöne' in Adorno's aesthetic theory, despite its apparent precedence in the text of *Ästhetische Theorie*, can best be understood if we follow how Adorno has recast it as being derived from an 'Erhabenes'. This 'Erhabenes', for its part, undergoes transformation in relation to the historical tradition of 'das Erhabene', the sublime.[39]

It was noted a moment ago that Adorno, in the section of *Ästhetische Theorie* dealing with the sublime, confronts head-on the decayed language of philosophy and philosophical aesthetics and neither quietly accepts the meaning of the word as given nor invents a different word in order to avoid the baggage of the historical one. Einstein, for his part, goes a third way, choosing neither option of the alternative 'ein Wort als vorgegeben denken' or 'ein Wort erfinden' (A 1, 369). The term 'erhaben' itself is not used, nor is there any explicit reflection on the concept in any of its historical guises, nor is any explicit attempt made to rejuvenate or rehabilitate the concept. Einstein's recourse to the sublime is, one can safely say then, the more covert. Far from preventing critical reflection on the matter, however, this simply means that none of it is happening with explicit reference to the sublime. Earlier in this chapter Einstein's procedure with concepts was discussed. Chapter 2 has shown in relation to ekphrasis, and the next chapter will show in relation to subjectivity and the sublime, how critical evaluation and reworking of historically and philosophically entrenched patterns and concepts can occur within theoretical texts that use the historically and philosophically troubled terminology only selectively.

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[38] On this point I would contend against Albrecht Wellmer that '[d]ie Hoffnung auf totale Versöhnung' (Wellmer, 'Adorno, die Moderne und das Erhabene', p. 64), while standing radically opposed to the letter of Adorno's philosophy and aesthetics, stands equally opposed to their spirit.

[39] The historical connection between the sublime and the ugly as united in their opposition to the beautiful, the keywords being formlessness and fear, is well documented. Adorno, too, alludes to this connection with reference to cruelty in the work of art in the section 'Zum Begriff des Schönen' in the chapter 'Zu den Kategorien des Häßlichen, des Schönen und der Technik' (cf. A 7, 79-81). It is telling, then, that in the

A janus-faced concept

With the sublime we are dealing with one such loaded concept, which by the mid-twentieth century has, one might say, a criminal record. But this too, like the sublime feeling, is double-sided. In the two-and-a-half century old history of the philosophical discipline of aesthetics it is the aesthetic of the sublime, as opposed to that of the beautiful, that defended art's independence with regard to the philosophical concept. The beautiful was, to extend the analogy, quietly guilty of white-collar crime. Synonymous with harmony, the beautiful could by dint of its positive and conciliatory quality be seamlessly integrated into a wider systematic philosophy. It was thus the beautiful that proved liable for complicity in the systematizing drive in aesthetics, which was just a symptom of the systematizing crusade in philosophy as a whole. Aesthetics was to be a sub-discipline of such systematic philosophy, where the beautiful could, as analogon, provide a link between truth and moral correctness or good action. The sublime was that fraught and marginalized (non-)province or adjunct[40] where recalcitrant contradictions, ruptures and incongruities could find a voice, albeit a muffled one, seemingly without impacting on the one overpowering voice of the compulsion to systematic closure.

That, however, is just one side of the issue. In Chapter 1, the darker side was also traced—the side that lays bare the totalizing tendencies within the Enlightenment's concept of reason. On this side the sublime is aligned with what Wolfgang Welsch aptly calls a 'bombastische[r] Geistbegriff'.[41] For both Einstein and Adorno the notion of the sublime in this sense is imbricated—and implicated—in the worst world-founding excesses of the philosophical tradition that foregrounds 'Geist', German Idealism. That in its turn has two sides, a comic and an utterly tragic one. On the comic side, the excesses of Idealism have coaxed the category of the sublime into a reversal of its initial significance: what was once sublime and momentous is now just ludicrous and faintly

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same section Adorno remarks, 'Wenn überhaupt, ist das Schöne eher im Häßlichen entsprungen als umgekehrt.' (A 7, 81)

[40] It is interesting to note that in Kant's *Critik der Urtheilskraft* the section on the sublime, which is of no small significance for his overall project and has since received enormous critical attention, appears as a kind of isolated or extraneous piece of text within the structure of the full work. It is not connected either to what goes before it or what comes after it, and it does not sit easily with his stipulations regarding taste in his discussion of the beautiful. See Immanuel Kant, *Kant's Three Critiques*, with a new introduction by Lewis White Beck, 5 vols (London: Routledge/Thoemmes, 1994), V: *Critik der Urtheilskraft* (text based on the 2nd edn from 1793). The section dealing with the sublime is 'Zweites Buch': 'Analytik des Erhabenen', §23-29, pp. 74-131.

[41] Welsch, 'Adornos Ästhetik', p. 187.

absurd. Adorno maintains at one point, even, that Idealism acted here only as a kind of catalyst, in that such a reversal was immanent to the dynamic of the category of the sublime itself from the beginning:

> Konkreten Kunstwerken gegenüber wäre vom Erhabenen überhaupt nicht mehr zu reden ohne das Salbadern von Kulturreligion, und das rührt her von der Dynamik der Kategorie selber. (A 7, 295)

Quoting Napoleon's famous quip, uttered to the Polish ambassador after the retreat from Moscow, from the sublime to the ridiculous is just one step, Adorno comments:

> An Ort und Stelle meinte der Satz grandiosen Stil, pathetischen Vortrag, der, durchs Mißverhältnis zwischen seinem Anspruch und seiner möglichen Erfüllung, meist durch ein sich einschleichendes Pedestres, Komik bewirkte. (A 7, 295)

Then focusing more sharply on the Kantian version of the sublime, Adorno points out just such a discrepancy between claim and fulfilment:

> Durch den Triumph des Intelligiblen im Einzelnen, der geistig dem Tod standhält, plustert er sich auf, als wäre er, Träger des Geistes, trotz allem [d.h. trotz der Hinfälligkeit des empirischen Einzelwesens] absolut. Das überantwortet ihn der Komik. Dem Tragischen selber schreibt avancierte Kunst die Komödie, Erhabenes und Spiel konvergieren. (A 7, 295)

The last sentence here suggests the anachronism of the tragic in its traditional sense. Great and heroic characters—whether within the artwork or as the artists themselves—struggle with what looks like sovereignty over a monstrous fate that they bend to their iron will, and fail, feeding the audience its craved catharsis. Advanced art writes instead the comedy of the tragic, the (tragic) comedy about no longer being in a position to write the tragic tragically, as pathos has worn thin.[42] Besides, as Adorno points out, to tie the question of the greatness of a work of art to that of how great its subject matter is in terms of social status is a nonsense. On this point Adorno and Einstein concur. Einstein's critique of the imbrication of power and representation, developed already during the

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[42] It thus comes as no surprise that the name Beckett stands for this idea in Adorno's writing. Cf. also Rüdiger Bubner, 'The Central Idea of Adorno's Philosophy', in *The Semblance of Subjectivity: Essays in Adorno's Aesthetic Theory*, ed. by Tom Huhn and Lambert Zuidervaart (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Intitute of Technology Press, 1997), pp. 147-75 (174, endnote 31).

early part of his career, is succinctly expressed in posthumously published fragments from the 1930s:

> Die Bildung der Sphäre des Höheren, die bestimmten Machtgruppen entspricht. [...] Machtgruppe als Auftraggeber. [...] Die religiöse und gesellschaftliche Hierarchie und die Komposition. Die religiöse und soziale Wertung als kompositioneller Faktor und ihr Einfluss auf die ästhetische Wertung. (W 4, 308-09)

In 'A propos ...' from 1930 he writes:

> Man fabriziert die große Eitelkeit und kleine Unsterblichkeit. Man züchtet emsig Personenrummel und Ewigkeitsnepp. Der Schreiber betreibt professionelle Heldenverehrung, und narzistische Zwerge markieren Genie. (W 3, 149-50)

In a review of the 'Herbstausstellung am Kurfürstendamm' from 1913, Einstein had cited the issue of quantitative greatness as a further mistaken measure: 'Denn deutsche Komposition drückt sich nur meterweise aus; Kraft wird doch gar zu gern gegen zahlenmäßige Größe eingetauscht.' (W 1, 171)

Adorno, then, mounts a forceful critique of the cultic elevation of artworks which concern themselves 'mit irgendwelchen erhabenen Vorgängen' (A 7, 224) and, registering an 'Unbehagen an den sogenannten großen Stoffen' (ibid.), he warns against 'die Verwechslung der Intention [...] mit dem Gehalt' (A 7, 226). The authenticity of what the artwork presents, what it does formally, is the indicator of its greatness, not some notion of the importance of its content:

> Im Wie der Malweise können unvergleichlich viel tiefere, auch gesellschaftlich relevantere Erfahrungen sich niederschlagen als in treuen Portraits von Generalen und Revolutionshelden. (A 7, 225)

What masqueraded as sublime in the bombast of older art, where it was sufficient to produce such portraits, amounts to little more than 'Frucht von Ideologie, von Respekt vor Macht und Größe' (A 7, 224). It is unmasked by van Gogh's painting a chair or a couple of sunflowers in such a way 'daß die Bilder vom Sturm all der Emotionen toben, in deren Erfahrung das Individuum seiner Epoche erstmals die geschichtliche Katastrophe registrierte.' (Ibid.) Modern art thus debunks the relevance of the 'what' in favour of the 'how'; it demonstrates the immense artistic impact, the intensity that can be

generated by what traditional art would have considered at best slight subject matter, at worst no subject matter at all for art.

For Adorno as well as Einstein, to speak of works of art in terms of the sublime would yield nothing but trite and sanctimonious waffle, now that the historical conditions for repeating this pattern have become suspect and ultimately critically transparent. To speak of the sublime at all then, has in one sense become laughable. There is a risk of seeming in complicity with pomp and bombast, and a pathos that topples over into kitsch ('Was als erhaben auftritt, klingt hohl.' (A 7, 294)). And there is the attendant risk of not taking the 'geschichtliche Katastrophe' seriously.[43] These risks go some way towards clarifying why even Adorno, who otherwise tends to approach even the most compromised of terminology with an unflinching sangfroid, prefers to limit the overt discussion of the sublime to a couple of pages and allow the actual reworking of it as an aesthetic category to proceed at a less than obvious level.

The 'return to Nature': part of the problem, not the solution

Looking now at the tragic side of the two-sided problem with bombastic 'Geist', for Adorno the recent experience of fascism represents the most heinous and one-dimensional outgrowth of the traditional concept of the sublime. Unlike other interpretations of fascism, e.g. that of Georg Lukács, as pure irrationalism, Adorno's interpretation sees fascism as a system in which irrationalism and rationality are fused in a drive towards a totally homogeneous and efficient society under a régime of charismatic power. In early twentieth-century Europe a hypertrophied rationality was grafted onto a technology that, as Walter Benjamin observes in his essay on the work of art, had in its development far outstripped its users' capabilities to manage it. It was a case of the most uncritical harnessing of just that brand of self-sufficient 'Geist' that drew its sham sovereignty from the ruthless domination, annihilation even, of the other.

To Einstein as to Adorno the all-powerful subject of Idealism, as epitomized in the teleological self-aggrandizing or reason-aggrandizing manoeuvre of the sublime experience in Kant, represents a subjectivity predicated on control—control over outer and inner nature:

> Was an der Natur erhaben sei, ist bei ihm [i.e. Kant] nichts anderes als eben die

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[43] Just what this historical catastrophe involves is addressed further below.

Autonomie des Geistes angesichts der Übermacht des sinnlichen Daseins. (A 7, 143)

Control over inner nature becomes repressive domination; absolute mind over matter is the precondition for the ability to withstand not only the threat of powerful nature outside oneself but also the natural within. Much of what Freud theorized in *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur* (1930) Einstein had tapped into in the preceding decade and Adorno was aware of—and by no means uncritically—in the succeeding decades. For both Einstein and Adorno what has been neglected is nature, outer nature in the form of the object, matter, the other, but also—and the neglect of outer nature is a symptom of this—inner nature, those levels or dimensions of the self that have been systematically suppressed, tabooized and marginalized, including whole swathes of perceptual potential, and thus experiential potential relating to the senses. But no more so than for Adorno does this necessitate for Einstein a naive project of 'getting back to nature'. Adorno comments:

> Das Naturschöne an der erscheinenden Natur unmittelbar ist kompromittiert durch den Rousseauismus des retournons. (A 7, 106)

And Einstein observes:

> Die häufigsten und abgenutztesten Vorstellungen, die mechanisierten Erinnerungen wurden gerade mit [der Natur] verbunden. Außerdem ist das Naturerlebnis dermaßen sublimiert und aufgezüchtet worden, eine ungemeine Masse komplizierter Assoziationen sind mit ihr verbunden, sodaß das Naturerlebnis immer unzureichender primäre seelische Schichten besetzt. [...] Die Natur und das Natürliche waren Hauptargument für einen beschränkten Positivismus, und somit gewann diese banale Realität eine lächerliche Überlegenheit gegenüber der unmittelbaren und gedichteten Wirklichkeit. Das Spontane wurde übersehen oder versank vor den konventionellen Objekten zur Lüge, das Erlebnishafte wurde entwertet oder beiseite geschoben, damit die gesicherten Objekte nie erschüttert werden. (W 3, 354-55)

Both are vehement in their criticism of using nature as an escape route from the vicious circle of an ossified society that has tyranny over nature as its prime ossifying force. In *Ästhetische Theorie* Adorno writes:

> Das Glück an der Natur war verflochten mit der Konzeption des Subjekts als eines Fürsichseienden und virtuell in sich Unendlichen; so projiziert es sich auf die Natur und fühlt als Abgespaltenes ihr sich nahe; seine Ohnmacht in der zur zweiten Natur versteinerten Gesellschaft wird zum Motor der Flucht in die vermeintlich erste. (A 7, 103)

And in *Georges Braque* Einstein writes:

> Die Landschaft [...] – dies blieb vage – war Ferien von der bürgerlichen Existenz, Leben ohne Hosenträger und Stehkragen, Protest gegen Büro und Untergrundbahn, und solches nannte man Natur. In der gewöhnlichen Existenz verhielt man sich also angeblich sehr unnatürlich, doch in der Landschaft rekelten Sonntag, Schafskopf, grüner Flirt und Ferien. Kaum wagte man irgendeinen Konflikt des Menschen mit sogenannter Natur festzustellen, Dichtung flatterte als leichteres, verantwortungsloseres Dasein. (W 3, 357-58)

This kind of escapism simply repeats the problem it was meant to rectify: instead of any genuine change occurring that might dig at the causes for needing to escape, nature is roped into a scheme in which it is once again instrumentalized and most likely also exploited and abused (one might think here, for instance, of the diverse ways in which nature is harnessed to an ever-growing leisure industry) in the name of collective human 'self-fulfilment'.[44] Supposed to counter alienation, the sought immediacy of an authentic encounter with nature is nothing of the sort. It is firmly cast off by Adorno as ideologically motivated:

> Ideologie ist das Naturschöne als Subreption von Unmittelbarkeit durchs Vermittelte. (A 7, 107)

Ideology is natural beauty as the illegitimate representation, through concealment of its artifice, of immediacy by way of the mediate. In other words, presented to us as capable of giving us that longed-for direct, unalienated and illusion-free experience of nature that is to make amends for the damage done by alienated and illusion-soaked society, natural beauty is nothing more than ideology.

Part of a solution: rethinking the nature of representation

The move to redress this historical development that has fed itself on ever greater domination of nature necessitates, for Einstein and Adorno, a transformation in the

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[44] It is curious to observe to what extent this idea of 'getting back to nature' has persisted intact, and can be found in, for instance, contemporary journalistic travel writing: '[Central] Park has often been described as the lungs of New York City, a bank of trees and plants that bravely battle with the city's foul air and turn it into something a little more breathable; but the park also serves as a back garden for who knows how many millions of apartment dwellers, who retain their sanity by getting back to nature every now and then.' Paul Whitington, 'A Walk Across Gotham', *Cara*, 8 (2002), 16-22 (p. 22).

relationship between the fundamental constituents of the cognition process: sense, or feeling, and reason. This means rethinking the relation between subject and object. It also means rethinking the nature of representation, as this is how that relation finds expression in the world. This much is at stake in theories of the sublime. It is not surprising, then, to find Adorno working out a transformation of the historical category of the sublime in the context of his critical aesthetics.

At this point a summary of Welsch's argument will be presented, as it provides an extremely clear and comprehensive analysis of Adorno's transformation of the sublime and with it, an account of the tacit manoeuvre from a philosophical aesthetics conceived under the aegis of reconciliation to one predicated on the characteristics (incommensurability, conflict, paradox) and dynamics (tension) of the sublime. The substantial thrust of his argument will be given with the intention of providing a further dimension, as certain moves will be commented, and where necessary problematized, with regard to the question of representation. Form will be the focus within the wider focus of the sublime, as it is at the level of form that the intricacies of the sublime moment are played out.

The historical catastrophe referred to above in the context of Adorno's exposing the hollowness of the historical sublime in its thralldom to 'große Stoffe' is that of the violence done to nature, inner and outer, in the sustained efforts at dominating it. But catastrophic, too—as registered by so much of the cultural produce of historical modernism—is the insight into such violence and, with it, the understanding that the principles and patterns it rests on are crumbling. It is the insight into what had become a gaping rift between claim and reality, 'Sollen' and 'Sein'. Just this context is evoked by Einstein, too, at the end of the first chapter of *Georges Braque*, where he claims a necessarily subversive and negating role for art, if the catastrophic is not simply to be falsely softened (by ideological forces) and perpetuated:

> Wenn die heutige Kunst der gegebenen geschichtlichen Situation entsprechen und der Umbildung des Menschen und seiner Struktur dienen soll, so kann die aktuelle Kunst nur subversiv gedichtet sein; es gilt nicht, diese Zeit zu verhaften und Krisen abzuschwächen, sondern im Absturz der Epoche ihr Katastrophenhaftes mitzuteilen. (W 3, 260)

The idea of a kind of art that would be adequate to ('entsprechen') its epoch only in being inadequate or at odds with it ('subversiv gedichtet sein') signals a moment of paradox

and tension, features characteristic of the sublime. The critique of systematic philosophy and its relation to the historical catastrophe implied here—and shared with Adorno—becomes explicit in a letter of Einstein's to Daniel Henry Kahnweiler from June 1923:

> Ich rede nicht systematisch. Einfach weil ich mir die Luxus nicht leisten kann, über solche [ausschließlich theoretischen] Dinge nachzudenken, und weil sich darin die tägliche Katastrophe wiederholt. (EKC, 145)

A reversal

'Erhaben sollte die Größe des Menschen als eines Geistigen und Naturbezwingenden sein' (A 7, 295), Adorno says, with no illusion as to the extent of what was 'bezwungen'. But it is the 'Größe' which in this connection is so troubled, as Welsch points out in his article 'Adornos Ästhetik: eine implizite Ästhetik des Erhabenen'. Having dealt briefly with Adorno's critique of the hollow sublime, Welsch proceeds to establish how the experience of the sublime has swung around from the content of the last quotation (A 7, 295) to 'die Erfahrung des Erhabenen als Selbstbewußtsein des Menschen von seiner Naturhaftigkeit' (ibid.) and to a point at which art moves the subject faced with the sublime to tears: 'Eingedenken von Natur löst den Trotz seiner Selbstsetzung' (A 7, 410). Crying involves both the pain and the pleasure the sublime moment traditionally comprises: the painful quaking and the pleasure of release. The subject is released from its self-imposed captivity:

> Darin tritt das Ich, geistig, aus der Gefangenschaft in sich selbst heraus. Etwas von der Freiheit leuchtet auf, welche die Philosophie mit schuldhaftem Irrtum dem Gegenteil, der Selbstherrlichkeit des Subjekts, vorbehält. (A 7, 410)[45]

The key move is thus one of reversal: Adorno, in his idiosyncratic interpretation of the phenomenon, turns the paradigm of the sublime out of its traditional schema of power, superiority and seizure of control. He conceives of it instead as the experience of possible participation in, and sharing of freedom with, nature. Instead of domination in an instance where that was the norm, domination itself is transcended. Thus, Adorno can say of the sublime:

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[45] The significance in the fact that Adorno includes the word 'geistig' here ('Darin tritt das Ich, geistig, aus der Gefangenschaft ...') will be considered further below.

> In den Zügen des Herrschaftlichen, die seiner Macht und Größe [d.h. der Macht und Größe des Erhabenen] einbeschrieben sind, spricht es gegen die Herrschaft. (A 7, 293)

Domination is replaced by mimesis.[46]

The motive force behind the turnabout can certainly be found in the emphasis on the sublime as a feeling; Kant knew this, and Adorno, using it in his turn, reasons that the content or import of such a feeling cannot alone be ascribed to the 'Geist' that registers it but belongs also to nature as instigator. This anticipates a reconciliation between subject and nature and occasions for the subject a 'Selbstbesinnung auf sein eigenes Naturhaftes' (A 7, 292).

Beauty transformed

Having traced the way the experience of the sublime facilitates a two-fold liberation, that of the subject and that of nature, Wolfgang Welsch contends that this kind of experience becomes the basic experience of all modern art. Modern art which, as sublime, involves 'die Entfesselung des Elementarischen' (A 7, 292) and so compels 'Geist' into reflection on its own naturalness, becomes the historical speaker or representative of repressed nature (cf. A 7, 365) and includes a glimpse at reconciliation with nature.[47] This means, Welsch maintains, that the entirety of modern art, whether beautiful or sublime, has taken on and works out the structure of the sublime. The beautiful, for Adorno, is thus generated by the sublime and in *Ästhetische Theorie* is a cover-name for what corresponds, in its innermost structure, to the sublime experience. The trembling and convulsion that used to be associated with experiencing the sublime in nature is a constituent feature of Adorno's concept of experiencing the beautiful, but Adorno, Welsch argues, has actually left the aesthetics of the beautiful behind.[48]

This last point that Adorno has in fact left the aesthetics of the beautiful behind is somewhat contentious: one could just as easily stress Adorno's concern to reclaim and rehabilitate from a historically compromised context and tradition the terms 'beauty' and

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[46] Cf. Welsch, 'Adornos Ästhetik', p. 188. What this means for the internal structure of the work of art will be considered further below.

[47] By contrast, the older model of the sublime had forestalled any possible recognition of naturalness on the part of 'Geist'. Reason, on that model, was sent in to rescue the imagination from its disempowering confrontation with the vastness and sheer force of nature. The move was predicated on adherence to a strict line of demarcation between nature and 'Geist'; it would have been inoperable without sustained hostility to nature.

[48] Cf. Welsch, 'Adornos Ästhetik', p. 190.

'beautiful' and his insistence on using them even in the context of a transformed aesthetic theory. His aesthetics do indeed, as Welsch is at pains to convince us, work with the structure and dynamic of the sublime, and it is by understanding these that one can best begin to understand Adorno's theory. But Adorno is attempting to undo the undialectic division between sublime and beautiful and think them instead in tension with and in relation to one another. He is redefining beauty and considering what it can mean in modern art, and is adamant not to allow a usurpation of the term by ideology-driven affirmative culture. In this regard, he has recourse once again to the cunning he had ascribed to Odysseus in *Dialektik der Aufklärung*: 'Man klammert sich ans Wort, um die Sache zu ändern.' (A 3, 79) The word 'beauty' might be retained, but the aesthetic of the beautiful, rather than being left behind, as Welsch would have it, is to be transformed.

Adorno's conception of the aesthetic: sublime in key ways

Welsch proceeds to show in six steps how the codification of art in the sense of the sublime can be detected with reference to all of the key moments of Adorno's conception of the aesthetic. The latency of the sublime is emphasized: modern art is implicitly sublime, sublime on account of structure and the laws of form, not on account of content or subject matter. The first step in Welsch's demonstration is that according to Adorno art must oppose its own concept. This is the chief indicator of how Adorno's apparent aethetics of the beautiful is working with and through the idea of the sublime. The self-critical quality of taste was a component even of the traditional sublime, which confronted phenomena not already socially sanctioned and preformed. Furthermore, the internal dynamic of the sublime experience, its suspension between pleasure and pain, means it foils any peaceful synthesis and disavows any self-righteous or complacent aesthetic, and also continually confounds the grasp of taste.

Second, Adorno sees the radical negativity inherent in modern art as true heir to the sublime. Art must constantly negate its own concept because otherwise it would be indistinguishable from ideology and continue to affirm blind domination by repeating those patterns pervading a society that oppresses nature. The formation of the artwork according to its own immanent laws, independently of the need to fulfil any practical purpose, beyond instrumentality, means art can silently critique a society beholden to the opposite principle, namely exchange, where intrinsic value gets lost. The negativity of

the sublime in art allows it at once to retain its autonomy and precisely not affirm the status quo.[49]

Third, art must oppose its own concept also on account of its internal constitution. Not only does art work in collusion with domination externally by being integrated into a culture of affirmation that bolsters the status quo. But its internal 'original sin' means it must struggle against a perpetuation of domination and eternally strive to overcome its own inner tendency towards a structure of domination. By 'original sin', 'die Erbsünde des ästhetischen Geistes' (A 7, 180), Adorno means the divergence between the constructive and the mimetic aspects—the formative principles of art itself—within the work of art. According to Adorno, the constructive and mimetic aspects cannot be fully reconciled by any genuine work of art.[50] The perfectly complete, rounded and closed work of art would be the perfect manifestation of domination: it would reproduce the structure of domination by forcing unity on the divergent elements that constitute the material of any work of art that is not to be shallow, banal or mono-dimensional. For Adorno the tension or pressure needed to force any such unity must not be overcome and harmonized; instead this same pressure would inhere in consummate beauty and vouch for its inner tension. The paradox is apparent: only beauty incomplete in this way, and so forever barred from consummation or totalization, is worthy of the name. If it is successfully to avoid affirming social domination, art must strive to transcend its inner proneness to domination. Here the aesthetic of the sublime is paradigmatic: it had always defined itself 'durch den Widerstand des Geistes gegen die Übermacht' (A 7, 296). Only now it is no longer a question of resisting the superior force of nature (within or without) but instead the overbearing power of societal domination and repression.

Fourth, the fact that it is not simply a question of a straightforward negation of domination further implies the notion of the sublime. Not domination per se is disavowed by art's internal structure, but rather the conventional form of domination. Art strives toward perfection not by producing syntheses but instead by cutting through them, but

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[49] It is evident that with this dimension Adorno is underlining his distance from aestheticism, which in one respect certainly—even drastically—safeguarded the autonomy of the artwork, but overlooked or indeed failed to discern the fact that the hermetic work (e.g. of Symbolism) reaffirmed the status quo. By framing itself as having utterly severed links with reality and purged itself of all purpose and instrumentality, this kind of work clinched its own impotence vis-à-vis that reality. 'Die Phantasmagorie einer von Zwecken ungestörten ästhetischen Welt verhilft der unterästhetischen zum Alibi' (A 7, 382), Adorno observes in *Ästhetische Theorie*. The alibi referred to here is related to the 'Verblendungszusammenhang'; it points up the fact that attention is diverted from the crime of perpetuated domination.

using the same energy, the same force, which had previously been used to produce them. This means, however, that the dialectic between consonance and dissonance must be rigorously maintained: if art were to attempt to appreciate difference, take each and every element thoroughly on its own terms, or, in Adorno's phrase, do justice to the heterogeneous (cf. A 7, 285) by turning its back on unity altogether, it would defeat that very aim. It would end up being unable to articulate difference because difference is dependent on identity in order to appear as difference at all. The non-identical is not the unidentical; to keep its critical edge, it must also keep in contact, in tension with identity:

> Wie sehr ästhetische Einheit [...] Funktion des Mannigfaltigen ist, zeigt sich daran, daß Gebilde, die, aus abstrakter Feindschaft gegen Einheit, sich in die Mannigfaltigkeit aufzulösen trachten, einbüßen, wodurch das Unterschiedene zum Unterschiedenen überhaupt wird. Werke des absoluten Wechsels, der Vielheit ohne Bezug auf ein Eines, werden eben dadurch undifferenziert, monoton, ein Einerlei. (A 7, 285)

> Nur gegen Identität, in ihren Begriff fallend, ist Dissoziation überhaupt möglich; sonst wäre sie pure, unpolemische, unschuldige Vielfalt. (A 11, 300)[51]

This process, by which aesthetic unity opposes the conventional form of domination by retaining a relationship of tension with difference, also characterizes the experience of the sublime. The dynamic works in two opposing directions, there is a pulling towards and a pushing away: 'Geist und Material [entfernen] sich von einander im Bemühen, Eines zu werden' (A 7, 292). Such divergence occurs in sublime art, in which domination, rationality and synthesis are at once sought and fought.

Welsch's fifth and sixth steps draw together the previous points under the aegis of art's drive to oppose its own concept, which is a result of its orientation towards truth. The goal is a compensatory one: 'Kunst möchte [...] etwas von dem wiedergutmachen,

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[50] Cf. Welsch, 'Adornos Ästhetik', p. 192, note 8.

[51] Cf. on this point also Hauke Brunkhorst, 'Romantischer Impuls und untergründiger Surrealismus bei Adorno', in *Vernunft und Subversion: die Erbschaft von Surrealismus und kritischer Theorie*, ed. by Dietrich Hoß and Heinz Steinert (Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot, 1997), pp. 98-115 (p. 102). At this point in his argument, Wolfgang Welsch is also inadvertently demonstrating how Adorno's thinking can not only anticipate but also trounce the kind of criticism that Martin Seel levels against Welsch's own further thinking: 'Kein Heterogenes ohne Homogenes: ohne jenes Gemeinsame, aus dem das Interesse an der Verschiedenheit entspringt. [...] Wenn es also nicht auf die tatsächlich leere Aussage hinauslaufen soll, es sei eben alles und jedes ein Besonderes, das gleiche Achtung verdiene, muß angegeben werden können, mit Rücksicht worauf es geboten ist, das Besondere zu respektieren.' Martin Seel, 'Gerechtigkeit

was Geist: Gedanke wie Kunst, dem Anderen antut' (A 7, 383); 'Hier hat die Idee von Kunst als der Wiederherstellung unterdrückter und in die geschichtliche Dynamik verflochtener Natur ihren Ort' (A 7, 198).[52] The sublime experience, emancipated from its historical entanglement with imperious reason, shares this goal; it too involves an anticipation of reconciliation with nature. Furthermore, the sublime is the paradigmatic experience of overflow, of self-transcendence. Correspondingly, art which tears at the very concept of art produces 'Kunst, die in sich erzittert' (A 7, 292) and artworks for which the concept of the work of art is no longer appropriate. Adorno cites Kafka as an example (ibid.): the concept of the work of art is as inappropriate for his work as the concept of the religious ever was (the sublime, the religious and the numinous having been historically closely related categories). Such works move in to inhabit the place that has been left empty by the hollowing out of the historical sublime:

> Werke in denen die ästhetische Gestalt, unterm Druck des Wahrheitsgehalt, sich transzendiert, besetzen die Stelle, welche einst der Begriff des Erhabenen meinte. (A 7, 292)

Welsch thus concludes that art as *Ästhetische Theorie* intends it realizes the structure not of the beautiful but of the sublime, and that Adorno's aesthetics represents in letter as well as in spirit an aesthetics of the sublime.

Representation again

At this point some further remarks about representation in relation to Welsch's argument are in order. Going back to the emphasis on the sublime as a feeling, the motive force behind the turnabout that renews the sublime experience, it can be said that 'Gefühl' is what has been strange to 'Geist', what 'Geist' continuously attempted to master, to get a grip on. It is not difficult to see in this the age-old discrepancy between image and word,

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gegenüber dem Heterogenen? Ein neuer Sammelband über das Erhabene', *Merkur: Deutsche Zeitschrift für europäisches Denken*, 9/10 (1989), 916-22, (p. 921).

[52] Here Welsch's argumentation is a little unclear: it is not immediately apparent which sublime he is speaking of when he says: 'Denn im Erhabenen war es, wie gesagt, von Anfang an um die Emanzipation der Natur aus der Unterdrückung durch den Geist und um die Antizipation einer Versöhnung mit Natur gegangen.' (Welsch, 'Adornos Ästhetik', p. 193) If we take the Kantian sublime, there is certainly an element of anticipation of a reconciliation with nature, but on the terms of an elevated subject; it is therefore more a question of the emancipation of 'Geist' from powerful nature than the other way around. It is only in the context of a renewed sublime, one which has recognized and learned from the self-

percept and concept, intuition and intellect. In this regard, another look at *Dialektik der Aufklärung* provides a backdrop, which however yields some interesting insights of its own.

Adornian mimesis: the backward-looking dimension

In the opening chapter of *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, 'Begriff der Aufklärung', Adorno discusses older magic practices in comparison with what happens in a rationalized world. The arbitrary quality of linguistic signification suppresses affinities between things, in contrast to magic, in which the image was not simply a sign for the object, but rather image and object were connected by similarity or through the name:

> Die mannigfaltigen Affinitäten zwischen Seiendem werden von der einen Beziehung zwischen sinngebendem Subjekt und sinnlosem Gegenstand, zwischen rationaler Bedeutung und zufälligem Bedeutungsträger verdrängt. Auf der magischen Stufe galten Traum und Bild nicht als bloßes Zeichen der Sache, sondern als mit dieser durch Ähnlichkeit oder durch den Namen verbunden. (A 3, 27)

Adorno observes that magic and scientific practices share the pursuit of ends, but differ in that magic pursues them through mimesis, not in a progressive distancing from the object. Criticizing Freud's ascription of 'Allmacht der Gedanken' to the primitive as well as the neurotic, Adorno reasons that there can be no 'Überschätzung der seelischen Vorgänge gegen die Realität' where thoughts and reality are not already radically sundered.[53] The process by which thoughts become independent of objects and the concomitant anchoring of the principle of subjectivity characterize a world in thrall to

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defeating delusion of the older sublime, that one can say it is a question of the emancipation of nature. It is the phrase 'von Anfang an' that is misleading.

[53] This is really not more than a quibble with Freud: the difference lies in Adorno's understanding of it as the 'primitive' *conceiving of* what he is doing as wielding power with his thoughts alone. Of course, in this sense Adorno is right: the 'primitive', to properly merit the name at all, could not have overestimated the power of his mind over reality, as he had no concept of his mind as differentiated from a reality understood as utterly external to it; he simply did this raindance, became that animal, certainly with an inherent purpose, but as a matter of praxis and without a theory of it separate from that praxis. But Freud, I suspect, never meant to represent what the 'primitive' thought or did not think about what he was doing; Freud rather gives his own point of view, or that of the rationalized Western mindset, whereby to think one can have an impact, for instance, on the weather by doing a dance amounts to overestimating the power of the human mind. Incidentally, Adorno, at one point in *Ästhetische Theorie*, again mentions this notion of Freud's, but with a qualifier that indicates he is wise to the rhetorical dimension: 'Ausdruck ist a priori ein Nachmachen. Illusionär das latent ihm innewohnende Vertrauen, es werde, indem es gesagt oder herausgeschrien wird, besser, ein magisches Rudiment, Glaube an die von Freud polemisch so genannte 'Allmacht des Gedankens'.' (A 7, 178)

science and technology: it is there that the possibility of world domination first dawns, not in the pre-scientific world:

> Die 'unerschütterliche Zuversicht auf die Möglichkeit der Weltbeherrschung', die Freud anachronistisch der Zauberei zuschreibt, entspricht erst der realitätsgerechten Weltbeherrschung mittels der gewiegteren Wissenschaft. Zur Ablösung der ortsgebundenen Praktiken des Medizinmanns durch die allumspannende industrielle Technik bedurfte es erst der Verselbständigung der Gedanken gegenüber den Objekten, wie sie im realitätsgerechten Ich vollzogen wird. (A 3, 27)[54]

In the rationalized world the manifold affinities referred to in the second-last quotation are annihiliated by identitary thinking and the functional logic of the discourse of science:

> Es ist die Identität des Geistes und ihr Korrelat, die Einheit der Natur, der die Fülle der Qualitäten erliegt. Die disqualifizierte Natur wird zum chaotischen Stoff bloßer Einteilung und das allgewaltige Selbst zum bloßen Haben, zur abstrakten Identität. [...] In [der Wissenschaft] gibt es keine spezifische Vertretbarkeit [...]. Vertretbarkeit schlägt um in universale Fungibilität. [...] Weil in der funktionalen Wissenschaft die Unterschiede so flüssig sind, daß alles in der einen Materie untergeht, versteinert der wissenschaftliche Gegenstand [...]. (A 3, 26)

With the demise of specific representability and the rise of conceptual logic, the boundaries of possible experience are drawn, its horizons narrowed:

> Was anders wäre, wird gleich gemacht. Das ist das Verdikt, das die Grenzen möglicher Erfahrung kritisch aufrichtet. [...] Aufklärung [...] schneidet das Inkommensurable weg. Nicht bloß werden im Gedanken die Qualitäten aufgelöst, sondern die Menschen zur realen Konformität gezwungen. (A 3, 28-29)

This quotation will be pursued in another direction shortly. For the moment, the emphasis on the levelling power of Enlightenment reason by way of abstract representation is the focus. This power works in collusion with industry in a process that liquidates the object:

> Die Abstrakion, das Werkzeug der Aufklärung, verhält sich zu ihren Objekten wie das

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[54] Adorno is quoting Freud, *Totem und Tabu*, in Sigmund Freud, *Gesammelte Werke* (London 1944), IX, p. 106 ff. The quotation can be found in *Gesammelte Werke: chronologisch geordnet*, ed. by Anna Freud and others, 19 vols (Frankfurt a. M.: S. Fischer, 1986-99, c. 1940-87), IX: *Totem und Tabu*, p. 110.

> Schicksal, dessen Begriff sie ausmerzt: als Liquidation. Unter der nivellierenden Herrschaft des Abstrakten, die alles in der Natur zum Wiederholbaren macht, und der Industrie, für die sie es zurichtet, wurden schließlich die Befreiten selbst zu jenem 'Trupp', den Hegel als das Resultat der Aufklärung bezeichnet hat. (A 3, 29)[55]

Over and against this manipulative tool of Enlightenment, Adorno, like Einstein before him, wishes to salvage something of the mindset of the 'primitive': its highly nuanced ability to register qualitative, and not merely quantitative, differences:

> die Einheit der Natur [...] so wenig wie die Einheit des Subjekts war von der magischen Beschwörung vorausgesetzt. (A 3, 25)

In this respect Adorno's idea of mimesis, which is already being developed in the anthropological-philosophical context of *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, is backward looking:

> In der Ablösung des magischen Erbes, der alten diffusen Vorstellungen, durch die begriffliche Einheit drückt sich die durch Befehl gegliederte, von den Freien bestimmte Verfassung des Lebens aus. Das Selbst, das die Ordnung und Unterordnung an der Unterwerfung der Welt lernte, hat bald Wahrheit überhaupt mit dem disponierenden Denken ineinsgesetzt, ohne dessen feste Unterscheidungen sie nicht bestehen kann. Es hat mit dem mimetischen Zauber die Erkenntnis tabuiert, die den Gegenstand wirklich trifft. (A 3, 30)

The subject has learned order and hierarchy by imposing these on the world, and has become blind to the difference between instrumental thinking and truth. The last sentence is of particular importance, as it claims that the mimetic capability inherent in older

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[55] A sentence cited earlier (in Chapter 2) as a point of clear concurrence between Einstein and Adorno might be recalled: 'Das Tektonische, dies Machtmittel gegen die Natur, wendet sich dann gegen den Menschen, der, wenn einmal die schützende Beschwörungsformel Erfolg brachte, sklavisch sie wiederholt und zum Fetisch seiner formalen Riten erhebt.' (K 3, 123) In *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, a little before the quotation given above, Adorno traces the roots of abstraction back to the development of unspecific representability out of specific representation in 'primitive' religious practices (see A 3, 26). In *Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen* Einstein does the same (see FF, 279/393), and then makes a similar point about the fatal limitations of the derived conceptual language. However, Einstein's point polemically ignores the potentially liberating function of abstraction. It binds the dominative use of 'Symbol und Metafer' instead into a Nietzschean polarity of the strong and the weak, in which the weak are those who have recourse to 'die metaforische Einstellung' because it provides them with 'glatte Auswege vor der unerträglichen Gewalt der Tatsachen, oder gestatte[t], Forderungen abzuwälzen'. (FF, 279/394) This can be read as a version of making 'alles in der Natur zum Wiederholbaren', which has already been highlighted as a grave concern of Einstein's. However, the strong-weak polemic also makes it a point at which the distinction between 'Kulturkritik' and 'Gesellschaftstheorie' or 'Gesellschaftsanalyse' becomes apparent. Although the boundaries are occasionally fluid in a given thinker or text, 'Kulturkritik' thematizes cultural or social phenomena, while 'Gesellschaftstheorie' and 'Gesellschaftsanalyse' analyse them in a much more detached way, with an explicit and extremely differentiated use of the conceptual heritage.

magic and shamanistic practices as well as in zoological forms of mimicry could have something to teach epistemology. For Adorno, mimesis, without which art could never come into being, becomes also a precondition for negative dialectical philosophy. To get close to the object, to give it precedence, means becoming like it, in quasi-animistic fashion. It involves making oneself similar to the environment. It is a relation of affinity, adaptation and reciprocity, a non-objectifying and indeterminate interchange with the other (or Other). The rigidity of self-identical subjectivity must be capable of being dissolved, made fluid, for that to happen. If we now look back at Adorno's comments on the way magic pursues its ends by mimesis instead of progressively distancing itself from the object, we can find out the nature of this procedure:

> Auf der magischen Stufe galten Traum und Bild nicht als bloßes Zeichen der Sache, sondern als mit dieser durch Ähnlichkeit oder durch den Namen verbunden. Die Beziehung ist nicht die der Intention sondern der Verwandtschaft. (A 3, 27)

Affinity rather than intention, i.e. rather than immediately involving a purpose or end, characterizes the relationship between the image or representation of a thing and the thing itself. It is in this way, too, that Adorno, in *Ästhetische Theorie*, characterizes the mimesis of a later age and under substantially different social circumstances (i.e. advanced capitalist as opposed to pre-scientific society) but crucial to art:

> Fortlebende [d.h. gegenüber noch in magischen Praktiken begriffene (N.C.)] Mimesis, die nichtbegriffliche Affinität des subjektiv Hervorgebrachten zu seinem Anderen, nicht Gesetzten, bestimmt Kunst als eine Gestalt der Erkenntnis [...]. (A 7, 86-87)

Adorno is not suggesting that magic practices do not serve purposes. As has already been noted, he quite explicitly states that they do. But in them, he is suggesting, a thing is not defined or experienced first and foremost instrumentally, that is, according to the purpose it is to fulfill. Instead it is experienced first and foremost holistically, as a thing with its manifold qualities. More precisely, it is not even experienced as a 'thing' at all, that is, as something definitely separated from the experiencer. It simply is the diverse qualities that are experienced while the 'thing' remains indeterminate in the sense that it has not been assigned any general determining form by an abstracting faculty.

Adornian mimesis: the forward-looking dimension

Adorno says in relation to the rise of the conceptual logic of Enlightenment reason:

> Was anders wäre, wird gleich gemacht. Das ist das Verdikt, das die Grenzen möglicher Erfahrung kritisch aufrichtet. [...] Aufklärung [...] schneidet das Inkommensurable weg. Nicht bloß werden im Gedanken die Qualitäten aufgelöst, sondern die Menschen zur realen Konformität gezwungen. (A 3, 28-29)

The excision of the incommensurable is a key notion here. It is precisely this that Adorno's rejuvenation of the concept of the sublime is intent on reversing. Adorno's reconciliation has little to do with any sentimental or straightforwardly utopian idea of restoring harmony, and much to do with salvaging the possibility of the incommensurable from a totalizing Enlightenment bent on crushing difference and dissonance.

Put in terms that highlight the affinity to Einstein, this is also the possibility of sustaining the paragon between word and image, or name and unnameable, and allowing neither one to accede to a position of domination over the other nor the false harmony of an alleged one-to-one identity. After Schelling, for whom art was 'das Vorbild der Wissenschaft, und wo die Kunst sei, soll die Wissenschaft erst hinkommen',[56] the philosophy of German Romanticism issued, with Hegel, in a clear resolution of the paragon: philosophy above, art beneath, 'Geist' out in front, 'Sinn' trailing behind it. Adorno's model instead allies a 'Glück' as 'Gefühl des Standhaltens' (A 7, 30) with art and, more specifically, with the experience of the sublime in art. This 'Standhalten', withstanding or resisting, has significance in a number of respects, all implicated in the experience of the sublime in modern art: art withstanding society; art resisting occupation by philosophy and more generally struggling to retain its autonomy; and then internally, i.e. within the work of art. 'Standhalten' in this last sense obtains in the artwork's opposition to the very concept of art. In the relation between parts and whole there is the resistance of the material elements to being assimilated into a form, to having form dictated to them, and instead form having to reckon with, and result from, following them where they themselves wish to go:

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[56] Friedrich W. J. Schelling, *Erster Entwurf eines Systems der Naturphilosophie*, in *Schellings Werke nach der Anordnung der Originalausgabe in neuer Anordnung*, ed. by Manfred Schröter, 13 vols (Munich: C. H Beck, 1965), II: *Schriften zur Naturphilosophie 1799-1801*, p. 623.

> Form objektiviert die einzelnen Impulse nur, wenn sie ihnen dorthin folgt, wohin sie von sich aus wollen. Das allein ist die Methexis des Kunstwerks an Versöhnung. (A 7, 180)

With regard to the experience of the work of art—the reception of a work that elicits a quaking response—'Standhalten' has to do with what, in the three-phase model outlined in Chapter 1, was referred to as the third or reactive phase. The 'Erschütterung', the convulsion and trembling that accompany the collapse of the boundaries of subjectivity, must be able to be shored up by some means or agent. But contrary to older models of the sublime, this agency is not to be reason completing—and relishing completion of—a self-aggrandizing manoeuvre. Quite what this agency is to be instead, will be deliberated further below and also in Chapter 4. What is needed is a genuinely strong but not bombastic subject, which can flexibly administer its own limits. This means subjectivity with sovereignty, or genuine autonomy, as opposed to a semblance of autonomy derived from a reason-bolstering, control-oriented instance of the sublime. Genuine autonomy would enable a sovereign movement between a state in which ego boundaries obtain and a state in which object and subject engage. This sovereign movement would leave the rigidity and anxiety of an older, inauthentic sovereignty behind. It would thus open the subject to new horizons, possibilities of play, since true play—play that is not scheming for some gain or other—can only occur in the absence of existential terror. Rainer Nägele, in an article on Adorno's negative dialectic in the context of poststructuralism, makes this point in relation to a passage from *Negative Dialektik*. The passage is as follows:

> The philosophical emphasis on the constitutive power of the subjective element always also closes off the truth. Thus certain animal species, such as the dinosaur Triceratops and the rhinoceros, carry armor, which protects them, as a prison, which – to speak anthropomorphically – they in vain try to get rid of. The imprisonment in the apparatus of survival might explain the particular ferociousness of rhinoceroses as well as the unadmitted and therefore all the more terrifying ferociousness of homo sapiens.[57]

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[57] Cf. Rainer Nägele, 'The Scene of the Other: Theodor W. Adorno's Negative Dialectic in the Context of Poststructuralism', in *Postmodernism and Politics*, ed. by Jonathan Arac, Theory of History and Literature, 28 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), pp. 91-111 (pp. 103-04). Nägele is quoting from *Negative Dialectics*, trans. by E. B. Ashton (New York: Seabury Press, 1973), p. 180. The passage in the German edition can be found in A 6, 181-82.

It is noteworthy, although Nägele does not draw attention to the fact, that this passage comes just after a comment on the problem of the Kantian sublime.[58] The connection to the particular perspective under discussion in this chapter—the sublime and sovereignty—is thus direct. Nägele comments:

> In light of this passage, the strengthening of the I can no longer be read as the phantasmatic fortification of ego-psychology but rather, paradoxically, as a liquification, a playfulness which, in one of his better moments, Schiller dreamed of in his aesthetics as the true essence of human beings, who are truly human only when they play. Against such an ideal, our historical status is still that of the rhinoceros.[59]

The origin of strong subjectivity

Both Wolfgang Welsch and Albrecht Wellmer, writing on Adorno and the sublime, implicitly count on such a strong, genuinely sovereign subjectivity prevailing. Welsch, discussing Adorno's version of the sublime experience, presumes on, and leaves unelaborated, a 'deeper knowledge' that accompanies, at a subterranean level, tensions within the self:

> Die Erschütterung in der Erfahrung des Erhabenen ist die der Subjektivität. Wohl geht es um Freiheit (wie Kant statuiert hatte), aber nicht (wie er meinte) als Superiorität gegenüber Natur, sondern gerade umgekehrt im Sinn einer Befreiung vom naturbeherrschenden Ich- und Subjektprinzip. Diese Befreiung schließt sowohl Momente der Nötigung wie solche des Glücks ein. Denn was das beharrenwollende Subjekt als Unlust seiner Erschütterung erfährt, das stellt sich für das tiefere Wissen, das alle Subjektanspannung untergründig begleitet, als Glück dar, als Erfüllung nämlich seiner 'Sehnsucht' nach dem 'vom subjektiven Block dem Subjekt Versperrten'.[60]

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[58] 'Seine [des Subjekts] verzweifelte Selbsterhöhung ist Reaktion auf die Erfahrung seiner Ohnmacht, die Selbstbesinnung verhindert; das absolute Bewußtsein bewußtlos. Davon legt die Kantische Moralphilosophie großartiges Zeugnis ab in dem unverschleierten Widerspruch, daß dasselbe Subjekt, welches ihm frei und erhaben heißt, als Seiendes Teil jenes Naturzusammenhangs ist, dem seine Freiheit entragen will. [...] War Herrschaft über die Natur Bedingung und Stufe der Entmythologisierung, so hätte diese auf jene Herrschaft überzugreifen, soll sie nicht doch Opfer des Mythos werden.' (A 6, 181)

[59] Nägele, 'The Scene of the Other', pp. 103-04. Note the expression of doubt that despite declarations by certain theorists of the postmodern as an age of play and playfulness already upon us, humanity is, in very fundamental ways, not (yet?) fit for or capable of genuine play. Such doubts suggest a historical determination and ideological functioning of certain strains of postmodernism, irrespective of their own claims to be in some way beyond the divisions and polarizations of ideology and inconceivable in terms of older ideas about history.

[60] Welsch, 'Adornos Ästhetik', p. 190. He is quoting from *Ästhetische Theorie*, p. 396 (=A 7, 396).

What epistemological status has this 'tiefere Wissen'? Is it conscious, sub-, pre- or unconscious? Is it rational or intuitive knowledge, neither one or somehow both? Is it really 'Wissen', or more a feeling or a conviction? Welsch leaves us guessing. Wellmer, for his part, simply mentions the strength of the subject in relation to the challenge of standing up to the experience of its own naturalness:

> Der Fortschritt des Bewußtseins, in dem der Sturz der Metaphysik sich ankündigt, bedeutet einen Fortschritt des Geistes zum Bewußtsein der eigenen Naturhaftigkeit. Die moderne Kunst ist das Eingedenken der Natur im Subjekt, gebunden an die Kraft eines Subjekts, das der Erfahrung der eigenen Naturhaftigkeit standzuhalten vermag.[61]

While Welsch and Wellmer recognize that a strong subjectivity is indispensable, neither of them questions how—or even whether—this tallies with the fact that earlier theories derived the strength of the subject from that very experience which is now being radically overhauled, indeed reversed, namely the experience of the sublime. Adorno is, however, relatively clear on this point:

> Ästhetische Entäußerung an die Sache, das Kunstwerk, erheischt kein schwaches, sich anpassendes, vielmehr ein starkes Ich. Einzig das autonome vermag sich kritisch zu wenden gegen sich und seine illusionäre Befangenheit zu durchbrechen. (A 7, 178)

> Erst das starke und entfaltete Subjekt, Produkt aller Naturbeherrschung und ihres Unrechts, hat auch die Kraft, vorm Objekt zurückzutreten und seine Selbstsetzung zu revozieren. Das Subjekt des ästhetischen Subjektivismus aber ist schwach, 'outer directed'. (A 7, 397)

The strong subject practises provisional and relative, not absolute, control over itself. It is 'inner directed'. The strong subject is one which has come through domination of nature and has become aware of how its captivity is self-inflicted—inflicted in the very moment in which it acts as if capable of complete control over nature. Einstein, as the next chapter will show, moves—implicitly—towards a renewed model of subjectivity involving just such a subject with the sovereignty to revoke its own illusory, because self-inflicted, captivity.[62] Adorno, the previous and following quotations make apparent,

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[61] Wellmer, 'Adorno, die Moderne und das Erhabene', p. 54.

[62] Cf. the following quotations, which refer to such sovereignty of the subject in an oblique but nonetheless significant way, given the context of the other writings of his analysed in this study: 'der mensch ist so

moves—explicitly—towards a renewed concept of subjectivity corresponding to the renewed reading of the sublime. This would not, however, be a kind of subjectivity that had 'outsmarted' nature in a trade-off: that result is prevented because the renewed kind of subject would of necessity retain a deep reflective understanding of its own limitations, based on its 'Naturhaftigkeit'.

Re-introducing Adorno's dialectical caveat

It would seem then, that Adorno, in this respect similarly to Einstein, is arriving by way of a phylogenetic mode of inquiry at the inkling or inception of an answer to the question of what to do with rationality turned irrational, in other words, with a reason that has forgotten 'its *raison d'être*—to eliminate suffering, to establish human well-being, to let qualitative individuality thrive'.[63] Akin to the tale of the Sorcerer's Apprentice, this irrational rationality has freed itself from its overarching purpose and yet still proceeds with series of discrete tasks according to its characteristic means-to-end instrumentalizing principle. The subjects of a society suffused with this kind of rationality may have a semblance of autonomy, but no genuine sovereignty, as they cannot exercise the liberty to determine in any given instant—and precisely not for all time or for everyone—where the limits of their rationality should end or begin. The transformed epistemological paradigm of the sublime moment in its rehabilitated form, so this line of thinking goes, while deriving a core element from pre-scientific practices, could have the corrective potential needed to end the irrational rationality that governs thought and action in advanced capitalist society.

From the point of view of the comparison between Einstein and Adorno on this issue, however, it is necessary to stress a development which makes matters more complex. While in *Dialektik der Aufklärung* a very energetic critique of narrow reason allows a relatively positive light to fall on older magic practices, with mimesis as the crucial concept, in *Ästhetische Theorie* mimesis is no less crucial a concept, but is now being woven into an even more rigorously dialectical and nuanced critique, in which the rational is advanced in a highly sophisticated way. This will be pursued shortly. For the

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geschwaecht, dass er allenthalben beweisbare gewissheit verlangt. damit verliert er das meiste' (CEA, 130), and 'eine masse von idioten erstickt europa. alle elastizitaet des individuums findet sich vernichtet.' (Ibid.)

[63] Lambert Zuidervaart, *Adorno's Aesthetic Theory: The Redemption of Illusion* (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Intitute of Technology Press, 1991), p. 135.

purposes of demonstrating the affinity between Einstein and Adorno as regards animism and magic and their epistemological implications, parallels were foregrounded, with reference to *Dialektik der Aufklärung* and certain of Einstein's works, while the dialectical caveat typical of Adorno's thinking was allowed to slip into the background.

This was a conscious strategy. It was adopted on account of the overall aim in introducing Adorno's aesthetics into a study on Einstein's: separating out the strands of the dialectic in the manner just mentioned allows us to see how much terrain Adorno and Einstein share, and how Adorno offers strategies for confronting—and this often means integrating—problems and conflicts which for Einstein remain irresoluble. It becomes easier to see how Adorno assimilates into one very complex dialectical argument, and even one text, what for Einstein remain conflicting and apparently unconnectable positions. This gives us a clearer understanding of the tensions between the texts that constitute Einstein's later work: we find him moving uncomfortably between positions which for Adorno are in no way mutually exclusive but instead, even if paradoxical when separated out, are combined to amend one another and give a very complex reading of the work of art and its function and potential in advanced capitalist society.

Now in order to gauge the extent of the affinity in a more comprehensive way, and not simply probe affinities in the individual strands, the dialectical rigour of Adorno's argument must be reintroduced. Using a quotation included above, one instance of allowing the dialectical caveat to remain out of focus is the following:

> In der Ablösung des magischen Erbes, der alten diffusen Vorstellungen, durch die begriffliche Einheit drückt sich die durch Befehl gegliederte, von den Freien bestimmte Verfassung des Lebens aus. Das Selbst, das die Ordnung und Unterordnung an der Unterwerfung der Welt lernte, hat bald Wahrheit überhaupt mit dem disponierenden Denken ineinsgesetzt, ohne dessen feste Unterscheidungen sie nicht bestehen kann. Es hat mit dem mimetischen Zauber die Erkenntnis tabuiert, die den Gegenstand wirklich trifft. (A 3, 30)

The subject has learned to equate truth with instrumental thinking. But what was elided above was the complication Adorno introduces that truth cannot exist without the sharp distinctions of just that instrumental thought. And, in a sense, truth of this kind did not need to exist before instrumental thought became so prevalent, as it is in response and as a corrective to the domination born of a progressive overemphasis on instrumental rationality that Adorno's truth operates. So even while the backward-looking element in

Adorno's concept of mimesis was stressed above, it must be taken into account that Adorno is always thinking of this regressive element in conjunction with the rational element, which together, and only together, are to point the way towards a genuinely enlightened position.

This is even more pointedly the case with *Ästhetische Theorie*. In *Dialektik der Aufklärung* the necessary distance from conventional forms of thinking about reason and rationality had been established. The text of *Ästhetische Theorie* has, so to speak, that battle behind it and can adopt an even more nuanced approach, drawing nearer again to rationality—not, of course, the rationality critiqued in Adorno's earlier work, but the transformed version of it founded in and emerging from that earlier work. Thus, while *Dialektik der Aufklärung* probes an affinity between art and older magic practices in counterdistinction to the narrowly rational practices of a Weberian disenchanted world, *Ästhetische Theorie* still emphasizes the notion that the language of the artwork is 'im Verhältnis zur signifikativen ein Älteres aber Uneingelöstes' (A 7, 172) and refers the expressive origins of the work of art back to the earliest history of subjectivity and of animation: 'Ausdruck haben sie [i.e. works of art], nicht wo sie das Subjekt mitteilen, sondern wo sie von der Urgeschichte der Subjektivität, der von Beseelung erzittern' (A 7, 172). But Adorno is nonetheless careful in this later work to play down the affinity of art to magic, to insist on the ultimate distinction between them and to distance his concept of successful art from any appearance of regression that it might get from the association:

> Die Rede vom Zauber der Kunst ist Phrase, weil Kunst allergisch ist gegen den Rückfall in Magie. (A 7, 86)

> Die Aporie der Kunst, zwischen der Regression auf buchstäbliche Magie, oder der Zession des mimetischen Impulses an dinghafte Rationalität, schreibt ihr das Bewegungsgesetz vor; nicht ist sie wegzuräumen. [...] Kunst ist Rationalität, welche diese kritisiert, ohne ihr sich zu entziehen; kein Vorrationales oder Irrationales [...]. (A 7, 87)

The tension between the mimetic and thus magic-derived aspect of the artwork and its rational or reflective aspect is what Adorno wishes to accentuate—and elaborate—here. Rather than art being a straightforward attempt at negation of, or opposition to, rationality (which would, as oppositional, always be determined by and dependent on that rationality), the critical potential of the artwork arises from its dialectical tension

between rationality and mimesis. Technique is mobilized in the opposing direction to domination. Technique and material participate in one another without one being subsumed by the other. The dialectical tension allows the mimetic impulses to be figured forth in a form that gives the lie to capitalist society's only way of thinking the relation between general and particular or between subject and object.

Construction and mimesis: the need for tension

As the fourth step in Welsch's argument suggests, it is insufficient from both the perspective of how the work functions in society and how it functions internally to think of the transformation in the relationship of domination exhibited by the artwork in terms of a straightforward eradication or abolition of domination. From the perspective of how the work functions in society, that would amount to little more than a utopian denial of the actual state of affairs and would achieve as little as any denial. Worse than that, by refusing to engage with repressive domination and change it from the inside out, art could instead fuel purely escapist fantasy and so serve not only to leave the status quo unchanged but actually to affirm and perpetuate it. From the perspective of how the work of art functions internally, if it were to simply turn its back on domination it could never hope to achieve an articulation of the diverse elements, as to articulate these elements requires that there be something against which they may be offset, something against which they may distinguish themselves. This is why Adorno insists on a tension being maintained between the mimetic and the constructive poles of the work of art.

If the constructive pole is given precedence, the work will risk untruth because not all the constitutive elements will have been fully articulated. Rather than emerging from their own dynamics and interplay, form will have been to a greater or lesser degree inflicted on them. An instance of this might be a work that is too reliant on the criteria of a canonical form, or an overtly political work, or one with predominantly propagandistic motivation. A further instance might perhaps be the work of an artist who is too insistent on subverting an existing form and is more attentive to this subversion than to the internal development of the work itself. If the mimetic pole is given precedence to the detriment of the constructive pole, then a work results which may indeed reflect some aspects of, or dominant tendencies in, society. But it will present those unreflectively, i.e. it will demonstrate through its lack of a thoroughgoing dialectical form the fact that it has relinquished its potential for critical engagement with its constitutive material, and with

that its potential for offering the recipient something more than decorative form, regressive fantasy or simplistic utopia.[64] Lambert Zuidervaart, in *Adorno's Aesthetic Theory*, comments in a similar vein on this point of Adorno's:

> If artworks were not internal processes resulting from external processes, artworks would not move in and against society. If the processes were not reified [i.e. arrested in the form of a work], artworks would not achieve the autonomy that allows them to surpass the social 'world of things,' becoming appearances of its essence, and suggesting a transformed reality [...].[65]

So it is not a question of seeking to eradicate domination (a mistake Adorno finds in some modern art, e.g. in some of the works of Expressionism and Surrealism). Nor will it do to succumb to the tendency of allowing the manifold to be drowned by the quest for unity (a mistake found more in older art and in works of popular culture). What the successful work must achieve, according to Adorno, is 'die Rettung des Vielen im Einen' (A 7, 284). This suggests that the diverse elements are indeed integrated into a form, but that they do not lose their distinctive characteristics within that form, and that their very diversity characterizes the form itself. Moreover, Adorno stresses the negative dialectical quality of the integration of the mimetic and constructive aspects into form ('Die von keinem Kunstwerk zu schlichtende Divergenz des Konstruktiven und des Mimetischen' (A 7, 180)), indicating that the only reconciliation to actually take place, the starting-point, is for us to reconcile ourselves to the idea that reconciliation will not happen:

> Zwar will das Mannigfaltige im ästhetischen Kontinuum seine Synthesis; als zugleich außerästhetisch Bestimmtes jedoch entzieht es sich ihr. Die Synthesis, die aus dem Vielen extrapoliert wird, das potentiell sie in sich hat, ist unvermeidlich auch dessen Negation.

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[64] Adorno addresses, in this context, the risk 'daß die Produkte unter inadäquate oder schwächliche Imagination herabsinken. Das Risiko ist das ästhetischer Regression. Der Ort, an dem künstlerischer Geist übers bloß Daseiende sich erhebt, ist die Vorstellung, die nicht vorm bloßen Dasein der Materialien und Verfahrungsweisen kapituliert. Seit der Emanzipation des Subjekts ist die Vermittlung des Werkes durch jenes nicht mehr zu entbehren ohne Rückschlag in schlechte Dinghaftigkeit.' (A 7, 63) An inadequate or weak imagination is, for Adorno, one that fails to mediate or move dialectically between mimesis and construction and thus loses the critical tension between them. Without construction the work would manage little more than 'Schlechte Dinghaftigkeit', bad quiddity, which would amount to an unreflected and falsely immediate representation of the constitutive material. Einstein's changing position with regard to form, regression and utopia will be investigated in the next chapters.

[65] Lambert Zuidervaart, *Adorno's Aesthetic Theory*, p. 184. Zuidervaart is quoting from the English *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. by C. Lenhardt (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), p. 119, which corresponds to A 7, 125.

> Der Ausgleich durch die Gestalt muß drinnen mißglücken, weil er draußen, meta-ästhetisch, nicht ist. Real ungeschlichtete Antagonismen lassen sich auch imaginär nicht schlichten [...]. Die Kunstwerke müssen auftreten, als wäre das Unmögliche ihnen möglich; die Idee der Vollkommenheit der Werke, von der keines, bei der Strafe seiner Nichtigkeit, sich dispensieren kann, war fragwürdig. (A 7, 252-53)

Even in the face of its having become suspect and in the knowledge of its impossibility, perfection must still be striven for by the work. But it must deny itself the achievement of that perfection.[66] Otherwise, as a work that has crystallized itself out flawlessly into an utterly perfect form, it would not only exercise absolute domination internally but also affirm and perpetuate it externally. This means, paradoxically, that for the work to be successful, its form must founder within. Domination could, in this way, be broken in action, just as it is being striven for. Right at the core of the drive to domination, there would be a thwarting of that drive. The dynamic of the sublime, and likewise art structured according to that dynamic, works in just this way: 'In den Zügen des Herrschaftlichen, die seiner Macht und Größe einbeschrieben sind, spricht es gegen die Herrschaft' (A 7, 293).

The point was made above that Adorno and Einstein share an insistence on the need for a strong subject to weather the new sublime experience. The case will be made in more detail in relation to Einstein in the next chapter. Such a strong subject would, on Adorno's view, be a product of all domination of nature and of all related injustice; it would have broken through and be able to transcend that. In other words, there is no question of reverting to a paradise lost, a garden where subject-object differentiation was yet to happen. 'Die Entzauberung der Welt ist die Ausrottung des Animismus', Adorno and Horkheimer had written in *Dialektik der Aufklärung*. But they also point out that it will not be by a re-introduction or imposition of 'Animismus' that amends will be made for the 'Entzauberung'. As in Kleist's parable, the fruit of the tree of knowledge can and must not be 'un-eaten'; it must be eaten again. In a passage in *Ästhetische Theorie* on the aporias of expression, or human expressiveness, Adorno maintains:

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[66] Cf. also Rüdiger Bubner: 'Art must simultaneously present things in two different ways. On the one hand, it must present the concrete particular as something that is not eclipsed by abstract universality but exercises its own right in harmonizing with the universal; on the other hand, art must make manifest the irreality of such a reconciliation. [...] The status of important artworks is established by the contradiction that takes shape between harmony and its disillusionment.' Rüdiger Bubner, 'The Central Idea of Adorno's Philosophy', p. 159.

> [...] die Emanzipation der Gesellschaft von der Vorherrschaft ihrer Produktionsverhältnisse hat zum Ziel die reale Herstellung des Subjekts, welche die Verhältnisse bislang verhindert haben, und Ausdruck ist nicht bloß Hybris des Subjekts, sondern Klage über sein eigenes Mißlingen als Chiffre seiner Möglichkeit. (A 7, 178)

The development of genuine subjectivity has, Adorno contends, been thwarted by the alienating relations of production. What we have seen to date is an embattled and alienated subject, which represses itself as it oppresses the other. This insight, Einstein certainly shares. In his plans for *BEB II* he comments in a colourful way on this historical situation of the subject:

> also diesmal handelt es sich nicht um die eitelkeit des nirvanas, sondern um zerstoerung der person [understood as the precondition for a new epistemological paradigm and a newly flexible subjectivity]. das wollten diese leute nicht; obwohl ihre person nur eine kette geschichtlicher belastung darstellt und sie nie ihre person realisieren durften unter den anderen regimes. person, das war zuschlagen der haustuer, die nacht oder die piège, die man dem anderen stellte. (CEA, 43)

If there is to be any hope of overcoming this historical situation of the subject, it is in the first place by the subject's own realization of its affinity to nature, Adorno maintains, and by replacing the dialectic of terror with a dialectic of liberation, in which the plaint raised by the subject's own failure would be at once the subject's codified potential. The unfolding of liberated subjectivity remains potential, a hope, and one which for Adorno is conceivable only *with* 'Geist', but particularly the 'Geist' in and of art:

> Ästhetisches Verhalten ist das ungeschwächte Korrektiv des mittlerweile zur Totalität sich aufspreizenden verdinglichten Bewußtseins. (A 7, 488)

> Nur als Geist ist Kunst der Widerspruch zur empirischen Realität, der zur bestimmten Negation der bestehenden Welteinrichtung sich bewegt. (A 7, 511-12)

Chapter 4

'Il se pose la question': The Sovereign Sublime

The problem posed

Much of the recent research on Einstein's later work, i.e. that of the 1930s—including *Georges Braque*, *Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen* and the fragmentary, partly autobiographical work *BEB II*—has sought with varying degress of success to provide a theoretical framework which would not only allow an adequate interpretation of each of these texts in isolation, with all its internal dissonances. Just as important was the question of how to interpret—plausibly, fruitfully, preferably both—the tensions and contradictions that become apparent when one text is confronted with another. I have outlined some of the chief difficulties as they have been confronted by Oehm, Schulte-Sasse, Kiefer and others. I have also indicated some further questions neglected in this line of reception, but which I consider important, indeed unavoidable, for an investigation of the relations between the modern, the Avant-garde and the postmodern within Einstein's work.

I would like to unfold one of these questions, namely about Einstein's understanding of representation within his theories of the creative process. Considerable critical attention has indeed been given to Einstein's critique of received theories of representation.[1] For all the merits of these and other relevant studies, what is missing is a

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[1] Cf. among others Oehm, *Die Kunsttheorie Carl Einsteins* (Munich: Fink, 1976), especially pp. 28-52 and 70-86; Kiefer, *Diskurswandel im Werk Carl Einsteins: Ein Beitrag zur Theorie und Geschichte der europäischen Avantgarde*, Communicatio: Studien zur europäischen Literatur- und Kulturgeschichte, 7 (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1994). The volume of *Études germaniques* devoted to Einstein also contains a number of relevant articles. To avoid repetition, since all the articles are from the same volume, the reference for the volume will be given first, followed by the individual articles with their page numbers. *Études germaniques*, 1 (1998). Igor Sokologorsky, 'Carl Einstein: la 'vision autonome' des peintres Cubistes', pp. 77-98; Gabriele Hoffmann, 'Sehen und Wahrnehmen in der Kunsttheorie von Carl Einstein', pp. 171-86; Marc-Vincent Howlett, 'Carl Einstein: réévaluation du concept de mimesis', pp. 187-200. Likewise, there has been much substantial work done on Einstein's own theories of representation. The list is too long to include in a footnote; the following give a number of different perspectives: Oehm, *Die Kunsttheorie Carl Einsteins*, pp. 36-68, 70-86, 164-79, and 191-94; Kiefer, *Diskurswandel*, pp. 58-73, 105-33, 175-83, 284-313, 354-410. *Die visuelle Wende der Moderne: Carl Einsteins 'Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts'*, ed. by Kiefer (Munich: Fink, 2003), and the volume of *Études germaniques* cited above contain diverse articles on Einstein's theories of representation. Cf. also Rüdiger Riechert, *Kunst zwischen Schöpfung und Vernichtung*, especially pp. 46-75, and Ernst Osterkamp, 'Däubler oder die Farbe – Einstein oder die Form. Bildbeschreibung zwischen Expressionismus und Kubismus', in *Beschreibungskunst* –

sustained study of the subtleties within Einstein's own theories of representation, which reveal significant shifts in emphasis, even within what are otherwise generally considered to be relatively coherent discursive phases in his œuvre. What I propose is that an examination of such shifts in emphasis can help us towards a fuller interpretation of how the discursive shifts extensively documented by Kiefer in his habilitation *Diskurswandel im Werk Carl Einsteins* come about.

It could be fairly said that the history of mimesis as the loyal imitation of nature is as old as the discourse of art. The ideal of an authentic depiction of (natural) things that can be perceived with the senses—literally a re-presentation of things perceived in the past—has a long and adventurous lineage in the history of occidental art and aesthetics, going back to Aristotle's poetics. Of course, even in its early days, the idea of mimesis as the essence of true art or true poetry did not go fully unchallenged. Philostratus placed the artist's fantasy in opposition to and ultimately above mimesis; Plotinus did not limit mimesis to the realm of things perceptible with the senses but included in it also that which is intelligible. Aristotle's concept was by far the most influential, however, and it held sway in the form of an aesthetic maxim for serious and 'high' art up to and into the nineteenth century. The Romantics had certainly begun to problematize it. But for the most part they were calling into question the (imposed) limits of traditional representation rather than toppling the ideal of authentic representation as such. For the Romantics, widening the horizons beyond what had been canonically defined as the correct and desirable way to depict a scene, to write an epic or compose a piece of music or a poem certainly involved explorations of the 'Nachtseiten' of humanity and the sciences of man.[2] This investigation was, however, itself driven by an impulse to plumb the depths of the mystery of the human condition in all its frailty and vulnerability as well as its glory and might. In short, the ideal of authentic representation remains intact. What undergoes dramatic change is the outline of the terrain which can be ploughed and sown by the artist. The limits of what can be represented while still, or rather newly,

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Kunstbeschreibung: Ekphrasis von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart, ed. by Gottfried Böhm and Helmut Pfotenhauer (Munich: Fink, 1995), pp. 543-69.

[2] The Romantics' notion of the unexplored dimension of humanity as 'Nachtseiten' has its origin in a work by Gotthilf Heinrich Schubert, *Ansichten von der Nachtseite der Naturwissenschaft*, reprint of the orig. edn from 1808 (Eschborn: Dietmar Klotz, 1992). In the notes entitled 'Das Transvisuelle. Fiktion. Ästhetizismus. Individualismus und Imagination' Einstein also uses this designation for that which encompasses myth and form but without dogma, structure and social base: 'aber Mythik u Form ohne

being considered as art are redrawn. The realms of the 'ugly', 'frightful', 'disgusting' and uncertain—objects, experiences, people, phenomena which had traditionally been located there—are part of this newly conquered terrain.[3] Authenticity remains the ideal. But the thrust of the authentic representation moves away from depicting, describing or rendering according to the way in which we know things to 'be', as based on what purports to be an objective model and loyal to a reigning aesthetic dogma. It moves instead towards depicting or rendering according to the way in which we see or feel or experience a scene, a person, etc. This is a move towards expressionism in the widest sense of the term: authentic expression of an internal sensation or feeling or state rather than imitation of something external with the postulate of objectivity.

Looking at modernism and the Avant-garde, matters get more complex again. The limits of this work will not allow more than a one-eyed glance[4] at what happens in the adventure that began as the quest for authentic representation. In the aesthetic theories and practices of modernism we can locate, depending on where we look, two mutually exclusive convictions. On the one hand we find the conviction that the means can be found for giving direct or immediate expression—that is, expression free of the conventions and thus free of the 'shop-soiledness' of sign systems—to even the most intimate, original and moving of human experiences. This means seeking a minimum distortion and maximum transmission of primal experience by the work of art. Elsewhere, the conviction holds sway that expression is always mediate, mediated in some way, and so can move in no other terrain than that of signs, shop-soiledness and all. But this is of course not to underestimate what signs can do. This second conviction leads certain artists to seek a maximum distortion of signs, to test and play with the very elasticity of signification itself. For them, the profoundest of human experiences is inseparable from signing practices, but this is no reason to decry the inadequacy of the sign(s) to the instant or feature that was to be captured.

Dogma Struktur u socialen Unterbau – also entfesselte Fantasie. [...] Wahnsinn - die Nachtseite' (W 4, 351).

[3] Cf. Winfried Menninghaus, '"Wir lernen den Ekel um." (Nietzsche) Grundlinien einer historischen Philosophie modernen Ekels', in *Große Gefühle: Bausteine menschlichen Verhaltens*, ed. by ZDF-Nachtstudio (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 2000), pp. 247-64. Especially relevant are pp. 250-52 and p. 262.

[4] With one eye we can see no depth, only surfaces. Nor with two, Einstein would add. I must limit myself to a very slight sketch of the main turns the adventure takes in modernism and the Avant-garde and am therefore aware that much of what follows is neither exhaustive nor unproblematic.

The history of the concept of the sublime, from the time of its dramatically widening currency and significance with the Romantics[5] in the late eighteenth/early nineteenth century, functions as a kind of theoretical stage on which this drama of the creative process is played out. The emergence of the concept of genius, of the 'Originalgenie', is to be understood in this context. More will be said on this point at a later stage in this work, where Einstein's critique of the concept of genius is discussed. First, however, a closer look at the concept of the sublime as Einstein tacitly works and reworks it in 'Il se pose la question' and in *Georges Braque* is needed. This, I would like to suggest, can help to establish how the two positions I mentioned in relation to representation in modernism and the Avant-garde—seeking minimum distortion of originary experience, seeking maximum distortion of signs—although issuing from the same quest for authentic representation, must part ways. Einstein's theory, however, hangs in a precarious tension between the two. A consideration of how this occurs will in turn lead us to a fresh assessment of the aporias of the Braque text.

'Il se pose la question'- introduction to the text

The text bearing this title is held as a fragment in the Einstein archive. The editors of the Berlin edition, Haarmann and Siebenhaar, date it about 1928. The internal organisation of the text, its cohesion in terms of content, suggests that it may have been the manuscript for a presentation or lecture.[6]

The question posed, Einstein's 'Hamlet-question', is whether the work of art is tautology or creation: nothing more than the tautology of an already present or given reality, or instead something which emerges from a direct and subjective reality, thus providing the possibility of creation, which would be free and undetermined by any given reality. The unfolding text pursues the criteria by which the work of art could be the latter. The problems posed by such a theory of two realities or two kinds of reality will come into focus in the next section. The text 'Il se pose la question' shares with the

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[5] It is far from my intentions to diminish the status of Burke and Kant in the development of the discourse of the sublime; their work is, and is of course also much more than, a precondition, an opening for the concept's gaining such wide currency and importance, both theoretically and practically, for the Romantics.

[6] The original typescript, with corrections and amendments, is in French. It is reprinted in W 4, 177-94. For convenience, quotations from the text will be given in German, from the translation by Carolin Hilker-Siebenhaar and Brigitte Restorff, 'Es stellt sich die Frage' (W 451-64). The French original will be referred to where necessary.

Braque text (as it does with so much of Einstein's writing) a polemical thrust, which overlaps with its critical force. Furthermore, the targets of the polemics, if not as manifold and specific as in *Georges Braque*, are certainly broadly similar: scientific and narrowly rationalistic thought, those who attempt to apply scientific principles to the study of artworks ('Man hat kürzlich versucht, Kunstwerke auf rein geometrische Gesetze zurückzuführen' (W 4, 451)), and the mimesis of nature, derided by Einstein as an old cliché. Such similarities notwithstanding, I aim to point out, by focussing more narrowly on the intricacies of the creative process itself as theorized by Einstein, where the two texts diverge in terms of their respective theories of the significance of the artwork as product of the imagination.

Flashes of the immediate: the sublime in 'Il se pose la question'

A theory of imagination and the unconscious

This section will deal with the model of the creative process elaborated by Einstein in 'Il se pose la question'. Einstein's starting point is axiomatic: art is the means to freedom.[7] Before confronting the intricacies of the creative process itself, Einstein works out a theory of the imagination and the unconscious. He presents the following hypothesis: if art is the means to freedom, then it must come from some source that is not subject to causality. He then ventures to conflate the imagination and the unconscious for the purpose of his exploration of the creative process, on the grounds that both are independent of causal logic, that is to say, they remain untouched by this mechanism of the conscious, reflective mind.

To Einstein, the unconscious is a kind of reservoir, a centre of diversity, and signs which approach it during the extrapolation of the artwork from the visionary or hallucinative moment lose the character of an organic and received reality. Instead of becoming the means for what Einstein terms 'stock-taking', that is, a purposive, instrumental and thus perceptively diminished approach to reality ('reality' here as all that is capable of being experienced), the signs react as peripheral signs of an as yet undetermined force. This force can surpass the limits of that diminished reality which is under the command of causality. The forms the unconscious throws out are never fully

explicable or comprehensible because they come from a source that defies logic and causal determination. This source, or force, withdraws the more one attempts to fix or grasp it. This in turn compels us to bring forth yet another 'Zusammenhanglosigkeit' – an 'incoherence'.

Such incoherence as form, because it defies causal logic, also defies any attempt at rational scrutiny or verification. That makes it superfluous for traditional rationality, but precisely therein lies its potential and so its value, according to Einstein. By confronting the rational mechanism with phenomena that are not yet adjusted to it, we gain some small chance of changing the mechanism.

With this theory Einstein is so far broadly in line with much of the thinking of the French Surrealist group around André Breton. Breton's theory of 'correspondances' unites elements that derive from such divergent categories of reality that reason would refuse to put them in relation to one another. The classic example is given by Lautréamont: the encounter between an umbrella, a sewing machine and an operating table.[8] The idea is not to start with the images of a conscious and consciously controlled looking but instead with images due to the productivity of the unconscious—and, moreover, of an ordinary unconscious, not just that of a 'genius'.[9] For Louis Aragon Surrealism consists in the deregulated use of the hallucinogen 'image', with each new image causing a revision of one's view of the entire universe:

> Le vice appelé *Surréalisme* est l'emploi déréglé et passionnel du stupéfiant *image*, ou plutôt de la provocation sans contrôle de l'image pour elle-même et pour ce qu'elle entraîne dans le domaine de la représentation de perturbations imprévisibles et de métamorphoses: car chaque image à chaque coup vous force à réviser tout l'Univers.[10]

This impulse is at the core of Einstein's conception, too.

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[7] This is in itself not unproblematic. A discussion of the related problems can be found in the final section of the chapter on *Georges Braque*.

[8] The three items as images can be connected associatively, for instance as follows: stitches are made during surgery, connecting the sewing machine to the operating table. The surgeon's hygiene mask worn over the mouth ends in a number of points, where the elastic is connected, and is stretched over the face like an umbrella, which prevents passage of fluids. The umbrella is like a human form, with a frame and fabric in between, like skeleton and skin.

[9] Cf. Dietmar Voss, 'Metamorphosen des Imaginären – nachmoderne Blicke auf Ästhetik, Poesie und Gesellschaft' in: *Postmoderne. Zeichen eines kulturellen Wandels*, ed. by Andreas Huyssen and Klaus R. Scherpe, 5th edn (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1997), pp. 219-50 (p. 229).

[10] Louis Aragon, *Le paysan de Paris* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), p. 80.

Einstein, however, stresses his difference from the French Surrealists around Breton on epistemological grounds. In *Georges Braque* Einstein makes it clear that he wants the visionary moment understood as a phase of the real, not as a superior reality, a 'sur-réalité', which for him implies a valorized dualistic model of reality, which he rejects as old metaphysical baggage.[11] Einstein's conception of reality or realities will become clearer in the discussion below.

Rendering the immediate?

The focus can now be narrowed somewhat. Almost half way through the text we find Einstein asserting that the signs from our imagination flow directly into the artwork, 'ohne die determinierte und herkömmliche Realität zu durchlaufen', 'unmittelbar', that is, without mediation. But at the end of the paragraph opening with that assertion, we find the following:

> Selbstverständlich findet die Analyse der imaginativen Wirkungen und des Traums in einem bewußten Bezirk statt, fassen wir das Unbewußte nur annähernd und negativ. (W 4, 455)

So whatever the unconscious brings forth can only be grasped approximately by the conscious mind. Some questions that must be considered are: what, in Einstein's theory, is the nature of the 'Zeichen' (signs) that constitute the work of art? What relation do they have to the unconscious? Do they pass directly or immediately into the work of art? If so, how? What implications has this for Einstein's theory of how art functions in the world?

The sign and the work of art

During the creative process motifs from memory are eliminated, and instead of observation an imaginative and arbitrary intuition takes over, according to Einstein (see W 4, 458). The resulting form is not a compromise achieved by uniting successive elements; rather the idea is to give the effect of a subjective, dream-related instantaneous visual act, which remains caught in its imaginative reality. There follows an isolation of free signs, which border on the one side with the unconscious and on the other with given

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[11] Cf. *Georges Braque*: 'Grundsatz: die Vision ist Voraussetzung der Realität und eine Phase des Realen, (also keine 'Einbildung', jedoch ebensowenig keine höhere Realität, keine Surréel – Wort von verkrachtem Idealism übersonnt). (W 3, 324)

reality, and which are condensed and intensified (W 4, 458). Let us now see how other references to these signs might serve to clarify their characteristics. The imagination creates the sudden tension of concrete and qualitative signs, Einstein says (W 4, 454). The task of a poem is never to establish or state a fact. That would diminish it to the status of tautology, or descriptive passivity. The poem is rather marked or formed by the sensually multifarious tension of imaginative and arbitrary signs, which do not point to some other veiled reality (W 4, 454).

How is this to be interpreted? What is Einstein's understanding of the sign and the part it plays in the emergence of the artwork? It might seem from the last remark about arbitrary signs that Einstein's understanding of the sign is building on that of structural linguistics. In fact, the Russian Formalists' criticism of Symbolism operates on precisely the notion embodied in the last part of the last quotation. Their own understanding of the sign led them to critique that of Symbolism, which they saw as locked in what is ultimately a Hobbesian view of language – words as cobwebs, numerous and interrelated, but shrouding, obscuring a 'true' reality, which lies behind. It can certainly be maintained, as Christine Poggi does, that for Mallarmé one of the fundamental issues *was* the arbitrary nature of the sign. But the hope was that in poetry that could be overcome by returning language to some kind of primordial essence.[12] This was to be effected in a number of ways, such as the widening out of the associative potential of a word by including it in an image or configuration created by words of the poem in unison and by exploiting the sonic—tonal and rhythmic—qualities of a word or words in sequence.

In Saussure's theory of structural linguistics, the sign is composed of three elements: (1) the signifier – for instance marks together making up the word 'duck', (2) the signified – the concept evoked by these marks, e.g. a breed of swimming bird (or its meat), and (3) the referent – the particular duck under discussion in a given context such as 'This duck needs salt'.[13] The sign is arbitrary in that it is not motivated by any feature of the referent. But not only is the relation between sign and referent arbitrary; so too is

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[12] Christine Poggi makes the remark in a discussion following a paper by Mark Roskill, 'Braque's *Papiers Collés* and the Feminine Side to Cubism', in *Picasso and Braque: A Symposium*, ed. by Lynn Zelevansky (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1992), pp. 222-39. The discussion is printed in the proceedings after Roskill's article, pp. 240-60.

the relation between the signifier and the signified. There is no good reason for using the marks d-u-c-k to stand for the idea of the swimming bird. There is no necessary link between them. It is simply a matter of cultural and historical convention that we do so. We could just as well have used the marks c-a-n-a-r-d, as the French do. (Onomatopoeia is a special case which defies this principle, e.g. quack.) Signifiers gain their individual meanings by virtue of their being phonetically or graphically different from other signifiers, e.g. duck means duck because its is not 'luck' or 'muck' or 'dock'. (Again there are exceptions, e.g. homophones and homonyms.) So meaning is not mysteriously immanent in signs. Words do not have meaning 'in themselves'. Instead, they function in a relational and differential system. Meaning results from the difference of one sign from others. 'In the linguistic system,' as Saussure says, 'there are only differences'. This is the starting point for the tendency described above as seeking maximum distortion of signs. Signs are discovered to be pliable, in that they depend on one another in order to mean anything at all. Rather than attempt to recreate an experience as it was lived, the artist working in this vein revels in the sheer profusion of ways in which (s)he can create an experience in writing, painting, sounds, etc. Knowing that there will be no one-to-one match between what was experienced and what will be written, painted, etc., the artist can flout this very idea to great creative potential.

Looking again at Einstein's ideas about the signs forming a poem, we can see how they might be read in such structural terms. The poem, to repeat his remarks, is marked or formed by the sensually multifarious tension of imaginative and arbitrary signs, which do not point to some other veiled reality (W 4, 454). This could indeed give us the sense of the sign as an arbitrary, unmotivated part of a functional system, which has no meaning 'behind', 'beyond' or 'before' the meaning resulting from the differentiality or relationality of all the signs taken together as a sign system. As I will argue in what follows, however, the thrust of Einstein's statement that the signs in a poem do not point to some other veiled reality goes somewhere beyond where the Symbolists' and somewhere other than where the Formalists' thinking goes. Like the Symbolists, Einstein insists that signs in the poem are stripped of their referentiality, their relation to effects and purposes in the world. But as for the Symbolists' faith in the

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[13] For a useful introduction to Saussure's linguistics and its repercussions see Françoise Gadet, *Saussure and Contemporary Culture*, trans. by Gregory Elliott (London: Radius/Century Hutchinson, 1989), esp. pp. 44-59.

restoration of some primordial essence to language, Einstein is too much the language-sceptic to partake of that. Rather, his model reveals an interest in the workings of language insofar as they open up the horizon to the realm where language *begins*. He is acutely aware that linguistic signs or signifiers do not represent some extra-linguistic world. Instead they bring forth the cultural and textual worlds to which they themselves point. Of even greater concern to him is, therefore, the realm which in his view not only causes ruptures in the apparently neat and stable constructs of identity, structure and sign system, but makes all these things possible in the first place. It is to this realm, with its capacity to subvert, destabilize and pluralize, that he looks for some initiative for change. And yet he has an agonal approach even to the search for any such initiative for change. He holds out no hope that language is where we will be healed again from the Fall. He sees the equivalences to things and states that words postulate as highly dubious. No matter what we do within language, it will not bring us (back) to some scenario 'where language and world are not yet separated, where the cut that separates knower from world, word from thing, signifier from signified in order to establish rational knowledge in the form of an equivalence of meaning (word = thing, signifier = signified), has not yet occurred.'[14] There is no question of being healed, Einstein would contend. The most we can hope for is that we can come up with some form of resistance to the progressive infiltration of ourselves and our world by quantitative, narrowly rationalistic processes and practices. It is with this in mind that he is interested in the beginnings of the linguistic process. These beginnings he sees as heuristically invaluable in that they may give access to a realm that holds potential for resistance. Something gets lost or stifled when language takes over, according to Einstein. This indeterminate 'something' can nonetheless leak out into the world in different ways, although culture provides ways of channeling the leakage, e.g. through art, or formerly through religious practices. But one of Einstein's chief concerns is that even these ways of bringing 'das dynamisch Wirkliche' into the world have been subjected to forces of homogenization to the extent that barely even in them can a detonation of the explosive force of the hallucinative moment be expected.

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[14] See the introduction Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan give, in their anthology of literary theory, to chapter 5 ('Post-Structuralism, Deconstruction and Post-Modernism'): 'Introduction – 'The Class of 1968 – Post-Structuralism *par lui-même*'', in *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, ed. by Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan, (Massachusetts: Blackwell, 1998), pp. 333-57 (p. 336).

'Imaginative reality' or 'subjective reality'

Einstein proceeds to theorize the imaginative reality, which for him is the source of art. He says that it stands in opposition to given reality because of its subjective nature. By 'given reality' here we can understand the world and its phenomena as we make them comprehensible to ourselves by way of rationalization, quantification, laws of physics, etc. With 'subjective' we must be careful. The only way to interpret this so that it does not render inconceivable all of what Einstein speculates about the hallucinative moment is to think of it not so much in terms of the subjectivity of the ready-constituted identity of a conscious being, but instead in terms of the personal reality of each human being. Understanding it in this way, conventional conceptualized reality differs from the imaginative reality of each individual human being, firstly, because our countless perceptions, our experiences of the world are ours and nobody else's. In this sense we are, as Einstein says, locked into our own reality (W 4, 454), even if our experiences mingle with collective experiences both from the present day and from the past, in the sense of a collective unconscious bearing 'archaic layers'. Conventional conceptualized reality differs secondly from imaginative or personal reality because, according to Einstein, imaginative reality, coming from the unconscious, is our immediate reality. It does not operate the way the conscious mind does. It is preconceptual, and in this sense anticipatory.

In the phrase 'subjective reality', as quoted above, it would be misleading to understand 'subjective' in terms of the subjectivity of the ready-constituted identity of a conscious being because in theorizing the hallucinative moment Einstein stipulates how subjectivity is, for that instant, broken down. The conscious, reflective mind is put momentarily out of action, so the distinctions between subject and object are wiped out. In this thinking of the sublime moment Einstein conducts a critique of reified subjectivity and objectivity. But in the phrase under discussion—'subjective reality' as opposed to 'given reality'—Einstein valorizes 'subjective', in contrast to the abounding ideals of, and the claims to, objectivity in a social and cultural reality dominated by a scientific model of truth. One reason Einstein avoids an adjective like 'individual' or 'personal' in place of 'subjective' is because it might suggest individualism, against which he continually polemicizes in the context of his critique of liberalism ('eine Doktrin von der Überwertigkeit des Individuums' (W 3, 368)). Or again, 'personal' might point towards

the notion of personality as related to the concept of genius against which Einstein also pits his critical and polemical powers.[15]

The revolutionary potential of spatial innovation

Towards the end of 'Il se pose la question' we find a series of paragraphs speculating in further detail on the initiative moment of the creative process as embedded in 'imaginative' or 'subjective reality' as it has just been explained. With each new conception of space, Einstein contends, habitual orientation is disturbed or endangered, and the security of continuity is threatened (W 4, 460). This theory of the revolutionary potential of spatial innovation is of course at the core of Einstein's conception of and championing of Cubism, and receives lengthier treatment in *Georges Braque*. In *Georges Braque*, however, there is a stronger emphasis on the cultural and historical, not least art historical, considerations and implications of this revolutionary potential. Here, in 'Il se pose la question' some attention is given to the art historical impact of Cubist spatial innovation, but greater emphasis is on the semiotic process involved in the creative act and thus on the significance of the imagination and the unconscious as a reservoir of freedom for the individual psyche.

Precisely by eliminating the process of the usual biological signs, independence is gained, Einstein argues (W 4, 460). The 'usual biological signs' can be understood here as those signs used in the context of conventional perception and apprehension of the world around us – signs expressing concrete purposes and denoting referents in the world. These are signs for utility. As subjects we fix them, and they fix us. Without them, there would be no 'I' to bump into something and designate it as an object, a chair. These signs give the impression of stability and continuity, and work in conjunction with memory to enable identity to develop. But this development is bought at the price of bracketing out whole areas of potential experience, Einstein argues. During the creative instant usual experience is thrown overboard and 'sufficient equivalences' are created out

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[15] In *Georges Braque* Einstein speaks of 'Persönlichkeitsfimmel' in (W 3, 282) and inveighs heavily against the concept of genius: 'Täglich wurden Genies entdeckt und neben solchen Quellenfindern mochte Kolumbus als ein Pinscher gelten.' (W 3, 319) The French version has 'enfant de choeur' (choir-boy) instead of 'Pinscher'. In 'A propos ...' from 1930 we find: 'Man fabriziert die große Eitelkeit und kleine Unsterblichkeit. Man züchtet emsig Personenrummel und Ewigkeitsnepp. Der Schreiber betreibt professionelle Heldenverehrung, und narzistische Zwerge markieren Genie. Vielleicht steckt darunter nur etwas wie Todesangst von Dienstmädchen oder Hilfsaktuaren, die verleitet, eine kleine Unsterblichkeit sich zu erstapeln.' (W 3, 149-50)

of 'free signs'. Constructive freedom is gained by the formation of an imaginative space. Under the control of this imaginative space, certain conventional features are included as a means of transfer, in order to guide the viewer of the artwork towards the imaginative (W 4, 460). Einstein's references in *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts* and *Georges Braque* to the use of collectively recognizable tectonic symbols by the Cubist painters comply with this part of his theory of the creative process here in 'Il se pose la question'.

The creative impulse takes form

In a paragraph close to the end of 'Il se pose la question' Einstein, in his speculations about the creative instant, zooms in on what happens the creative impulse as it becomes realized. He spells out the dialectic process ('Der dialektische Prozess zwischen Vision und positiver Realität' (W 4, 306)): creative impulses take form in the world, thus influencing established conventions. At the same time, they necessarily forfeit some part of their potential, merely on account of the fact that they have had to undergo adaptation ('Anpassung des Imaginativen' (W 4, 463)) in order to take form in the world at all. The following quotation from the paragraph in question describes the process:

> Nachdem die Imagination geschaffen wurde und sich vom Akt des Imaginierens gelöst hat, bewegt sie sich auf das Gedächtnis, auf jene determinierte Realität der Überprüfbarkeit, zu und geht in es ein. Überprüfbarkeit ist ja nichts anderes als eine willkürliche Übereinkunft, sehen wir doch, wie sich jede Überprüfung als Anpassung des Imaginativen kompromittiert und wieder einmal die widersprüchliche Grundlage unseres Bewußtseins enthüllt. (W 4, 463)

Einstein is at this point postulating the irruption of an indeterminate impulse. Pre-linguistic in character, this impulse arises from a source deeper than the conscious mind, deeper than memory, and, as energy, manages to move in its indeterminacy towards and into memory. Memory has the function of scrutinizing the influx. But this function is 'nothing but an arbitrary arrangement', in other words, it is just *one* of many possible configurations, just one of many possible ways of experiencing the world. This particular selection or configuration is described by Einstein as arbitrary because it is in principle by no means the only necessary one: it is conceivable that another order should have become the dominant one ('Jede Wirklichkeit bedeutet Begrenzung, dh sie schliesst anders strukturierte Realitäten aus' (W 4, 372)). That it is arbitrary in this sense, however, has nothing to do with Einstein's labelling it as 'determiniert'; in other words,

there is no need to see a contradiction here. Viewed from without, as an order that has installed and adapted itself over time, this 'Realität der Überprüfbarkeit' can be seen as arbitrary. In describing it as determined or determinate, however, Einstein is referring to the laws of causal logic, which found and characterize the system. It might, then, seem contradictory that Einstein also uses the word 'willkürlich' in relation to the imagination and the unconscious. But he does so because—and this he makes clear on a number of occasions in different texts[16]—he is characterizing its operations from the point of view of a rational understanding of the world. He says elsewhere that these operations, too, follow their own laws, have their own necessity '[verlaufen] zwanghaft und fatal' (W 3, 379)), but to someone attempting to grasp them by means of causal logic they appear to occur in an entirely arbitrary way.

The indeterminate impulse referred to in the quotation above consists of signs from the imagination, which however do not coincide with signs from 'determinate reality'. Einstein refers to the 'Kontingenz zweier heterogener Realitäten' (W 4, 463), the contingency of two heterogeneous realities, on the one hand the reality of the imaginative signs, which function according to their own immanent laws and do not have referents in the straightforward way that signs in everyday language have. Rather, they refer only to themselves, within the 'reine Totalität' of the artistic form. Einstein is establishing a theory here which insists on multiple forms of reality, multiple ways of experiencing the world, but which also holds that these realities are mutually incomprehensible, or at least that other realities are incommensurate with the dominant epistemological model of the Western tradition.[17] That the essence of the artwork, the moment captured by it or the

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[16] See 'Il se pose la question': 'Der determinierten Kausalität gegenüber bezeichnen wir dieses Imaginative als willkürlich.' (W 4, 452) And *Georges Braque*: 'Man war gewohnt, nur imitativ gerichtete Funktionen als Ausdruck eines objektiven Seins zu bezeichnen. Hingegen betrachtete man allzu lange das Halluzinative als Willkür, da hier die konservativen Tendenzen der Wiederholung, der Wunsch, das Gegebene zu akzeptieren, nicht befriedigt wurden.' (W 3, 385) Likewise: 'Damals war die Halluzination Ursprung der gesetzhaften Kräfte, während sie einem rationalistischem Geschlecht als Quelle der Willkür noch erscheint, wobei man das Kollektive im generalisierenden Begriff sucht.' (W 3, 390) In 'Diese Ästhetiker veranlassen uns' we find: 'die Gestalt verfaellt am Begriff zur Täuschung, und die konkret-halluzinative Person verzerrt sich am vernuenftigen Ich gemessen, zum Luegner und Verfertiger aller Willkuer.' (W 4, 196)

[17] On this theory of multiple forms of reality cf. also the polemical obituary for Goethe, 'Obituary 1832-1932': 'the doctrine of the unity of the real will be ended by the dialectics of the pluralisms of reality.' (W 3, 213) The text was translated from the French original, which is no longer extant, into English by Eugène Jolas and published in *transition* in March 1932. On the question of incommensurability see the text 'Diese Aesthetiker veranlassen uns' from the early 1930s (or 'Gestalt und Begriff', which is the title Sibylle Penkert gives it in *Carl Einstein: Existenz und Ästhetik* (Wiesbaden, 1970)): 'Aus diesem Gegensatz von

experience formed into it, contains an implicit critique of that dominant—and domineering—model, is one of the features that Einstein's aesthetic theory shares with that of Adorno.[18] A similar kind of foreclosed utopia, or recognition of and insistence on the simultaneous indispensibility and futility of art marks Einstein's theory.

> Uns fällt der Teufelskreis auf, daß das Imaginative, das die Ausdehnung des Gegebenen erweitert und erneuert, selbst an Umfang verliert und die subjektive, imaginative und dynamische Realität [...] allmählich schrumpft und zugunsten einer mechanisierten objektiven und wissenschaftlichen Realität verkümmert; auch die Kraft der imaginativen Intervalle schwindet zugunsten der Wiederholungen einer vernünftigen Kontinuität. [...] Das imaginative Zeichen geht seines unvermittelten Charakters verlustig, es reiht sich in die Objektivität ein, und am Ende setzt sich das Unbewußte von neuem gegen dieses rational gewordene Imaginative zur Wehr, und der Kampf des Subjekts gegen das erneut determinierte Objekt beginnt von vorn. (W 4, 463)

In this dialectic process, as Einstein describes it, the imaginative impulse, in order to find form as a work of art, must lose some of its potential. In the reception of the artwork, or in the artist's own reaction to the making of the artwork, a kind of accommodation must occur between on the one hand what could shine through of the dynamic reality and on the other the fixed paths of stable rationality and continuity. The signs that make up the artwork bear traces of the visionary moment, or dynamic reality: 'Die ausgestrahlten Zeichen verbinden das Unbewußte mit der determinierten Realität, weil sie die Stempel ihres Ursprungs tragen und zugleich den virtuellen Charakter späterer Determinierung und Anpassung haben.' (W 4, 463) In the confrontation between the artwork with these traces and 'determinate reality' it is the artwork which is to the greater extent compromised, and all but overwhelmed by determinate reality. This is again made clear in the final paragraph of 'Il se pose la question':

> Durch unvermitteltes und imaginatives Handeln – jene Identität von Ich und imaginativer

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Begriff und Gestalt ergibt sich die Unmoeglichkeit einer beschreibenden Aesthetik, da beide Komplexe gruendlichst inadaequat sich verhalten.' (W 4, 219)

[18] The moment captured by the work of art is not the idea of a one-to-one match between experience and representation. Rather, it is a question of form. The moment captured by the work of art is not a recreation of some moment lived or felt or experienced by the artist. Instead it is the *form* of the artwork itself, the way it works, the way in which its parts interact with the whole and the whole with each part. It is a moment captured by the work in the sense that it is the capturing or arresting moment of the work. It will stop the keen recipient in his/her tracks, but the position he/she will be stopped in and the effect it will have need not be anything like those of the creating artist.

> Form – überwinden wir die Aufspaltung in Subjekt und Objekt; indem wir die Objektivität erweitern, indem wir aus unserer imaginativen Isolierung heraustreten und das Neue anpassen, vergrößern wir unsere Knechtschaft, und wir kehren, um ein neues Mittel zur Freiheit zu finden, wieder zum Unbewußten zurück, dem einzigen Garanten unserer Freiheit. (W 4, 464)

'[D]ie Objektivität erweitern' here denotes the process by which something of the creative moment radiates out ('die ausgestrahlten Zeichen' (W 4, 463)) into determinate reality and comes to be extinguished there.[19]

Back to the sublime: Einstein versus Kant

What are the implications of this dialectic process for the subject? For the three-phase model of the sublime in relation to Einstein's theory as presented in Chapter 1, what is of interest is *how* we manage to step outside our imaginative isolation, in other words, how the retreat from the sublime encounter is effected. Einstein gives us some indication:

> Das vom Objekt begrenzte Ich erstarkt durch die Opposition der Kontraste, und auf der einen Seite sind die mannigfaltigen Handlungschancen größer geworden; das Ich – das während des Akts verschwand, indem es mit seiner imaginativen Kraft zusammenfiel – lebt durch eine sogenannte, in eine mechanisierte Zukunft verwandelte Voraussicht und durch ein von der virtuellen Vergangenheit vermehrtes Gedächtnis weiter. (W 4, 463)

'[M]echanisierte Zukunft' here suggests a return of the conventional norms of perception, a reduction of the vision by means of quantification and rationalization, an adjustment of, for instance, a hallucinative or qualitative spatial experience into Euclidean terms, in order to achieve some purpose.[20] But this rationalization presupposes conceptualization, and with it, the division into subject and object(s), and what Einstein, as noted earlier, calls 'stock-taking'. This orientation process involves a reconstitution of

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[19] In another text, which is closer to *Georges Braque* in import as regards what might be called its more utopian thrust, Einstein stresses instead, in a call to action, the possibility that the new objects, the result of successful visionary experiences, will make way for themselves by pushing aside the old: 'Nun muessen schlechthin neue Objekte erfunden werden, die in Kongruenz mit den vorhandenen treten, diese bekaempfen und bedraengen. Hierdurch wird die lebendige und dialektische Spannung verstaerkt.' (W 4, 218) But towards the end of the same text we also find the following, which is more in line with the processes elaborated in 'Il se pose la question': 'Die Vision ist das primaere Stadium des Realen, das dann zu Objekten oder bewußten Gesetzen sich versteinert und als Fiktion abstirbt.' (W 4, 220)

[20] Einstein stresses how this kind of purposive seeing is usually dominant: 'Im allgemeinen verspürt man visuelle Empfindungen, die sich nach der Handlung richten, und unser Sehen ist ein Konglomerat, das von

the 'I', the subject, at the same time as that which I have been seeing—but precisely not looking at—is (re)constituted, (re)configured by my memory and takes shape before my eyes. Conceptualization is a key word here, as it is precisely about the initial movement of the mind towards conceptualization that Einstein is speculating here.

'[D]as vom Objekt begrenzte Ich erstarkt durch die Opposition der Kontraste' – this suggests that the 'I' is reconstituted by means of the contrast between on the one hand the power, immensity or intensity of the object which is able almost to overwhelm the 'I', to shrink, limit, squeeze it momentarily out of existence, and on the other hand the impotence, the nothingness of the 'I' during the flux. Einstein leaves one step of the process out at this point: he does not explain how this limited, shrunken 'I' can gain in strength ('erstarken') by such a limitation. The most plausible missing link can be found if we look back to Kant's theory of the sublime: the reconstitution of the 'I' occurred precisely by way of its coming to reflect on its powerlessness or nothingness in contrast to what it experienced as the infinitude, the omnipotence of what was to become for it the object. For Kant this is the triumphant moment for the subject: in its capability to say to itself 'that is infinity' or 'that is absolute vastness, boundlessness', it has already mastered the boundlessness by turning it into a concept, giving it a name. The feeling can dissipate, the triumphant subject with its invincible concept remains. An ungraspable feeling has become a graspable idea, a word.

Against these graspable ideas and against words as 'Fixierungen' Einstein, as was indicated elsewhere (see Chapter 3, page 136f.) polemicizes heavily. We may locate the missing link in the stages of the sublime moment in Kant's version of the theory. How it is evaluated is, however, quite a different matter. An instance chronologically close to the text under discussion, in which Einstein's evaluation becomes quite clear, is the following, in the text 'Diese Ästhetiker veranlassen uns':

> Anthropomorphismus heißt Distanz oder Differenzbildung, also Verstaerkung der bewußten Ichzone durch Entfunktionalisierung des Geschehens. Nun bildet man die statischen Fixierungen wie Begriff und Zahl; diese sind an die spaete Erwerbung des Ichs gebunden, womit der labile Personkomplex statisch kostümiert wurde. (W 4, 207)

Or again in the same text:

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einer Menge von Gefühlen, Erinnerungen und praktischen Momenten bestimmt wird, die den eigentlichen Charakter des Sehens zugunsten praktischer Ziele verschleiern.' (W 4, 461)

> Verbegrifflichung heisst: Abwehr des Toetlichen und Lebendigen, unuebersehbaren Weltzwangs. (W 4, 195)

Looking just at the second quotation for a moment: the fact that Einstein calls conceptualization a defence, a fending off of both the fatal and the vital (which are both potentialities and therefore dynamic), alludes to his theory, propounded since *Bebuquin*, of how the two are inextricably bound together in the flux of being-as-chaos, and how they stand in opposition to the static concept or form. In both quotations Einstein is characterizing conceptualization as a defensive petrification, a fixing of the functional or dynamic experience onto a schema that allows for repetition and thus for the reassurance of continuity and identity. The subject thus created is for him no reason to rejoice. It is simply a purposive entity in a cage of reason, to which however it itself holds the key. Einstein's conviction is that the hallucinative interval is the ground of all our conceptual and thus rational activity. As such it should be given greater scope to effect the innovation or the kind of quantum leap[21] of which he holds it capable.

> Das Erkennen selber geschieht halluzinativ, nur seine Ergebnisse sind rational geartet. Dies heisst: das Logische ist Produkt und Fassade des Alogischen. Damit jedoch die Schwaeche der logischen Position und der eindeutigen Gewissheit verborgen sei, verhuellte man deren Ursprung und trennte die Erkenntnis von ihrem seelischen, naemlich alogischen Ursprung ab; denn das Logische setzt die Ausschaltung des komplex-Funktionalen voraus. (W 4, 197)

Einstein contends that the functioning of logic and so of the entire systems constructed on its foundations is contingent upon a piece of prestidigitation. What gets conjured away ('eskamotiert' – see the next quotation) is the ground of that logic itself, or rather the destabilizing circumstance that it does not rest on a ground at all, but on a source which is groundless, amorphous, in endless flux. Using the example of numbers ('[die] ungehemmte Mechanik des Logischen' (W 4, 206)), which function alongside concepts, Einstein suggests how continuity is simulated and this simulation perpetuated and preserved:

> Man versucht durch die Zahlen die Welt zu einheitlicher Kontinuitaet zu bilden und das disparat Schockhafte des Geschehens zu verbergen. [...] Zwischen zwei verschiedenen

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[21] Cf. the concept of hypothesis as unfolded in 'Diese Ästhetiker veranlassen uns'. (W 4, 205; 209; 211)

> Zahlen klafft das mathematische Vakuum oder Intervall; zwischen jenen steht eine zahlenmaessig nicht darstellbare Sensation, die eskamotiert wird, naemlich die schockhafte Bewegung in einem anderen Fakt. Vermittels der Zahlen versucht man eben die lebendige Differenz einzuschraenken oder zu verbergen. (W 4, 206)

The consequence of such simulation and perpetuation of continuity is the repression of difference. ('Unterdrueckung der charakteristischen Merkmale', 'Wirklichkeitsverkuerzung und Weltabwehr' (W 4, 201)). But precisely here too is the source of the possibility of rationalization and the conceptual homogenization of the world:

> Alle Wissenschaft beruht auf dem atavistischen Versuch, letzte Basen zu bilden, somit ist jede Setzung eines absoluten Beginns nur mythische Regression, die unter dem Einfluß von Geburt und Tod des Individuums, also der Fiktion der geschlossenen Person gebildet wird. (W 4, 197)

> Man kann Philosophie schlechthin als Technik der Eskamotierung des Wirklichen bezeichnen [...]. Die vielfaeltige Beziehbarkeit der Begriffe beruht schlechthin in ihrer gestaltlosen Leere. (W 4, 200)

The track of thought here veers extremely close to a conclusion widely familiar since the advent of poststructuralist theories: that the a-logical is the precondition of logic, or that difference is more original to philosophy than identity:

> In order to be able to begin with a ground of identity and authority that establishes a criterion of what is true, philosophy must always have a second beginning that precedes the first, an act of opposition and differentiation that expels such things as artifice, representation, metaphor, empty substitutes, non-identity, difference, and writing into an outside that then allows an inside to be established. The outside is then subordinated in opposition to the inside. [...] Philosophy, in other words, relies on a sleight of hand, a maneuver of substitution that places its real origin in difference outside its desired origin in identity (of truth, of reason, of ideas welded to the mind in the logos, etc.). It says that substitution is secondary to an original, more authentic moment of truth, but in order to found that moment, it must substitute truth for the more original act of differentiation that constitutes philosophy's supposedly original identity [...].[22]

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[22] Rivkin and Ryan, 'Introduction – 'The Class of 1968 – Post-Structuralism *par lui-même*'', p. 340.

Einstein had spoken of an 'Eskamotierung des Wirklichen'. A 'sleight of hand', a 'maneuver of substitution' – the proximity to Einstein's position reaches even into the choice of words used to indicate the move that takes place as philosophy, or Einstein's metonymic 'Logik', grounds itself by forgetting its groundlessness.[23]

Yet in one crucial respect, Einstein's position can be differentiated from that attributed to poststructuralist thinkers in the above quotation. That quotation suggests a pendulum swing, whereby the allegedly 'authentic moment of truth' now under deconstruction gives way to 'the more original act of differentiation'. By the logic of the very argument in use, however, it is not—or ought not be—a question of getting to the 'more original' or the 'real origin'. Reversing the hierarchy in a retained dualism—difference versus identity—means simply repeating the hypostatization the deconstruction was meant to rectify or at least expose. In this respect, Einstein's position in 'Il se pose la question' is more complex and does not tend towards an ideological totalization. It is the concept of a 'Dialektik des Ursprungs', the *simultaneous* emergence of difference and unity, that gives Einstein's position its critical edge:

> Gerade die Ausschaltung der Dialektik des Ursprungs ermoeglicht die Rationalisierung und begriffliche Vereinheitlichung der Welt. (W 4, 202)

It is not simply a question of privileging difference now over unity, a plurality of selves over some notion of identity, but rather of recognizing that neither has any meaning without its inherent other, the other that dwells within itself as that which it is not.

This, then, is at the root of the imaginary dispute set up here between Einstein and Kant with regard to the concept of the sublime, and especially to the last phase in the three-phase model under discussion. In Einstein's meditation on the imagination and the semiotic processes involved in bringing forth the work of art, the conjuring trick inherent in the rationalization process and the illusion of stable subjectivity which can proceed from it are laid bare. Einstein is indeed operating under the same principle as Kant insofar as we are talking about a basic motivating force behind their efforts: the liberation of mankind from self-inflicted unfreedom, *the* fundamental enlightening impulse. But with Einstein this could not and cannot happen under the aegis of reason and the conscious, rational mind alone. What his theory about the imagination and the

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[23] Einstein calls it also 'die Grundfaelschung aller Philosophie' (W 4, 196) and 'ein Deguisement', a

unconscious suggests is that reason and rationalism in the narrow sense handicap what it is to be human. 'Die Erkenntnisrealitaet [enthaelt] ein Minimum des Wirklichen' (W 4, 203), he remarks in 'Diese Aesthetiker veranlassen uns', and in notes for *Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen*, 'der mensch ist so geschwaecht, dass er allenthalben beweisbare gewissheit verlangt. damit verliert er das meiste' (CEA, 130).

All the same, Einstein is no thorough-going irrationalist. Although the polemical thrust of his writing often tends to obscure this, he is not about undervaluing subjectivity. In *Georges Braque* and in *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts* Einstein insists on the need for strong subjectivity to effect the kind of experience he theorizes as movement in and between the postulated zones.[24] But the question is, where ultimately does the subject get this strength, if not from its very ability to reconstruct itself successfully with the aid of the faculty of reason as Kant outlines, and not to linger indefinitely in the indeterminate zone? In an article entitled 'Metamorphosen des Imaginären – nachmoderne Blicke auf Ästhetik, Poesie und Gesellschaft', Dietmar Voss uses Georges Bataille's concept of sovereignty in exploring the relationship between imagination, subject-constitution and aesthetics in a society moving from early industrial capitalism through to postmodernity:

> Solches Eintauchen in die Welt des Scheins, der noch 'ästhetisch' ist, aber jenseits der Dispositive des Schönen und Häßlichen, wäre, mit Bataille gedacht, gleichbedeutend mit der Behauptung der ''souveränen Sphäre menschlicher Subjektivität''. Sie bietet die Möglichkeit einer transitorischen Auflösung der psychischen Kommandatur des Ichs, der vorübergehend unlimitierten Freisetzung libidinöser Besetzungsenergien, der Verflüssigung von Körper- bzw. Ich-Grenzen in der (Selbst-)Wahrnehmung. Das Subjekt erscheint (sich) dezentriert, über libidinöse, zeichenvermittelte Besetzungen und Vernetzungen mit Dingen und Menschen verschmelzbar [...]. Die Souveränität transitorischer Selbstüberschreitung und geregelter Verschwendung, stets, wie Bataille betont, mit der Kraft verbunden, ''wieder zu sich zu kommen'' – sie ist [...] in bürgerlich-kapitalistischen Gesellschaften, ihren abstrakten Identitäts- und Rollenzwängen, recht eigentlich nicht lebbar. Sie wird als gefährlich therapiebedürftiger 'Wahnsinn' stigmatisiert.[25]

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disguise (W 4, 198).

[24] 'Der Starke setzt seine Identität aufs Spiel; mit ihr bezahlt er die Verwandlung des Werkes.' (K 3, 124)

[25] Dietmar Voss, 'Metamorphosen des Imaginären – nachmoderne Blicke auf Ästhetik, Poesie und Gesellschaft', in *Postmoderne: Zeichen eines kulturellen Wandels*, ed. by Andreas Huyssen and Klaus R. Scherpe, 5th edn (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1986), pp. 219-50 (p.224). Compare *Georges Braque*: 'Wir erkennen diese metamorphotische Haltung im Animismus und Totemismus wieder; dort fühlt sich ein

We are looking here at a suppler kind of subjectivity, one which does not cling to itself as its own defining limit, and whose sovereignty would allow for excess without utter self-destruction, and would not stifle what lies beyond or disrupts continuity, stability, identity. This suggests a sovereignty regarding not just subjectivity itself but also regarding the process by which subjecthood is instated and revoked. The 'Kraft [...] 'wieder zu sich zu kommen'' as an important, indeed constitutive aspect of such sovereignty is common to Bataille's, Adorno's and Einstein's renewed model of subjectivity. It implies a dialectic of limits, without which there could be no reinstatement of the subject after the collapse of boundaries and thus no more functioning within the symbolic order, the order of reason and determinate signs. It is in this context, I would contend, that the following quotation from 'Il se pose la question' can be most plausibly understood:

> Wir üben eine sorgfältigere Kontrolle über unsere Imagination aus, wenn wir es nicht eilig haben, zu Objekten zu gelangen, die wie für alle Welt sichtbare Handlungssignale aussehen. (W 4, 461)

It is thus not a question of a trade-off as it was in the Kantian sublime. The 'Kontrolle' in the above quotation is predicated on the ability also to slacken control in the usual sense. It is thus a critically differentiated and positively transformed notion of control. Here is a brief recapitulation: with Kant there was a teleological motive to the sublime, as the faculty of reason 'allowed' the imagination to momentarily overwhelm it; this is what

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Mensch dem Tier, Felsen, Flüssen oder Bäumen tiefer verwandt als einem anderen Menschen.' (W 3, 406) 'Diese metamorphotischen Figuren sind Ergebnisse einer tiefen Abspaltung und der alogischen Inkohärenz des Seins. Sie wachsen aus einer Vereinsamung und setzen den Tod der konventionellen Person voraus, also eine Art Selbstmord.' (W 3, 408) 'D.h., man beschleunigt Tod und Geburt des Wirklichen [...]; allerdings die Schwachen mögen solche Expropriierung der Person fürchten, gleich wie der frühantike Mensch die Gewalt der Vision dadurch ausdrückte, daß er das von ihm selber Visionierte zu Göttern oder Dämonen projizierte. [...] Der Rationale sucht den Unterschied [zwischen dem Menschen und dem Gegebenen] durch Generalisierung aller Dinge, also durch begriffliche Annäherung zu begleichen. Braque hingegen verspürte, daß man einer noch nicht verbrauchten Realität bedarf, und verschloß sich in die Gesichte.' (W 3, 406) 'Wir weisen darauf hin wie bei Kindern die Person noch nicht stark genug entwickelt ist, um zwischen sich und der Umwelt klar abzugrenzen, sodaß die Gestaltidentifizierung dauernd und leicht vollzogen wird. [...] Wir weisen auf diese infantil regressiven Dinge hin, um sie mit unbedingter Schärfe von den neuartigen Gesichten Braques abzutrennen.' (W 3, 382) The social stigmatization of such experience as is described here also receives considerable treatment by Einstein. Cf. also his numerous references, in *Georges Braque* (for instance W 3, 360) and elsewhere, to the tendency to place under a taboo any experience outside the rationalized mainstream, not least the expression of any spatial experience not in compliance with Euclidean space.

Thomas Weiskel's point about the fictionality of the imagination's collapse uncovered.[26] Weiskel's conclusion will be recalled:

> We are justified [...] in turning to an emanational logic precisely because Kant in effect abandons his attempt to make comprehension an empirical operation. Hence the real motive or cause of the sublime is [...] the *aggrandizement of reason at the expense of reality and the imaginative apprehension of reality*.[27]

Rather than sanctioning such a monologue, with the subject of reason dictating, Einstein's theory points towards a dialectic between reason and the imaginative apprehension of reality, in which subjectivity and the hallucinative mode, the determinate and the indeterminate, work in a kind of symbiosis, nourishing and complementing one another. But Einstein is under no illusions about the nature of any such symbiosis; it is a dialectic that never reaches any stable synthesis. It does not and cannot take place under the aegis of power-free rationality, as for Einstein that very concept is suspect. Instead, we are looking at the scene of an endless struggle, a 'battle between the arbitrary unconscious, that is, the dynamic subject, and the petrified object' ('Kampf zwischen dem willkürlichen Unbewußten, also dem dynamischen Subjekt, und dem versteinerten Objekt' (W 4, 464)). The important thing for Einstein in 'Il se pose la question' is *that* the struggle take place, that a victory not be handed to reason and the narrow constraint of continuity ('dem engen Zwang des Kontinuierlichen', '[der] Minderung des Lebens', '[einem] Todesprozess' (W 4, 203)).

'Il se pose la question' thus presents the aesthetic moment as a moment with subversive potential. This potential is the origin of the endlessly erosive potential of art, which however evaporates in the instant in which an attempt is made to appropriate or occupy it. In this idea of the inception and potential of art, the proximity to Adorno's idea of the foreclosed subversive or utopian potential of art emerges. A discussion of 'Il se

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[26] Cf. Weiskel, *The Romantic Sublime: Studies in the Structure and Psychology of Transcendence*, paperback edn (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1986), pp. 40-41. See also Chapter 1, 'The Kantian sublime'.
[27] Weiskel, *The Romantic Sublime*, p. 41.

pose la question' in this context and in relation to *Georges Braque* will take place at the end of the next chapter. That chapter will first explore how the text *Georges Braque* begins to appropriate the erosive potential of art and make it explosive.

Chapter 5

Georges Braque: An End for the Sublime

A revision of form

Before Einstein's work *Georges Braque* is introduced, a development that was elucidated from one perspective in Chapter 2 needs to be considered from another perspective. This will serve a double purpose: that of providing a useful backdrop against which to interpret the contradictions and aporias of the Braque book and that of indicating how the position maintained in *Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen* is arrived at. The change in the evaluation of the tectonic between the different editions of *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts* was traced in Chapter 2 – from positively-evaluated fundamental form in the Cubist image to indispensable dialectical element of the dualism of tectonic and hallucinative flux in Picasso's 'mantic' work, to negatively-evaluated inhibition or obstruction of vision in the work of Surrealism. The significance that shift has for Einstein's concept of form will now be considered, and, more specifically, the question of the changing relationship between expressive and technical or constructive elements within that concept of form.

The tectonic defects

As was noted in Chapter 2, it is in the concept of 'das Tektonische' that Einstein finds, initially anyway, a viable alternative to the deadlock of the word, which cannot but refer. Einstein, it will be recalled, understands tectonic symbols to have an archaic, collective basis. But it is, as he understands it, a more flexible collective basis than the binding conventionality of the word. The notion of collective underpinning is crucial for Einstein from the time of inception of his concept of the tectonic until the late 1920s, when that concept becomes fraught. In the course of Einstein's meditations on the tectonic, during which it is confronted with and interacts with further areas in his growing knowledge of ethnology, psychology and psychoanalysis, some things emerge about it that render it ever more problematic and thus his valorization of it ever more ambivalent.

It is during his collaboration (1929-1930) on the magazine *Documents*, as Conor Joyce convincingly argues, that Einstein assigns a new layer of meaning to the term

'tectonic'. Previously, and broadly in keeping with the German tradition from which he had derived the term in the first instance, the three aspects building, geometry and stasis had been constitutive.[1] 'Tectonic' as Einstein used it was thus bound into a dialectical notion of the coming into being of a work of art. On this notion, there was a tension between the following aspects: building and the dissolution of discrete object and subject; stasis and the dynamism of vision; geometry and a-geometric or non-spatially oriented painting (e.g. Impressionism) or drawing (Matisse). The tectonic was the critical category in a theory of limits, which did not, however, assign any content to what lay beyond the limits.

Now, Einstein added a fourth aspect to the sense of the term tectonic: censor or defence, not so much against monstrous forms, as Joyce notes in relation to a contribution of Einstein's for the first issue of *Documents* (early 1929), but against formlessness.[2] This is often called the void or chaos, the hiatus, of which one cannot even say that it lies beyond the outermost limits of form, as this would imply a relation to form, which the formless by definition cannot have. (Of course it has an abstract linguistic relation to form, namely a relation of antonym, but that does not render it any more intuitable; it simply reduces it to its function as a concept. It does not indicate, let alone tackle the inherent paradox in the word, which refers to something, not even some *thing*, that defies all words, all communication.)

With the beginning of his consideration and assessment of Surrealism, and the addition of this new aspect to his notion of the tectonic, Einstein makes a connection that is seminal for his subsequent writings on art, but also on everything else. He begins to associate the tectonic with the censorship of reason, 'Zensur durch die Vernunft', and with '[die] klassischen Hemmungen' (K 3, 165), which presumably refer to the inhibitions of representing experience in terms of Euclidean space and linear (i.e. spatially-derived) time.

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[1] Conor Joyce provides detailed analysis of key works and their authors in that tradition in so far as they relate to Einstein's concept of the tectonic. They include *Das Problem der Form in der bildenden Kunst* (1893) by the sculptor Adolf Hildebrand, *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie* (1901) by the Viennese art historian Alois Riegl, *Abstraktion und Einfühlung* (1907) by the German art historian Wilhelm Worringer and *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (1915) by Heinrich Wölfflin, the most prominent professor of art history in Berlin at the time when Einstein was writing his first articles on art, and writing *Negerplastik*. See Conor Joyce, *Carl Einstein in 'Documents' and his collaboration with Georges Bataille* (Philadelphia: Xlibris, 2002), pp. 279-96.

[2] Ibid., p. 292.

The shift in the significance of tectonics in Einstein's theory corresponds to a shift in some of his basic premises. This amounts to a change in how he had previously grouped certain concepts and put them to work, sometimes dialectically, sometimes antithetically. Thus, when Einstein begins to associate the tectonic with reason, it is as if he is slicing it out of its role in the dialectic of 'Halluzination' and 'Tektonik'. These were, broadly speaking, the expressive and constructive aspects of form respectively, on which the Cubist work had, according to his theory, been based. Thus, for instance, in the Picasso chapter in the 1928 edition Einstein had maintained, 'die tektonischen Elemente sind dem Subjekt adäquat, doch gleichzeitig sein einziges und wirksames Werkzeug, die Natur verbindlich zu fassen' (K 2, 75).[3] Clearly, then, in the second edition, this understanding of the tectonic as adequate or appropriate, and not obstructive, was already present. In other words, the tectonic elements were aligned with a creative force. They were not only involved in bringing forth 'the new'; they were a precondition of its being brought forth. However, in the section 'Die romantische Generation', which only appears in the third edition, we read:

> Das Tektonische, das allzu rasch den Prozeß hemmt und eine vorgefaßte Auslese erzwingt, wird kaum noch gewertet, höchstens als Stauung im allzu rapiden Zwang der Prozesse. (K 3, 167)

The tectonic elements have come to be seen as 'anti-creative'; they have, it seems, defected, switched camp, and are now aligned with reason and other obstructive elements.

Looking at this shift in terms of the basic groups of concepts that structure Einstein's theory, it appears that 'das Tektonische' shifts across what was previously an ethnologically and phylogenetically unbridgeable gulf. In Einstein's theory the role of the primitive in offering alternatives to modern aesthetic and epistemological habits and possibilities cannot easily be overemphasized. Up until the change in Einstein's evaluation of the tectonic—i.e. in his Cubism-oriented phase—relatively late

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[3] The quoted comments were altered only slightly for the third edition, to emphasize the creation of 'new objects' typical of Picasso's Surrealist phase: 'die tektonischen Elemente sind dem Subjekt adäquat. [...] Kraft dieser formalen Dominanten abändern wir das Wirkliche und bestimmen neue Gegenstände.' (K 3, 119) In the first edition the Picasso chapter is much shorter (just six pages) and none of these detailed comments on the character of the tectonic are included yet.

acquisitions, phylogenetically speaking, included: reason, language[4] and conventional experiential categories (Euclidean space and linear time). Einstein associates all of these phenomena with statics. They are part of a network of metaphors used to reflect a system of damming, ordering, fixing, blocking out, bringing things to a standstill. The fixing of things in this way is seen to go hand in hand with the development of identity logic, whereby experiences become recognizable, repeatable – and limited. Relatively early acquisitions, on the other hand, included the flux of imagination and the basic tectonic forms, as known from the basic forms of nature and the human body.[5]

It is those same tectonic forms which, in Einstein's theory of Cubism, are the decisive precondition for renewing vision and represent the most obvious departure from Cubism's forerunner, Impressionism. Thus, in the second edition of K, Einstein emphasizes the dialectical relationship between 'die alten Symbole des Zeugens und Gebärens, des Lebens und Sterbens, [die] beiden sexuellen Zonen an[gehören]' (K 3, 116), i.e. tectonics, and dynamic, hallucinative creativity:

> Dies war entscheidend, daß die Kubisten ihren starken Subjektivismus durch kollektive, tektonische Zeichen kompensierten; hierin zeigt sich die seelische Dialektik dieser Arbeiten. (K 2, 66)

At this point in Einstein's theory, tectonic forms are therefore closer to early phylogenetic acquisitions than late, and are necessarily implicated in the dynamic creative process.

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[4] A distinction must be drawn here, or perhaps this 'language' narrowed down. It is the reified language of purposive rationality Einstein wishes to align with reason and other obstructions to the creative process. This must be differentiated from the way in which he refers to the new language of Cubism in the Picasso chapter. There, we find sentences such as: 'Noch [d.h. in den Anfangsjahren des Kubismus] sprach die neue Sehweise etwas schematisch in Kuben [...]. Später erst gewann man eine gewaltsamere Formsprache. [...] Die kubistischen Maler, vor allem Picasso und Braque, hatten eine neue Sprache geschaffen, deren dynamische Syntax ungemein elastisch war.' (K 3, 119) Here, the language analogy is used in a general way to characterize how the Cubist painters found(ed) their own mode of painterly communication. Einstein no doubt deliberately avoids the analogy of a 'new system': an idea strong enough to train their talents and motivate them to keep producing challenging work, Cubism is loose and flexible enough to allow experiment, development and new discovery. The 'dynamic syntax' Einstein ascribes to Cubism is a direct allusion to the demands he makes on contemporary literature: that it should finally get around to shaking up conventional syntax. It is, then, the Cubist method *in toto* that is compared to a language – and an ideal language, at that, that is not subject to the constrictions of what Einstein sees as the reified language of words.

[5] Admittedly, Einstein identifies the tectonic forms as belonging already to an age of settlers and builders as opposed to nomadic wanderers, but this is not until *Georges Braque*, when the re-evaluation has already happened.

In Einstein's Surrealism-oriented phase early acquisitions are reduced to include only the hallucinative moment and the metamorphic identification that can come with it. The late acquisitions consist of reason (as censor) and with it, the language of purposive rationality, conventional experiential categories (Euclidean space, linear time), and now also the tectonic. Just as they were before the tectonic was included in them, these late acquisitions are characterized by 'Stau' and 'Statik' (see K 3, 161 and 165). But by aligning the tectonic fully with them, Einstein foregoes the dialectic of the limit the tectonic had previously constituted. The tectonic therefore loses its liminal or ambivalent status as marking the border between dynamic and static.[6] It undergoes a minimal shift from the limit-towards-statics of the conceptual realm of dynamics to the limit-towards-dynamics of the conceptual realm of statics. It thus loses its initiative function in the creative process, and ceases to be necessarily implicated in that process. It takes a slide in value and, whereas Einstein had previously located it in a phylogenetically more remote zone, it is now seen to belong to the same order as reason and the language of purposive rationality. It is grouped with the late acquisitions and thus depotentialized with regard to creating new reality and transcending convention.

The shift, although minimal, is significant for the comparison with Adorno. Einstein has now justified reading the sentence already cited (Chapter 2, page 51) with reason in mind where he mentions 'das Tektonische':

> Das Tektonische, dies Machtmittel gegen die Natur, wendet sich dann gegen den Menschen, der, wenn einmal die schützende Beschwörungsformel Erfolg brachte, sklavisch sie wiederholt und zum Fetisch seiner formalen Riten erhebt. (K 3, 123)

Close as it already was to *Dialektik der Aufklärung* before the explicit alignment of the tectonic with late acquisitions such as reason, this now appears as a very proximate match of the spirit of Adorno and Horkheimer's text.

In a sense, however, it is simultaneously the point at which Einstein and Adorno begin to diverge significantly. This has to do with the flexibility of their respective concepts of reason. On account of his intricately dialectical notion of the concept, the term 'Vernunft' is understood by Adorno to harbour a residual potential of freedom. It is

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[6] Certain articles Einstein wrote for *Documents* also bear witness to this shift in the status of the tectonic. The relevant articles are 'André Masson, étude ethnologique' from 1929 (W 3, 25-30), esp. p. 29, and 'Joan Miró (Papiers collés à la galerie Pierre)' from 1930 (W 3, 134-37), esp. p. 134.

ultimately—perhaps not yet so clearly in *Dialektik der Aufklärung* but certainly in Adorno's later writings—concepts that are to undo the slavery and fetishism of the concept (see for instance A 6, 62). Einstein's alignment of the tectonic with reason marks, however, a loss of the liminal quality and thus the flexibility and dialectical complexity of the notion of the tectonic, which in its relation to the hallucinative was crucial to his pre-Surrealist concept of form. If we consider these two aspects in terms of expressive and constructive aspects of form, it quickly becomes apparent that with the loss of the liminal character of the tectonic, the relationship between the two aspects of form has been simplified, and form can be dissolved altogether or apodictically attested by artist or critic. The course is thus set for a problematic encounter with limits, as that which lies beyond the limits is ascribed a certain content.

Form unravels

It was said above that with the addition of the new 'defensive' aspect to his notion of the tectonic, and the consequent shift in the basic constellations of his concepts, Einstein makes a connection that is seminal for his subsequent writings on art and other matters. Once the tectonic has been associated with the censorship of reason and devalued, there is, within the logic of Einstein's own theory, no longer any 'lowest common denominator' making the work accessible to all. What had been theorized as the guarantee of collective validity of the work of art, the tectonic, is cancelled. And this is no dialectical 'Aufhebung'; the tectonic simply loses its liminal, dialectical quality. Instead, there is the prospect of untrammelled autism, formless expression or outpouring, as in the 'egotistical sublime'. In terms of Einstein's own theory, the issue of collective validity of art must consequently become problematic. Were one to view the criterion of collective validity as the linchpin of Einstein's theory, one would not be surprised to find it reasserting itself in some form. It is in fact not only retained in his assessment of the work of Léger, which emerges simultaneously with his burgeoning Surrealism theory in *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*. It also makes a dramatic re-entrance. When the stage has apparently otherwise been cleared of what Einstein had once held to be very promising art (Picasso, the Surrealists' work), this re-entrance occurs: in *Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen*.

Returning to our current focus: once Einstein has associated the tectonic with the censorship of reason, his strongly form-oriented approach to the assessment of art—an

assessment that with *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts* marks a high point in his career—begins to unravel. While he completes another very significant work in the *Georges Braque* (anti-)monograph, that work is fraught with ambivalence and complications to the point where it itself calls out for 'kunstlose Zeiten' (W 3, 276). Paradoxically, the basic tenets of Einstein's theory are simultaneously shifting and staying as they are. They had been oriented to the formal relationship between the elements within the work itself—its sensuous material—and the 'Gestalt', or that which makes the work in its entirety more than the sum of those parts. Now, though, with Surrealism Einstein tries to orient those basic tenets to the question of unconscious structures and impulses, in the context of both individual and collectivity. It would seem, therefore, that the shift is from a formal theory of art to a symptomatic theory of art, as Ken Wilber uses the latter term.[7]

Yet the shift is only partial: Einstein apparently takes on board Surrealist ideas about the genesis of a work of art and, between *Georges Braque* and *Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen*, develops his own theories about the larger currents. Sexual, economic, cultural and ideological: he has much to say on each, as this and the next chapter of this study will show. But he takes his sense of form, sharpened earlier in his career, to the Surrealist images, too. And because that earlier notion of form was oriented to a collective ethos, Surrealism has difficulty measuring up. What is more, because the problems Einstein faces in altering his theory to allow it to get to grips with the art of Surrealism are fundamentally also related to the (in)communicability of experiencing their 'dynamic' works, the transformation weighs heavily on Einstein's conceptual apparatus. While he had been able to tread a precarious line with his dialectical interpretation of form within the developments of Cubism, Surrealism not only proves more volatile, but also, on account of some of its basic points of departure, runs counter to Einstein's original criteria for the work of art. Sometimes it is only by conceptual acrobatics and a quantum

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[7] Theories that draw on the idea of the artwork emerging in the context of certain kinds of unconscious structure, whether individual or collective, Ken Wilber refers to as 'symptomatic theories', defining them as follows: 'they view a particular artwork as symptomatic of larger currents, currents the artist is often unaware of—sexual, economic, cultural, ideological. They generally grant that the meaning of art is the expression of an original feeling, intention, or vision of the artist. But they immediately add that the artist might have, or exist in, structures of unconscious intention, and these unconscious structures, generally not available to the artists themselves, would nonetheless leave symbolic traces in their works of art, and these traces could be spotted, decoded, deciphered, and interpreted by the knowing critic.' Wilber cites the examples of Marxist, Feminist and Freudian theories, quickly indicating also how these paved the way for theories based on all kinds of -isms: 'racism, sexism, elitism, speciesism, anthropocentrism, androcentrism, imperialism, ecologism, logocentrism, phallocentrism.' See Ken Wilber, *The Eye of Spirit. An Integral Vision for a World Gone Slightly Mad*, 3rd edn, expanded (Boston: Shambhala, 2001), pp. 97-98.

of rhetorical charge that he can differentiate, for instance, between a conventional decorative or ornamental line-drawing or ink sketch and a 'psychogramme', a line-drawing resulting directly from a hallucinative or 'metamorphotic' experience (see K 3, 162). And, more importantly, at the same time as his theory is taking this Surrealist turn, qualms and misgivings about the autistic character of the works simply refuse to be silenced:

> Jedoch sind diese Bilder seelisch durchaus anders situiert als die halluzinativen Kunstwerke der Primitiven: nämlich sie sind autistisch geartet und geben Erlebnisse der abgespalteten einzelnen Person; es war notwendig, um in die Schichten des Traumes oder des Unbewußten zu dringen, vom kollektiven Bewußtsein – und das heutige Kollektive ist zunächst noch rational – sich loszulösen. (K 3, 167)

As was noted in the earlier section, Einstein identifies ways in which the group compensates for the isolation, namely with collective politics and the emphasis on the sexual (see K 3, 167). One gets the impression, though, that these points are also to compensate for Einstein's own scruples about the potential of the movement. In the third edition of *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts* he remains, ultimately, ambivalent about it:

> Wir [entscheiden] allerdings nicht, ob die Dynamik der Jüngeren ein jugendliches Stadium bedeutet. (K 3, 169)

By this he means that it may in fact turn out to be a decadent stage in art. This is the perspective that predominates in *Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen*, and precisely on account of the failure of the collective demand.

Georges Braque

Introduction

Carl Einstein's *Georges Braque*, originally written in German in 1931-32, appeared in Paris, London and New York in 1934 in French translation. Einstein had since 1928 been living in a sort of voluntary exile in Paris, and to write a substantial work on Braque, whom he knew well, had been an intention of his since the early 1920s. A reader coming to the work as to a traditional monograph, that is, with expectations of a volume devoted entirely to the paintings of the artist in question and to an immanent critique or individual

interpretations of these, will be somewhat disoriented. Much less a monograph than, among other things, an anti-monograph, *Georges Braque* is not so much structured around the painter's work, but seems, initially at least, to take it as a pretext for the launch of a sharp and polemical critique. The title *Georges Braque* is not the title Einstein originally had in mind. In a letter from early 1932 to his friend, the Berlin publisher Ewald Wasmuth, Einstein refers to the volume, making it clear that it is called *Réflexions*.[8] For Einstein the very concept of a monograph implied a presentation of the artist and his work in isolation from the surrounding historical circumstances, an approach to the writing of art history which Einstein found much too restrictive: 'Die Monographie droht Gefahr, dass man den Menschen und sein Werk allzu scharf abtrennt und diese den bedeutenden Zusammenhängen entreißt' (W 3, 256) In *Georges Braque* Einstein elaborates a social-historical theory of vision that incorporates a theory of Cubism developed from his earlier work, in particular the three editions of *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*. He essentially applies a critique of historicism, similarly found in Friedrich Nietzsche, to the domain of the history of art. He launches a virulent attack on aestheticism, the cult of genius, and historicism in academic writing on art, demanding instead a historical-critical analysis. The work of Georges Braque is ancillary, as Paul Westheim pointed out in an early and insightful review of the book in the *Pariser Tageblatt*.[9]

The Braque book deals chiefly with two interrelated themes: the inadequacy of contemporary practices in art criticism and the history of art, and Einstein's own designation of the function of art. The work, a mesh of ideas about art, history and the history of art, aesthetics, religion, myth and society, unfolds the central concerns of Einstein's critical thought. It is suspended in an ever uncomfortable tension between polemical critique, sociological and historical analysis and assessment and, to a certain extent, apology – something which in Einstein's hands is always bound to self-destruct, given the nature of his thought. In somewhat Nietzschean fashion, it builds to raze. An

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[8] Cf. Ines Franke-Gremmelspacher, "*Notwendigkeit der Kunst*"*? Zu den späten Schriften Carl Einsteins* (Stuttgart: Hans-Dieter Heinz Akademischer Verlag, 1989), p. 24. See also Wilfried Ihrig, 'Vita Carl Einstein', in *Text & Kritik*, 95: Carl Einstein (1987), pp. 80-86 (p. 85).

[9] 'Einstein schreibt keine Braque-Monographie. Braque und der Kubismus sind ihm Anlaß, Aufgabe und Standort der Kunst heute festzulegen.' Paul Westheim, 'Aufgabe der Kunst heute', *Pariser Tageblatt*, 17 September 1934. Quoted in Klaus Kiefer. 'Carl Einstein – Exil in Frankreich', in *Avantgarde – Weltkrieg – Exil. Materialien zu Carl Einstein und Salomo Friedlaender/Mynona*, ed. by Klaus H. Kiefer, Bayreuther Beiträge zur Literaturwissenschaft, 8 (Frankfurt a. M.: Lang, 1986), pp. 112-134 (p. 121).

undermining of his own premises, self-contradiction, and circularity in the logic of Einstein's texts are easily detected, but that is the beginning, not the end of fruitful interpretation. Paradoxically, such circularity and contradictions do not run the thought aground, but instead provide a tension that spurs it on.[10]

Although it is possible to give an overview, in general terms, of the main concern of each chapter, the themes of the individual chapters cannot be strictly delimited. Einstein characteristically sets no great store by a systematic and rigorously logical manner of argument, so that there is considerable repetition and overlap. Within such overlaps, though, the nuance of his argument often comes to light.

In the first chapter Einstein clarifies his intentions and methodology and in so doing elaborates a critique of historicism, as it is in conscious opposition to this method and worldview that he works. In the second and third chapters he proceeds with this sociological/ethnological method to probe the development of art in Western civilization, presenting a number of worldviews, that of early antiquity, nineteenth century liberalism and Marxism, and assessing the function of art within each. Einstein views his own epoch, which has inherited and is struggling with the liberal worldview, in terms of a return to a mythical age. The achievements of some of his contemporaries, he contends, point the way to a new function of art – the creation or formation of reality ('Wirklichkeitsbildung'). This function is in stark opposition to the role assigned to art under aestheticism, which is the target of Einstein's vehement critique in the fourth chapter. In chapter five he juxtaposes the epistemological and psychological foundations of his own approach to those of aestheticism. The concept of the work of art as organic entity is elucidated, and there are some considerations of reception.

According to Einstein, it was Cubism that initiated the break with artistic tradition and set the revolution of vision in motion. Chapter six gauges the achievements of Cubism, with particular attention to Braque's Cubist phase. In the final chapter the focus is on Braque's works of the late 1920s and early thirties, in which Einstein sees a continuation and bringing to fruition of the developments of Cubism. For Einstein these late works by Braque fulfill the function of 'Wirklichkeitsbildung' – the formation of reality, with the result that the real and the mythic can once again become one.

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[10] On this point cf. also Hans Joachim Dethlefs, 'Die Überwindung des Ästhetischen: Über Carl Einsteins Braque-Projekt', in *Text + Kritik*, 95: Carl Einstein (1987), pp. 23-43 (p. 37).

Einstein unfolds a theory of Surrealist art, which he develops in conscious opposition to what he sees as the idealist ('sur-réel' (W 3, 324) – 'above' the real) bent of Surrealism as propounded by André Breton in the First and Second Manifesto of Surrealism. One of Einstein's chief concerns in *Georges Braque* is to probe what he sees as the biological significance of art, and its social and political implications, in both its historical development and contemporary manifestations. With that in mind, this chapter will show how the text marks out a utopian position with regard to the power of art, but also intimates how this classic position of the Avant-garde involving a conflation of art and social and political practice will prove problematic. First, though, Einstein's critique of determinism and progress will be considered, as it has important consequences for his concept of aesthetics and art historiography, as well as showing that Einstein's own demands were for a dialectical historiography and art historiography. His critique addresses a number of different aspects or manifestations of determinism and progress. Most significant are his criticism of historicism and of the Euclidean model of space and Renaissance perspective, its correlate as used in art.

Einstein's critiques of determinism and progress

Einstein's critique of historicism and its implications for art history

In the second part of his *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen*, 'Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben', Nietzsche subjects the concept of history already prevailing among his contemporaries, i.e. that of historicism, to a sharp critique.[11] There can be little doubt that Einstein's views on history derive, whether directly or indirectly, from Nietzsche's.[12] Nietzsche sees history as necessary, but laments the pursuit of 'historical' knowledge as an end in itself, as a kind of philately, a purely positivistic accumulation of facts resulting in historians becoming 'walking encyclopedias' without any genuine engagement with the substance of the past – or the present. Whatever historians call truth

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[11] Friedrich Nietzsche, 'Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen II: Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben', in *Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. by Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, 9 vols (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1972-), III.1: *Die Geburt der Tragödie*; *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen I-III (1872-1874)*, pp. 241-330.

[12] The pervasive osmotic influence of Nietzsche in Avant-garde circles is well-documented; Einstein undoubtedly also encountered his work while studying philosophy in Berlin, though not via the curriculum. For a fuller examination of Einstein's concept of history in relation to that of Nietzsche, Oswald Spengler and Walter Benjamin, see Franke-Gremmelspacher, *Notwendigkeit der Kunst*, pp. 40-44.

can be of no value unless it can contribute something to the formation of the present and the future. Any claims to objectivity are fundamentally suspect. Rather, the historian should approach the past with an active and critical judgement in order to discern what is worth knowing and preserving, but also what might warrant being dissolved or abandoned. Against the supposed impartiality of the historian, then, Nietzsche sets a demand which echoes through—and underpins—historiography (and indeed all kinds of theoretical writing) right through this century: 'Nur aus der höchsten Kraft der Gegenwart dürft ihr das Vergangene deuten.'[13] The echo in the work of Walter Benjamin is most evident in his theses on the philosophy of history, 'Über den Begriff der Geschichte'.[14]

And here is the echo in Einstein, in an essay entitled 'Antike und Moderne' probably written between 1912 and 1914: 'der Mensch treibt Geschichte als produktives Wesen, und Voraussetzung dieser schöpferischen Leistung ist die Gegenwart.' (W 4, 141) The sentences Einstein writes just before this one illustrate his position more fully as regards what history *ought* to do:

> Geschichte bildet sich nicht in eintöniger Wandellosigkeit. Jede eigentümliche Zeit erzeugt den ihr gemäßen historischen Gesamtablauf. [...] Jedes Ereignis, das unserem Bewußtsein hinzuwächst, sei es ein rückwärtiges oder ein Vermuten des Zukünftigen, beeinflusst und verändert unsere Ansicht des geschichtlichen Verlaufs. Nicht eine zur Ideologie erstarrte Geschichte beherrscht unsere Gegenwart, sondern diese selbst bildet und formt die Anschauung des Historischen. Denn der Mensch treibt Geschichte als produktives Wesen [...]. (IV 140-141)[15]

Einstein stresses the necessarily anthropocentric nature, and social/political determination of all history:

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[13] Friedrich Nietzsche, 'Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen II: Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben', p. 291.

[14] Walter Benjamin, 'Über den Begriff der Geschichte', in *Walter Benjamin: Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. by Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser, 13 vols (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1977), I, 691-704.

[15] That these remarks should appear here in the indicative and not in the conditional or imperative is testimony not to an actual or marked difference in the way history was handled at this earlier time as compared with the time when the Braque book was conceived, but rather to Einstein's buoyancy and optimism during the years prior to World War I, which he spent in the company of likeminded writers (among others Walter Benjamin and Gottfried Benn) and artists in Paris and Berlin. Cf. Wilfried Ihrig, 'Vita Carl Einstein', p. 81. The 'wir' in such sentences as 'Wir kennen keine einzige und ideologische Geschichte' refers, if not only to himself, then surely to just those thinkers with whom he shared ideas, but not to all those engaged in theorizing and writing history. It is this 'wir' which gives certain of Einstein's texts their manifesto-like tone.

> Geschichte ist Geschichte der menschlichen Produktion u Ordnung der von ihm hervorgebrachten Objekte. (IV 395)

> Jede Gesellschaft wählt entsprechend ihrer politischen und gesellschaftlichen Struktur ihren geschichtlichen Standpunkt. (IV 304)

This position is clearly presented again in *Georges Braque*. The first sentence of the following quote refers to the historicist approach:

> Viele betrachten Geschichte als ein objektiv gegebenes Tatsachengebiet. Hier urteilen wir anders. Die Geschichte nimmt ihren Beginn keineswegs in der ältesten Vergangenheit, sondern entspringt dem atmenden Heute [...]. Das Vergangene schimmert als Projektion des Jetzt; Auslese und Wertung der Epochen werden vom Heute, seiner Struktur und Gewalt erzeugt und geartet; somit ist nicht von einer einzigen, objektiven Geschichte zu sprechen, sondern alle jeweilige Geschichtsbildung ist Perspektive, aus dem Augenpunkt des Heute entworfen. (W 3, 259)

Einstein raises objections to the two dominant methods of viewing history, which necessarily have repercussions on the history of art. One concerns the way in which history is constructed idealistically according to a teleological model, in which each event or movement is seen only in terms of its merits in a grand narrative of progress, 'der Irrtum der Entwicklungsutopiker' (W 4, 304), as Einstein calls it (see also W 3, 258). The overriding model for this method is that of the natural sciences, in which the knowledge accrued over centuries, even millennia, seemed to point the way towards an eventually attainable omniscience and thus perfection of mankind – individual and society. Einstein condemns the way in which historians of art, captives of the myth of progress, sought to approximate this model (see W 3, 258). The second pevalent method at which Einstein levels a fundamental objection is the cyclical model, in which every event or movement of the past is simply likened to another, thus confirming, by means of methodological tautology, the stable unity which the historian had set out to ensure:

> Hiermit vereinfacht man das Geschehen zu statisch eintönigem Mechanismus, wobei man insgeheim eine vorbestimmte Harmonie, ein Gesetz der Wiederauferstehung voraussetzt. [...] eine garantierte Wiederholung wird behauptet, damit man eine beruhigende, faule Einheit des Geschehens durch metaphysische Doktrinen erstaple. (W 3, 259)

These two methods, the evolutionary and the cyclical, are united by what they share *and* what they lack. In addition to an idealistic premise, for the evolution-based method the entelechy of humanity and of art, for the cyclical method the ideal of harmony and balance that issues from a rhythmic repetition and limitation of events, they share a basically conservative interest in their emphasis on the continuity and unity of history. They lack an awareness of, or deliberately marginalize, those events or movements that arise out of extreme suppressed tension and signal a rupture, those (usually marginal) minority forces that occasionally surge forth against the powers-that-be:

> In beiden Versuchen steckt der Wunsch, Geschichte zu einem Kontinuum zu vereinheitlichen und die beunruhigenden Spannungen, die erschreckenden Widersprüche abzuschwächen. Im Kern bedeutet solche Bemühung lediglich reaktionäre Geschichtsschreibung; man begreift eben das Jüngste als Wiederkehr oder Folge, doch nicht als Gegensatz und Wende. (W 3, 259)

These last words might lead one to suspect that Einstein is in danger of lapsing into the opposite extreme in his analysis, setting out with an intention (as foregone conclusion, thus laying himself open to a similar criticism as that which he levels against the two methods of history quoted above), the intention of finding *only* 'Gegensatz und Wende'. It would be difficult, and might seem obtuse, to argue that such suspicions are completely ill-founded. I will not attempt to do so, but will try instead to show from where Einstein's emphasis could derive. What Einstein is attempting here is something akin to Benjamin's 'reading history against the grain' or Foucault's vigilance for discontinuities in the context of a questioning of conventional developmental narratives. One might of course protest that focussing predominantly on discontinuities skews the picture unnecessarily. This would indeed be so if Einstein failed to recognize continuities. But this is far from the case, as will now be clarified.

The extent to which his 'monograph' on the work of Georges Braque (which is a monograph in a similar sense in which Einstein's *Bebuquin* of 1906 was a novel) was written with a polemical intent must be borne in mind: *Georges Braque* was written in the face of an academic art history which Einstein saw as little more than 'Historie der Bilder' (W 3, 259). By this he means a sort of self-sufficient story in which works of art were first of all identified as such according to a strict canon to ensure stability of the status quo. They were then observed in isolation from the circumstances in which they

were produced, following the dictates of a purely formalist method of analysis and immanent criticism, and so defused of any subversive effects they might secrete. Taking a brief look at some further instances where history and the history of art are under discussion, it will become apparent that Einstein was well aware of problems of reduction. He was far from any simplistic or one-sided idea of either discipline that would involve the exaltation of 'Gegensatz and Wende' to the exclusion of all notions of process, development or evolution (this last term in a non-doctrinaire sense):

> Geschichte wechselt zwischen Kontinuas (Heredität) und Mutation (Tendenzen des Wechsels). (IV 392)[16]

> Es besteht weder eine einheitliche kunstgeschichtliche Kontinuität noch eine klare Entwicklung der Kunstformen. [...] Wir vereinfachen aus dem Wunsch, leichter zu begreifen, und die Vereinheitlichung erleichtert uns die Konstruktion sogenannter geschichtlicher Zusammenhänge. (IV 304)[17]

Einstein's assessment of Impressionism is a case in point, where both continuity and discontinuity are recognized. In the opening chapter of his *Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts* of 1926 Einstein asserts the importance of Impressionism in paving the way not only for Cubism but for all of modern art, through initiating a dismantling of the naturalist aesthetic, and thus a departure from classical ideals. And in *Georges Braque*, too, for all Einstein's critical remarks about their denigration of painting to technique, to 'analysierender Beobachtung' (W 3, 308), the Impressionists are credited with having taken a most significant step: 'Die Impressionisten hatten wohl die Struktur des Motivs aufgelöst und gemindert' (W 3, 361). In *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts* Einstein establishes connections between the Impressionists' discovery of light through painting on the one hand and new scientific insights—in physics, biology, psychology and philosophy—on the other. This gives another perspective on Einstein's understanding of Cubism, namely as a phenomenon which emerged in, and as a result of, a particular cultural climate, as 'Gegensatz und Wende' *as well as* 'Fortsetzung' or 'Folge'. In fact, the term 'Fortsetzung' captures both aspects: literally, 'fortsetzen' can mean to put

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[16] The collection of notes is entitled 'Halluzination und Bewußtsein. Geschichtsprozesse und Kunstwerk. Methode der Kunstgeschichte. Bildoptik, Sehen. Utopie und Kunst. Stil' (W 4, 388-96).
[17] This is from Einstein's 'Handbuch der Kunst' (W 4, 301-22).

something 'fort' in the sense of 'weg', and so designates continuity as well as displacement or change.

The evaluation of the work of Braque 'nicht als Fortsetzung der Tradition, sondern als Durchbruch dieser' (W 3, 259)—with its emphasis on precisely that dimension of which the dominant discourse is, according to Einstein, mortally afraid (see W 3, 259)—can thus be read as deliberately provocative: it is a conscious attempt to effect a particular impact on the dominant discourse of the history of art. That Einstein, who had read Hegel and Marx, is eminently aware of the fact that 'Durchbruch' or 'Gegensatz' is just as much 'Fort-Setzung' (literally, a moving forward) of history, or of tradition in the broad sense of the word, as what he calls 'Kontinuas' or 'Heredität' is beyond doubt. He is aware of the double-edged—tradition-bound and innovative—nature of historical phenomena. What he calls 'Fortsetzung der Tradition', though, here refers rather to an uncritical, ideology-bound adherence to norms of the canon.

Einstein's critique of historiography has a number of important consequences. His description of history as 'Projektion des Jetzt' indicates his understanding of the historically determined, constructed nature of all historiography, and of the myth of objectivism. The idea of a historically situated (art) historian bringing to the task of interpretation her/his own values and norms, both collective and individual, opens up areas of investigation about the (often covert) prejudices and interests pertaining to the historian and her/his sociohistorical milieu. The question of changing styles and the reception of artworks over time also demands fresh critical attention in the light of the revised approach to the discipline. Moreover, the very concept of the *discipline* of the history of art is given a radical review. It is no longer allowed to languish in splendid isolation, Einstein having no regard whatsoever for neat demarcations. In his view they serve only to impede flexibility in critical thought and therefore also to hinder valuable—and potentially subversive—insights: 'Eine Analyse der Kunst über das Formale heraus hätte eben die gesamte Idealisierung ins Fragwürdige gerückt.' (W 3, 253)

Euclidean space and Renaissance perspective

Einstein's criticism of the two basic models of historiography and their reflection in art historiography amount, then, to a rejection of the fundamentally conservative, because deterministic, doctrine of cycles and the fundamentally conservative and one-sided defence of continuity and unity in history. It is the same critique of determinism and one-

sided continuity that motivates Einstein's criticism of Kant's experiential categories. Against Kant, Einstein contends that space and time are not given a priori in experience, but that they are socially constructed categories imposed on what is perceived in order to give it a practically and socially useful meaning, and thus akin to concepts in their obliteration of particularity. Euclidean space and clock time are models of space and time based on continuity, with homogeneity of the units in each case. In fact, clock time is time conceived of in terms of space, as a second is measured against distance. Einstein's theory of Cubism is based on the suspension of Euclidean geometry in favour of multiperspectivism or a simultaneity of perspectives, and thus a more flexible concept of space and spatial experience than the one that had dominated since the Renaissance.

Einstein begins chapter VI of *Georges Braque* with a polemical attack on the classical aesthetic tradition and its principles that gradually gives way to a more sober analysis. Embracing scientific developments since the Renaissance, and taking its cue from Aristotle, this tradition had as its ideal the loyal representation of nature. Perspectival representation was the chief formal means by which this was to be accomplished: 'In der Perspektive wähnte man, das vollendete Mittel zu kompletter Nachahmung zu besitzen; die Schätzung der Perspektive zeigt den Sieg der aristotelischen Ästhetik.' (W 3, 311) To Einstein this was not only a mathematical reductivism but 'ein Stück alter Metaphysik', because rooted in a set of laws which were taken as universally valid:

> Man wähnte alles Erleben nach einem einzigen Gesetz geregelt und übertrug das begriffhaft Einheitliche oder die Systematik des Mathematischen in die Bilder. (W 3, 311)

This fixed concept of space was accompanied by an entrenched subject-object dualism, which involved a static subject observing a stable object and making a supposedly true-to-life copy of it. The result for the artist as for the viewer was one of pre-determination:

> der eigentliche, optisch schöpferische Vorgang [war] ausgeschaltet. Die Bildstruktur war damit gegeben und alle Proportionen schon voraus bestimmt. [...] So galt der fixierte und homogene Raum als Voraussetzung, statt daß man begriff, daß er überhaupt erst zu erfinden sei. [...] Somit wurde das konkrete Erlebnis geradweg auf die wechselnden Modelle oder Motive beschränkt. (W 3, 311)

This resulted in what Einstein sees as the denigration of art to pure technical ability:

> Im fixierten Raumbild wurde ein interessantes Arrangement getroffen und die technisch geschickte Ausführung bedeutete Gipfel und Krönung. (W 3, 321)

Moreover, such technical expertise manifested itself in works which were divided into planes, prompting Einstein's analogy with social hierarchies (his sociological impulse to the fore here once more):

> Im klassischen Bild lagerten die Plane hintereinander, die Hauptpersonen agierten im Vordergrund, die minderen krüppelten verkürzt in bedeutungsloseren Schichten. Vielleicht war in diesen Bildern die gesellschaftliche Ordnung optisch umgesetzt, und solcher Bildbau entsprach höfischer Stufung oder geistlicher Hierarchie. Der vernünftige Mensch war Mitte des Bildes, aktives Element und die Landschaft schimmerte in tatenlosen Gründen. (W 3, 320)

Art, via the concept of space as perspectival illusion created by mathematical rules, had become a means for making and keeping order, 'wobei alle beunruhigenden oder außerhalb des Vernünftigen tätigen Schichten als minderwertig vernachlässigt wurden. Das Intuitive war jetzt heillos begrenzt' (W 3, 310).

> man verehrte den Raum als ein unerschüttertes Schicksal, als unberührbare Konstante, da man in ihm ein Mittel zur Ordnung zu halten glaubte, wodurch alles Handeln erleichtert war. [...] Schoßhund und flic zugleich, wagte man [den Raum] nicht anzufassen oder optisch zu bezweifeln. (W 3, 320-321)

In fact, such was the belief in the power of mathematics as a 'Mittel der Ordnung', not only on the level of representation and hence perception, as is Einstein's argument, but, more directly, as a means of alleviating the delirious illusions of the insane, that Foucault, in his investigation *Madness and Civilization*, can quote Samuel Tuke, an early nineteenth century psychiatrist, to this effect: 'The various branches of the mathematics and natural science furnish the most useful class of subjects on which to employ the minds of the insane.'[18] What Einstein describes as the neglect of all those dimensions active outside the domain of Reason, he comments on elsewhere as not only neglect but deliberate opposition: 'Der Wert der Mathematik wie der Logik besteht eben im

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[18] Cf. Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, trans. by Richard Howard, with an introduction by David Cooper, 4th edn (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 235-36. Foucault is quoting Samuel Tuke, *Description of the Retreat, an Institution near York for Insane Persons of the Society of Friends* (York, 1813).

Widerstand gegen das spontan Seelische [...]. Alles Fixierte, Begriff oder Regel sind lediglich Widerstände, damit man vom Funktionalen nicht zu Tode gehetzt werde.' (W 3, 317) Einstein's view of Renaissance perspectivism, with its scientific anchorage, as a symptom of the beginning systematic exorcism of all things disorderly, unreasonable, heterogeneous, in short, of the Other of reason, points forward to Foucault's ideas about the institutional sequestration of unreason at the hands of an imperious Reason.[19]

To take this to its ultimate conclusion, 'der Raum war ein Tabu' (W 3, 321), as Einstein remarks. It was this time-honoured taboo that the Cubists ventured to break. This involved broaching certain questions that previously would have been inconceivable:

> Nun war zu befragen, ob der Raum ein starres Fertigfabrikat sei, oder wechselndes Erlebnis und Projektion des Menschen, ob die Gegenstände Schicksal, höhnisch überlegene Substanzen oder labile, abhängige Handlungssymptome des Menschen sind. (W 3, 309)

Such questioning signalled the end of what Einstein calls 'Substanzenwirtschaft', i.e. a conceptual shift from substance to process or function, from the static to the dynamic. Einstein is careful to place the optical revolution he sees occurring with Cubism in the context of similar dynamizing developments in other fields, in physics, epistemology, psychology:

> Die Substanzenwirtschaft hatte allenthalben bankrott gemacht, die alte Seele, [...] unbeweglich wie ein Buffet, war funktionell zerfallen; das stabile Ich eine Fassade, ein Vorurteil; die Materie war in diskontinuierliche Kraftfelder zersprengt und die Begriffe waren als seelische Ermüdungserscheinungen [...] erkannt. Die Person war nichts mehr stabil Einheitliches, hier querten Schichten, schicksalhafte Komplexe wirkten; die statische Perspektive vom Menschen war zerfallen. Endlich mußte auch die Malerei dynamisiert werden. (W 3, 319)

It is against this background of the structuring of man as a functional being, as 'ein Bündel von Ereignen [sic]' (W 3, 317), 'von Wachstum und gleichzeitigem Verfall ' (W

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[19] Common to both thinkers is the emphasis placed on means, modes and norms of representation as indicative of the ways in which a particular era constitutes, perpetuates and ultimately renews its concept of knowledge about the world, its epistemological presuppositions. Where the two thinkers clearly diverge is on the question of language and representation, Einstein holding to the ultimate—and binding—communicability of experience before or beyond language.

3, 319) that the question arises for those painters who are to discover Cubism: 'sind die hingelagerten Gegenstände abzubilden, oder können Bildgestalten, die der aktuellen Struktur des Menschen entsprechen, gefunden werden.' (W 3, 309) For Einstein 'abbilden' implies determinism, the impossibility of contemporary forms emerging, and is therefore to be opposed. Yet if and when contemporary forms emerge, Einstein does not envisage their being written back into an evolutionary narrative of forms, as that would simply repeat the narrative of progress.

Production and function of the work of art in *Georges Braque*: the tectonic

The production and the function of the work of art in *Georges Braque* are based on the interaction between the 'hallucinative interval' and the tectonic forms. The 'hallucinative interval' was discussed at length at the beginning of the introduction to the sublime and at various points within that introduction (see Chapter 1). The reader is asked to bear that discussion in mind as we now focus on the function of the tectonic.

In Einstein's *Georges Braque* a curious role is played by the concept of the tectonic. In Chapter 2 the changing significance of the tectonic in the different chapters and editions of *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts* was traced. Earlier in this chapter that changing significance was re-interpreted in terms of a change in the basic premises of Einstein's theory. The two moves were described as the tectonic defecting, or changing its conceptual affiliations, and form unraveling. *Georges Braque* marks an ambivalent stage in Einstein's œuvre: both aspects, the tectonic defecting and form unraveling, are held in critical tension, while an appeal is still made to form, but to a type of form that is no longer fully predicated on the dialectic of flux and tectonic. In Einstein's earlier theory of Cubism and indeed still to a certain extent in *Georges Braque* tectonic forms, because they are seen to belong to archaic, subconscious layers of the psyche shared across the collectivity, are positively evaluated as providing the collectively binding force necessary to weld the art of the Cubists to the notion of a social revolution. In the latter chapters of the Braque book, however, the decisively less formal[20] and more

[20] Cubism in both its analytic and synthetic phases was form-oriented but not a-figural. Minimally figurative instead, it focused on playing with received ideas about form, figuration and space. Einstein himself comments on the reduction in form's significance from Cubism to the later, i.e. Surrealist, works of

Surrealist or 'automatic' painting of Georges Braque is propounded as an even more advanced stage in the 'Cubist revolution':

> In den kubistischen Arbeiten hatte Braque die Struktur des Sehens abgeändert; doch nun wagt er komplexeres und tödlicheres Abenteuer. (W 3, 375)

> Nun [...] wird das Bild tiefer und länger in der Traumzone eingebettet [...]. (W 3, 379)

The ability to remain in the hallucinative zone for longer, i.e. for a more intense encounter with the limit, without resorting to the damming function of the tectonic symbols (see also W 3, 373) is seen by Einstein as Braque's exemplary achievement. It is clear that the positive evaluation of the tectonic has been relativized:

> Wir erwähnen hier noch einmal das Tektonische als Hemmung des Visionären, jedoch enthält dies gleichzeitig eine Abwehr des konventionell Gegenständlichen und ist Ausdruck einer Spaltung oder Isolierung, aus der bald das komplexere Gestaltproblem wachsen wird. (W 3, 363)

The tectonic forms are now something to which one has recourse. They have become an indicator of a weakening on the part of the artist, a sign that the limit in the risky playing with limits has been reached. So how, one might ask, is Braque's later work to be understood as an advance on his earlier Cubist work?

In Einstein playing with limits is deadly serious:

> Welchen Mutes bedarf es, das konventionell Wirkliche dauernd zu vernichten und dadurch sich zu zwingen – auf schmaler Planke treibend – unablässig neue Realität zu erzeugen. D.h., man [...] vernichtet in beständiger Unruhe die eigene Person. (W 3, 406)

> Diese metamorphotischen Figuren [...] setzen den Tod der konventionellen Person voraus, also eine Art Selbstmord. (W 3, 408)

Rejecting as 'metaphysische Doktrinen' (W 3, 259) the various determinisms, e.g. historical, economic and evolutionary, with which the nineteenth century was rife, Einstein seeks a way out of the belief in such determination and towards an openness to contingency. A characteristic tenet of French Surrealism too, this idea of re-opening

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Braque: 'Die Kubisten hatten die vernachlässigten raumhaften Erlebnisse geweckt und damit war der

experience to contingency is the hub also of Einstein's critique of epistemology. In that critique, based on historical anthropological argument, Einstein rejects the over-development of paradigms of cognition originally developed for survival purposes. Excessive fear and caution underpins them, thus smothering any impulse toward change, he claims. The liminal experience, as we saw in the previous chapter, is to provide the paradigm for a transformed or alternative model of cognition that begins with a just relation to alterity. This alternative model is to amend the reification of subject and object, and the oppression inflicted on the object by an exploiting and domineering subject of Reason (see W 3, 368-69). It is driven by the aim of autonomy, in that it is conducted under the sign of establishing another relation between individuals and their knowledge besides the one previously promulgated by philosophy. The subject of that inherited philosophy, according to Einstein's psychologically and ethnologically underpinned argument, was domineering precisely on account of its own vulnerable position in nature and in the cosmic order and a will to defy or deny rather than come to terms with that.

The force of vision and the question of contingency

What Einstein advises to avoid regression and infantilism, citing Braque as a successful case, is the use of the formative power of what he calls the 'Gestalt'. This is the idea of a consummate presentation of the experience of vision or hallucination, which would replace the imitative depiction of a discrete object (see W 3, 387-89, cf. also Chapter 2, page 61). An object as something static and discrete is, for Einstein, 'eine Konvention oder Hemmung der Schöpfung' (W 3, 387). Einstein speaks of the 'Zwang der Vision' (W 3, 374), and that a lapse into the infantile occurs only 'wenn die Regression nicht durch neue Gesichte schöpferisch bezwungen wird' (W 3, 371). Focusing on this terminology, within *Georges Braque*, 'Zwang', 'bezwungen' and 'das Zwingende' form part of a semantic web with terms such as 'Geschick', 'fatal' and 'Fatalität', 'Schicksal' and 'Diktatur', this last term appearing as 'eine Diktatur des Sehens'. In contrast, however, to the denigration of the scientific determinisms of the nineteenth century, which elsewhere might warrant negative use of terms such as 'Fatalität', these terms are positively evaluated in *Georges Braque*. They all signify closure or absence of

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Anreiz gegeben, über das Formale hinaus die unterdrückten Kräfte zum Sprechen zu bringen' (W 3, 364).

contingency. That is paradoxical, considering the point made earlier about openness to contingency. A trade-off not unlike the one detected in the Kantian sublime and in some of Ernst Jünger's characters seems to be afoot, whereby the subject stands to gain by exposing him/herself briefly to the contingency of the ecstatic moment. (See also Chapter 1, page 20.) The sacrifice of reason and freedom to the force of the vision (see W 3, 381) is rewarded: 'mit solcher Unfixiertheit der Welt [erwirbt] der Mensch eine erheblich größere Freiheit' (W 3, 404).

The paradox in Einstein is meant to be resolved, however: the subject submits to the force of the vision, but in doing so, is only momentarily subsumed within it. Thus the person taken as a whole, conscious and unconscious, is actually seen to open themselves to the contingency of moving between the less contingent (where the rational subject presides and continuity prevails) and the more contingent (where boundaries are loosened, greater or lesser concentrations of energy or intensity are exposed, and the outcome is uncertain). Contingency-management is, in a sense, re-introduced at another, much less absolute, level. Rather than the triumphant reaffirmation of subjectivity or form after the ecstatic release found in Jünger, however, Einstein tips the balance in favour of maximizing the moment of release. There is no shame associated with the loss of form in Einstein's conception, as there was in Jünger. Therefore, there is no need for a triumphant reaffirmation of boundaries. Rather, the hallucinative experience is to function as a corrective for hardened, 'armoured' subjectivity. Unlike the sham sovereignty of an inflated and defensive subject (like some of the figures in Jünger), the strong artist's subjectivity would embody the genuine and flexible sovereignty of one capable of the ecstasy, literally, as ex-stasis, of an empathetic and unreified encounter with the object as Other. It would be capable likewise of rescinding the collapse of boundaries, but without the need for armour.

This is apparently similar to the outcome described in Chapter 4. However, the text 'Il se pose la question' differs from *Georges Braque* in that it deals only with the question of the aesthetic moment of inception – and that at the level of sign-formation and conceptualization. It is not hampered by considerations of exactly how the aesthetic instant as moment of inception or spontaneity is to find its way in the institution of art or in the social world. 'Il se pose la question' has its merit in stopping short of such concerns, leaving the reader with the powerful point that this is simply part of an endless dialectic: the interruptive flash of the aesthetic moment sends itself out as potential; it is

fused with the order of the world, which is the order of reason and the conceptual, to which it does not belong but comes to belong; its potential is partly realized, partly compromized, and ultimately integrated into the order of the world; another disruptive flash ensues.

The artist as deus ex machina

In *Georges Braque*, on the other hand, Einstein begins to give the potential a content. He gradually but surely departs from the indeterminacy that was its strength in 'Il se pose la question'. And this also involves moving away from the kind of outcome of the sublime encounter theorized there to an outcome that is more problematic. From an empathetic reconstruction of Einstein's own theory in *Georges Braque* we will now, therefore, turn to the structural and discursive difficulties that bedevil it.

Without the tectonic as a form-giving force, how, one might ask, is Einstein to avoid sliding into an irrationalism akin to that associated with Gottfried Benn, as discussed in Chapter 1 (page 20)? The simple answer would seem to be that he cannot. Yet the text manoeuvres around such a consequence, ever wary of the accusation of advocating regression, passivity, a return to the infantile (W 3, 363), or an idealization of the hallucination (W 3, 408), and circling in on the nuances of the outcome of the ecstatic experience. Returning to the idea of the 'Gestalt', what Einstein prizes it for is that, unlike the tectonically mediated Cubist works, it is 'graphisch unmittelbar niedergeschrieben' (W 3, 363). In other words, all conscious construction, or the constructive aspect of form, is sidelined in favour of an attempt at reproducing the immediacy of perception. The following remarks Adorno makes in *Negative Dialektik* are pertinent in this context: 'Haß gegen den starren Allgemeinbegriff stiftet einen Kultus irrationaler Unmittelbarkeit, souveräner Freiheit inmitten des Unfreien.' (A 6, 20) In 'Il se pose la question' reproducing the immediacy of perception was deemed out of the question; it was a matter instead of confronting the inevitability of the only ever partial and compromized success of communication, and using construction or the constructive aspect of form to house what can be housed. To reproduce the immediacy of perception would mean bypassing language, indeed any and every sign system, which, to be a sign system at all, must be shared or conventional, i.e. it must be mediate.

The impossibility, as demonstrated by more recent theoretical developments, of communicating the immediacy of perception is just one problem, however.[21] Having demoted the—allegedly collectively binding—tectonic, the 'Gestalt', conceptually simplified now, without this dialectical counterpart, moves in to take its place. The force of the vision apparently operates on both producer and recipient of the work of art. '[D]iese Aktivierung des Unbewußten im Betrachter kann alte kollektive Kräfte auslösen' (W 3, 393), Einstein states, but without specifying how that process is to be socially binding in a modern world. Far from any modest claim that art, simply by challenging and renewing itself, might offer some kind of resistance in an administered world, Einstein remains beholden to the notion of an emphatically socially engaged art typical of Weimar's left-wing intellectuals. Despite his invective against Expressionist painters in *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts* and elsewhere, he quietly retains that movement's ethic or cult of genuine expression: 'Für uns bedeutet die Gestalt das Natürliche.' (W 3, 387)[22] One can see how he arrives at this equation; recent theory has, however, exposed any appeal to the natural as a signal that rational argument is being fully displaced by apologia.[23]

Einstein further contends that the force of the vision is to secure the revolutionary potential of the new hallucinative art by being 'eine Phase des Realen, nämlich der Beginn neuer Wirklichkeit' (W 3, 408, cf. also 404). Art is to become a means of transforming reality, by destabilizing the structures and models of order to which society

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[21] See for instance Terry Eagleton in a discussion of Adorno, language and aesthetics: 'Behind [the] nominalist plaint that words violate the quiddity of things [...] lies a nostalgia for the happy garden in which every object wore its own word in much the way that every flower flaunts its peculiar scent. But the fact that language universalizes is part of what it is, not some lapse or limit from which we might hope to be cured. [...] To mourn the non-particularism of language is as misplaced as regretting that one cannot tune into the World Cup on a washing machine.' Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), p. 342.

[22] At this point Thomas Krämer's assertion, in the context of an assessment of Einstein's relationship to Stefan George and the George circle, that Einstein has nothing at all to do with such a cult of the immediate needs relativizing. Krämer writes: 'In *einer* bedeutenden Hinsicht unterscheidet sich Einstein [...] durchaus vom George-Kreis. [...] Im George-Kreis [...] findet sich – entgegen mancher frühen theoretischen Äußerung in den "Blättern für die Kunst" – weithin ein Kult des Unmittelbaren, des Urtümlichen, bis hin zu einer neuheidnischen Verherrlichung des "Leibs", mit der Einstein offenbar nichts anzufangen wußte.' Thomas Krämer, 'Carl Einstein und Stefan George', in *Carl-Einstein-Kolloquium 1994*, ed. by Klaus H. Kiefer (Frankfurt a. M.: Lang, 1996), pp. 29-40 (p. 39). Krämer's comments may be apt for the early Einstein and the idea of a 'neuheidnische Verherrlichung des Leibs' is indeed not to be found in Einstein's work, early or late, but the idea of an approach to the immediate must certainly be considered in the context of Einstein's appraisal of Surrealism, especially in the Braque book.

[23] See for instance the collection of articles *Faszination des Organischen: Konjunkturen einer Kategorie der Moderne*, ed. by Hartmut Eggert and others (Munich: Iudicium, 1995).

fearfully clings. The text in its entirety rules out the possibility that this is meant solely in a metaphorical way. Rather, art is to make a direct and concrete impact, not an erosive one, as in 'Il se pose la question'. The precondition seems to be in *Georges Braque* that the artist function as a kind of *deus ex machina* in the salvation drama of a 'Wiederverzauberung der Welt' (to alter Max Weber's phrase), providing non-conceptual innovative impulses that not only disrupt and subvert the continuum of bourgeois normality and rationality, but actually transform it, spontaneously, beyond recognition. The artist, one could conclude then, assumes the function of social legislator.[24]

The utopian thrust of the work is to be found, therefore, in the discrepancy between the stated aims of its new concept of art and suggestions as to how those aims are to be fulfilled. There is, for instance, no consideration of how the new art is to be disseminated among the public. No attention is given to the issues surrounding the reproduction, presentation and transmission of the artwork. Apart from the attack on academic art historiography, the institution of art in its modern form with its agents and dealers, its sacrosanct museums, its technology and adaptations to mass society, is curiously absent from Einstein's conception of art's function in the closing chapters of *Georges Braque*.[25] There is, however, some consideration of the (individual) recipient: 'gerade die Schwierigkeit einer Analyse verlängert und verstärkt die Chance der Identifizierung des Betrachters mit dem Bild, dem er hörig verfällt' (W 3, 393). The idea that the recipient should be destabilized and emasculated will be considered in detail at the end of Chapter 6.

Revolt or revolution?

Before moving towards a conclusion to this chapter, the findings from the text 'Il se pose la question' will be confronted with those from the section on *Georges Braque*. 'Il se pose la question' drafts a theory which ascribes to imagination and the unconscious the capacity, and therefore also the task, of providing a counterforce to imperialistic rationalization. But there can be no question of a *Blitzkrieg*: the struggle that ensues is an endless affair, with imagination launching a stream of quiet, erosive attacks from the

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[24] See Zygmunt Bauman, *Legislators and Interpreters: On Modernity, Post-Modernity and Intellectuals* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1987).

wings. The defining characteristic of imagination is precisely its indeterminacy, its instability, the fact that it cannot be pinned down and made to serve 'übergeordnete Kräfte', as Einstein writes in the third edition of *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*, which he was preparing not long after writing 'Il se pose la question'. In *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*, he also writes the following about 'Anschauung', which has to do with both intuition and the presentation of images in the mind. (The passage will be quoted at some length, as it provides much for an understanding of his position around the end of the 1930s.)

> Die Anschauung ist nicht das stabile Material übergeordneter Kräfte, denen sie unverwandelbar zur Verfügung steht, sie ist nicht nur Gedächtnis des Gegebenen, sondern sie wird in der Kunst zum Selbständigen umgebildet, während sie sonst frecher Reflexion als willig Unveränderliches dienen soll; in der Kunst wird die Anschauung zum produktiven Moment, hierin wird die schöpferische Freiheit gelegt und damit wird Anschauung menschlich. [...] Schauend ändert man Menschen und Welt. Anschauungen verbrauchen sich und optische Unzufriedenheit zwingt zur Abänderung, gleichgültig, ob die überkommene Position hierbei zerbricht; denn nicht um Abbilden, sondern um Bilden geht es. Damit wird Malerei oder Bildnerei notwendig Kritik der Anschauung und der Erbschaft. (K 3, 92)

'Anschauung' can thus be a corrective, an initiator of change in the face of 'Unzufriedenheit'. Its power lies in its subversive, destabilizing potential. Because of its indeterminacy, however, its task cannot be to maintain existent structures and patterns. About sixty years after the appearance of Einstein's encyclopedia volume, in a review of a collection of articles on the sublime edited by Christine Pries, Martin Seel comments in a strikingly similar vein on the subversive power of the sublime, but likewise its necessary exclusion from the mainstream:

> Erhaben kann auch ein Bewußtsein heißen, dem schockierend zur Anschauung kommt, daß die für verbindlich gehaltenen ästhetischen oder politischen oder biographischen Grundgleichungen, sei es: nicht stimmen, sei es: daß sie ganz anders aussehen könnten. Dieses korrektive Bewußtsein aber kann niemals selbst zur Norm der Kultur, Gesellschaft oder Epoche werden – denn es findet sich jäh außerhalb dieser Norm. [...] Nur als Gegen-

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[25] These questions did not need to be attended to in 'Il se pose la question' because there were no such claims being raised for the artist. That text addressed the potential of the aesthetic moment but without binding its conclusions into a wider project for the transformation of society.

oder Grenzbegriff, nicht hingegen als Zentralbegriff hat der Begriff des Erhabenen Sinn.[26]

Against any one-sided attempt to raise the concept of the sublime to programmatic status or to the level of a new norm for art, Seel shows extreme and in a sense warranted scepticism. He takes pains to point out the mutual historical determination of 'Grenzbegriff' and 'Zentralbegriff', heterogeneity and homogeneity, subversion and norm.[27] This is certainly helpful, as it wards off a hypostatization or fetishization of 'the sublime'. But a further distinction is required. It is one thing to raise the concept of the sublime to programmatic status and have 'the sublime' enter the art world and become widespread. This would be the sublime as a theme. If it were not simultaneously worked into the given artwork at a formal level, this would a contradiction in terms. In a sense, it is hardly worth showing scepticism against this kind of sublime-as-mainstream, in the same way as it is hardly worth being sceptical about a change in hemlines. As regards the sublime in the sense of genuine 'Grenzerfahrung' and 'Grenzbegriff', as a shaking experience and as a concept built around that experience, it is that which cuts into and places a question mark over everyday continuity and the normative power of the factual. And, dialectically, without that everyday continuity, it would have nothing into which to cut, nothing over which to place a question mark. By its very constitution, therefore, it is immune to becoming mainstream. From this perspective, Seel's scepticism is superfluous.

All that said, Seel's scepticism is highly warranted in a metonymic way – and that is most likely how it is intended. Taking 'the sublime' to stand, *pars pro toto*, for a group of related concepts familiar since the spread of postmodern theories: alterity, the Other, difference, ambivalence, plurality, heterogeneity, the particular, Seel's scepticism can be seen to be levelled at certain theories that ultimately tend to repeat the binary logic they seek to expose, simply reversing the hierarchy. More will be said on this issue towards the end of the study.

Much of the theory established in 'Il se pose la question' about the potential of the unconscious and the subversive force of the artwork Einstein carries over into *Georges Braque*, but this latter work has an unmistakably buoyant tone, certainly towards the end,

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[26] Martin Seel, 'Gerechtigkeit gegenüber dem Heterogenen? Ein neuer Sammelband über das Erhabene', in *Merkur: Deutsche Zeitschrift für europäisches Denken*, 9/10 (1989), 916-22 (p. 922).
[27] Martin Seel, 'Gerechtigkeit gegenüber dem Heterogenen?', pp. 921-22.

which the more strictly dialectical model elaborated in 'Il se pose la question' forbids. Let us just recall a couple of Einstein's remarks and contentions towards the end of the Braque book:

> Also es handelt sich um die Zerstörung und Erweiterung der standardisierten Realiät; denn in diesen mythischen Gestalten bricht das konventionell noch nicht Verwirklichte durch, und Kunst wird eine Kraft zur Irrationalisierung des Seins. (W 4, 405)

> Die subversiv visionierte Gegenrealität erweitert sich zum kollektiv Realen, und die Dichtung wird die Atmosphäre des Menschen. (W 3, 408)

> Ein Bedürfnis nach Schicksal und Zwang treibt uns von Neuem. (ibid.)

> [...] solche Umbildung des Schauens und die Kraft der seelischen Schichten, die hier aktiviert werden, [wird] eine gänzlich abgeänderte Selektion der Geschichte verursachen. (W 3, 409)

The painter Braque is, according to Einstein, the instance par excellence of this 'Umbildung des Schauens': he has left the 'negative phase' of Cubism (W 3, 408) behind and moved into 'das dichterische Bilden des Realen' (ibid.). As such, he has spearheaded a generational upheaval and has brought new life to vision, taking it out of the realm of the purely formal into that of 'Gestaltdichtung' (ibid.).

In the Braque book, however, Einstein shows much less concern than he does in 'Il se pose la question' for the snagging intricacies of the 'translation' processes, the translation of the vision from its indeterminate state into materiality, into the signs comprising the work of art. Furthermore, with Einstein's championing of the psychogramme the idea of form, central as it was to the concerns of Cubism, gets critically compromised. In 'Il se pose la question' form was still of prime importance:

> Der Unterschied zwischen formalem Sehen und der praktisch-wissenschaftlich durchsetzten Konvention wird präzisiert, und die Form schält sich als ein eigenständiges Phänomen heraus. (W 4, 461)

Looking now at Einstein's Surrealist phase, what needs attention from this perspective is not so much the automatic vision in itself, but the way the contact with the racing metamorphoses turns into the work of art or the 'Gestalt':

> Häufig wird der automatische Ablauf unterbrochen werden oder nachträglich korrigiert, ungefähr wie man in der Erzählung seine Träume abändert. Durch Einschaltung des Bewußten entsteht ein seelisches Doppelspiel, dem der Gegensatz von Psychogramm und tektonischer Form entspricht. Die Kontrapunktik der gegensätzlichen seelischen Bezirke erzeugt ein Doppelspiel ungefähr wie die romantische Ironie. (K 3, 122)

Einstein does not sort out the relationship between form, tectonics and 'Gestalt' with the same terminological rigour as was at work in 'Il se pose la question'. Whether and how formal or tectonic elements continue to have an effect on the 'Gestalt' occurrence remains unclear. Einstein on the one hand calls the 'Gestalt' 'etwas Spontanes' (W 3, 248), on the other hand he insists:

> Geschaute Gestalt besagt noch nicht schlechthin bewußt gewordene Gestalt. [... Die] Gestaltbildung wird man nicht bewußt zu beherrschen oder zu ordnen vermögen; denn während dieses Geschehens vergeht in der Ekstase das retrospektive Ich, und somit erscheint uns solches Geschehen sprunghaft und unerklärbar. Vielleicht wird man nachträglich versuchen, die scheinbare Unordnung, das zufällige dieses Geschehens zu mindern oder tektonisch abzuwehren. (W 3, 387)

Einstein's defence of Braque's late work (i.e. that of the late 1920s and early thirties) hinges on Braque's ability to remain in the indeterminate zone for longer and longer, and so bring forth a 'Gestalt' which comes ever closer to the vision itself. The trouble with this turn of the theory is that certain features of the earlier version get lost: the collective basis founded on the tectonic forms, and the implicit critique of conventional space contained in Cubism. Besides, the theory put forward in *Georges Braque* has already been subjected to a more rigorous semiotic critique in 'Il se pose la question'. This is however not a sufficient reason to overturn the dating of 'Il se pose la question' and insist that it must have been written later than the Braque text. On the contrary, and as my argument will show, there is a logic in Einstein's progression from 'Il se pose la question' through *Georges Braque* to *Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen*. To place 'Il se pose la question' in the middle would not be inconceivable, but would certainly make for a much less fruitful and plausible interpretation. Moreover, as Einstein's œuvre in its (fragmentary) entirety shows, the handling of a certain issue in a way that almost a century later may be considered prophetic (e.g. of postmodernism) or satisfactory, in no way rules out the possibility that the same issue may appear in a different guise in a later

text of his, and may be treated in what might be seen by the twenty-first century interpreter as a less successful way.

With the 'Gestalt' and the prospect of an immediate rendering of the vision beckoning, we enter the realm of the psychogramme. Klaus Kiefer interprets the psychogramme in relation to Derrida's *Grammatologie*. This is problematic because Kiefer's point of departure with what he calls the 'Poetologisierung' of Einstein's discourse is a 'Semiotisierung', taken, in connection with the notion of a 'fonte arbitraire et inventée des signes', as a semiotic basis of Einstein's understanding of language.[28] This amounts to a wilful misinterpretation. For Einstein the psychogramme is, on the contrary, an attempt to overcome the interchangeability and infinite shiftability of the written word or sign.

> Wir bemerkten, wie für Braque das unmittelbar niedergeschriebene Psychogramm bedeutsam wird; d.h.: nun geht es nicht mehr um formale Metaphern, sondern er ist im tieferen Sinn Realist und schreibt möglichst direkt das Erlebnis, das ihn leitet und durchquert, nieder. Nun wird das Erlebnis nicht mehr durch die Kontrolle des Logischen gefiltert wodurch es zur Imagination oder Metafer abgeschwächt wird, sondern gegen alle rationale Bindung wird die Vision als das bestimmend Wirkliche verspürt und niedergeschrieben. (W 3, 407)

By virtue of Einstein's emphatic distinction between the psychogramme on the one hand and metaphor and allegory (see W 4, 408) on the other, it becomes clear that what he is *not* theorizing here is a practice that would allow an infinite displacement or deferral of meaning. Instead, the immediate reality of the experience is to be captured by the automatic work of the psychogramme, which is to make it available to the sympathetic recipient.

Conclusion

To draw this chapter to a close, I would like to suggest a line of development which, moving out from the individual interpretations of the texts, makes plausible the changes in emphasis in Einstein's theory from 'Il se pose la question' through *Georges Braque* to *Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen*, with a substantial shift in focus between the first two and the last. To a small extent, the next chapter (on *Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen*) will be

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[28] See Kiefer, *Diskurswandel*, p. 452f.

pre-empted in the following comments. Because that chapter is quite extensive, however, it is best to broach the discussion already, while details of this and the last chapter are still very fresh in the mind. The current discussion can then be referred to and resumed at the end of the next chapter.

'Il se pose la question' theorizes the work of art as germinating a *creatio ex nihilo*, which however can never be fully materialized as such. Flashes of the creation can come through in the artwork, but the work itself is always to a certain extent beholden to what has gone before. Its liberating and therefore revolutionary potential is thus just that: potential, which in the event of an attempt to concretize it, will dissipate out of existence, leaving only a trace. But in just that trace, which is something and nothing at once, lies the subtle but neverending power of art.

Georges Braque represents a bolder, more utopian project, as Einstein seems to be investing in the subversive potential pinpointed in 'Il se pose la question', or attempting to turn that potential into something tangible. The fact that the semiotic aspects—how the hallucinative images become fixed as a work—are not given so much consideration here accounts for the often apodictic tone of the work. It also gives the impression that the artists capable of the kind of visionary extemporization attributed to Braque are to function in the manner of a *deus ex machina* for old reality to be overthrown and new realities to emerge. This is the goal or end the sublime acquires in *Georges Braque*. Yet such a goal also puts an end to the sublime as an experience predicated on openness, open-endedness and the absence of a teleological structure. It was, it will be recalled, against the teleological rigging of the Kantian sublime that the Romantics and later the modernists reacted.

The venom injected into the pages of *Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen* bears witness to a disappointment and disillusionment without parallel in Einstein's œuvre. Given the erosive, one might almost say modest, nature of the revolutionary or subversive potential of art as theorized in 'Il se pose la question', it makes more sense that such overwhelming disappointment as we find in *Die Fabrikation* should have grown out of the higher hopes voiced in the Braque book being dashed. The possibility that both works, *Georges Braque* and *Die Fabrikation*, were being written at the same time cannot be excluded. But this should not necessarily present a problem. In a sense, *Georges Braque* and *Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen* taken together represent the two political sides of the one coin that is the theory of the artwork propounded in 'Il se pose la question'.

Georges Braque, while not overtly political, has sufficient political undertones and ethical/moral overtones to constitute an aesthetic both socially and politically revolutionary. Add to this its emphasis on the aisthetic as opposed to the traditionally aesthetic,[29] and it begins to resemble Walter Benjamin's Surrealist aesthetic, in which 'alle revolutionäre Spannung leibliche kollektive Innervation, alle leiblichen Innervationen des Kollektivs revolutionäre Entladung werden'.[30] In terms of rhetoric, *Georges Braque* and *Die Fabrikation* are the lyre and the sling-shot, the carrot and the stick, respectively. In *Die Fabrikation* what shines through the unrelenting onslaughts is a utopia frustrated, the utopia of the Braque book. It is conceivable that the more forceful and at times apparently impassioned rhetoric of *Georges Braque* as opposed to other texts of the same period, not least 'Il se pose la question', represents a sort of last foray into the world of art. We can at this point recall Einstein's own remarks to Wasmuth: 'dies braquebuch ist natürlich kein buch über braque. zumal ich alle malerei satt habe.'[31] In his correspondence with Wasmuth he also referred to it, cynically, as his last 'kunschtbuch'.[32] *Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen* does not cut itself loose from that world

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[29] On this distinction between aesthetic and aisthetic, see Wolfgang Welsch, *Ästhetisches Denken*, 3rd edn (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1993). See also the interview with Wolfgang Welsch, 'Gibt es eine postmoderne Ästhetik?', in *Kunst machen? Gespräche und Essays*, ed. by Florian Rötzer and Sara Rogenhofer (Munich: Boer, 1991), pp. 230-47 (pp. 235-37).

[30] Walter Benjamin, 'Der Surrealismus', in Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. by Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser, 13 vols (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1977), II: *Aufsätze, Essays, Vorträge*, pp. 295-310 (p. 310).

[31] Quoted in Franke-Gremmelspacher, *Notwendigkeit der Kunst*, p. 25.

[32] 'Carl Einstein: Brief an Ewald Wasmuth (1931)' printed in ALT, 263-65 (p. 265). There is some obscurity regarding which work is actually in question here, i.e. whether when Einstein refers to his 'aesthetik', he is talking about the Braque book or about a more extensive project, parts of which may have been tapered to constitute the Braque book. Cf. Kiefer, *Diskurswandel*, pp. 490-91. The conclusion of a further discussion of the point in Chapter 6 (footnote 11) will be anticipated here: it is the Braque book that

of art. Rather, in its stridently oppositional stance, it remains dependent on that which it opposes.

Einstein calls his last 'kunschtbuch'. At any rate, the remarks were made in letters dated 28 November 1931 and 15 February 1932, which roughly coincides with the time of completion of the Braque book.

Chapter 6

Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen:

The Dissolution of the Avant-garde

Introduction to the text and historical context

Introduction

Even the title Einstein gave this late work of his, reproduced as a scrap of typed paper on the cover of the Rowohlt paperback edition, signals conflict and contradiction: *Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen. ~~Eine Verteidigung des Wirklichen~~* (*The Fabrication of Fictions. ~~A Defence of the Real~~*). A work which has been somewhat reductively received as an envenomed diatribe against 'the intellectuals', *Die Fabrikation* is that and more. It seeks, in characteristically unsystematic argument, to expose the systematic nature of the relationship between social and economic factors, the growth of the need for 'fictions', or what we might call the myths of popular culture, and the function of artist and intellectual, artwork and cultural product in an advanced capitalist society in the throes of what looks like a crisis induced by the system itself. The title looks at first like it might belong to a work, perhaps from the 1980s or nineties, by the French thinker Jean Baudrillard, with the 'defence of the real' stricken out to suggest liquidation of the real, the notion that the real no longer exists to be defended, or even that a fabrication of fictions precludes the existence of the real and so also makes any defence of it ludicrous.[1] On account of the historical fate that befell Einstein's œuvre, both unpublished and published, his ideas left little trace of influence on succeeding generations. One might, however, speculate with hindsight that his texts would have had a hand in sowing the seeds for certain kinds of unflinchingly critical and self-critical thought we now associate with postmodernism.

Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen – a history of the text

Before this and other matters are addressed, however, some background information about *Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen* will be provided. The text used as the basis for this study is the only published edition to date, that published posthumously by Rowohlt in 1973 and edited by Sibylle Penkert. This version is based on a typescript, held in the Carl Einstein Archive in the Akademie der Künste in Berlin, which Einstein had obviously worked through a number of times, adding manual corrections. Three further versions are also held in the archive; these represent earlier stages in the production of the text.[2] Yet the shortened and corrected version, which for convenience will be called typescript A and on which the Rowohlt edition is based, was not intended for publication either. It was still a draft version and, had it been retyped, the text would have looked different again, as sections would have been elaborated, shortened or reformulated, according to Einstein's own handwritten corrections and notes on the edge of typescript A, e.g. 'ausführen' (FF, 27), 'Kurz' (FF, 32), or 'Dynamik Kub' (FF, 122). The sections marked by Einstein to be shortened or omitted, taken all together, indicate that what was originally a four hundred and eighty page typescript would be reduced by about a hundred pages. Moot, however, is the question of what considerations Einstein had in mind while making these changes. Until and unless that is known, one cannot draw conclusions about the authenticity of the longer draft over the shorter, or vice versa. Grateful though one must be to both editor and publisher, Penkert was presumably restricted by the economic considerations of the publisher, who, in the early seventies could hardly count on Einstein being a known entity, let alone a household name. Penkert's editing strategy[3] is therefore substantially more arbitrary than would be required for a historical-critical edition (which she of course makes no claims to present). Pending such an edition,[4] which would present and juxtapose *all* of the changes made to

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[1] This—for the moment fleetingly suggested—comparison with the work of Baudrillard will be given some consideration further below, see the section 'The Avant-garde's failure on account of social structure: economic factors'.

[2] Two of these versions are identical, i.e. one is simply a duplicate of the other; these represent the fundamental draft of the work. The third is a clean retyped version of that first draft. Corrections noted during the writing of the first draft have been included in it, but the work has not been otherwise changed. This third version can therefore also be seen as an authentic version of the work (see FF, 331).

[3] Cf. Penkert, 'Explikation – Edition – Interpretation', FF, 329-43 (331f.).

[4] There is some hope that the Berlin edition of Einstein's works will eventually include another volume drawing on archival material and correspondence.

the text in the course of production, it is difficult to make arguments or claims regarding the different versions and their relative priority and significance.

As regards the dating of the manuscript, Einstein scholars now unanimously cite roughly the time between 1931 and 1936 as the time of writing.[5] The first date is broadly determined by the fact that in the work there is mention of 'die Leute von 1930' (FF, 249/345) and discussion of the global economic crisis and Hitler's rise to power.[6] This would not exclude in theory the possibility of parts of the text having been written already before 1931. There are, however, other factors which make this seem quite unlikely. Ines Franke-Gremmelspacher makes a convincing argument for dating the writing of the main part of FF after 1932, offering two points in evidence. First, there are similarities to be found, even in the wording, when looking at the texts Einstein published or wrote in the early thirties, including *Georges Braque*, whereas no such similarities are to be found between FF and texts that appeared up to 1933. And second, a point also made by Oehm, the Braque book contains the following remark in the preface: 'Ce livre a été écrit en 1931-1932', suggesting that by 1934, when it was published, Einstein no longer stood firmly behind the work.[7] 1934 is also the date provided by Einstein on parts of his still unpublished fragmentary novel, or sketches for a novel, the so-called *BEB II* material, held in the Carl Einstein archive in Berlin. The protagonist is once again Bebuquin, the eponymous (anti-)hero of Einstein's first novel begun in 1906. Certain passages of *BEB II* exhibit striking similarities to passages in FF. Some consideration of these will be included in what follows. The last date, 1936, for Einstein's reworking of the text that was to become FF is reasoned by the consideration that Einstein was involved in the Spanish Civil War from the summer of 1936 until early 1939, and that his circumstances there, about which however little is known, would probably not have afforded him the leisure to work on such a lengthy manuscript as FF had grown to be.[8]

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[5] Cf. for example Penkert, FF, 331; Sello, 'Zur "Fabrikation der Fiktionen"', FF, 345-73 (352); Franke-Gremmelspacher, *"Notwendigkeit der Kunst"? Zu den späten Schriften Carl Einsteins* (Stuttgart: Hans-Dieter Heinz Akademischer Verlag, 1989), p. 88; and Kiefer, *Diskurswandel im Werk Carl Einsteins: ein Beitrag zur Theorie und Geschichte der europäischen Avantgarde*, Communicatio: Studien zur europäischen Literatur- und Kulturgeschichte, 7 (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1994), p. 524, citing Franke-Gremmelspacher, *Notwendigkeit der Kunst*, p. 91.

[6] Cf. Sello, FF, 352.

[7] Cf. Franke-Gremmelspacher, *Notwendigkeit der Kunst*, p. 89, citing Oehm, *Die Kunsttheorie Carl Einsteins*, p. 161.

[8] Cf. Sello, FF, 349f., and Franke-Gremmelspacher, *Notwendigkeit der Kunst*, p. 88.

Anyone approaching the text without prior knowledge of its history or of Einstein's other writings will undoubtedly be struck by the amount of repetition virtually throughout. There is a case to be made for understanding this feature of the text primarily in two ways: one, as a consequence of the way in which the theme of the text was perhaps re-routed during production, giving it a work-in-progress character which was to undergo significant editing and tempering before publication, and the other as deliberate in the draft versions and intended to endure in as far as possible in a version prepared for publication. These two interpretations need not cancel each other out. Both have their significance in the context of Einstein's œuvre and the historical circumstances, insofar as they are known, surrounding the production of the text. A combination of the two views allows us to see how a more rigorous shortening of certain tracts may have been envisaged by Einstein for the revision of typescript A (which was never undertaken), while in all likelihood some of the repetition is intentional and stylistically and rhetorically motivated, i.e. designed to underscore the polemical thrust of the work.

As regards the first case: there is evidence to suggest that Einstein had begun writing an aesthetic theory of modernism, which however took on the character of, or developed into, a tirade against intellectuals and the Avant-garde. A number of passages in certain letters from Einstein to his friend Ewald Wasmuth has been cited in turn by Einstein scholars through the past three decades. The passages are understood to be of key significance, as they contain dated statements about the texts Einstein was working on. The trouble is that certain passages remain ambiguous because Einstein refers to the works only in a casual way, perhaps also because no definitive title exists yet at the time of writing the letter. One such passage from a letter sent from Paris to Wasmuth dated 28/XV/31,[9] with Einstein's characteristic use of lower case virtually throughout,[10] reads as follows:

> ich schreibe an einem buch, das in paris und bei Weye in New York erscheint, aber maerchenhaft ist das durchaus nicht (dies unter uns, wenn es auch wunderbar klingt). [...] sonst gibt es garnichts. wie gesagt ich schreibe dies buch, dann will ich versuchen meine aesthetik herauszubringen. [...] im uebrigen will ich nun endlich diese aesthetik abschliessen; ich habe genug davon und das kunschtbuch, das ich noch machen muss,

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[9] This presumably needs correction to 28/XI/31.
[10] It was primarily Einstein's admiration of Stefan George that led him to adopt this stylistic idiosyncrasy. It therefore dates back to Einstein's student years in Berlin, i.e. 1904-1908.

> wird mein letztes sein. ich habe genug davon, es kotzt mich an. auch genug von theorien. wir sind mit diesen tapeten lange genug ueberklebt.[11]

Katrin Sello plausibly interprets the 'aesthetik' in this much disputed passage as referring to early versions of what was later published as FF. Franke-Gremmelspacher follows that interpretation, and the wording of the letter itself leaves little doubt that she is correct in her contention that two works, and not one, are under discussion there, 'diese aesthetik', referring to an early version of FF, and '[das] buch, das in paris und bei Weye in New York erscheint', 'das kunschtbuch, das ich noch machen muss', referring to *Georges Braque*, which was indeed published by Erhard Weyhe in New York. Thus the possibility cannot be discounted that parts of FF were being written while the Braque book was taking shape.[12] Sello further speculates that the weariness Einstein displays in the letter vis-à-vis art and theory gives us some idea of what to make of the discrepancy between FF and what one would generally understand by an 'aesthetics': The earlier drafts held in the archive suggest that Einstein had first planned an aesthetic theory of modernism, but that while working on it, his weariness of art and theory grew and prevailed, such that the original plan mutated into a pamphlet against the intellectuals.[13]

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[11] 'Carl Einstein: Brief an Ewald Wasmuth (1931)' printed in ALT, 263-65. The passage quoted here is on p. 265. Approximately the same passage is also cited by Katrin Sello, FF, 353, Franke-Gremmelspacher, *Notwendigkeit der Kunst*, p. 89, and Kiefer, *Diskurswandel*, p. 490. At any rate, the remarks were made in letters dated November 28, 1931 and February 15, 1932, dates which roughly coincide with the time of completion of the Braque book. Another letter to Ewald Wasmuth and his wife Sophie from early 1930 is cited by Penkert, as it too refers to 'meine Aesthetik' and the publication of parts thereof. Cf. Penkert, FF, 331. Cf. also Oehm, *Die Kunsttheorie Carl Einsteins*, p. 232, footnote 25, who refers to the same two letters in support of an argument leading to the erroneous conclusion that the 'aesthetik' refers to the *Georges Braque* monograph. The origin of the error lies in Oehm's need to defend her own thesis of a 'Copernican' shift or turnabout in Einstein's œuvre (cf. Oehm, p. 161ff.). She dates this turnabout between the dates of the two letters and therefore needs to refute the continuity that would be suggested by 'meine aesthetik' signifying *Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen.*

[12] Oehm's rigid two-phase model of Einstein's writing career would disallow such a possibility. This chapter is intended to demonstrate, among other things, how closely theoretically and structurally related *Georges Braque* and FF are, despite an initial impression of starkly differing theoretical premises the reader may have.

[13] It is perhaps misleading to stick to this characterization of FF as a 'pamphlet', which Helmut Heißenbüttel also makes in the introduction (cf. FF, 8). It sets reader expectations to focus chiefly on the polemical import of the text. In addition, although the initial commentators, Heißenbüttel, Penkert and Sello, undoubtedly meant it to ease reception of a difficult work by way of some sort of classification, it may encourage the present-day reader to overlook, underestimate or discount the theoretical and political import of a work which is certainly often apodictic, but nonetheless requires serious critical attention, both on its own merit and in the context of Einstein's œuvre as a whole. Heißenbüttel does in fact see the problem with his own description of FF as 'ein Buch, eine Attacke, ein Pamphlet, das radikal mit aller Überlieferung Schluß machte' (FF, 8). He attempts to redirect the reader's natural inclination in the very next paragraph: 'Daraus darf man jedoch keineswegs folgern, daß hier irrational geredet oder bloß Behauptungen aufgestellt würden.' (ibid.)

The tirade retained the premises of an aesthetic theory, but these were subsumed under a political critique. This interpretation is borne out by the fact that already in the letter to Wasmuth quoted above, Einstein connects his weariness of theory and art to a realistic view of political developments and recognizes how the ever more acute contradictions inherent in capitalism are imbricated in the needs of the petit bourgeois and the rise and success of fascist ideology. Given that the preparatory work for FF contains extensive considerations of art theoretical matters, and FF likewise, but even more extensive considerations of these matters in relation to political developments, the re-routing of the project as reconstructed by Sello seems plausible. On that speculation, it is not difficult to imagine how the versions in the archive, and even the revised version, may not represent the text in the way in which Einstein would have presented it for publication. It is possible that considerable reworking was intended but never executed. It is similarly possible that such reworking might have resulted in a shorter, less tortuous text.[14]

As regards the second case: the repetition we encounter in FF is not particular to that text, but is a feature of Einstein's style of writing, particularly apparent also in *Georges Braque* and in parts of *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts* (see FF, 333). Redundancy does however seem much more acute here than in earlier works of Einstein's, making the text tiring to read and complicating a grasp of the ideas at issue.[15] The feeling one gets is of being exposed to an act of filibustering, a spoken tirade; the relentlessness of the invective, the almost total lack of modulation in tone and mood give us Einstein the obstructionist. But what is obviously at variance with that feeling is the persistent use of the preterite, which indicates narration and gives a sense of (temporal) distance, as well as the length of the work (it is easily Einstein's longest, apart from the plans for *BEB II*). Its length may in part account for the fact that repetition is more conspicuous in FF than in other works of Einstein's. But a further factor may be the way in which the themes to some extent overlap, e.g. art and its role in society, and the function of psychoanalysis in bourgeois society. What we find, as in *Georges Braque* but certainly less successfully executed in terms of readability (although that had in no way been a priority of Einstein's), is a straddling of discourses and a loosening of genres to the point of dissolution: FF is at once a political tract, a theoretical work assessing

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[14] Penkert speculates that Einstein may have intended a substantial revision of the early versions of FF, i.e. a revision of even the last revised version on which the Rowohlt edition is based. Cf. FF, 331.
[15] Cf. FF, 345, and Ines Franke-Gremmelspacher, *Notwendigkeit der Kunst*, p. 86.

modernism and the Avant-garde(s), a sociological investigation with aesthetic implications, and a work of cultural criticism comprising epistemological considerations and elements of a theory of language. It combines a range of heterogeneous stylistic features and devices.

As Ines Franke-Gremmelspacher justly points out, citing an undated letter from Einstein to Ewald Wasmuth, a certain level of redundancy was far from anathema to Einstein, given his partiality for the unsystematic. This partiality he first frames in the cited letter as a matter of taste ('eine Abneigung gegen Synthesen') but then grounds as something which his work problematizes. The letter will be quoted at some length, as it is relevant not only at this juncture but also for the next chapter on Einstein and Adorno.

> Ich selber werde bewußt immer weniger systematisch, ich habe eine Abneigung gegen Synthesen. Vielleicht wachsende Idiotie. Bei mir ist die Geschichte mehr auf Lockerung und Humor gestellt. Allgemeines Entsprechen, mir erscheint das zu perfekt, zu schön. Sie mögen sagen eine Sentimentalität. Nein, ich sehe im Systematischen stets die Grenze, wo ein Problem auftaucht, das von einem System nicht bewältigt werden kann. Nicht weil ich an Psychologie glaube; deren Genetik ist meistens erdichtet.[16]

Franke-Gremmelspacher also notes the unsystematic character of Einstein's manner of writing, which refuses to start from the general or the system:

> Es handelt sich [...] um eine Schreibweise, bei der das Besondere, der einzelne Gedanke, die besondere Formulierung im Vorgergrund stehen und zu ihrem Recht kommen sollen. Einsteins kritische Haltung gegenüber Logik und Kausalität, die sein gesamtes Werk durchzieht, erstreckt sich bis in die formale Gestaltung der Texte hinein: Nicht logisches Folgern und kausale Ableitung der Gedanken charakterisieren diese, sondern Spontaneität und Sprunghaftigkeit.[17]

And, moving out from this, the unsystematic character of the conception of the text in its entirety is also noted. Contradictions arise in the content that do not appear intentional.

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[16] Cf. Franke-Gremmelspacher, *Notwendigkeit der Kunst*, p. 87, quoting an undated letter to Ewald Wasmuth.

[17] Ibid. Hans Joachim Dethlefs makes a similar point: 'Der Leser, der vom Text einen analytischen Beweisgang oder ein positives Resultat erwartet, wird bei der Lektüre rasch ermüden. [...] Auf die Anspannung der Energien folgt im nächsten Augenblick ihre bedenkenlose Zerstreuung. Die Angriffe gelten der modernen Kunst, treffen aber ebensosehr das Christentum, die Scholastik, die Philosophie, Systemphilosophie vor allem, die Sprache, vor allem die Begriffsprache.' Hans Joachim Dethlefs, *Carl Einstein: Konstruktion und Zerschlagung einer ästhetischen Theorie* (Frankfurt a. M.: Campus, 1985), p. 93.

Franke-Gremmelspacher suggests this may be a consequence of Einstein's not being too sure of his articulation of a political aesthetic having written off his 'romantic phase'. Franke-Gremmelspacher is broadly operating here with the two-phase model of Einstein's œuvre put forward by Oehm (and disputed since).[18] Leaving aside the details of the critique of Oehm's thesis, two points need adding to Franke-Gremmelspacher's interpretation.

First, the description of Einstein's writing style in the above quotation is accurate in the main. But it does not highlight what appears—and perhaps irritates—as the chief contradiction with regard to logic and causality in FF: Einstein certainly adopts a critical stance vis-à-vis both logic and causality. The arrangement of paragraphs and ideas could be described as paratactical; the passages or paragraphs of any chapter taken together defy the usual standards of consecutive argument.[19] But this leaves unaddressed the fact that in individual paragraphs of FF, psychological and especially social-psychological argument is pervasive. And such argument relies quite heavily indeed on causality and logical sequencing. This will become clearer as the analysis of certain arguments unfolds.

Second, as regards Einstein's uncertainty in articulating a political aesthetic after his 'romantic phase', it is to her credit that Franke-Gremmelspacher does not repeat Oehm's ideologically biased valorization of his so-called 'materialist phase'. It will be argued in the following that the apparent materialist bent of FF, rather than actually developing an independent materialistic aesthetic theory, marks a strategic manoeuvre away from the means elaborated in texts written prior to it, but without altering the ends significantly. FF is thus written predominantly *ex negativo* and suffers from the resulting

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[18] Cf. Oehm, *Die Kunsttheorie Carl Einsteins*, pp. 159ff. and the refutations by Rüdiger Riechert in *Carl Einstein: Kunst zwischen Schöpfung und Vernichtung* (Frankfurt a. M.: Lang, 1992), p. 13-15, and by Kiefer in *Diskurswandel*, pp. 517, 524, 532, and especially 543ff.

[19] Given the paratactic composition, and the way in which several themes are interwoven in many of the text's sentences and paragraphs, any individual sentence becomes the potential partner of any other. The interpreter is thus allowed an unusual freedom to pick and choose from various places in the text in constructing and presenting his/her argument.

Although these points have just been mentioned with regard to Einstein's FF, they were in fact originally made by Jan Rosiek with regard to Adorno's *Ästhetische Theorie*. Cf. Jan Rosiek, *Maintaining the Sublime: Heidegger and Adorno* (Bern: Lang, 2000), p. 352. *Ästhetische Theorie*—Katrin Sello also notes the comparison (FF, 346)—was, like FF, an unfinished work published posthumously, which would in all likelihood have been edited and shortened considerably by the author in preparation for publication, had time allowed. As regards theme and argument, however, the work of Adorno's more obviously in line with FF is *Dialektik der Aufklärung*.

dependence on what it denounces.[20] Moreover, the text will be shown to represent a second, and more overt, politicization of the unpoliticized aesthetic theory embodied in the unpublished text 'Il se pose la question' as discussed in Chapter 4.

The problem posed

FF is not the first text of Einstein's in which the impact of relations of production and market mechanisms on the work of art are considered. It is, however, the first text in which such considerations appear to fully determine the work of art and necessitate a thoroughgoing rethink of art's role in society and whether and how art can be theorized. FF sees Einstein confronting and grappling with cultural modernism and the revolutionary Avant-gardes of the 1910s and twenties, especially in the exemplary and acute form of Surrealism. If *Georges Braque* represents Einstein's critical assessment of and departure from aestheticism, then FF can be seen as his critical assessment of, and attempt to depart from, revolutionary modernism.

Observation of a link between on the one hand the theories and teachings of turn-of-the-century developments in the areas that came to be established as the independent disciplines of psychology and psychoanalysis, and on the other the art movement of Surrealism, does not amount to a retrospective insight into the movement's origins; rather such a link was already posited by the manifestos and writings of the movement itself. Einstein, fully aware of Surrealism's ideational heritage, however, uses the very tools developed by those disciplines—in conjunction with tools derived from his ethnographic and art-theoretical studies—to delve into the complex web of connections and mutually determining factors that constitute the function of art and of its producers and promoters, i.e. the function of the institution of art in capitalist society.

Thus, whereas the Surrealists attempt to expose and subvert a rationalizing market-driven society built around exchange mechanisms and repressive of whatever complicates or does not comply with its models of order, in particular its moral order, Einstein attempts to expose the imbrication of the Surrealists' project in precisely that system that they ostensibly set out to critique. The overarching thesis in this chapter is that while Einstein uncovers the dialectic at work in what he sees as the failed revolt of

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[20] On this point, see also Dethlefs: 'Der Text führt in die Verzweiflung und verhüllt so die unzerstörte Bindung mit dem Streitobjekt. Zerstört wäre sie, wenn die Kunst gleichgültig geworden wäre. Dann wäre aber eine Streitschrift nicht mehr nötig.' Dethlefs, *Konstruktion und Zerschlagung*, p. 92.

the Avant-gardes, his own critique does not manage to hold the insights into that problem in dialectical tension. To allow this thesis to be developed, however, the historical circumstances surrounding the emergence of Einstein's critique will first be sketched.

Historical circumstances

The text targets the liberal intellectuals of Europe, but primarily of the Weimar Republic, sometimes also referred to as 'die Geistigen', by which Einstein means in particular philosophers, and artists of what he sceptically calls 'die sogenannte Avantgarde', but also all other artists, critics, historians and promoters of art, as well as writers, scientists, academics, journalists, psychoanalysts, etc., i.e. in Marxist terms, representatives of the superstructure. The overarching theme is the monopoly the intellectuals hold on mental life in modern capitalist society and the stultifying and paralysing effect that has, not only on mental life, but on social and therefore also political life, with the result that prospects for change look very grim. An insight into the intellectuals' dependence on their bourgeois clientele is the lever with which Einstein pries open the system that has defused what looked like the most explosive and promisingly subversive art ever.

The text consists of five chapters or 'books', simply given Roman numerals—'Buch I' to 'Buch V'—in the typescript. In the Rowohlt edition the three middle chapters have titles in addition to their numerals—'Die Monstres', 'Das Vacuum' and 'Sonderbild' respectively. The initial and final chapters have only numerals, a fact which may, but need not necessarily, be seen as a further point in the argument that FF remained unfinished. Titles for the three middle chapters appear only on the last revised version of the typescript (i.e. typescript A as designated above) and are handwritten additions, so it is equally possible they were only provisional. They are rather cryptic, giving little indication of content or structure. Even when one has read the text in its entirety, they seem to relate in only a minimal metonymical way to the actual content elaborated.[21]

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[21] For an indication of how 'Die Monstres' metonymically signifies an ideological abuse of psychological and psychoanalytical procedures, see below, footnote 75. On the metonymical significance of 'Das Vacuum' as the groundlessness of philosophy and its various strategies for concealing that groundlessness, see below, footnote 62 and Chapter 4, 'Back to the sublime: Einstein versus Kant'. And to see how 'Sonderbild' refers metonymically to the cult of exceptionality and exclusivity perpetuated by artists and intellectuals alike, see below, footnote 54.

The frequent repetition across chapters and overlapping of themes were mentioned above. It is nonetheless possible to give an approximate indication of the main theme of each chapter. Books I and V are concerned with the relationship between art and society, where the society in question is that of advanced capitalism in Western Europe in the first third of the twentieth century. Book II focuses on the changing role of sexuality in bourgeois society, the emergence of psychoanalysis and how it is practised. Book III presents and critiques the intellectuals' dominant epistemological model and closed philosophical systems, and book IV deals with language theoretical considerations.

The economic crisis

The precarious social, economic and political circumstances surrounding the production of Einstein's FF will be addressed here in a broad way before probing the narrower issue of the critique of the intellectuals and the Avant-garde, which of course also hangs together with those circumstances. The world economic crisis in the years following the 1929 collapse of the stock-market, and the social and political upheaval it brought, is the key in historical as well as personal terms: Not only is Einstein interested in the political and economic developments insofar as they affect the social and political fortunes of Europe, whose art-world is his own livelihood, but he becomes also deeply concerned with the implications the situation has for the raison d'être of contemporary art and his own position as a critic and transmitter of that art. It is not surprising, then, to find numerous and lengthy references to the economic crisis in Einstein's letters to his friend Ewald Wasmuth, a publisher of texts on art in Berlin.[22] Einstein describes the situation in France, where he is resident since his definitive move from Berlin in 1928:

> hier sieht es [...] trotz des gefrorenen goldes recht boes aus. geld wird hier rar, die arbeitslosigkeit und die failliten nehmen zu [...]. eigentlich haben die meisten in frankreich ihr vermoegen zur haelfte oder zu 60% verloren.[23]

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[22] For an account of the economic crisis, its causes and consequences, see Charles Poor Kindleberger, *The World in Depression 1929-1939* (London: Allen Lane/Penguin, 1973). For statistical details relating to Germany see Detlev J. K. Peukert, *Die Weimarer Republik*, Neue Historische Bibliothek 1282 (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1987), pp. 243-52.

[23] 'Carl Einstein: Brief an Ewald Wasmuth (1931)' printed in ALT, 263-65, dated 28/XV/31(presumably XI).

Money is scarce, unemployment is on the increase, as is bankruptcy. Inflated currency spells ruin for people with cash deposits and fortunes, while artificial measures to counter the inflation, i.e. a concerted deflationary policy, do little to contain the crisis:

> man kann zum ende an einer deflation auch kaput gehen. (ALT, 264)

There is an upset in the cycle of supply and demand on account of both the diminished will to spend when large-scale unemployment threatens and the vastly diminished purchasing power of the already unemployed. Einstein, in an astute and historically ratified analysis of the circumstances,[24] cites this as the chief cause of the economic crisis:

> Produktion und Konsum klafften auseinander, die Aktien sausten herunter, die spekulativ aufgeblasenen Betriebe schluckten das letzte Geld weg. (FF, 102/157)

As prices of foodstuffs and household essentials career out of control, other areas of the market come to a virtual standstill. The main source of income for the intellectual disappears:

> die geschaefte gehen garnicht, buecher werden kaum gekauft, jeder spart und die leute sind recht deprimiert. (ALT, 264)

In such an environment the dependence of the supposedly independent artist, writer or intellectual on the fortunes of the market becomes acutely obvious. The narrowing of focus to existential necessities on the part of consumers impacts with grave consequences on the art-world and its aficionados. The same letter to Wasmuth quoted above contains a scathing attack on Einstein's and Wasmuth's métier, i.e. writing and publishing on art, which however also signals Einstein's resignation:

> unser handwerk ist eine ueberalterte hure; wenn Sie gaenzlich falsche artikel ueber wirtschaft schreiben, das were richtig oder politische diskurse, deren plattfuessigkeit stinkt, dann sind Sie ein bedeutender kopf. man hat eben nicht das richtige odd gefressen.[25]

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[24] Cf. John Willett, *The New Sobriety 1917-1933: Art and Politics in the Weimar Period* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978), p. 178.

[25] Ibid., p. 265. Cf. also the following comments in the plans for the partly autobiographical *BEB II*: 'auf der eine seite das wagnis, auf der anderen die servilmachende armut; die abhaengigkeit der geistigen von

The sharply satirical suggestion that to be important one should be writing bogus articles on economy or banal treatises on politics, i.e. capitalizing on the crisis and the public's consequent search for answers, points up a further dimension to the dependence of the intellectuals. The idea of freedom of the intellectual, the possibility of a free-floating intelligentsia, a 'sozial freischwebende Intelligenz'[26] as a critical force to be reckoned with in society on account of its disinterest and lack of partisan affiliation, is not only called radically into question; it is roundly dismissed. The laws of supply and demand apply here too, Einstein notes.[27] To be considered important means to write what sells. That begs the question of what the role of the intellectual is who does not reach any very significant turnover. Once Einstein has reached the initial conclusion of the predominance of the economic and political spheres over the cultural, he is quick to follow it, in FF, with the diagnosis of the—temporary, he still hopes—superfluity and liquidation of the intellectuals.

Crisis-enthusiasm on the Left

Not everyone watched the increasingly critical situation with growing anxiety, however. 'Let's hope 1929 brings us plently of struggle, friction and sparks,' the playwright Friedrich Wolf had written in the last days of 1928.[28] Einstein's letter to Wasmuth quoted above is once more a telling document:

> au fond finde ich all das grotesk. so angenehm einen festangestellten wohlversorgten kommunisten zu hoeren: 'die krise muss zunehmen' diese reizenden festbezahlten krisenenthusiasten. (ALT, 265)

An optimistic reading of economic crisis as an indication of the imminent demise of the bourgeoisie, and thus as a sign that the proletarian revolution was on its way, had been

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einer kaprizioesen luxusschicht. der kampf gegen die armut, ohne proletarier zu sein; man vergnuegt die geistkokotten. DER GROSSE SALON; die geniepraemie des seelenstaplers.' (CEA, 40)

[26] The term is derived from Alfred Weber but is chiefly associated with the sociology of Karl Mannheim. See Karl Mannheim, *Ideologie und Utopie*, 8th edn (Frankfurt a. M.: Klostermann, 1995), p. 135.

[27] Cf. also the fragment 'Stellung des Künstlers in der Gesellschaft. Utopie vom Menschen. Bildanalyse und Bildwirkung. Raum, Gestalt. Bildeindruck und Betrachter. Tektonik. Stil.' from 'Handbuch der Kunst': 'wenn man vom freien Kler [=Künstler] spricht, so lamiert man noch eine vag romantische Auffassung. der Kler ist letzten Endes – soweit er nicht Rentner oder Zuhälter ist – dem Gesetz von Angebot und Nachfrage unterworfen. [...] man bildete eine fiktive Elite, die angeblich alles begreift, die der propagandierenden Kenner und der zahlenden sammler. doch damit wurde K ein betrieb, dem jede tiefere wirkung versagt.' (W 4, 403)

[28] Cf. Willett, *The New Sobriety*, p. 177.

circulated by the Comintern since the acute situation in Germany in 1923.[29] European Communists—including a host of left-wing intellectuals and artists—had since the Russian revolution of 1917 looked increasingly to the Soviet Union to provide the initiative for revolution.[30] The split in the French Surrealist movement was in part a question of affiliation to the French Communist Party. Shortly after Breton's *Second manifeste du surréalisme* appeared in 1929, the Surrealists' magazine was revamped to appear by mid-1930 under the title *Surréalisme au service de la révolution*, whereby this revolution was specifically aligned with that of the French Communist Party, which also looked to the Soviet Union.[31] Einstein's sarcasm suggests he was more circumspect. It reveals his disgust at the hypocrisy and naivety of the relatively safe 'crisis-enthusiasts', who seem to be gleefully anticipating the day when they will wake up to a readymade communist utopia. Rather than believing communism to be making its way from Russia, with that way being paved by the economic and political crisis in Europe, Einstein contends the opposite. In the letter to his friend he observes: 'uebrigens soll es den russen auch garnicht gut gehen' and suggests: 'das system stalin hat sie eben in den prozess der kapitalistischen laender miteinbezogen'. (ALT, 265) Stalin's five-year plans from 1928 and 1932 to rapidly industrialize a largely rural land and peasant populace, with the stated intention of liquidating the kulaks as a class, were met with stubborn resistance by the peasantry. One result was that throughout the thirties meat, milk and various dairy products were in very short supply. There was famine in 1932-33 and a pervasive shortage of all consumer goods until about 1935.[32] Moreover, the attempts to bring the land and its people up to a standard to compete with the capitalist West involved capital-raising schemes upheld by European investment. That meant the Soviet Union was imbricated in the very system that was thrown into chaos by the 1929 crash, and to which

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[29] Cf. Willett, *The New Sobriety*, p. 94 and p. 177.

[30] Cf. Wilhelm Reich and Siegfried Bernfeld, *Dialectical Materialism and Psychoanalysis*, a reprint from the now extinct American journal, *Studies on the Left* (London: Socialist Reproduction, 1972), anonymous introduction, pp. 2-9 (p. 7).

[31] Cf. on this point also Mark Polizzotti: 'As Breton himself noted at the time [i.e. early 1930]: 'The *Second Manifesto of Surrealism* puts an end to the first phase of Surrealist activity. We will try to carry out this activity, which has become aware of its philosophical and historical significance, in ever closer relation to the act of social revolution.'' Mark Polizzotti, *Revolution of the Mind: The Life of André Breton* (London: Bloomsbury, 1995), p. 346.

[32] Cf. Holland Hunter, 'The New Tasks of Soviet Planning in the Thirties', in *Marxism, Central Planning and the Soviet Economy: Economic Essays in Honor of Alexander Ehrlich*, ed. by Padma Desai (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1983), pp. 137-97 (p. 83).

it was supposed to represent an alternative.[33] For Einstein it also meant one more road barred for Europeans with designs on a revolution or sympathizing with the communist cause—the end of the 'great utopia'.[34] Moreover, it meant for him that continuing to present Russia as the ideal and insist on alignment with the Comintern amounted to a fudging of the facts, and either a naively optimistic or a deviously ideological distortion.

Not only had Einstein's hopes for the Soviet Union dwindled to nothing, but hopes that developments in Germany might yet be checked or turned around faded with Chancellor von Papen's so-called coup against Prussia. Brüning, von Papen's predecessor as chancellor, had already begun governing by decree in early 1930, thus effectively overriding parliament and rendering it impotent to hinder further abuse of power. This is now generally seen as a significant development in paving the way towards Hitler's takeover.[35] On 20 July 1932, von Papen, with the backing of President Hindenburg, forcibly deposed the Social Democratic led Prussian government. That also meant the SPD's control of the Berlin police was destroyed, a further crucial point in developments towards the Nazi takeover, as John Willett points out in his study *The New Sobriety*.[36] There was no concerted response to the dismissal of Braun's Social Democratic government, to the sweeping away of liberal institutions and eventually to the National Socialists becoming the strongest single party:

> nobody – not the trade unions, nor the Prussian police, nor the Socialist Reichsbanner, nor even the KPD and its semi-underground Roter Frontkämpferbund – was prepared to use organized force to resist [Hitler] [...].[37]

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[33] Cf. 'Carl Einstein: Brief an Ewald Wasmuth (1931)' printed in ALT, 263-65 (p. 265). On this point see also Reich and Bernfeld, *Dialectical Materialism and Psychoanalysis*, anonymous introduction: 'The austrian and german [sic] communist parties [...] increasingly through the twenties took their lead from Moscow, and at this time Leninism in the hands of Stalin was rapidly being transformed into the ideological litany of the new managerial class that was being established throughout Russia.' (p. 7)

[34] An exhibition entitled 'Die große Utopie. Die russische Avantgarde 1915-1932' appeared in Frankfurt in 1992. Cf. *Die große Utopie: Die russische Avantgarde 1915-1932*, Katalog: Schirn-Kunsthalle Frankfurt, 1 March-10 May 1992, ed. by Bettine-Martine Wolter and Bernhart Schwenk (Frankfurt a. M.: Schirn-Kunsthalle, 1992).

[35] At that time, Article 48 of the Weimar Constitution accorded the president both legislative and executive powers in a state of emergency. In other words, it was no longer even nominally the people, with whom sovereignty rested, but quite explicitly the 'Reichspräsident'. By 1931, this state of affairs had already come under attack. Carl Schmitt in *Der Hüter der Verfassung* had not only exposed various dimensions of the sovereignty problem, but had predicted—and warned against—precisely that possibility of an abuse of power such as was to allow Hitler to assume power. Cf. Carl Schmitt, *Der Hüter der Verfassung*, reprint of the original 1931 edn (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1985), esp. p. 131.

[36] Willett, *The New Sobriety*, p. 202.

[37] Ibid.

Willett cites a passage from the German Communist Party (KPD) theoretical journal *Die Internationale* showing that for some Communists it would have even been greatly preferable to have a 'straightforward Fascist dictatorship' confront a determined, united proletariat than to have a Social Democratic coalition confront a confused, divided proletariat.[38] The threat posed by National Socialism was substantially underestimated, we can say retrospectively, by much of the Left, Einstein included.

National Socialism and Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen

In her seminal study *Die Kunsttheorie Carl Einsteins* Oehm presents the strong thesis that the Nazi takeover marks a watershed in Einstein's œuvre, his turnabout from a basically late Romantic, 'subjectivist' theory of art to a 'materialist' position. In an effort to promote the later 'materialist' Einstein against Einstein the 'subjectivist', Oehm tends to overemphasize discontinuities at the expense of continuities. For instance, she seems not to see that although the objects of Einstein's critique might differ between, say, *Georges Braque* and FF, the structure of the critique does not, nor does the implicit philosophy of history and utopian cast of mind. The weaker thesis will be advanced here, namely that although the political developments in Germany were of some significance in spurring on Einstein's rethink of the merit of art and the role of artist and intellectual, he understood those developments as just one further aspect of an already critical situation, which stretched far beyond the boundaries of that one country. It will also be recalled that by 1928 Einstein was living in Paris and so no longer had any first-hand daily knowledge of life in Germany.

This weaker thesis allows us to understand why, in FF, the National Socialist movement receives treatment only in passing; it is cited in the context of the critique of an exploitative class-based society with an alienating division of labour, increasingly sophisticated ideologies and increasingly opaque ideological structures, which ensure perpetuation of the status quo. Einstein places Nazi ideology into a wider framework: he registers the growth of 'romantisch ferne Utopien' (FF, 86/133) out of the disappointment and disillusionment that the post-World-War I generation carried with it. As characteristics of post-World-War I art he notes 'Wirklichkeitsverzicht und Furcht vor der Realität' (FF, 86/132). The war of course meant military discipline and an enforced

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[38] Willett, *The New Sobriety*, p. 203.

proximity to others. Einstein contends that people's horror and disgust at such collective discipline and invasive proximity bred an impassioned individualism, while it also left people broken. Indeed, he uses the word 'fabriziert' in this context, suggesting that the ensuing situation was a further 'Fiktion', artificial and imposed:

> Gerade die Kriegsdisziplin hatte leidenschaftliche Individualisten fabriziert {und deren Person gleichzeitig zerbrochen}. (FF, 86/132)

Einstein thus sees the war as a further cause of the fragmentation of the individual and the consequent fetishization of individualism (cf. also FF 85/130). An aspect of this war legacy he does not explicitly refer to here is the post-war literature that vigorously reaffirms such individualism but is hinged around, one might even say obsessed with, the notion and experience of the collective, whether lived or reported, which throws back to the trenches. This is an exemplary instance of the kind of crippling 'polarized thinking' (the term is Theodor Lessing's) Helmut Lethen examines with particular reference to the work of Ernst Jünger in his study *Cool Conduct: The Culture of Distance in Weimar Germany*. Drawing on documents from Expressionism, Lethen asserts that testimony from that decade allows us to identify a sense of life's dynamism as an oscillation between two poles. However,

> in the new objectivity decade, when 'polarized thinking' (Theodor Lessing) had in fact reached its high point, we learn that the pendulum motion [in this case: advocacy of 'cool' individualism, distance and isolation versus advocacy of full absorption into the 'warmth' of a collective] can get stuck uncomfortably between the extremes. [...] Before the new objectivity construction, polarization was a surface aspect of the life stream; now, as either a gradual development of the concept or an abrupt effect of the shock of world war, the polarity has worked its way into life itself, splitting it in two. Whatever idea of a unified life remains in the arts of the new objectivity has so little force as to rule out any chance for synthesis or any pleasure from oscillation between the poles.[39]

As Einstein sees it, this traumatized relationship with individuality and individualism is reflected politically in the degeneration of critical politics and political critique into 'alte romantische Gläubigkeit' (FF, 84/129), 'bürgerlich romantische Politik', 'politische[r] Messianismus' (FF, 86/133).

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[39] Helmut Lethen, *Cool Conduct: The Culture of Distance in Weimar Germany*, trans. by Don Reneau (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), p. 24-25.

> In Westeuropa wurde ein politischer Chiliasmus romantisch und national aufgezogen. (FF, 86/133)

> Nun gewannen diejenigen Parteien rauschende Gefolgschaft, die archaische Utopien feilboten. (Ibid.)

Just such archaic utopias are championed by the National Socialist movement, with its ideologies of race and 'Reich', 'Blut und Boden'. Einstein sees, too, that the Nazi programme is full of hollow rhetoric and crass generalizations, and that it is at its core anything but revolutionary or progressive:

> an die wirtschaftliche und sociale Struktur rührte man nicht. (FF, 86/133)

> Als Ersatz für eine politische Umänderung boten die Kleinbürger vermoderte Sprichwörter aus [...]. (Ibid.)

This last quotation shows Einstein's understanding of the movement as supported in the main by the middle classes, in particular the lower middle class or petite bourgeoisie, i.e. shopkeepers, clerks, tradesmen, etc. This class is characterized by its aspirational tendencies. While its standard of living is not much higher than that of the proletariat, it reaches upward by adopting—to the point of outdoing—the moral precepts of the class just above it, i.e. the middle or upper middle class, as well as their tastes in art, manners, clothing, etc. Lacking in wider education and any tradition of self-determination, the Weimar petite bourgeoisie identified strongly not only with the moral and aesthetic authority of the class above it, but also with political authority ('Lehmann wünschte Führung und simple Phrase' (FF, 102/158)), and was thus particularly susceptible to the doctrine and slogans of National Socialism.[40] Furthermore, the petits bourgeois believed they stood to gain from a successful revolution, so the quashed attempts of 1918/19 (FF, 86/133) were a substantial blow to them too, and fuelled their need for 'alte billige Illusionen' (FF, 86/133). It was they, Einstein contends, who were largely responsible for the reactionary sweep in matters cultural, with which the intellectuals then simply complied:

> [die Kleinbürger] erzwangen die kulturelle Reaktion, der die Intellektuellen beispiellos

feige sich unterwarfen. (FF, 87/133)

Einstein certainly considers the broader context of the development and success of the National Socialist movement, but the question of the role of the intellectuals specifically in preparing the ground for fascism, and the ideological issues connecting modernism and fascism, are not of central concern in FF.

Einstein's personal perspective

Once the National Socialists were in power, it became increasingly obvious to Einstein that his move to Paris, which in 1928 had been a personal choice, could now be equated with exile. For a Jewish intellectual who had taken part in the revolutionary activity in Brussels near the end of the first World War there was now no question of returning.[41] Einstein was, no doubt, considerably better placed than most exiles in purely practical terms. His links with Paris dated back more than twenty years.[42] He had a number of friends and many acquaintances and contacts there, had an excellent command of the language, and was steeped in France's art-world and well-acquainted with its culture, even if by 1931 he did not prize the quotidian appearance of that culture.[43] His situation nonetheless took on a different flavour when it became enforced:

> ich sehe, immer werde ich allein sein, jude, deutschsprechend, in frankreich. jude ohne gott und ohne kenntnis unserer vergangenen zeit, deutschsprechend, doch gewillt die deutsche sprache nicht wie meine landsleute und gleichzüngige faul und müde versacken zu lassen.[44]

The prospect of retaining a vibrant relationship with the German language had diminished, but the sentiment of a staunch commitment to the language itself remained. The first of two further quotations relating to this matter of enforced exile, from an

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[40] 'Schulze' and 'Lehmann' are Einstein's characterizations of the average petit bourgeois citizen.

[41] On Einstein's activity in Brussels cf. Penkert, *Carl Einstein: Beiträge zu einer Monographie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1969), pp. 76-87, and more recently Liliane Meffre, *Carl Einstein 1885-1940. Itinéraires d'une pensée moderne*, (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2002), pp. 58-79.

[42] Cf. Liliane Meffre, *Carl Einstein 1885-1940. Itinéraires d'une pensée moderne*, p. 37ff., as well as her article 'Carl Einstein in Frankreich', in *Exil*, 2 (1991), pp. 48-55.

[43] Cf. letter to Wasmuth from 28/XV/31: 'paris ist ein laermendes dorf. wir sprechen immer noch voltaire und racine. kueltuere. wir besitzen ein bidet und keinen hitler; esprit. on vit avec le sourire; latinité et mesure. on mange l'oignon; méditérrannée; l'ail; noch stinkt vergil. die sonne homers ist stark eingeregnet und die clarté aehnelt verzweifelt einem gemeinplatz. aber was wollen Sie, hier poebeln keine nazis.' (ALT, 265)

[44] Note from 18 February 1933, quoted in Kiefer, *Diskurswandel*, p. 474.

autobiographical fragment dated 30 January 1934, shows Einstein registering the state of affairs:

> die lampen leuchten ueber einen beziehungslosen; ich mied jede verwandtschaft und naehe. wohl, aber jetzt ist es anders. alles gewollte sich abtrennen war eitle willkeur und kuenstlich; doch jetzt ICH BIN ABGETRENNT WORDEN. das ist anders. aller sinn dieses lebens ergibt sich aus dem zusammenleben ... vielleicht ist glueck nur gemeinschaft ... (CEA, 52)

In the second, from a much-quoted fragment for his planned autobiographical novel, the so-called *BEB II* project, and dated just a day later, 31 January 1934, the above has clearly undergone reflection and self-criticism:

> BEB[uquin] versteht nun, dass er sein ganzes leben nur einer abgetrennten klique angehoert hat, die in aest[h]etischer eitelkeit und erfolgsucht untereinander sich bekaempfte; also BEB war, wie er jetzt sieht, sein ganzes leben emigrant gewesen. sein ganzer effort war daraufhin gegangen emigrant, d.h. isoliert und ausnahme zu sein. immer war er auf der flucht vor einem bindendem milieu gewesen. jetzt begreift er, wo man ihn hinausgeworfen hat. (CEA, 52)

Einstein puts his own past pursuits, and the values underpinning them, one of which was to be 'an exception', into the context of a 'clique', i.e. he recognizes what is socially and historically typical in them, and thus contributes to a critical sociology of his milieu. Not only at the level of the group bound together by the same values and pursuits, but also at the individual level, the paradox of the situation is registered, as Einstein unflinchingly confronts his own past and what shaped it, grasping the consequences of what that means for where he is now.

The reactionary cult of the exceptional

But something else is revealed in that sharply self-critical passage too, namely the supremely idealistic, and in a sense Nietzschean, nature of any kind of collective that was being pursued by Einstein—and by implication by the kind of 'clique' of which he was part. Einstein had, by his own admission, sought throughout most of his adult life to stand apart from others professionally and, to a great extent, also personally. Described by a reviewer of his work as a 'kaltschnäuzige[r] Skeptiker', Einstein's arrogance, if even as a pose, his aloofness from those around him, even those who might have shared many

of his aims and concerns, is well-documented.[45] He retained a sceptical distance from anything that looked like a 'school' or the makings of one and was quick and deft at exposing the ideological flattening-out that can occur when a number of ideas come to bind a group and become consolidated as doctrine.[46] The imagined collective exposed *ex negativo* by Einstein in the above quotation was to be a collective of 'exceptional' people, a collectivity composed exclusively of consummate individuals. The problematic relationship with individuality and individualism appears again here.

The circle around Stefan George, the 'George-Kreis' as it was known, and the kind of barely-disguised or newly-framed élitism at work there, are not very far away. The vanity and preciousness, and the taste for the exceptional that Einstein discerns in himself, but also in the milieu of which he was a somewhat isolated part, are given similar treatment in a work written more than three decades later than FF, Gert Mattenklott's *Bilderdienst: Ästhetische Opposition bei Beardsley und George*. In a discussion of the aesthetic cult of Stefan George and his disciples, Mattenklott lays bare its broader social functions and implications and the structural mechanisms that bind it into a deeply conservative 'apoliticism', which amounts to a reactionary politics. George and his followers generate the illusion of a pure unity between artist and work, with an absolute autonomy of both. The artist's stance bears witness to his independence from anything that might look like labour and pay. But of course this stance, which draws on older, namely feudal forms of behaviour and manner, is thoroughly fraudulent, as the artist is anything but independent of economic factors. Thus, Mattenklott contends, George gives the impression of

> eine Einheit von Mann und Werk durch die zur Schau getragene Muße des feudalen Dichterfürsten, durch die äußere Unabhängigkeit des Mannes von Arbeit und Lohn, die

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[45] Cf. Georg Poensgen, who, in a review of the first (1926) edition of Einstein's encyclopedia volume *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*, made the following comment: 'Es gibt wohl kaum einen kaltschnäuzigeren Skeptiker augenblicklich als Einstein.' Georg Poensgen, 'Carl Einstein. Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts. Propyläenkunstgeschichte Bd. XVI, Berlin 1926', in *Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft*, 50 (1929), 45-46, (p. 45). This review is reprinted in K 3, 856-58.

[46] It is possible that this was one of Einstein's chief reasons for declining the offer of a post at the Bauhaus in 1924, something which would have undoubtedly brought considerable prestige and a regular income. Another reason—but one which in a way is simply a variation of the one already mentioned—was perhaps that he saw the Bauhaus as having become too beholden to its reputation, too unwilling to jeopardize that, and thus no longer free or even seeking or prioritizing the disinterestedness and freedom spoken of above in the context of the 'free-floating intellectual'. Cf. on this point also Klaus Herding, 'immer auf der flucht vor einem bindenden milieu', in *Merkur: Deutsche Zeitschrift für europäisches Denken*, 8 (1992), 717-25 (p. 718).

> innere geistige Autonomie des Werkes, man weiß da gar nicht, was kostbarer ist, der Produzent oder das Produkt.[47]

With a sharp eye for the sociological dynamic, Mattenklott exposes the system-affirmative character of this kind of demagogic aesthetic cult:

> Die Fetischisierung von Form, Bild, Gestik erfüllte mehrere Funktionen [...]. Die systemstabilisierenden, auf Sekurität und Respektierung des Eigentums und Privilegienverteilung bedachten Interessen des (männlichen) Besitzbürgertums sind unüberhörbar.[48]

Mattenklott leaves no doubt about the political consequences of such 'Zucht und Haltung'[49] in the context of a broadly conservative bourgeois intelligentsia thriving on all sorts of utopian fodder and understanding itself as apolitical: the task fell to George to glorify 'staatsbürgerliche Verhaltensformen [...], die zumindest auf passive Duldung faschistischer Herrschaft hinausliefen'.[50]

Almost two decades later again, that is, a little over half a century after FF was written, Norbert Bolz's *Auszug aus der entzauberten Welt* takes up the same issues. While there is some overlap between Mattenklott's and Bolz's argument, Bolz's work is considered here on account of its uncanny proximity to FF. In a discussion of aesthetic exile against the backdrop of Weber's diagnosis of the demystification of the world ('Entzauberung der Welt'), Bolz posits an aesthetic, and ethical, cult of the exceptional or the rare ('Kult des Seltenen'). Reference is made to Stefan George's *Teppich des Lebens*. The first work George let go through the hands of a publisher, it was printed in such a fashion as to imitate George's own handwriting. Bolz comments, quoting Friedrich Kittler:

> Aug im Aug mit dem Zeitalter der technischen Reproduzierbarkeit realisiert George das Ideal eines persönlichen Buches. [...] 'Im Gewand des Archaischen tritt die Technik auf den Plan.'[51]

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[47] Gert Mattenklott, *Bilderdienst: Ästhetische Opposition bei Beardsley und George* (Munich: Rogner & Bernhard 1970), p. 191f.
[48] Ibid., p. 229.
[49] Ibid., p. 230.
[50] Ibid., p. 226.
[51] Norbert Bolz, *Auszug aus der entzauberten Welt* (Munich: Fink, 1989), p. 154. Bolz quotes Friedrich A. Kittler, *Aufschreibesysteme 1800 - 1900*, 2nd edn (Munich: Fink, 1987), p. 265.

Bolz notes the priority of the sound of the word in this poetry over its semantic weight, and how words are used as conjuring formulae of an apocryphal folk tradition. Moreover, traditions of magical and religious rituals and communions are drawn on:

> [...] die doppelte Sehnsucht nach Esoterik und Teilhabe am Unterstrom der Volkssprüche versetzt George in eine Priesterrolle.[52]

Bolz succinctly explains the cult of the exceptional in the following way:

> Rentneraristokratismus bestimmt ihn soziologisch, die Ausnahme ethisch und das Preziöse ästhetisch.[53]

Incidentally, the term 'Rentneraristokratismus' is curiously reminiscent of Einstein's own caustic vocabulary. Indeed in the first chapter of FF, without specific mention of the technical reproducibility of art, Einstein presents his assessment of the demand for the exceptional as predicated on the average art consumer's desire to *also* be exceptional, and of the serial nature, in terms of motifs and forms, of the production of much modern art. In the demands that the art consumers make Einstein observes a trickle-down effect:[54] the average art consumer now aspires to—and in fact ascribes to himself—the exceptionality that was once the preserve of the gifted artist. At the same time, the production strategies in much of what passes for art have come to be aligned with modern industrial production of mass wares. (Einstein is speaking here of visual art, but that does not mean the insights are limited to it alone):

> [...] die Kunstwerke wurden von der Klientel auf ihre *Seltenheit* hin geschätzt. Der individual gierige Kunde wollte Besitzer oder Begreifer eines einzigartigen Kunstwerks sein. Schulze wollte fabelhaft sein, und somit forderte er für sich kleine Monstres. Er kaufte Schafe mit 5 Beinen, und dies war seine bescheidenste Forderung. Damit wurden die besondere Anschauung, die *Ausnahme* zu Kriterien des Kunstbetriebs. [...]

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[52] Bolz, *Auszug aus der entzauberten Welt*, p. 154.
[53] Ibid.
[54] The notion of such a trickle-down effect, related to exceptionality and prestige, is prevalent in cultural studies of fashion. See for example Jennifer Craik, *The Face of Fashion: Cultural Studies in Fashion* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 9. 'Sonderbild' as the title of the fourth book or chapter of FF gains its metonymical significance in this context: it points to the issue of an ideologically perpetuated cult of the exceptional and the rare, and of the lone genius: 'Die Metaforik, welche die moderne Dichtung charakterisiert, zeigt ein Championat um die Einsamkeit. Die Literaten bildeten verschlossene Sonderwelten für Geweihte.' (FF, 258/357)

> Tatsächlich wurden die meisten Kunstwerke trotzdem serienweise erzeugt. [...] Die Visionäre spielten ihre Träume serienweise ab. Die vorgetäuschte Einzigkeit dieser Reihenprodukte erhöhte jedoch die *Sonderstellung* der Kenner oder Besitzer. (FF, 82-83/127, italics N.C.)

> Die *sociale Ausnahmestellung* bedingte eine Kunst für Privilegierte, worin *seltene* Empfindungen aufklangen, und das Typische unterdrückt war. (FF, 186/270, italics N.C.)

The passage immediately following the first two of these quotations draws some pointed conclusions, all the more exacting when it is borne in mind that Einstein does not exclude himself from the allegations he is making:

> Solch *aristokratischer* Geistbetrieb wurde durch eifrige Vulgarisierung ergänzt, die den zweideutigen formalen Demokraten entsprach. Der luxuriöse [Individualbetrieb] warf keine genügende *Rente* ab. Wie Großgrundbesitzer oder Fabrikherren von der Arbeitsleistung der Proletarier leben, so bestritten die Intellektuellen den größeren Teil ihrer Existenz durch Vulgarisierung. [...] Gleich den Unternehmern organisierten die Intellektuellen die Publizität ihrer Ware, die die Minorität verteidigen sollte. Sie forderten, daß ihre Privatgeheimnisse von allen anerkannt werden. (FF, 83/127, italics N.C.)

> Dank der Vulgarisierung konnten die Geistigen ihre Privilegien vermehren.

> Die Intellektuellen übten fast unwidersprochen ihre Diktatur aus. Hatte man früher dem *Pfarrer* geglaubt, so vertraute man jetzt dem Fachmann der Ideologie. (FF, 83/128, italics N.C.)

A covert élitism?

One thing that remains problematic here is Einstein's use of the word 'Vulgarisierung'. The following argument could be made: Einstein is not so much using this word from the perspective of the intellectuals or artists, i.e. he does not think that their own impression of what they were doing with their works was 'vulgarizing' them. Rather, Einstein himself sees the intellectuals' organized publicity of their work as unintentional vulgarization, i.e. their embroilment in the mechanisms of the market, such as advertising and the creation of demand or desire. In that case, one might question whether in Einstein's text an élitist, or at least very idealistic, model is still tacitly in operation: how is the relationship between artist and (capitalist) society to be viewed—and every view is

in some way an evaluation—if one is neither to make normative or prescriptive demands, nor to describe the status quo without making such demands, thereby implicitly affirming it? One straightforward answer to this is that every artist, both in a pre- and post-patron society, is also a labourer, a breadwinner like every other, but in how far an artist is 'embroiled' in the market-place is a matter of degree. Therefore, to approach the matter in an absolute way is to fail to grasp the actual differences that exist, and thus to fail to evaluate what needs evaluation if one is to retain any kind of distinction between artwork and cultural product, where all artworks are cultural products but not vice versa. This type of question will receive fuller treatment towards the end of the section below entitled 'The suggestion of an alternative', where the limitations of Einstein's position will be addressed.

A second argument could however be advanced, using a quotation from elsewhere in FF to show a different perspective:

> Die Objekte waren elend verfallen. Trotzdem klammerten sich die Maler noch an jene und schoben in ihre Bilder gegenständliche Einzelerinnerungen (primitive), die wie Fremdenführer in die private Symbolik überleiteten. Allem Hermetismus zum Trotz klammerte man sich vorsichtig ans 'Vulgäre', um die Brücken zum Klienten nicht abzubrechen.

The impression given here, with 'Vulgäre' in inverted commas, is rather that the vulgarization Einstein speaks of was indeed a conscious strategy on the part of the artists. On this view, they deliberately compromized their work in order to maximize their audience. It is not so much the case that they were unhindered by concerns of admitting elements considered vulgar by their wealthier client-base, as that they had recourse to the everyday or the banal, and in that sense the vulgar, so as not to alienate and confound their audience completely. The use of the inverted commas suggests that the notion of what is vulgar is that held by the artists themselves, in compliance perhaps with a more traditional aesthetic and certainly with social dictates. The inverted commas also suggest that Einstein does not concur with this view.[55]

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[55] The historical evidence makes it plausible to assume that many artists would have viewed the need to operate within and for a mass market with distaste and even bitterness. Detlev Peukert documents how the decade of inflation from the early 1920s to the early thirties brought on a 'Not der geistigen Arbeiter' (the title of a work by A. Weber from 1923): 'Bis dahin hatte ein Teil der bürgerlichen Intellektuellenschicht aus der relativen Sicherheit kleinerer oder mittlerer Rentenvermögen gelebt. [...] Die Inflation hatte diese bürgerliche Rentnerschicht insgesamt enteignet und mit ihr auch die Intellektuellen in die

Here is, therefore, another instance of how in FF a comment can be picked up and refined or given a further perspective at a later stage in the work. This second argument grants Einstein a more nuanced position vis-à-vis the social status of the work of art. But it also sits more easily than the first argument with his approach to the history of art, which is informed by considerations of ethnography, social and cultural history and social anthropology, and is borne out in such comments as the following, on the very first pages of FF:

> Starke Kulturen zeichnen sich durch ein erhebliches, doch ins Breite strömendes Niveau aus und sind durch einen allgemein verbindlichen Stil beherrscht, der die Schwächeren stützt, (doch) die Fessellosen begrenzt. [...] Die Schwäche der heutigen Moderne erweist sich hieraus, daß sie kaum mittlere Leistungen mit Gewicht erzeugen konnte. Die bestehende Gesellschaft vermochte die Kunst in kein breiteres Milieu einzuordnen, und somit strebte Einjeder ins ungebunden Außerordentliche. Diese Tatsache beleuchtet die abrupte Künstlichkeit der Moderne, die keiner verpflichtenden Kultur eingefügt ist. (FF, 13-14/2)

These comments are reaffirmed, again half a century later, in a study of the Weimar Republic by Detlev Peukert, who writes in a chapter entitled 'Die 'Neue Sachlichkeit' der Massenkultur':

> Die großen Stile, die unser Bild der klassischen Moderne prägen, folgten [...] in atemloser Hektik aufeinander und konkurrierten gleichzeitig miteinander. Keine Manier besaß die Kraft und die Dauerhaftigkeit, der Epoche als ganzer ein geschlossenes kulturelles Antlitz zu verleihen.[56]

The question of what to do in, or indeed with, a society that has no binding culture and no binding values is one with which Einstein and his contemporaries on the Left and Right grappled fiercely. The combination of economic, political and personal crisis described in this section sketches a background to Einstein's rethinking of modernity and of the cultural movements that troubled modernity engendered. The combined crisis gave rise to a rigorous critique, not only of modernism and the Avant-garde, but also of

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existenzbestimmende Abhängigkeit von einer Anstellung oder vom Verkauf ihrer Arbeiten gebracht.' Peukert, *Die Weimarer Republik*, p. 168. Given the durability of notions of class and status, it is hardly surprising that the conspicuous outer signs or trappings of nobility underwent an inflation and even fetishization just as the last vestiges of the socio-economic privileges attaching to the 'bürgerliche Rentnerschicht' were lost.

[56] Peukert, *Die Weimarer Republik*, p. 168.

Einstein's own position as an intellectual and the views he had previously held on art. That critique took shape as *Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen.*

Einstein's critique of modernity and its critics

Introduction

FF, as has been noted above, is characterized by a lack of systematic closure or traditional textual architecture, even if treatment of the themes in itself often seems exhaustive. Einstein weaves his argument from strands that are not made to provide a single causal chain or flawless narrative of how modernity became what it was and how it came to undo itself. It will be helpful, for the purpose of this study, to separate out some of the strands. Einstein's focus is on the development of cultural institutions in the age of liberalism and towards the extremisms of the years following World War I. Methodologically his approach is psychological and ethnographic; it is informed by epistemological considerations and a sociology of the aesthetic, whereby he has widened his scope from art matters and problems in aesthetics produced by the liberal worldview (core concerns of *Georges Braque*) to art's broader function in social, psychological and political terms. In other words, a cultural and ideological critique of the entire nexus of the bourgeois institution of art is underway. This critique is relentless in its attempt to expose the manoeuvres behind the smoke screen of the entertainment industry in its early twentieth century guise, the power-political mechanisms that perpetuate it. Where Einstein's critique is vulnerable, however, is in reflecting on the historical conditions of its own possibility, and framing its response, or an alternative to what it critiques, in terms of those conditions.

This point can be illustrated with reference to other, more recent, attempts to theorize the Avant-garde. In his foreword to the 1984 English edition of Peter Bürger's *Theorie der Avantgarde* from 1974, Jochen Schulte-Sasse refers to Bürger's application of an idea from Hegel, elaborated by Marx in relation to the category 'labour'.[57] The idea

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[57] Jochen Schulte-Sasse, in the foreword to Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. by Michael Shaw, Theory of History and Literature, 4 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press; Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), pp. vii-lv (p. xxxvii). For a counter-argument criticizing Bürger's transfer of Marx's reasoning about the category of labour, cf. Heiner Boehnke, 'Überlegungen zu einer proletarisch-avantgardistischen Ästhetik' in *'Theorie der Avantgarde' – Antworten auf Peter Bürgers*

is that philosophy can only comprehend an epoch adequately when that epoch is nearing its end and thus its sublation. Schulte-Sasse makes the point that Bürger's application of this idea convincingly demonstrates the preconditions for the historical analysis of the social functioning of past art, i.e. its function as 'institution'. Such analysis 'became possible only when, first, the historical unfolding of this institution had reached its end in the radical separation of aestheticist or modernist art from society, and second, when due to this development, the Avant-garde could attack the institution of 'art'.' 'In other words,' Schulte-Sasse continues, 'Bürger reflects the historicity of his own theory along with the history he reconstructs'.[58] While commending Bürger on this aspect of his work, Schulte-Sasse, however, towards the end of his foreword, subjects Bürger's theory to the warranted criticism that the limitations it imposes on post-Avant-garde art amount to an inadequacy in framing its response, or an alternative to what it critiques, in terms of the historical conditions of possibility of the theory itself. This is a shortcoming Bürger's theory shares with Einstein's.[59] Agreeing with Schulte-Sasse on the point about the preconditions for the historical analysis of the social functioning of past art, I would argue that Einstein's undertaking is more a sociological and psychological, and less a historical, analysis of the functioning of past and contemporary art, and that, while Einstein shares many insights with Bürger (the basic thesis that it is the social status of art, its function and prestige in society, that provides the connection between individual artwork and social history; an insight into reasons for the defusing of Avant-garde art by incorporation into the institution; an attack on metaphysical aesthetics in favour of a materialistic aesthetic theory rooted in the reality of the social sphere of today, to mention but a few), Einstein's theory is inevitably and understandably weakened by its historical proximity to its object. The ways in which it is weakened will be discussed at a later stage in this chapter.

This section will take the following form. A short analysis of Einstein's presentation of modernity will feed into an analysis of his critique of early twentieth century reactions to that modernity. These two aspects will be dealt with apart from his critique of the revolutionary Avant-gardes, which will be addressed in the next section.

Bestimmung von Kunst und bürgerlicher Gesellschaft, ed. by Martin Lüdke (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1976), pp. 166-89 (esp. pp. 166-73).

[58] Jochen Schulte-Sasse, foreword to *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, p. xxxvii.

[59] Jochen Schulte-Sasse, foreword to *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, pp. xxxvi-xxxvii.

The Avant-garde movements of course also frame their alternatives in the form of critical responses to modernity, but Einstein's critique of them warrants separate attention on account of their significance in the overall context of the politicization of the aesthetic that emerged from the discussion of *Georges Braque*.

Einstein's 'Moderne'

Without entering into lengthy discussion on definitions of modernity and the problematic nature of the term, we can take 'die Moderne' in FF to refer broadly to the era characterized by advanced industry, technology and division of labour and the effects they had on the economic and social complex, i.e. the tail-end of the nineteenth century and the first three decades of the twentieth.[60] This era of advanced capitalism with its secularized models of physical and moral order, science and liberalism, can of course be traced back into the nineteenth century, the century that began thinking in a historical (more accurately, historicist) fashion and, hand in hand with pre-relativistic science, propounded the concept of scientifically-grounded enlightened progress and the liberal worldview. The dominant epistemological model had been handed down from the Enlightenment, which, with Descartes, posited the thinking subject as the origin of the world of objects and all knowledge of both subject and world. Einstein notes this, and subjects it to criticism:

> Das moderne Credo lautet: Das subjektiv Imaginative bestimmt das komplex Reale. (FF, 20/15)

> Irgendwas mußte an dieser Moderne faul sein. Seit Descartes bemühte man sich, das eigene Dasein sich zu beweisen, so weit hatte man sich von der naiven und positiven Erfahrung entfernt. Man verharrte in dem scholastischen Aberglauben, daß man aus der Definition auf tatsächliche Existenz schließen könne. Das naive Erleben galt wissenschaftlich für unkorrekt oder belanglos. Die Geistigen hatten das Monopol erlangt, alle Wirklichkeit zu fassen und problematisch werden zu lassen, und das Primat des Geistes zur Voraussetzung allen Geschehens erhoben. (FF, 124/187)

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[60] Cf. also *Georges Braque*, where Einstein emphasizes the quantitative, calculative character of the worldview that accompanies this era: 'Dieses quantitative Weltbild entsprach der entwickelten Technik und Industrie, zumal man nun den Menschen als bezifferbare Arbeitskraft bewertete [...].' (W 3, 262)

Here Einstein is clearly taking issue with the fact that subjective Idealism as it grew out of the Enlightenment tradition moved humanity away from a positive evaluation of any kind of concrete experience and towards an ever more complex system of abstraction,[61] whereby paradoxically a blank space, a metaphysical vacuum,[62] ideal nothingness, or 'Wahn', had come to occupy the centre of reality, a nothingness, moreover, which was siphoning off enormous amounts of human energy:

> Die Primitiven [...] betrachten die Bezirke des Wahns als realste und primäre Wirklichkeit. Die Intellektuellen variierten das Primat der Geister zum Primat des abstrakten Geistes – die Priorität der philosophischen, dichterischen oder Bildrealität enthält also einen Archaismus – d. h. der Idealismus ist ein purer Atavismus. –
>
> Hier lag das Tragische der menschlichen Situation – man verausgabte die größte Energie an die Bildung der Fiktionen und machte den idealen Néant zur Mitte des Wirklichen. (FF, 124/187)

One further quotation will allow us to link the state of affairs Einstein describes here to the situation at the beginning of the twentieth century, when the questions of truth and reality became questions of interpretation rather than anything purportedly objective:

> [Die Intellektuellen] hielten nun die Entscheidung über Sein und Nichtsein, über Hoffnung und Verzweiflung in dürren Händen. So hatten vordem die Priester Gnade und Verdammnis vermittelt.
>
> Die Intellektuellen hatten ihre Machtstellung von neuem begründet, als sie das Privileg der uneingeschränkten Skepsis wiedererobert hatten. (FF, 125/187)

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[61] Cf. again *Georges Braque*: 'Dieses Weltbild unterscheidet sich von den früheren, da man versuchte, anstelle einer mythisch gestalthaften Realität eine konstruierte Abstraktion zu setzen; weniger um Erfahrungen zu ermöglichen, als diese auf wenige Typen zurückzuführen, d.h. sie zu erklären.' (W 3, 263)

[62] It will be recalled that the third book of FF was entitled 'Das Vacuum'. The two references to 'Vacuum' that can be found in the third book or chapter suggest that Einstein means it to refer to that metaphysical empty space (lack of space, nothingness, absence of ground) around which an entire system of thought is erected. The philosophers' 'methodisches Vacuum' is seen as negative, that which eliminates 'Das konkret Wirkliche' and every 'Chance zu Handeln' from the outset (FF, 223/318). Again, the segregationist motive of such mental activity is underlined: 'Die Philosophen [...] entzauberten diesem Nichts das reine Sein und Geschehen, die den tätigen Menschen entmutigen und sein Dasein entwerten. Die Ablehnung des positiven Seins weist aristokratische Einstellung'. (ibid.)

'Das Schicksal der Schicksallosigkeit'

In *Georges Braque* Einstein had already traced the collapse of traditional grounding or meaning-giving narratives in an analysis of the crisis of historicism. In the late nineteenth century a liquidation of the received concepts of truth and reality gets underway, as the tenets of idealist epistemology are driven to their limits. Nietzsche's work exposes truth as a mechanism of language on the one hand, and on the other as a question of social convention around which social structures are built. The thinking subject has its status drastically reduced by the psychophysicist Ernst Mach to a provisional entity, an agglomerate of sensations and impulses, which is anything but a continuous and unified substance. Any knowledge founded by and on this inherently precarious subject must then also be provisional, hypothetical. This was the conclusion reached also by Hans Vaihinger, whose *Philosophie des Als ob* (written in the 1870s but published only in 1911) laid waste the notion of scientific truth providing objective and final insights about the world around us and its inhabitants.[63] The revered laws of every science, including physics, whose laws seemed to have the greatest self-evidence, were now to be understood rather as working hypotheses about the material of our experience, agreed ways of talking about and generalizing phenomena, which were liable to require revision, adjustment or abandonment at any stage if new insights warranted it.[64] In other words, in the sciences, both natural and human, relativistic and functional models came to replace substantial and essentialist ones. No grounds were any longer unassailable. The way was thus open for a proliferation of competing statements about reality and versions of truth, none of which could any longer attain a status beyond that of interpretation, fiction or, more radically put, just plain error awaiting exposure:

> Der geistige Fortschritt schien darin zu bestehen, daß man an die Stelle eines offenkundigen einen latenten Irrtum setzte. (FF, 29/33)

> Die eine Erkenntnis degradierte die andere zum Irrtum. (FF, 30/34)

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[63] Hans Vaihinger, *Die Philosophie des Als ob: System der theoretischen, praktischen und religiösen Fiktionen der Menschheit auf Grund eines idealistischen Positivismus* (Berlin: Reuther & Reichard, 1911).
[64] Vaihinger's work is concerned with fictions, but in pragmatic and heuristic terms, as epistemological and scientific constructs. Unlike Einstein's, his is not an ideology-critical focus, except to the extent that the received notion of an absolute distinction between truth and falsity is exposed as untenable.

The scepticism underpinning this world-view, and the restless drive to outstrip and replace the statements of the day meant that speculation, competition and the 'new' acquired unprecedented value in the sphere of knowledge. It also meant, however, radical destabilization and disorientation for the bourgeois subject, who experienced cultural and intellectual life as collapsing into ever more dislocated and ephemeral fragments:

> Das paradoxe Gewirr der Erkenntnisse und psychologischen Deutungen hatte die Unsicherheit der Menschen gesteigert. (FF, 128/190)

> Die privatkapitalistische Gesellschaft war unfähig, eine Überlieferung und verpflichtende Übereinkünfte zu bilden. [...] Umfassende sociale Konventionen und zwingende Anschauungen fehlten. (FF, 27/31)

This was exacerbated by the fact that the bourgeoisie already felt its material existence threatened by a growing proletariat, which, unlike it, was still united by some idea, doctrine or 'fate', as Einstein contends:

> Die Intellektuellen verspürten die Drohung der Massen. (FF, 316/462)

> In einem war die Masse der Minorität überlegen. Ihr Anspruch war eindeutig {und zielte auf bestimmte Veränderungen des Wirklichen.} [...] Die Massen besaßen ein Schicksal. [...] Die Masse war in ein schweres, ökonomisches Geschick eingespannt. Hieraus erwuchs ihre politisch eindeutige Doktrin. Die Masse war davor geschützt, durch keine individual überzüchtete Intellektualität in faule Unbestimmtheit abzugleiten. Der arbeitenden Klasse konnte nur eine Doktrin, die vom Ökonomischen ausging, entsprechen, also eine Lehre, die nicht im Gewirr der geistigen Überbauten verflimmerte. (FF, 33/39)[65]

Truth: a question of power

Work within the various areas of knowledge, the various sciences, had become so specialized and complex that the discourses became obscure to the layman, to the point of appearing esoteric:

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[65] Cf. also FF, 93/143, as well as Einstein's comments on the intellectuals in the plans for his *BEB II* novel: 'CHAMPIONS DER KRITIK UND ZWERGE DES WOLLENS. sie wollten wie verzogene kinder eben immer nur etwas anderes: BEB mit seinem imaginativfimmel stellt nur das extrem dieses anderswollen dar.' (CEA, 43)

> Je nach Beruf oder Technik erdichtete man eine spezialisierte Anschauung. (FF, 27/31)

> Nun standen die Feticheure der wissenschaftlichen Geheimnisse ihrem gläubig erstaunten Publikum gegenüber. (FF, 15/6)

In this situation, with initiate knowledge the privilege of the few, those few held the power in their hands:

> Die Technik wurde zum Machtmittel der Minorität ausgebaut. Die Minderheit diktierte den Standard, ohne diesen für sich selber anzuerkennen. (FF, 57/88)

Intense intellectual competition in a highly advanced and specialized climate meant that, more than ever before, concepts of truth and reality, presentations of scientific fact and technical know-how became unhinged from everyday experience. They became a question of power ('Bei der Urteilslosigkeit der Massen ist Wahrheit eine Machtfrage.' (FF, 29/33)), and with that, the dominant legitimating principle for the exercise of power, as George Konrád and Ivan Szelényi point out in the their historically informed study of the role of the intellectual in Eastern Europe:

> The intelligentsia sought by professionalizing themselves to escape from [the] feudal situation, appearing on the free market as a stratum emancipated from the constraints of feudal subordination. Soon they went on from this stratum-position to take the first step toward forming themselves into a class, by formulating the ideological program of a society in which intellectual knowledge itself would be the dominant legitimating principle for the exercise of power. On our hypothesis the history of the changes of structural position undergone by the intelligentsia can be described as a process of transformation from an estate to a stratum and from there into a class, these three structural positions corresponding to the conditions of traditional redistribution (Western European feudalism), free-market capitalism and rational redistribution.[66]

As there was no Socialist system in place in Weimar Germany, what Konrád and Szelényi say about the transformation from a stratum into a class cannot simply be extended to the intellectuals Einstein has in mind. However, looking at matters in these terms, it is easy to see how the fledgling and fragile democracy that was Weimar was torn asunder by the forces or voices of one kind of rational redistribution battling the

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[66] George Konrád and Ivan Szelényi, *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power*, trans. by Andrew Arato and Richard E. Allen (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1979), p. 64.

forces of another kind, with both of these battling free-market capitalism. But this is just half—the visible half—of the battle: Einstein would amend it by adding that the invisible half consisted of the forces of the various forms of rational redistribution using strategies complying with free-market capitalism with the intention of firmly establishing and consolidating their own expert knowledge as the dominant legitimating principle for wielding power. Einstein points out the interests which unite the intellectuals socially, regardless of stated political orientation, and is in this sense theorizing the initial stages of transformation of the intellectuals from a stratum into a class.

In no position, on account of advanced specialization of labour, to challenge the experts' conclusions concerning (metaphysical) truth and (scientific or physical) reality, the masses were utterly disempowered:

> Leidenschaftlich betrieb man die technische Normalisierung, der fast ausschließlich die arbeitenden Massen unterworfen wurden. (FF, 57/88)

> Die intellektuelle Minderheit hatte über die Majorität den geistigen Ausnahmezustand verhängt. (FF, 82/126)

The wording here is interesting: the idea of a mental state of emergency suggests not only how acutely the collective mental crisis was felt, but also that it was very deliberately orchestrated, and that the disempowerment of the laity would endure until such time as those who had usurped the power deemed it time to reconsider. Einstein argues that this time would never come, but that instead the intellectual élite would work harder and harder at normalizing the state of emergency until, for economic reasons, its own situation became untenable.

Massification

The standardization and organization of the masses ('die technische Normalisierung'), regulation of their daily lives down to the minute, led to a phenomenon associated in particular with the early twentieth century, when urban populations in Western and Central Europe swelled rapidly: massification or, as Einstein also calls it, 'Vergesellschaftung' (FF, 17/10), no doubt with Ferdinand Tönnies' distinction between

'Gemeinschaft' and 'Gesellschaft' in mind.[67] More and more, the city became a place of hurrying throngs. Planners tried hard to keep up with demographic needs in terms of transport and buildings, but the sheer numbers no doubt lent the cities an oppressive and restrictive air. Coupled with this was an increasing bureaucratization of civic society. In an insightful essay from 1903, 'Die Großstädte und das Geistesleben', the sociologist Georg Simmel documents some of the effects on mental life that such urban development had. He registers the ways in which city-dwellers learn different strategies for coping with city life. He speaks of the blasé attitude, exhibited often in public spaces or in a moving crowd, where the individual seems to shut down his sensory apparatus and simply drift, with glazed-over expression, impervious to all and everything around him. In a sense contrary to this, but likewise a defensive strategy, is the cultivation of personal foibles and eccentricities Simmel observes in those who clearly wish to set themselves apart from what they have identified as the stock behaviour, opinions and attitudes of the teeming masses.

Reactions to massification

There were two basic responses to the acute rationalization and technologization of daily urban life, one of which was more or less associated with the urban working classes, while the other was largely the prerogative of the educated middle classes. One was to accept the way in which human life was increasingly determined by technology, science and the machine. Emerging from a century which had preached determinism of various sorts, biological/evolutionary, historical, economic, this could amount to simply yet another determinism, all the more persuasive because of the concrete confrontations the urban population had with technology and machinery:

> Das Geschehen wurde immer genauer und pedantischer in naturwissenschaftliche Gesetze oder technische Regeln gezäunt. [...] Der mittlere Mensch glaubte, sein Leben rolle nach fest bestimmten Gesetzen ab, die von den Oberen geprägt und befohlen waren. {Wissenschaftliche Determinierung statt hieratisch mythisher –} (FF, 29/32)

Although Einstein writes that it was a case of scientific *instead of* hieratic mythical determinism, 'statt' here can be taken to mean literally 'in place of', and not 'as opposed

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[67] Cf. Ferdinand Tönnies, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft: Abhandlung des Communismus und des Socialismus als empirischer Culturformen* (Leipzig: Fues, 1887).

to'. On numerous occasions elsewhere in the text it is clear that he understands the differences between the two as differences in content only, not in form, structure or effect:

> [Man] versank in wissenschaftlichen Fatalismus (Determinierung) [...]. Eine negerhafte, magische Atmosphäre überwölbte diese Moderne. (FF, 138/203)[68]

The other response to the increasing technologization and rationalization was to put up resistance. The bourgeoisie had been raised on a mental diet of individualism, whereby liberalism was to safeguard the individuals' rights and freedoms, and enlightened progress, whereby developments in science and technology allowed ever greater control of nature and thus seemed to hold ever more freedom in store:

> Angeblich sollten die Wissenschaften objektive Übereinkünfte gewähren und gestatten, die gewünschte Zukunft vorauszusehen und herbeizuführen. (FF, 188/271)

By the early twentieth century, however, both of these aspects were looking problematic.[69] The massification referred to above was perceived to curtail freedoms and level individual differences, and every clear doctrine demonstrating history's telos as one Promised Land or another was subjected to critique and relativization.

> Der gepriesene, bürgerliche Fortschritt mußte zuletzt auch beim Laien eine kräftige Skepsis auslösen; hundert Formulierungen widerlegten einander. (FF, 46/69)

The intellectuals responded, according to Einstein, by accentuating their individualism, in other words, by raising it to a conscious project in an attempt at self-salvation from the ignominy of being nothing but part of the mass:

> Die herrschende Minderheit hoffte, durch äußerste Differenzierung, dem Druck der Massen zu widerstehen. (FF, 103/159)

> Die Endphase der kapitalistischen Demokratie ist durch einen fast manischen Individualismus charakterisiert. Je gefährlicher die Sonderstellung der Elite bedroht wurde, um so höher schätzte man die individuelle, sichtbar unterschiedene Fassade. (FF, 16/8)

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[68] Cf. also FF, 15/6; 18/12.

Einstein consolidates this observation with social-psychological argument centred on the idea of compensation mechanisms:

> Man beobachtet, daß bei zunehmender Bevölkerungszahl die Individualisierung der Person zunimmt. – Man trifft automatisch Abwehrmaßregeln gegen die Masse. Da nun das vereinzelte bürgerliche Individuum social ziemlich schwach und einflußlos ist, kompensiert man dies Manko durch Fiktion. Sociologische Unterlegenheit erzeugt also Romantik; denn am leichtesten ergänzt man die sociale Schwäche des Individuums durch Fiktion. (FF, 59-60/92)

Arguing similarly, this time in terms of collective compensation mechanisms, Einstein traces how 'Schulze', his characterization of the average petit bourgeois citizen at the receiving end of the fictions, came to lead a double-life:

> Tagsüber werkte der Zeitgenosse in der Tretmühle; doch nach Ladenschluß oder sonntags war der ideale Mensch frei. Mit den Sophismen vom privaten und freien Menschen stützte man die formale Demokratie. (FF, 97/148)

> Zu Hause reagierte der ideale Schulze Pathos, Träume und Verdrängungen am Kunstwerk ab. [...] Diese bessere, imaginative Welt verspürte er als unmittelbare Wirklichkeit, da sie den Schulze der Wunschträume weckte und zum abgeschlossenen Einzelnen sprach. Schulze atmete von abends 6 Uhr bis morgens als Gott. [...] Allerdings am Morgen preßte er sich demütig in die Metro. Schulze führte ein Doppelleben, dessen Gegensätzlichkeit ihn zerbrach. (FF, 97/149)

The alienation brought about by the segmentation of life is channelled into escapist fantasies fuelled by the proliferation of art, and especially hermetic and exoticist art, in a commercialized environment.

It is in this context that Einstein elaborates the role of the 'Parvenuschicht', the newly rich who specialize in the art market and feed the needs of their own class, which desperately seeks to cordon itself off from the working class by developing its own codified idiosyncrasies. Einstein characterizes the parvenus as a product of economic speculation, a socio-economic group grown wealthy on account of unrestricted capitalist competition. They are the middle and upper middle classes that rose to affluence, reaping

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[69] On this point see also Detlev J. K. Peukert, *Die Weimarer Republik*, Neue Historische Bibliothek 1282 (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1987), pp. 237-38.

the benefits of a time of rapid industrial expansion in Germany followed by economic consolidation, i.e. the early 1870s onwards. This was the 'Gründerzeit', the period following unification. It is hardly surprising that Einstein identifies these classes as the prime affirmers of the capitalist system and stalwarts of progress. Lacking a history and a tradition, however, they require 'einer bluffenden seelischen Fassade, um sich gegenüber den Alteingesessenen zu behaupten' (FF, 36/48). What is more, Einstein argues, the knowledge purveyed by these self-styled expert transmitters and commentators of all matters cultural is determined by their get-rich-quick mentality: 'der Parvenu nährte sich von Résumés, einer Literatur dritter Hand' (FF, 36/49). Again arguing in a causal social-psychological mode, Einstein ventures that the parvenu was ashamed of his own rise to wealth and strove to redress this by raising the criterion of the 'new' to the ultimate (cf. FF, 36/50). This also allowed him to establish an interesting personality for himself, into which he could seamlessly integrate his daily activity as speculator. For Einstein the parvenu epitomizes the modern:

> Die Originalitätssucht der Modernen gehört in die seelischen Komplexe der Parvenus. (FF, 36/50)

Fabrication of utopias: the dark force of Enlightenment

The obsession with originality is of course linked, as it already was in *Georges Braque*, to a passionate cult of genius (cf. FF, 59/92; 98/151). But this takes a paradoxical turn as the parvenu becomes more prevalent on the cultural horizon: weak artists who produce pale imitations of genuinely innovative works are 'discovered' and heralded as the new 'must-have':

> Nun wurde der bescheidene Fund, die geringste Entdeckung rasch vulgarisiert. Man liest nicht das originale Gedicht, sondern die laue Nachahmung, worin eine neue Nuance bequem vorgeleiert wird. Der Parvenu bevorzugte die Schwächlinge, die blasse Derivate fabrizierten. (FF, 37/51)

The cult of genius is also seen to be at the core of the market for biography, which Einstein debunks in a few deft moves. This, and flights into the exotic, especially in the form of travel literature, are two of the main instances of the fabrication of fictions, as Einstein explains it. Heroizing biographies, prepared by 'biographische Lakaien',

allow their individualistic consumers an escapist identification with Jesus or Napoleon at a small cost (FF, 93/142), while a shifting of 'die geographische Achse des geistigen Betriebs' (ibid.) gives access to populist versions of ancient eastern mysticism and contemplation.[70] For those who sense that Europe is in decline or finished this provides welcome relief, and bolsters their flagging self-confidence. (See the section 'Sorcerer's apprentices' below.) The manufacture of utopias thus provides a substitute for the collapsed metaphysical constructs of the West, as art moves in to fill the vacuum left by the demise of organized religion and the withering of spirituality in a demystified world:

> Die religiösen und metaphysischen Konstruktionen waren niedergebrochen; sie enttäuschten. [...]
>
> Der Bankrott der Religionen hatte einen seelischen Leerlauf hinterlassen. [...] Man suchte den Lückenbüßer für die Religion und fand ihn in der imaginativen Kunst {welche die alten Kräfte gefahrlos zu erregen gestattete; jetzt erträumte man private, sehr distanzierende Mythologien.} (FF, 45/68)

The fabrication of utopias, which of course act as a vent for mounting pressure in a society that has radically undermined the bourgeois subject, both metaphysically and physically (i.e. economically), amounts to a devaluation, denigration even, of the present. It distracts from the problems of the present and is, Einstein argues, an ever more desperate attempt on the part of the intellectuals to defend themselves and their clientele, who after all ensure their continued existence:

> Wir verweisen auf diese banalen Beispiele der intellektuellen Verteidigung {nämlich Biographien und Exotismus}, da sie schlaghaft die Mittel weisen, wodurch die Intellektuellen die bedrohte Stellung ihrer Kundschaft, nämlich der herrschenden Minorität, sowie ihre eigene Position verteidigten. (FF, 93/142)
>
> Die eigene Existenz war mit Gedeih und Verderb der konsumierenden Minorität verkuppelt. (FF, 16/8)

Collapsed metaphysical constructs include the project of Reason, Einstein observes. The philosophy of Enlightenment has gone bankrupt:

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[70] These aspects, biography and exoticism in literature, have been dealt with exhaustively by Franke-

> Da die gepriesene 'reine Vernunft' bankrott gemacht hatte, flohen die Intellektuellen in Unbewußtes und Traum. (FF, 55/85)

> Die durchrechneten und standardisierten Komplexe konnten keine individuall betonte Reaktion auslösen. (ibid.)

> Gegen die wissenschaftliche und ökonomische Nivellierung war die Utopie vom außerordentlichen Individuum nicht aufrechtzuerhalten. Drum zogen sich die Genies ins Irrationale zurück. (ibid.)

The scepticism against the rational and the reaction to the consequences of rationalization, a compensatory flight into the irrational (cf. also FF, 304/436), prompt Einstein to an early insight into the dialectic of Enlightenment.[71] The belief in enlightened progress swings around into its opposite; reason and responsibility are cast off in favour of psychic determinism: 'An Stelle der vorausschauenden Vernunft, des bestimmenden Wollens, trat der Zwang eines dunklen Automatismus.' (FF, 188/272) Within a passage that strikingly anticipates Adorno and Horkheimer's Odysseus chapter in *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, Einstein synopsizes the process as follows:

> Die Menschen versuchten sich gegen die Übermacht des Mythos zu verteidigen und leiteten aus der Tageserfahrung die logische Typik ab. Die Logik bedeutete somit einen Versuch, die praktische Erfahrung zu rehabilitieren und gegen den Mythos durchzusetzen. Doch die Logik wurde religiös infiziert, und rasch wurden die Taten der allwissenden Götter mit dem 'reinen' logischen Geschehen identifiziert. Die Götter wurden rationalisiert, doch die Logik selbst wurde Metaphysik. Die Revolte vermittelst des Logischen mißlang. (FF, 201/291)

Einstein uses 'Logik' here metonymically to refer to Enlightenment reason. In relation to the reactionary state created by the tyranny of reason, Einstein speaks of 'die dämmrige Luft der negativen Theologie' 'vom Geschrei der abstraktionstrunkenen Idealisten erfüllt' (FF, 74/115 and 200/290), a return to 'stummes Dunkel' (FF, 72/112), and a sinking into 'dichtes Dunkel' (FF, 75/116), 'dunkle[s] Geschick' (FF, 189/273). All these metaphors are designed to expose the dark side of Enlightenment and the culmination of the drive to rationalism in irrationalism. In a similar vein, he advises the writing of 'die

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Gremmelspacher, *Notwendigkeit der Kunst*, pp. 106-13.

Geschichte der modernen Verhexung durch die Intellektuellen' (FF, 172/253). And elsewhere he states: 'Aller Rationalisierung der Welt steht ein ebenso bedeutender Prozeß dialektisch gegenüber, nämlich die Entsinnung der Welt.'[72]

Sorcerer's apprentices

Popularized psychology and psychoanalysis

Einstein detects here a further strategy that distracts from present concerns and problems, both of an individual, personal and collective, social nature: the bourgeois practice of psychoanalysis. With the rise of the Psychoanalytic Movement in the 1920s the hope that psychoanalysis, ideally hand in hand with socialism, would offer a route to a better world became widespread among European and American intellectuals:

> In the 1920s a guarded spirit of optimism could be seen among many intellectuals. With the horrors of World War I behind them, they hoped that a new world could be reconstructed along more socialistic and democratic lines [...]. In this new world Freud and Marx would be the chief guides. The hope was openly expressed that psychoanalysis could lead to a happier world, perhaps even one in which neurosis had disappeared entirely. [...] [T]he appearance of the Depression, then Hitler in 1933, put a speedy end to this spirit of hope.[73]

Certainly, Einstein himself makes use of psychological and psychoanalytical argumentation: this is not at issue here.[74] What is, is Einstein's criticism of the bourgeois practices and their popularization. He discerns a relation: the dialectic of irresponsible psychology. On the one hand there is the social process of popularization and a growth in irresponsible engagement in the practice of psychology. On the other, one finds the social and psychological problems generated and perpetuated by modern capitalist society, which in turn necessitate some form of anaesthetic. This is administered as psychological therapy and psychoanalysis, a questionable remedy for which, however, the public has been primed by the media division of the institution of psychic treatment itself. Einstein

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[71] This has also been observed by Franke-Gremmelspacher in *Notwendigkeit der Kunst*, p. 104.

[72] Cf. Sibylle Penkert, *Carl Einstein: Existenz und Ästhetik: Einführung mit einem Anhang unveröffentlichter Nachlaßtexte* (Wiesbaden, 1970), p. 90.

[73] Reuben Fine, *A History of Psychoanalysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), p. 375.

[74] One could perhaps argue that the partly psychological and psychoanalytical dismantling of bourgeois subjectivity and capitalist society Einstein undertakes with FF is firmly rooted within the typically German

makes the point that the power of psychoanalysis as a critical tool has been more or less ceded to an institutionalized social practice of deep psychology and psychoanalysis, which, at one remove, serves, like art, to fill the vacuum left by the waning of organized religion and spirituality:

> Die Intellektuellen bemächtigen sich des Liebeslebens ihrer Klienten und beweisen diesen, daß selbst die elementarsten oder unbewußten Erlebnisse an die geistigen Überbauten symbolisch gebunden sind. In solchem Betrieb stecken altchristliche Theologie und Beichttechnik. (FF, 162/237)

On account of its privileged access to deeper layers of the psyche, it is psychoanalysis which functions as the interpretive discourse for art, while psychology props up the cult of genius, providing a toolkit for analyzing the circumstances and development of individual genius and the exceptional character as dealt with above.

> Die Psychoanalyse gestattete, die aufgesammelten Verdrängungen zu pflegen und als wichtige Elemente zur Herstellung der Persönlichkeit herauszuheben. Die Intellektuellen kamen der Neurose der überanstrengten Emporkömmlinge geschickt entgegen. Doch auch die Snobs, die ihr überaltertes Distanzbedürfnis keiner Aktualität anpassen konnten, fanden hier ihre Rechnung. Für beide Kategorien organisierte man den Markt der Träume. (FF, 37/54)

> Die Bürger kauften nun ein blendendes sexuelles Bewußtsein. Jetzt flutete der Sexus durchaus psychisiert. (FF, 37/55)

Art provides the symbolic content, the ritual gratification and sense of participation, for a discourse of salvation in which the form is given by popularized psychological and psychoanalytical thinking (cf. also FF, 60/92-93). For Einstein it is, once more, a question of escape from reality. The analyst escapes a confrontation with the pressing questions, e.g. why so many people are, or are under the impression that they are, in need of help, how patterns of destructive behaviour are linked to social structures and institutions, such as the family, and how recurring problems can be avoided by addressing the bigger picture. And the bourgeois escapes, for short spells, the drudgery and alienation of work-a-day life, and the sense of being a nobody in a sea of nobodies.

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tradition of 'Kulturpessimismus'. How this would affect an interpretation of Einstein's critique of Spengler will be considered further below.

The society psychologist or psychoanalyst and the spiritually and emotionally needy bourgeois are seen by Einstein to enter a symbiotic relationship: the bourgeois pays his or her fee, and the pair sets about building and maintaining a sexual 'alter-ego' for the client, and perhaps cultivating an already latent neurosis.

> Der feige Bürger konnte mit Hilfe der Intellektuellen seine Triebe ästhetisch abreagieren, ohne Reuezustände zu fürchten. Man besorgte sich eine sexuelle Kitsch-Dämonie. Man lebt als sparsamer Familienvater und verwaltet als geiziger Rechner; doch theoretisch ist man fabelhaft kompliziert. (FF, 163-64/239)[75]

> Die Intellektuellen ahnten, daß man den Klienten am sichersten halte, wenn man seiner Sexualerlebnisse, der Träume und Verdrängungen sich bemächtige. Der Klient wiederum war geschmeichelt [...]. (FF, 163/238)

> Die Minderheit war ein Club der träumenden Neurotiker geworden. (FF, 179-80/265-66)

The suggestion is that nowhere in bourgeois normality was there room for excess or profligacy (the bourgeois was 'sparsam', 'geizig'), but that the intellectuals, having realized this deficiency, were in a position to offer a very attractive ersatz: an imaginary experience of excess.

Arguing phylogenetically ('Schon der Primitive war mit seiner Gestalt unzufrieden') and psychologically, Einstein contends humanity, on account of its excess of ability to feel over its ability to physically express (cf. FF, 164/241), always had the need to idealize and project sensibilities into some higher power. Between older generations and the current one there is, according to Einstein, always a quantitative difference. In his time that difference has, however, become a qualitative one, as older kinds of projection do not suffice in a climate of radically heightened individualism. The kind of schizoid existence registered in the above quotation about the 'sparsamer Familienvater' and also in the quotation outlining Schulze's lifestyle (FF, 97/149) is seen by Einstein as typical of an age which has systematically done away with collectively binding social forces and replaced them with fraudulent models which purport to cement

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[75] Here the metonymical significance of 'Die Monstres' noted earlier becomes clear: they refer to the psychological complications and complexes allegedly cultivated by inauthentic analysts: 'Die Liebesdeuter verwoben die zerspalteten seelischen Zonen durch ein System der Symbole. Jetzt waren die elementarsten

the individual, but actually hold it in thrall to the very forces that stand to profit by keeping it unstable. In this situation individualism is fetishized; it reaches fever pitch ('manische[r] Individualismus' (FF, 16/8)), and the broken continuity of the person receives a makeshift pasting back together:

> Der Bürger wurde neurotisch; unvermittelt trat ein Bruch in seiner Person ein. Die Spaltung zwischen der künstlich dressierten Psyche und dem primitiven Triebleben wurde offenbar. (Der Bürger der spekulativen Industriestaaten) war zu rapid gezüchtet worden; darüber war die Kontinuität seiner Person flötengegangen. (FF, 166/243)

> Die Person war in der Differenzierung zerbrochen. Jetzt wurde sie in die sexuelle Dominante gesammelt. (FF, 164/240)

> Man stellte eine fragwürdige Kontinuität der Person und der Erlebnisse durch symbolische Einschaltung her. (FF, 166/244)[76]

The popularization of psychoanalysis, as Einstein sees it, effects and is taken to justify large-scale regression (cf. FF, 159/233 and FF, 173/255) and repudiation of individual responsibility (cf. FF, 173/255: 'Der unbewußte Schulze war eine Ausrede, eine Rettung', and FF, 156/229). Social problems could be held at bay simply by diverting

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Erlebnisse völlig vergeistet und idealisiert; der Bürger verfiel noch tiefer dem Einfluß der Intellektuellen und Literaten. {Effekt die Monstres Verfertigung der Geister.}' (FF, 161/235)

[76] These quotations indicate Einstein has engaged with the works of Freud, most likely *Massenpsychologie und Ich-Analyse* (1921), *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* (1920), and *Totem und Tabu* (1912/13), liberally interpreting certain concepts and terms and binding them into his polemic but at the same time watchful of the popularization of psychological theories and scathing in his denunciation of how they are used as tools of manipulation. Cf. also FF, 161/235: 'Die Intellektuellen nutzten die seelische Unsicherheit der Bürger; sie versprachen durch Analyse zu schützen und zu heilen. Zunächst bog man dem Bürger pathogene Komplexe bei, man verstärkte seine sociale Besonderheit. [...] Man zauberte ihm Minderwertigkeitskomplexe ein, ein Ödipisches Schuldgefühl; man baute den Klienten in Krankheiten ein und hielt ihn fest in der Hand.' There is ample use of the term 'kompensieren' and a reference to 'Kompensationspsychologie' (FF, 37/51): an encounter with Jung's notion of compensation was already discernible in the 1931 edition of *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts* and in *Georges Braque*. There may also have been a personal encounter with Jung, as both wrote for the magazine *transition* in the late 1920s and early thirties and had their work translated for it by Eugène Jolas. See Dougald McMillan, *transition: The History of a Literary Era 1927-1938* (London: Calder and Boyars, 1975).

Einstein's text is not free of the performative contradiction involved in demonizing the popularization of psychological theories while employing derivations of categories and terms from such theories within its own argumentation. Because it offers a theory of the conflicts in society in partly psychological and psychoanalytical terms, it could be seen to actually contribute to the popularization it decries: the text presumes a certain understanding of contemporary psychology and frames its alternatives against these presumptions, without however having clarified or qualified the latter. A similar problem is detectable in the case of the criticism of Spengler (see the next section, 'Spengler's soothing story'). It is a

attention away from them and towards something of greater interest to the individuality-seeking bourgeois:

> Da die socialen Probleme peinlich drohten, bedurfte man der metaforischen Vorhänge. Der Handel in Imagination blühte wie nie. Die Intellektuellen organisierten die Konjunktur der lähmenden Rätsel. (FF, 156/229)

Will-power was held in check by the doctrine that the unconscious was fate; any residual impulses regarding social matters thus met with resignation (cf. FF, 157/231).

A contemporary critique of psychoanalysis in a capitalist bourgeois environment can be found in the work of Wilhelm Reich. Reich, a psychoanalyst, had worked alongside Freud in the latter's polyclinic, but a dispute had developed in 1927. Reich was struggling for a socialist psychoanalysis and trying his utmost to 'get psychology, especially psychoanalytic psychology, into sociology'.[77] Reich first published the essay *Dialectical Materialism and Psychoanalysis* in 1929 in the theoretical journal of the KPD, *Unter dem Banner des Marxismus*, and in its Soviet counterpart, *Pod Znameniem Marxisma*. Of particular relevance in the present context is chapter IV, 'The sociological position of psychoanalysis'. Some of the conclusions reached there include: '[...] psychoanalysis had become socially respectable'; '[...] the public indulges its unsatisfied sexuality, and at the same time this craze which they dare to call psychoanalysis is an excellent source of income. So-called psychoanalysis has become good business'; and, 'Those analysts who are optimistic about the popular propagation of psychoanalytical ideas are making a big mistake. It is precisely this popularization which is a symptom of the decline of psychoanalysis'.[78] It is interesting, furthermore, to note Reich contending, in the 1929 version of the essay, that 'psychoanalysis has a future only under socialism. [...] [S]ince, in bourgeois society, it must remain socially ineffective, its purpose can only be achieved *after the social revolution*'.[79] Similar things can be said about Einstein's view of the function of the intellectual in FF, although Einstein makes no concessions as to any potential future role for psychoanalysts. Noteworthy, too, is the fact that in the notes and amendments Reich makes in the 1934 revision of the essay, he adds:

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problem that resides in the contradictory and ambivalent character of the text, whose contradictions sometimes invite but sometimes simply refuse interpretation as fruitful paradoxes or dialectical twists.

[77] Reich and Bernfeld, *Dialectical Materialism and Psychoanalysis*, anonymous introduction, p. 5.

[78] Ibid., pp. 51, 51 and 53 respectively.

[79] Ibid., p. 53.

> The idea that psychoanalysis could only develop its effectiveness after a successful revolution was a short sighted concession to ultra-leftist marxist economism. Experiences [...] have shown that the exploitation by mass psychology of the contradictions between sexual needs and moral inhibitions constitutes a lever of fundamental importance in cultural politics.[80]

While Einstein was, around 1934, apparently still beholden to the notion of the intellectuals becoming effective only *after the social revolution*, it is clear that he was nonetheless acutely aware of the importance, in cultural politics, of exploitation by mass psychology. In their institutionalized and popularized forms psychology and psychoanalysis are seen by Einstein as serving to cushion the embattled bourgeois ego and to tacitly affirm and perpetuate the repressive status quo.

Spengler's soothing story

Einstein's unrelenting ideology critique leads him to detect tacit affirmation of the status quo even in what generally passes for radical social and cultural critique. A brief look at his critique of modernism, i.e. the cultural movement that represents a thoroughgoing re-evaluation of modernity, will show this at work. Cultural pessimism as pioneered by Nietzsche (following Schopenhauer, one can always add) in the late nineteenth century paved the way in this radical re-evaluation of modernity; diagnoses of decadence, emerging in both critical and literary form, followed suit into the early twentieth, proliferating up to and beyond the first World War. Einstein's critique of modernism takes the form of an attack on those critics who mount their insights into developments in the late nineteenth/early twentieth century once again onto a teleological causal model, and diagnose a catastrophe. Of course such projects do little concretely to restabilize the unsettled bourgeoisie, except that they bolster the bourgeois subject's flagging sense of self. Einstein comments sardonically, with reference to Oswald Spengler's *Untergang des Abendlandes*:

> Mit der beginnenden kapitalistischen Krise dämmerte der Spenglerische Untergang des Abendlandes an matten Horizonten auf. Der Kapitalist fühlte sich in seiner Existenz bedroht. Flink bewies ein dienstbeflissener Professor, daß die Krise der herrschenden Gruppen den Untergang des Okzidents künde. (FF, 92/141)

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[80] Ibid., p. 64, note jj.

The catastrophe is a reversal of the ideologies of salvation, be they religious (Christianity) or secular (progress, the communist utopia). But if the bourgeois can be singled out as being part of a dynamic of collapse, if his imminent demise can be painted as the end of the civilized world, then at least he can figure his significance in terms of that cosmic event:

> Das Machwerk Spenglers bietet ein Beispiel, wie die Intellektuellen den Individualhunger und das Selbstbewußtsein der herrschenden Minorität schmeichelnd verfestigten. Schnell war die Faillite der Geschäftemacher zu papierner Apokalypse aufgedonnert. (FF, 93/141)

Thus, the case is made that such allegedly critical works, which are made to appear as if they have got to grips with the way civilization works and the dynamics that determine it, instead serve an ideological function similar to the fictions of escapist literature and the institutionalized practice of psychoanalysis. They serve to paper over the cracks in the bourgeois subject, in its society and its mental and spiritual world. They defer any attempts to confront existing social and political problems. And they indirectly perpetuate the status quo, with all its oppression and repression.

Already in an essay from 1921, 'De l'Allemagne' (W 2, 200-203), Einstein had polemicized against Spengler for his dissolution of all distinctions and his grand generalizations, comparisons and analogies. Einstein holds that they had a soporific effect on the post-war generation: 'Les notions générales n'ont toujours pas perdu leur influence calmante.' (W 2, 200) Spengler's success was due to—or indeed calculated on—that particular political climate, according to Einstein. It was a document that, with its utterly negative view of mankind, promoted a retreat into complacency and inaction, he suggests: 'Après la défaite il est flatteur de penser que la faillite du pays signifie la fin du monde entier; une politique d'imbéciles ayant fâcheusement compromis le présent, il est particulièrement doux de s'étendre sur les vedas et le tâoisme.' (W 2, 200) The reception of Spengler after World War I was extremely widespread; it can only be cursorily registered here. Other writers and intellectuals apart from Einstein had negative and mixed views on his ideas, while appreciating their impact. Thomas Mann, for instance, offers a criticism of Spengler in an essay from 1924, 'Über die Lehre Spenglers'. However, Mann had not always stood opposed to Spengler. The pre-1922, pre-Republican Thomas Mann had woven elements of Spengler's *Untergang* into *Der Zauberberg*, with no unequivocal assessment. Certain aspects of Spengler's diagnosis,

such as the critique of the media and of Caesarism, were also taken over by Adorno and Horkheimer for *Dialektik der Aufklärung*. But a later appraisal by Adorno in the 1950s, 'Spengler nach dem Untergang' (A 10:1, 47-71), concurs not only with Einstein's allegations of a collapse of all distinctions (see A 10:1, 58), but also with his criticism of Spengler's negative anthropology that turns into conservative ideology (see A 10:1, 56).

Reading Einstein's FF as a document of 'Kulturpessimismus', the argument could, however, be advanced that Einstein's critique of Spengler and *Untergang des Abendlandes* is ineffective, as Einstein himself could be seen to repeat the error of providing the bourgeois subject with yet another ultimately supportive eschatological narrative. The narrative would be ultimately supportive because as it unfolds, it provides the bourgeois subject it intended to liquidate with options and possibilities of identification: that of the story of a cataclysmic demise and that of the possibility of salvation through identification with a collective project of spontaneous action. Instead of binding the idea of collapse into a polarity of occident and orient, Einstein binds it instead into a polarity of real and fake/unreal/surreal, which is matched by the polarity of collectivism and individualism. It is interesting to see how the polarity Einstein grapples with is teased out and made to collapse (once more, the notion of collapse!) in Jean Baudrillard's theories of a postmodern (of necessity also post-Cold-War) society, while Spengler's polarity has been resuscitated in a re-entrenchment of global ideological affiliations with the declaration of a 'War on Terror'.[81]

Nominalism and Heidegger's meek meditation

A further dimension of Einstein's critique of the almost absurdly abstract nature of some of the intellectuals' constructs is his implicit attack on ontology. Nowhere does he call this area of inquiry by that name, but a number of remarks suggest his position. First, he discerns a utopian strain in nominalism, which he associates with liberalism. Now it may not initially be too clear what is meant by comments such as:

> In das Leben der Menschen war eine Masse von Fiktion und willkürlicher (rationaler) Fantastik geströmt. Tragisch genug; liberale Nominalisten wähnten wir also im Zeichen schon die Welt abzuändern. (FF, 32/37)

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[81] On Einstein, Baudrillard and the real, see the section below, 'The Avant-garde's failure on account of social structure: economic factors'.

But they can be pulled apart a little. The mass of fictions streaming into people's lives refers, as before, to the ideological subsystems of the intellectuals. Some of these are arbitrary fantastic constructs. Generally speaking, in the rationalist tradition, a work could be arbitrary and fantastic at the same time, in which case it would be a work of fiction or literature but not science or philosophy. But a work could not be arbitrary and rational, nor rational and fantastic at the same time.[82] The rational and the fantastic or arbitrary, i.e. reason and imagination, were seen to belong to mutually exclusive spheres.

By slipping the word 'rationaler' in brackets into the above sentence, then, Einstein is doing two things. Firstly, he is drawing attention to a kind of thought (much maligned in FF as well as in his earlier writings, and also in works of his contemporaries) which sends the rational off on a fantastic metaphysical spree. A grand theory or towering system is erected (one might think of Fichtean idealism), which may indeed be rational in the narrow sense, i.e. in the sense of fulfilling the criteria of logical thinking and abstract reasoning alone, but which has lost sight of its rationale, i.e. its grounds and motivation, and has little understanding of its own implications for praxis. Secondly, he is implicitly pointing up the problem of the grounding of reason. Traditional consensus held philosophical work to be grounded in reason, which since Kant had, in turn, been grounded in the transcendental subject. The relationship between reason and imagination as construed by Kant was, however, differently cast by succeeding generations, such that questions about epistemological primacy came to be polarized. The nineteenth century saw the emergence of a dualism in this question: various will-based theories or 'irrationalisms' of one kind or another and logical positivism stood in opposition. Against these dualisms, Einstein proposes an elision of the distinctions traditionally held to obtain between the rational and the arbitrary or imaginative in philosophical work.[83] But such elision does not only happen when imagination is allowed to run away with the rational to produce a fantastic edifice of 'reason' like Fichte's. The discussion in Chapter 4 (especially page 210f.) shows how Einstein's insights into the genesis of reason reveal the impossibility of any absolute or fundamental bracketing off of imagination from reason, and therefore the flaws in all historical insistence on such absolute separation.

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[82] A marked and consciously subversive instance of a collapse of these distinctions can be found in the 'pataphysics' of the late nineteenth century French writer Alfred Jarry. A submerged reference to the title of Jarry's most famous work, *Ubu Roi*, may be in the title of Einstein's early novel *Bebuquin*, and the name of its eponymous hero.

Nominalism is the theory that there are no universal essences in reality and that the mind can frame no single concept or image corresponding to any universal or general term. The reference to 'liberale Nominalisten' and their attempts to change the world by means of the sign gives a hint that Einstein is on the trail of the ideological significance of the doctrine of nominalism. On the one hand nominalism purported to free cognition and reality from the snares of over-conceptualization, whereby concepts are seen to close in on material reality to the point where it is virtually extinguished in the analysis. On the other hand, however, such zealous attention is given to allowing the individual thing to appear that notions of relations between things, causality, and the interdependence of one thing on another are not only marginalized, but increasingly anathematized. Thus, while setting itself up as a kind of materialism, nominalism stands tacitly opposed to historical materialism. Julian Roberts interprets this as a conscious reactionary strategy on the part of certain nominalist and phenomenologist thinkers:

> [...] the phenomenologists' slogan of 'zu den Sachen selbst', together with the general attack on vacant conceptuality, was well calculated to distract from the appeal of a materialistic socialism.[84]

In FF, the sentences following the one about 'liberale Nominalisten' quoted above look like this:

> Man hatte über vieldeutigen Bildern das Sein vergessen und glaubte, der Wechsel einer Imagination bewirke die tatsächliche Veränderung des Seins. Man war in archaische Magie und infantile Fantastik zurückgesunken. (FF, 32/37)

Here we have a momentary overlap, in the phrasing in any case, of Einstein and Heidegger: the notion of having forgotten 'das Sein'.[85] For Einstein, confronting the problem of having forgotten 'das Sein' cannot mean embarking on a meditation on Being

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[83] See in particular the text 'Diese Aesthetiker veranlassen uns' from the early 1930s (W 4, 194-221).

[84] Julian Roberts, 'The Politics of Weimar Cultural Theory', an unpublished paper presented at the conference 'Art, Sexuality and Politics in the Weimar Republic: An Interdisciplinary Conference' at the University of Liverpool, 23-25 September, 1982, p. 4.

[85] In the preface to *Sein und Zeit*, which appeared in 1927, Heidegger had written: 'Haben wir heute eine Antwort auf die Frage nach dem, was wir mit dem Wort 'seiend' eigentlich meinen? Und so gilt es denn, *die Frage nach dem Sinn vom Sein* erneut zu stellen. Sind wir denn heute auch nur in der Verlegenheit, den Ausdruck 'Sein' nicht zu verstehen? Keineswegs. Und so gilt es denn vordem, allererst wieder ein Verständnis für den Sinn dieser Frage zu wecken.' Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 15th edn, revised according to the *Gesamtausgabe* and including marginal notes from the author's copy in an appendix (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1979), pp. 1.

or attempting 'to plunge into the ontology, the 'formed, determined, ordered ... structure' which informs the world of individual things'.[86] Such a passive, contemplative response is precisely one of the targets of Einstein's polemical critique in FF. The substance of that critique, along with Einstein's reference to 'archaische Magie' above, is echoed in Roberts's article:

> [...] the pious passivity with which Heidegger absorbs himself into the structures of language is an echo of the more explicitly religious language mysticism of his predecessors. [...] We are dealing here with the magical influences of 'separate substances'.[87]

Elsewhere, namely in a letter to Ewald Wasmuth from 1932, Einstein voices his opinion on Heidegger:

> was Sie mir von Heidegger schreiben, überrascht mich nicht, nachdem ich in sein leeres wesen vom grunde hinein geschaut habe. schon bei Husserl fand ich die problemstellung unoriginal, für mich bedeutet das lediglich terminologische spielerei; zumal ich die wesenschau bei Husserl überhaupt nicht versucht finde. ich habe den eindruck, daß er mit der ausschaltung des empirism lediglich eine sprachliche sofistik betreibt. es fehlen ihm zu solchem unterfangen eben gänzlich die dazu notwendigen metafysischen kräfte.[88]

Noteworthy here are the charges of linguistic sophistry and exclusion of the empirical. In Roberts' article Heidegger serves as an exemplary instance of the paradox of 'a logic of the singular which is entirely cavalier about the evidence of the senses':

> [...] the paradox of this theory is that in the last resort it entirely abandons materialism, at least to any common-sense understanding, and becomes far more idealistic than explicit idealisms [...]. In the particular case of Heidegger and his followers, the danger is that insistence on the 'materiality of the sign' simply evacuates matter of significance.[89]

Einstein's critique, not just of Heidegger but of nominalism in various guises, runs in just the direction indicated by Roberts's analysis, but with a different emphasis. Like Roberts, Einstein recognizes the covert conservatism in this 'logic of the singular'. The disregard for 'evidence of the senses' is a troubling political indicator for Einstein too. And in FF,

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[86] Roberts, p. 9, quoting Heidegger's habilitation, *Kategorien- und Bedeutungslehre des Duns Scotus*.
[87] Roberts, 'The Politics of Weimar Cultural Theory', p. 9.
[88] Letter to Ewald Wasmuth from 24 September 1932. Cf. Kiefer, *Diskurswandel*, p. 375.
[89] Roberts, 'The Politics of Weimar Cultural Theory', p. 9.

while there is no mention of nominalists' insistence on the 'materiality of the sign', there is ample concern with the problem of an overemphasis on the sign to the detriment of matter or material conditions (cf. for example FF, 245-46/340; 265/369). Roberts stresses that while the nominalists were believed to be changing the world—changing our understanding of cognition and experience—by way of the sign, they were in fact successfully eroding the authority of socialist materialist thought. Einstein emphasizes instead that they were deflecting attention away from pressing social and political issues, a charge he would, by the way, also level at philosophers of a socialist materialist bent, since in FF, as we have seen, his is a blanket condemnation.

Nietzsche – fatally 'verwagnert'

As for Nietzsche, he is chided for having simply replaced metaphysical dualism with social or biological dualism, and for thinking he could grasp 'im Individuum das real Unzweifelhafte':

> Er dichtete eine evolutionistische Allegorie und erhob den Übermenschen zum primären Faktor und Sinn der Geschichte. Nietzsche formulierte eine Metaforik des Individuums, er dichtete den Mythos der Züchtung. Der Darwinismus wurde reaktionär verwagnert. (FF, 304/436)

It is hardly the case that these few lines' appraisal do justice to the work of Nietzsche, to which Einstein himself remained greatly, if for the most part quietly, indebted throughout his intellectual career.[90] Bearing in mind the time of writing (1931/32 to about 1936), what the lines may be seen to grasp, however, is a certain strain of Nietzsche-reception which indeed foregrounded the notion of the 'Übermensch', and represented a reactionary 'wagnerization' (i.e. creation of a cult which ultimately had little to do with the actual œuvre of the man who gave it his name[91]). There is supreme irony in Einstein's suggestion that even Nietzsche, the prophet of *amor fati*, could not escape the destiny—shallow popularization—of his one-time hero and later sworn enemy, Wagner.

While philosophy, cultural critique and psychoanalysis had been developed within a tradition and a society as conceptual tools, with which to gain a deeper understanding of traditions, societies and individuals and how these relate to each other,

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[90] Cf. also Katrin Sello, FF, 359, on Einstein's reception of Nietzsche.

in FF Einstein exposes how they are enlisted or incorporated by the institutions and social mechanisms of capitalist society itself, the better to consolidate it. FF shows how they, in effect, end up functioning as so many immunizations with which capitalism makes itself stronger, more resilient, durable and efficient.

The dissolute Avant-garde

> *Rings nichts als Stupor, Gebanntsein von dem betörenden Zauber der Idee, keine zu haben.*
> Karl Kraus, Die Fackel 890-905 (July 1934)

The ultimate avant-garde movement: Dada or Surrealism?

There has already been some discussion, in the previous section, of how Einstein took popular literature (biography, fiction) to task for its ideological implications. Using the insights into the correlation between popular escapist entertainment, reification and social and political stagnation gained during the course of his career and given their most pointed formulation in FF, Einstein extends that critique to the artistic Avant-garde. He uses the term itself sceptically—'die sogenannte Avantgarde' (FF 44, footnote)—but also more or less synonymously with 'die avancierten Modernen', 'die Modernen', but also 'die Dichter'[92] and 'die Literaten'.[93] Although he does not name any particular artists or movements, it can be gauged from the way in which Einstein characterizes these 'Modernen' and 'Dichter' that he is referring to the radically and at times noisily innovative art movements of the early twentieth century, especially Surrealism.

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[91] One might recall Mark Twain's ironic quip, 'It is a well-known fact that Wagner's music is much better than it sounds'.

[92] It might be recalled that Einstein had written a short piece on Braque's Surrealist work, entitled 'Braque der Dichter' (W 3, 246-50) and first published in 1933 in the French art magazine *Cahiers d'Art*. On what Kiefer plausibly calls the 'Poetologisierung' of Einstein's aesthetics of painting around this time, cf. Kiefer, *Diskurswandel*, pp. 449-56.

[93] See FF, 266/370, where Einstein equates Avant-garde writer and painter via the 'vision' to which both are subjected: 'Die Literaten unterlagen der rasch wechselnden Sensation und überschätzten darum deren Bedeutung. {Die Vision erzwang ein besonderes Pathos, im Gedicht wie im Bild. [...] }', and also FF,

Of all the movements, Surrealism was of course the one to which Einstein, living in Paris full-time since 1928, had been most exposed. But that is not to say that Einstein's interest in it was chiefly personal: Surrealism is also often considered the most exemplary of the Avant-garde movements, as for instance by Hans Magnus Enzensberger:

> Kein avantgardistisches Programm, das nicht gegen die Trägheit des bloß Vorhandenen protestiert und versprochen hätte, ästhetische oder politische Fesseln zu lösen, hergebrachte Herrschaft abzuwerfen, unterdrückte Kräfte in Freiheit zu setzen. Freiheit, revolutionär errungen, verheißen alle avantgardistischen Bewegungen.
>
> Der Surrealismus ist das Paradigma, das vollkommene Modell aller avantgardistischen Bewegungen. Er hat deren Möglichkeiten und Begrenzungen ein und für allemal zu Ende formuliert und alle Aporien entfaltet, die solchen Bewegungen innewohnen.[94]

It might be noted, however, that the characteristics Enzensberger ascribes the Avant-garde programme in the above quotation amount, in terms of strategies, to little more than an amalgamation and radicalization of Romantic programmes with a new, overtly political demand. One can of course say that the Romantics with their critical philosophical aesthetics were avant-garde vis-à-vis Classical aesthetics and the Enlightenment tradition, but that is to lose the historical specificity of the term 'avant-garde' in relation to the early twentieth century art movements.[95]

Peter Bürger's characterization of the Avant-garde offers instead a useful criterion, which, for all the continuities, indicates a discontinuity between Romanticism and the Avant-garde. This criterion, as was briefly noted at the beginning of the last section of this chapter, is criticism of art as an institution, or self-criticism, as opposed to

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81/125: 'Am Ende bildeten die Modernen völlig imaginative Gedichte und Bilder, die in abgetrennten, sehr {eng individualierten} Bezirken verharren.'

[94] Hans Magnus Enzensberger, 'Die Aporien der Avantgarde', in H. M. Enzensberger, *Einzelheiten* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1962), pp. 290-315 (p. 303-04; 313).

[95] On a number of occasions in FF Einstein specifies the time he is referring to, e.g., 'Die Kunst des beginnenden zwanzigsten weist die grenzenlose Hybris der Geistigen' (FF, 69/106), or 'Die Leute um 1920 wollten [...] etwas jenseits dieser Wirklichkeit finden, die in der Masse von Überbau und Skepsis versackt war' (FF, 84/129), or again 'Die Leute von 1930 revoltierten scheinbar gegen die Überlieferung' (FF, 249/345). Early in the work (FF, 25/26) the sentence 'Ähnlich war die künstlerische Situation' had originally been followed by 'der letzten zwei Jahrzehnte'. The Rowohlt edition puts this in a footnote: 'Gestrichen: der letzten zwei Jahrzehnte.' On the previous page, however, a paragraph begins 'Gerade die jüngste Moderne' (FF, 24/23), so we are left with a fair idea of the referent.

system-immanent criticism.[96] Bürger's theory consequently makes Dadaism the exemplary avant-garde movement:

> Dadaism, the most radical movement within the European avant-garde, no longer criticizes schools that preceded it, but criticizes art as an institution, and the course its development took in bourgeois society. The concept 'art as an institution' as used here refers to the productive and distributive apparatus and also to the ideas about art that prevail at a given time and that determine the reception of works. The avant-garde turns against both – the distribution apparatus on which the work of art depends, and the status of art in bourgeois society as defined by the concept of autonomy.[97]

Reading this quotation in the present context, it is difficult not to see FF itself as a kind of theoretical counterpart to what the Dadaists were attempting to achieve with their subversive activities and antics. The critique of 'art as an institution'—productive *and* distributive apparatus, as well as prevalent ideas about art—is certainly underway in FF. The concept of autonomy, as perhaps the most abiding of 'prevalent ideas about art', comes under attack but, as will become clearer in the following pages, precisely because, as Einstein sees it, a genuine reintegration of art and life had aborted and was yet to be properly attempted.

Interestingly, Einstein in FF does not base his critique in any significant way on Dada or its failure to effect lasting or substantial changes on the status quo, aesthetic or political. That may be because by the early thirties Dada was already perceived to be dead, the short shelf-life of the shock factor being Bürger's plausible diagnosis:

> Nothing loses its effectiveness more quickly than shock; by its very nature, it is a unique experience. As a result of repetition, it changes fundamentally: there is no such thing as expected shock. The violent reactions of the public to the mere appearance of the Dadaists are an example: newspaper reports had prepared the public for the shock; it expected it. Such a nearly institutionalized shock probably has a minimal effect on the way the recipients run their lives. The shock is 'consumed.'[98]

Surrealism, with what the theoretical side of the movement framed as its forays into the unconscious, was certainly also shocking to bourgeois tastes, as well as deeply

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[96] Cf. Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, orig. *Theorie der Avantgarde* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1974), trans. by Michael Shaw, foreword by Jochen Schulte-Sasse, Theory of History and Literature, 4 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. 21f.
[97] Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, p. 22.

subversive of bourgeois mores and the value system they were predicated on. But, while Surrealism also launched an attack on the autonomy of art, and ceaselessly marked the gulf between received aesthetics and its own premises, it was not so directly and openly subversive of art *as institution* in the way Dada was. One can speak to a greater extent of the Surrealist 'work of art' than one can of the Dadaist 'work of art'. The true Dadaist was more a person involved in the staging of an event, a happening, a moment, than the producer of a more or less self-contained 'work of art'. The documents of Dada are first and foremost of the demagogic kind: manifestos and programmes. Branding as a reproduction and belittling the market- or exchange-value of whatever they did actually make in the line of a 'work', the Dadaists instead exalted its uselessness for contemplative immersion, as Walter Benjamin observes in his essay 'Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit'.[99] The Dadaists were dedicated, as Benjamin further recognizes, to the relentless destruction of aura, i.e. the sense of authenticity and aloofness of the 'true' work of art. The attack on the distributive apparatus, by subversive use of the productive apparatus, was paramount. The Dadaists were, it seems, shrewdly prescient in calling attention to and singling out for attack an aspect of art-as-institution that has proven itself ever more robust and durable in its adaptability to the dictates of financial gain, and thus in its use in a system-affirmative way.

> That, since the invention of film, distribution techniques have affected production in turn cannot be doubted. The quasi-industrial techniques whose dominance in certain areas is a result of this fact have proved anything but 'shattering', however. [Footnote] What has occurred is the total subordination of work contents to profit motives, and a fading of the critical potencies of works in favor of a training in consumer attitudes (which extends to the most intimate interhuman relations). [Footnote] [100]

Surrealism, on the other hand, though not short on manifestos, steered away from a head-on collision with the distributive apparatus. Radically rethinking aesthetic norms and values and the productive apparatus, it sought its own fusion of art with life as well

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[98] Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, p. 81.
[99] Quoted in Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, p. 29.
[100] Bürger, p. 30. Bürger includes two footnotes in this passage, the first about pulp literature determined by the tastes of groups of addressees and produced by teams of writers; and the second about the point of departure for Adorno's critique of Benjamin's over-optimistic view of reproductive and distributive techniques in the latter's essay 'Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit'.

as an undoing of what it saw as aristocratic, sanitized aestheticism. Nevertheless it remained representational and, while its proponents and their work challenged received notions of meaning and form in art, they did not expressly set out to defy or subvert all contemplative or 'meaning-seeking' immersion, as the Dadaists did. Thus, Surrealism retained, at some level, content: there was still something more or less distinct and discrete 'there' and open to interpretation.[101] This 'content', moreover, was derived from or infused with material from dreams, states of intoxication, ecstasy, semi-consciousness and regression, and did not come packaged with any manual for interpretation or traditionally normative aesthetic schema. That meant it was all the more open to interpretation, open, Einstein would contend, to foisted meanings on account of its dreamlike, richly associative or, as he calls it, 'metaphorical' character, and open to fetishization by a clientele bereft of tradition. That clientele could identify with its apparent break with tradition, and use it as a prop for their identity (cf. FF, 36/50; 249/346).

While Dadaism ran up against the unintentionally but inescapably built-in obsolescence[102] of its own principles (with time, shock lost its impact), Surrealism proved itself more durable. Art as an institution proved flexible and adaptable enough to embrace both movements, but with a significant difference. The (retrospective) assimilation of Dada spelled utter defeat,[103] as defiance of the institution was its raison d'être, whereas for Surrealism assimilation could proceed without complete loss of its basic premises.[104] Surrealism or particular derivatives of it were therefore the prime

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[101] On the changes in reception necessitated by the Avant-garde 'non-organic' work of art, cf. also Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, pp. 79-81.

[102] Inbuilt obsolescence is, ironically, the core feature of the modern commodity or consumer product. This is what Bürger means by 'the shock is "consumed"'. (Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, p. 81)

[103] One can of course argue retrospectively that this was not utter defeat, as the movement did manage to force the institution of art towards a concept of art of unprecedented inclusivity, heterogeneity and plurality. 'Utter defeat' as meant here is framed in terms of the movement's own demands.

[104] It is no accident, historically speaking, that Surrealism, as opposed to Dadaism, now fuels the advertising industry. It should be noted, too, that as far as Einstein was concerned, the most crucial of Surrealism's basic premises was none other than its 'Revolteanspruch' (FF, 275/385), in the social and political sense. Insight into reasons for the failure to fulfil this demand fuels FF. Einstein traces how the discrepancy grew between what the movement set out to achieve and the functions it actually fulfilled. In Einstein's view, Surrealism did fail, in that it lost sight of its commitment to the revolution. Retrospectively, we can see how the failure was never really conceded, so that work on one side of what had been Surrealism's double focus—the unconscious and the revolution, the one of course initially tied to the other—could continue apace, with a 'healthy' market share. Dadaism, on the other hand, being more single-minded, would have become unrecognizable, had it mutated. Rather than stymying any and all kinds of transmission, Surrealism continued to produce works of sense (as opposed to Dada's nonsense), even if it was a new kind of sense that needed new decoders, or new theories and interpreters, to transmit it.

candidates to be co-opted by capitalism, with the possibility of this liaison issuing in a 'Seelenfabrikation' (FF, 285/402) or 'consciousness industry'.[105] From today's perspective, then, by focusing primarily on Surrealism rather than Dadaism, Einstein opted in FF for a critique of the movement whose imbrication with capitalism meant that the critique—and critical responses to it—are of lasting relevance into this century. And because Einstein focused in a cross-disciplinary way on the social functioning of art, he was able to arrive at insights into problems with and limitations of the distributive apparatus even though Surrealist art did not specifically pinpoint these.

Einstein's antithetical argument structure

At various points in the text Einstein uses attributes which lay bare his opposition to, and indicate his critical assessment of, those art movements that claimed to be cutting edge and radical. As already noted above, he refers sceptically to 'die sogenannte Avantgarde', and likewise to 'die angeblichen Revolutionäre' (FF, 271/378). 'Avant-garde' was originally a military term denoting the group of soldiers out in front of the regular troops, leading the fray. Members of the 'new' art movements saw themselves as spearheading change and preparing the way for a very different future (FF, 310/450). Einstein detects in this self-image the preponderance of the bourgeois concept of progress, as well as the belief in a linear development in the arts, ideas he had railed against in previous theoretical writings, not least *Georges Braque*, in favour of a sociologically underpinned dialectical method. Moreover, the concept of the 'avant-garde' includes the notion that the group out in front is specially chosen for the task on account of its superior abilities. It is easy to see how this feeds an élitism and sense of superiority on the part of the artists (cf. FF, 274/383-84).[106]

It is no accident, considering the logic of the text, that when Einstein speaks of revolution or revolt in relation to the Avant-garde—its 'Revolteanspruch' (FF, 275/384) for instance, or '[d]ie [...] Literaten, die sich revolutionär gebärdeten' (ibid.)—a term from the opposing lexical field invariably comes into play, typically 'Reaktionäre' or one of its equivalents in Einstein's diction, such as 'idealistische Subjektivisten',

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[105] The term is Hans Magnus Enzensberger's. See his 'Bewußtseins-Industrie' in *Einzelheiten* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1962), pp. 7-15.

'Individualisten', 'Quietisten', 'Kontemplative' (e.g. FF, 21/17; 24/24; 28/32; 58/90; 249/345). Underscoring the duplicity of the 'angeblichen Revolutionäre' (FF, 271/378), with references to their 'revolutionäre Pose' (FF, 68/105) and 'Geste' (FF, 277/390), Einstein sets the Avant-garde's revolutionary claims in stark antithesis to the reality of the social and political function it fulfils. In fact, before exploring the reasons why Einstein makes this opposition, it is worth noting how the entire text is, at an argumentative level, structured antithetically. The more knowledge of Einstein's other texts the reader possesses, the more decodable are the oppositions around which FF is built. Like hypertext, each concept has a specific history and trajectory within Einstein's career, which, when traced, allows a partial reconstruction of his theory of art, and the developments in that theory, around the concept in question. Such concepts include, among others, death, metaphor, myth, totality, form, vision, the tectonic, 'Gestalt', concepts, individualism, revolt, revolution, the primitive, action, the collective.

Einstein typifies both intellectuals and working masses. According to this schema, the intellectuals, still beholden to philosophical idealism, are individualistic and affected, politically liberal, isolated and highly-specialized. They are pedantic, atavistic and superstitious, but also sceptical (see FF, 31/36). They are pacifistic, resigned, fearful, cautious, duplicitous, speculative and opportunistic. Contemplative and cerebral, they are people in whom the relationship between thought and action has been unhinged. Their reality is produced by fabrication and determined abstractly, their social laws operate as hypotheses in constant competition with one another, and their version of history is an interpretation framed by the interests of power. The active mass, on the other hand, is bound into a collectivity, socialist or communist, and thus open to a materialist doctrine. These people are relatively unspecialized as workers, and lacking in higher education. They are trusting and naïve (an exclusively positive term in the context of FF, opposed to opportunistic and cunning (see FF, 15/5-6)), and thus easy prey for the intellectuals. Practical people, they are in touch with body as well as mind, and their thinking is in a direct relationship to their actions. Their reality is collectively produced and naively experienced, their social laws are compelling collective agreements, and their version of

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[106] Cf. the section above, 'The reactionary cult of the exceptional', on 'Rentneraristokratismus', a concept which Bolz uses in relation to aestheticism, but which Einstein extends to the Avant-gardists once they lose sight of their commitment to social and political change.

history is collective memory of the collective 'Milieu', as Einstein calls it.[107] These typifications, rigid and tending towards reification as they are, underlie Einstein's argumentation.

There are a couple of notable rifts in the unfolding argument, indicating that the typifications are problematic to begin with. The working masses are presented as having direct experience of reality and an unambivalent and unanimous doctrine ('Die Massen besaßen ein Schicksal', 'besaßen einige einfache Erfahrungen und stellten überraschend klare Forderungen', 'Ihr Anspruch war eindeutig' (FF, 33/39)). In this regard they are seen to be better placed than the intellectuals: 'die Masse als der stärkere Partner' (FF, 33/39). But it is not clear whether Einstein intends the contamination spread by the fabricating intellectuals to be understood as reaching only the bourgeois and petit-bourgeois classes, or also the working class. The question arises whether they are immune on account of their collective structures and clear political agenda or whether they too are being corrupted and confused by the onslaught of fictions. Whereas the thrust of FF in its entirety would suggest the latter to be the case, within the text Einstein, as has just been noted, opposes that suggestion or at least relativizes it considerably.

This is one of a number of instances where the interpreter is faced with two or more plausible but mutually opposing readings. The reader who seeks to iron out briskly such contradictions and ambivalences and promote one reading will be quickly frustrated by Einstein's text. Instead, a strategy of multivalent reading and extensive analysis is required if one wishes to find one's way into the problematics of the text. For it is at just those points where the reader locates such contradictions that s/he can also begin to understand the relationships between the different works constituting Einstein's later œuvre. While FF in many ways does lead into insuperable aporias, the text in its entirety can be taken to function in relation to other texts of Einstein's in much the same way as Hans Joachim Dethlefs points out about the *Georges Braque* text. The quotation might be recalled from Chapter 3 (page 155). Dethlefs describes the procedure, noting also how it is reflected in the tension between 'Epoche – Lebenswerk – Einzelwerk':

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[107] 'Milieu' is used to refer to the collective nature of the working classes' social environment. In contrast, Einstein refers to the artists' 'Überwertung der Einsamkeit', their 'ängstlicher Protest gegen Milieu und Gesellschaft' and their clientele's predilection for their 'Gedichte und Bilder, da sie dem Individuum die erwünschte Milieulosigkeit und lyrische Vereinsamung boten' (FF, 58/90). 'Bindung (Anpassung) an ein Milieu' would have meant forfeiting the liberal illusion of personal freedom (cf. FF, 26/27).

> sich zu den eigenen Voraussetzungen mit der Hilfe dieser Voraussetzungen in Gegensatz setzen. Die Zirkularität dieses Denkweges läßt sich leicht feststellen, doch ist mit einer solchen Feststellung wenig getan, da der Selbstwiderspruch bei Einstein nicht statischer Natur ist und die Unterschiede keine feste Grenze haben.[108]

The reactionary Avant-garde

The discrepancy between the Avant-garde's claims and the reality of what it has achieved is most obvious on the social and political fronts, Einstein maintains. He is willing to concede that at a purely aesthetic level the Avant-garde has managed to shake up the status quo:

> Man war ästhetisch radikal [...]. (FF, 290/411)

> Kriterium dieser Kunst war die gelungene Vernichtung des Realen [...]. [...] wir beobachten die abgeänderte Struktur der Künste. (FF, 58/89)

However, in Einstein's view, it is not just not part of the solution, it is part of the problem. Not only has it failed to change the political, social and economic structures, or even initiate change. It has actually served to preserve and consolidate those structures as they are:

> Man war ästhetisch radikal, gesellschaftlich jedoch Aristokrat. [...] Tatsächlich verstärkte man den klassenhaften Bruch und zerriß die konkreten Zusammenhänge. (FF, 290-91/411)

> Die Künstler selbst, wenn sie ästhetisch links standen, verhinderten häufig die sociale Revolution. (FF, 97/148)

> Tatsächlich dienten die ästhetischen Revolutionäre von links in schmiegsamer Ergebenheit den Reaktionären und besitzenden Gruppen. (FF, 58/90)

Before taking account of the reasons why Einstein considers the Avant-garde to belong on balance to the forces of reaction, one problem of the argumentative method he

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[108] Hans Joachim Dethlefs, 'Die Überwindung des Ästhetischen: Über Carl Einsteins Braque-Projekt', in *Text + Kritik*, 95: Carl Einstein (1987), pp. 23-43 (pp. 30-31).

employs here needs highlighting. In the last quotation above, the schematic and undifferentiated character of his attack on the intellectuals is apparent, as he condemns all the left-wing aesthetic revolutionaries in one grand sweep for being subservient to the ruling class. No Weimar intellectual could escape this condemnation, as Einstein is applying criteria to the role of the intellectual that effectively bar him or her from having any voice within a capitalist society. Having work published means complying at some level with the system and, Einstein would contend, becoming embroiled in the mechanisms whereby the writer loses any intellectual autonomy s/he ever had. The result, on this line of thinking, is that 'die freischwebende Intelligenz' ends up being nothing but a myth perpetuated by intellectuals in league with capitalism to mask their own interests and affiliations. For the moment, according to Einstein, the intellectuals have to act, not think and write. There seems to be no way that they can change the superstructure from within, or the structure whereby there exists an antagonistic base and superstructure.

This is where FF is at its closest to a pamphlet, or indeed a kind of counter-propaganda to that circulated by the makers of fictions. But it is also a point at which it is theoretically vulnerable. Einstein's critique appears in this light to be absolutist and predicated on a utopia based on an idea of voluntaristic revolt. He does not clarify how one is to get from the current situation to a changed one, in which the intellectual could properly resume his or her critical function. It remains to be seen whether this is indeed the case, or whether Einstein does in fact give some indication of how to bridge the two situations.

A four-pronged attack

In Einstein's view the Avant-gardists have failed to live up to their own stated principles. This is certainly a different position from that defended in *Georges Braque*, as will become clearer in a moment. The grounds for the revised position are to be found in dispersed points made in FF, which, when pulled together, make a substantial, if flawed, argument. The argument is basically three-pronged: the Avant-gardists have failed

1) strategically and

2) tactically, but also

3) on account of social structure, i.e. their position and room to manoeuvre within society. This third aspect will however be sub-divided, as the Avant-gardists' room to manoeuvre was subject to substantial reduction by overriding

a) economic and

b) political factors,

and the particular arguments Einstein presents regarding a) and b) are worth considering separately. Einstein's case against the Avant-garde will therefore be treated as a four-pronged argument.

1) The Avant-garde's strategic failure

Looking first at the strategic failure: Einstein reassesses the Avant-garde claim to produce art endowed with the capacity to create reality. The creation of a new reality to counter the given reality was to constitute the revolutionary potential of Avant-garde art:

> Diese Künstler erhoben leidenschaftlich die Frage menschlicher Freiheit. (K 3, 94)

> Der Weg zum Neuen geht durch das halluzinative Intervall; Technik des Sprungs. (K 3, 113)

> Wir vermögen die Umwelt nur dadurch zu verwandeln, daß wir ihre gegenwärtigen Formen vernichten und neue Gesichte in sie zwingen als Stoff und Typen künftigen Daseins. (K 3, 112)

> Nun [...] gilt es das Schauen als Schöpfung zu retten; damit Malen heißt nun ein Dichten; denn dichtend erschafft man Realität. (W 3, 326)

Whereas in the second and third edition of *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts* (1931) and as late as 1932 in *Georges Braque* this was affirmed, in FF Einstein quotes his own previously-held ideas, sometimes almost verbatim:

> Die isolierten oder subjektiv betonten Erlebnisse kehren häufig in regressiver Form wieder, da sie zunächst in die Zone des Unbewußten abgeschoben wurden, wo sie zwischen Traum und Halluzination, in der archaischen Reserve geisterhaft dämmerten. (FF, 238/330)

Here in FF, however, those ideas are subjected to a vigorous critical assault. The retreat into lower levels of consciousness, which was to supply the material for the creation of the new reality, is likened here, as elsewhere in Einstein's earlier writings, to a return to primitivism and the belief in magic and what Freud called the 'Allmacht der Gedanken'.[109] Whereas in earlier works Einstein gave those phenomena a singularly positive sense, in FF they are shrouded in negativity:

> Die Geschichte der Intellektuellen ist die Chronik einer lächerlichen Donquichoterie, eines archaischen Wahns. Die Literaten behaupteten immer noch, die Vision gebäre die Fakten. Aller Modernität zum Trotz blieben sie in überalterte Magie gebannt. (FF, 233/327)

> Uralter, metaphysischer Schwindel wurde von der Avantgarde ästhetisch aufgarniert. Der Literat lebt in steter Korrespondenz mit den geheimen Mächten, die durch seinen Mund die Orakel künden. Solche Mitteilungen gewinnt man im Traum, Wachschlaf oder Wahnsinn. Älteste Negerdörfer umblühen diese Mentalität. (FF, 274/383)

The reference to bourgeois Romantics hinges on the fact that most of the Avant-garde artists were indeed 'Bürgersöhne' (FF, 87/134), from circles in which there was a high value attached to art, and to whom the career of artist was open without pressing existential need standing instantly and obviously in the way. Einstein now berates them as Romantics on account of their tendency to attach primary significance to the aesthetic over and above everything else, with its alleged power of *creatio ex nihilo*.

Einstein is likewise dismissive of the attempt these 'scheinbar modernen Leute' make to reinstate an animistic era. He deems them contemplative types,[110] whose

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[109] See the third part of Freud's *Totem und Tabu*, entitled 'Animismus, Magie und Allmacht der Gedanken'. Sigmund Freud, *Gesammelte Werke: chronologisch geordnet*, ed. by Anna Freud and others, 19 vols (Frankfurt a. M.: S. Fischer, 1986-99, c. 1940-87), IX: *Totem und Tabu*, pp. 106-11.

[110] The words 'contemplation' and 'contemplative' have deeply negative connotations in FF: they refer to the mystical tradition of consummate immersion in the inner being, the kind of total introspection, to the point of dissolution of the subject, which Einstein sees as generating the Avant-garde artwork, and which had, in a certain form, played a significant role in the theory developed in *Georges Braque*. Noting in FF that the mystic experience can have no centring in the modern age ('Die alten Mystiker konnten in die kollektive Fiktion, die Religion, zurückfinden. Die entsprechende Bindung fehlt den modernen Imaginativen. ' (FF, 291-92/413), Einstein associates what he sees as the surrogate mystical experience with, on the one hand, the artist's structural position of isolation and detachment from society and, on the other, the production of autonomous and hermetic works of art. What he is also criticizing is the view of art, after Schopenhauer, as a quietive. One can of course say that in this criticism he is forcing an open door, as Nietzsche, with his idea of art as a radical stimulant, had already—to borrow Marx's words—'turned Schopenhauer the right way up'. But this would miss the sociological address of Einstein's

(economic) interest demands of them that they safeguard their particular type of expertise, which is abstract, removed from the world of the deed (cf. also FF, 24/24).[111]

In the case of intellectuals not working as creative artists, their abstract knowledge was, as we saw before, arranged and rearranged to form shifting theoretical constructs, fictions, designed to deflect attention away from pressing social and political matters. Likewise, the Avant-garde artists need to protect their monopoly on the transcendental knowledge embodied in their art:

> Die Literaten erkämpften sich das alte Privileg der Prophetie und behaupten, daß gerade die abgetrennten Visionen die Zukunft vorwegnehmen. (FF, 240/333)

> Die Literaten priesen, wie früher die Priester, den Überwert überalterter, archaischer Eigenschaften und Zustände. (FF, 278/391)

Einstein discards the notion of their potential to create reality anew, and thereby to make a revolutionary impact, as soon as he realizes they are incapable of performing the function for which he had optimistically championed them:

> {Der Wahn, die Fiktion sollten die Voraussetzung und primären Elemente des Seins bilden. Die Kluft zwischen privater mythischer Conception und der kollektiv benutzbaren Wirklichkeit war unüberbrückbar.} (FF, 32/37)

Einstein's detection of the gulf between the hermetic mythologies of modern art, from Symbolism forwards, and collectively experienced reality leads him to a reassessment of the socially revolutionary potential of such art:

> Die antiken Primitiven waren [trotz ihres Antinaturalismus] Realisten; ihrer Dichtung entsprach eine kollektiv geglaubte, mythische Welt. (FF, 115/174)

> Trans [sic], Träume und Wahnsinn [...]. Die Heutigen erweckten die gleichen Zustände, doch um der konventionellen Welt zu entrinnen. [...] Die sociale Funktion dieser Kräfte

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criticism: most of the Avant-garde artists had some knowledge, if osmotic, of Nietzsche's ideas, and many aspired to his 'Artistenmetaphysik'. Yet despite this gloss and clamour, the aloof artist producing culturally, socially and politically tranquillizing work remained, in Einstein's view, the dominant model. And this model, he contends, was constantly receiving indirect reinforcement from many quarters, including the 'revolutionary' artists themselves.

> war umgewertet und sprang in den Gegensatz über. [...] Die moderne Primitive ist subjektiv betont; ihre {Figurationen} entsprechen keiner allgemein erlebten Realität. (FF, 115/174)

2) The Avant-garde's tactical failure

'Unüberbrückbar' is a key word from one of the above quotations. The mythical conceptions of the Avant-garde, i.e. the constitutive features of their art as well as the content of their theories about that art, remained unrelatable to collective reality. This points towards a second prong of Einstein's argument: the tactical failure of the Avant-garde, and how it makes them not revolutionary but deeply reactionary. Einstein maintains that the intellectuals and artists of the Avant-garde simply appropriated the transcendental values previously enshrined in religion:

> Nach dem Bankrott Gottes wurden die jenseitigen Werte von den Intellektuellen ziemlich kritiklos übernommen. [...] Sie wahrten die alte Hierarchie der Werte. (FF, 219/312)

The last words of the first sentence in this quotation leave an ambivalence. Einstein does not make explicit at this point whether the intellectuals and artists a) slipped more or less innocently into their current position without criticizing, at the historical moment when it was necessary, i.e. when secularization was just setting in, the value-hierarchy and recognizing its ideological function for the social and political conservatism that it was (all emphasis on the spirit, and moderation, even mortification, of the flesh; no redemption or rest, only toil in the here-and-now, instead salvation in the next world), or b) tacitly appropriated the values in full knowledge of their ideological power. This is clearly the question of culpability and responsibility, and of whose interests the intellectuals actually serve. The question will arise in different forms yet, and is given fuller treatment in the section 'The issue of responsibility' below.

The Avant-gardists' allegedly revolutionary demands for freedom remained couched in the terms of a 'Geistesfreiheit' asserted by previous generations of intellectuals. The demands were highly abstract and therefore alien to the working classes:

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[111] The question of Einstein's own ideological subscription, namely to an ideology of the deed, and the extent of that subscription, will be given consideration further below in the section 'Conjuring a Sorelian alternative?'.

> Die Intellektuellen ließen den Kampf um Freiheit zum idealen Abstraktum werden, d.h. sie behaupteten die Unabhängigkeit des Intellekts, der Formen und Intuition von den Fakten. (FF, 176/260)

> Jetzt konkurrierte die geistige Welt mit der naiven Erfahrung der Masse; die privilegierte Terminologie der Geistigen hatte bald das Sein entwertet und besiegt. (FF, 219/312)[112]

The abstract notion of freedom evolves into the basically Romantic utopia 'des freien, inneren Menschen' (FF, 87/134), the idea of an unhindered unfolding of the personality and development of the inner nature and talents to which the Avant-gardists remain in thrall:

> Sie verfertigten mit unbenanntem, früher gottbeladenem Material ein neues mythisches Monstrum, den sogenannten inneren Menschen, worein man die alte Fabelei verschob. (FF, 219/312)

Because it was launched for the individual and precisely not the collective, however, Einstein ascribes that utopia to the liberal tradition. In a phylogenetic-psychological argument, he then dismisses that tradition's utopia as a remnant of outdated metaphysics:

> [Die modernen Künstler] waren noch immer von der alten Fabel der grenzenlosen Freiheit besessen. Diese Utopie ist ein religiöser Atavismus, der aus der Problematik vom hilflosen Menschen und dem übergewaltigen Gott, der wollenden Kreatur und dem göttlichen Schicksal gewachsen war. Diese liberale Freiheits-Utopie ist ein Rest verjährter Metaphysik. (FF, 77/119)

Two discrepancies can be traced in the old fable of boundless freedom, the first of which is of little significance to Einstein, who is not so much concerned that liberalism is not living up to its own ideals, as that it be abolished altogether. This first discrepancy is as follows. On the one hand is what freedom can be according to theorists of the liberal state (i.e. the liberty that remains once a social contract is observed which limits people's liberties insofar as they impinge on the similar liberties of others). On the other is what

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[112] Here again we see the 'geistige Welt' of the intellectuals set in direct opposition to the naïve experience of the mass, along with the suggestion of an answer to the question that remained ambivalent above (see the section 'Einstein's antithetical argument structure') the privileged jargon of the intellectuals is seen to have quickly devalued and triumphed over 'das Sein' itself. The implication is that the fictions diffused by the 'geistige Welt' do indeed manage to reach and affect the working class, despite the special strength elsewhere ascribed to them.

the ideology of freedom comes to represent in a society which, by dint of its economic structure, ensures that the freedom described by the theorists is curiously absent in practice. Here is Einstein's terse comment on the practicability of such freedom:

> [...] nur in der Fiktion 'verwirklicht' man die liberale Utopie vom freien Individuum. (FF, 290/410)

More urgent for Einstein is the second glaring discrepancy between the high-flown ideological representations of freedom and the daily experienced unfreedom of the concrete social conditions and contradictions, a discrepancy which, in his view and to his dismay, receives no attention from the Avant-gardists. Instead he sees in them the very ones who, to their own advantage, strengthen and refresh the ideological whitewash:

> Die Intellektuellen hatten gefährliche Privilegien fixiert, als sie die Symbole und Abstraktionen zu primären Faktoren (Werten) erhoben. [...] Damit hatten sie allerdings den Kampf um eine konkrete Freiheit sabotiert, jedoch für sich selbst ungemeine Macht gewonnen. (FF, 176/260)

> Die Bezirke des Idealen waren Besitz der herrschenden Gruppen, die mit solcher Einstellung ihre Privilegien verteidigten. {Ökonomischer und geistiger Privatkapitalismus.} (FF, 223/318)

There is no question here of the intellectuals or Avant-gardists addressing or expressing the interests of the masses. The Avant-garde intellectuals, working in collusion with the ruling élite, carefully ensure that the facts of working-class conditions are filtered out of the material out of which ideology is constructed (cf. FF, 227/323). Thus the pursuit of genuine social and political freedom for all is not just not on the agenda, it is actively thwarted. Particular targets are of course socialist and communist ideas, which threaten the concept of private ownership and so the ruling order.[113] What is more, Einstein

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[113] Einstein's view that intellectuals' fictions were consciously conceived and employed against socialist and communist ideas receives some detailed corroboration in an unpublished paper given by Julian Roberts at the conference 'Art, Sexuality and Politics in the Weimar Republic: An Interdisciplinary Conference' at the University of Liverpool, 23-25 September, 1982. Roberts presents the interesting if somewhat problematic thesis that what he calls the 'Platonism' of Weimar philosophy 'may be discerned in three areas of theory, all more or less conscious responses to the threat of socialist thought. They are nominalism—as a response to metaphysical materialism; relativism—as a response to the theory of practice; and fatalism—as a response to the socialist view of history.' Julian Roberts, 'The Politics of Weimar Cultural Theory', p. 3. While Roberts' investigations into Weimar theories of language, cognition and history and their origins are indeed compelling, the question of what the three chosen areas of theory

discerns in the actual behaviour of the Avant-garde intellectuals and artists, as opposed to the rhetoric they avail of, a covert anarchism and the application of double standards, whereby they can happily set *and* flout the norms:

> Die Intellektuellen wie die Minorität anerkannten für sich selber keine Bindungen, sondern dichteten die Fiktionen der freien Persönlichkeit und der einzigartigen, freien Erkenntnis. {Man faßt hier den anarchischen Charakter jeder idealistischen Position, die immer die Norm sprengt.} (FF, 187/271)

If the utopia of the inwardly free person can be debunked as system-affirmative ideology, and if the fundamental structure of that system precludes the Avant-garde from furthering the cause of social and political improvement, then similar arguments can, and in FF do, follow for other forms of the utopia. The forms that are of particular significance in Einstein's reassessment are those located around 'primitivism' and 'myth', 'automatism' and the 'irrational'. FF seeks to expose the abstract nature of those terms. Like the utopia of freedom, Einstein observes, they exist purely as representations, or the goals of theories that are divorced from economically determined, collectively experienced reality. However, in a dialectical twist, it is not the case that such theories are simply divorced from that reality. This is implicit in Einstein's observations. The theories are divorced from that reality to the extent that they are not derived from what is historically and socially given in it, so they cannot even begin to change it to become more like the (un)reality represented in them. But the theories are also profoundly tied to economically determined reality to the extent that the representations they consist of, while thwarting analysis of, and insight into, the concrete social and political situation, and so serving to perpetuate the status quo, are eagerly consumed by the very people whom that status quo leaves at a disadvantage. This is the dialectic exposed in FF: the dialectic of allegedly revolutionary art which, within the capitalist market mechanism, hinders change for producer and recipient alike.

Given the exposure, in FF, of the abstract nature of various prevailing forms of utopia, it follows that certain key terms in Einstein's own vocabulary undergo a

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meant in the context of consciously left-wing or materialist thinkers who likewise adopted them, is not addressed. Consequently, while the main thesis has its validity vis-à-vis innovative conservative thought in Weimar (i.e. thought which, despite its novel jargon and its apparent criticism of and distance from older models, sustains a reactionary ideology), there is no room for the important issue of Left-Right pooled conceptual resources and frameworks.

revaluation. 'Primitive', 'Mythos', 'Magie', 'Archaik', 'Animism' (sic), 'Automatismus', in the context of *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts* (1931 edition) and *Georges Braque*, all represented elements of a theory hingeing on a metempsychotic or 'hallucinative' experience. This experience was to subvert the dominant epistemological model of a discrete and domineering subject observing and ultimately manipulating a discrete and more or less passive object. Its revolutionary potential was considered to lie in its instating an economy of erotics, which would gradually displace, and eventually replace, the prevalent economy of rational exchange. Although the alternative economy does not receive this particular cultural-anthropological articulation (as an economy of the erotic or the gift) until the advent of the Surrealists around Georges Bataille, in it lies perhaps the most fundamental of all the salient differences between the concepts of 'Gemeinschaft' and 'Gesellschaft' as delineated by Tönnies. Not surprisingly, then, it is also the fundament to an alternative order most persistently sought-after in artistic revolutionary circles of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

The hallucinative experience mentioned above was, in Einstein's conception, embedded in the notion of a return of myth, a myth that would act as a renewal of epistemological patterns and modes of experience, and so as the binding basis for an otherwise irretrievably fragmented society:

> Our watch-words are hallucinative, primitive ideas, derationalisation and metamorphosis of man, of his spirits and his language. It is through the hallucinative, especially, that we will progress towards the collective forces. (W 3, 558)

> The synthesis of a true collectivism is made possible by a community of spirits who aim at the construction of a new mythological reality. (W 3, 542)[114]

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[114] The first quotation is 'Obituary 1832-1932' (W 3, 209-18). The second is part of the manifesto 'Poetry is Vertical', signed by Einstein and Hans Arp, Samuel Beckett, Eugène Jolas, James J. Sweeney and others (see W 3, 640-41). Dougald Mc Millan speculates that while the 'Poetry is Vertical' manifesto was largely Jolas's own, Einstein may have made suggestions and contributions. See Dougald McMillan, *transition: The History of a Literary Era 1927-1938* (London: Calder and Boyars, 1975), p. 65. Conspicuous in the quotations above are two things. First, the phrases 'primitive *ideas*' and 'the *construction* of a new mythological reality' (emphasis N.C.) suggest, despite all talk of abandoning the rational, a conscious, conceptual and planned effort. Secondly, the first quotation indicates a model of aesthetic renewal and the second a model of organicist renewal as return of myth. Taking the quotations together and in connection with Einstein's argument in FF, it is clear that although the organicist model is seen as typical of right-wing positions in cultural documents of the time, the two tendencies are not necessarily mutually exclusive. On this point see also Inge Baxmann, *Mythos: Gemeinschaft: Körper- und Tanzkulturen in der Moderne* (Munich: Fink, 2000), esp. pp. 99-107.

But even the core concept of 'Gemeinschaft', Einstein observes, is reduced by certain leading intellectuals to a reactionary abstraction that serves only to galvanize class segregation:

> Eine Gruppe herrschender Individuen täuschte eine ideale, begriffhafte Gemeinschaft vor und verhinderte die tatsächliche Kollektive. (FF, 80/124)[115]

With his insight that 'der Mythos der Heutigen social negativ unterbaut [ist]' (FF, 293/415), i.e. that the 'Primitive' of the Avant-garde artists is, in conception as in practice, anything but collective, it seems Einstein is abandoning the hopes provided by this concept of myth, as by the equivalent 'ideale Objekte und utopische Konstruktionen' (FF, 215/307). He is therefore working with a concept of myth that, in the sense that it is understood as necessarily organic and incapable of being consciously foisted onto a given society, goes back to Herder and the early Romantics.

Of interest at this juncture is the way in which Einstein refers to his previously held concept of the tectonic in art at just a couple of rare points in FF. According to the Braque book, tectonic symbols, for instance the cylinder, the sphere, the triangle or prism, correspond to the basic shapes of the human body, as well as the shapes of the things around us. They thus provide a set of primary templates out of which everyday visual or spatial perception can develop. Looking at that development in reverse, as Einstein does in order to theorize the hallucinative instant, i.e. moving from utilitarian, Euclidean, everyday vision towards an increasingly unconceptual, undifferentiated kind of vision which allows a free interchange between viewer and viewed[116], the tectonic forms become the ultimate templates, the final symbols before the full collapse into inchoation. Or again, they are the first to be grasped again once the ecstatic moment

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[115] In an undated letter (presumably from mid or late 1932, or early 1933) from Einstein to Ewald Wasmuth a similar and deliberately vulgar version of this comment appears in relation to Hitler's mounting power and what Einstein no doubt sees as the architect Schultze-Naumburg's servile collaboration (the latter had written an anti-modernist tract *Kunst und Rasse* in 1928): 'das wort *ideal* kann von einer sau verwandt nur eine sauerei sein.' Quoted in Kiefer, *Diskurswandel*, p. 473. Einstein misspells the architect's name as 'Schulze Naumburg', thus equating him with the 'Schulze'-figure of Einstein's own satires.

[116] Incidentally, this is a model of cognition intended to replace an ends-oriented rationality with a kind of initiate intuition. Models with a similar intent are rife in conservative circles, too, as Julian Roberts shows in detail in 'The Politics of Weimar Cultural Theory', pp. 3-9. There, too, there can be allegedly collective underpinning, but of course with anything but a socialist or communist framework. There is, as yet, no detailed study of the relationships between Einstein's thought and that of conservative nominalist, mythological and mystical thought in Weimar. Kiefer, in *Diskurswandel*, pp. 371-76, does however give some attention to these issues, and some orientation for further research. Cf. also the section 'Conjuring a Sorelian alternative?' below.

subsides. It is in this respect, according to Einstein, that they represent a liminal moment and can provide a defence ('Formschutz' (W 3, 350; 355), 'Todesabwehr' (W 3, 347)).

In a sense, when he addresses afresh the question of the tectonic in FF, Einstein is simply confronting a problem that had bedevilled his theory since its development out of Cubism and towards Surrealism. It was at that crossover point in his theory that he began to account for the tectonic symbols as having a collective anchorage, due to their being rooted in 'archaische Schichten', deeper levels of the mind which are allegedly shared by all. That achieved two things at once. It built a bridge between the more strictly aesthetic aspect of his theory and the potential for imbuing it with a social and political conscience. And it gave his theory a defence on the issue of regression, no small concern for the French Surrealist movement either, in particular Breton's wing of it after the split, as Peter Bürger notes in *Theory of the Avant-Garde*.[117] Einstein is, even at the time of writing *Georges Braque*, acutely conscious of the problem of regression. (See Chapter 5, page 240). Up until FF his concerns in this matter seem to be of an aesthetic rather than a political nature, but certainly with social implications. Even still, he is no 'Anwalt einer fröhlichen Regression oder Desintegration des Selbst'.[118] His thinking on the disintegration of self in *Georges Braque* and elsewhere is accompanied by constant concerns about the implications of regression and is predicated on a supremely demanding struggle of self-annihilation. All the same, in FF he forgoes the concept of the tectonic as a guarantee of collectivity, with the consideration that it amounts to nothing but a surrogate collective and has no real basis in modern society:

> Die Maler fanden in den tektonischen Formen eine Ersatzkollektive, {welche die subjektive Überzüchtung beschwichtigen sollte.} [...] Die Suche nach verpflichtenden Formen endete in resigniertem Irrtum. {Bildtektonik, die keiner tektonischen Gesellschaft entspricht, ist musikalischer Sport.} (FF, 48/73)

Here again, Einstein's acute awareness of the problem of the inward focus or 'subjektive Überzüchtung' is clear. It is not certain which artists he is referring to, but on the very

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[117] See Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, p. 53 and p. 66.

[118] The phrase is Albrecht Wellmer's. He uses it in the context of a discussion of what he calls Adorno and Horkheimer's 'emphatische[r] Begriff der Aufklärung': 'Die Kritik der identitätslogischen Vernunft scheint auszumünden in die Alternative: Zynismus oder Theologie; es sei denn man wollte sich zum Anwalt einer fröhlichen Regression oder Desintegration des Selbst machen, ohne Rücksicht auf die Folgen: die Alternative auf die Klages zusteuerte, und die Adorno und Horkheimer um jeden Preis vermeiden

next page of FF, and in the same context, his older criticism of Constructivists and Suprematists reappears.[119]

What is certain, is that in FF he once again includes himself in the censure, as he too had previously taken the tectonic forms to be collectively binding. One can only speculate as to what he means by 'tektonische Gesellschaft'—perhaps tribal African societies, in which the tectonics of their sculpture was, according to him, imbued with a centralized and centralizing ritual significance unknown to the twentieth century European artist and 'liberal intellectual'.

Ultimately, he abandons the concept of collectively binding tectonic forms on much the same grounds as he abandons, or revalues, 'Mythik', 'Magie', 'Archaik', 'Primitive', etc.: he comes to the conclusion that the form these things took in the modern age was just a guise or a disguise. None of them were actually reinstated in any way that corresponded to what they had meant according to (often nostalgic or projected utopian) theories about their function in older societies. The realization that they could not be outwardly or consciously imposed, by artists, intellectuals or anyone else convinced they should be cultivated, brought the European intellectual to a crisis, a (self-)critical point of re-orientation inconceivable to the kind of intellectual Einstein vilifies in FF. For this latter intellectual is the archetypal 'Mitläufer', who will not have to concede the dissolution of the cherished utopian ideas until the zero hour. The fact alone that just such a point of crisis *was* reached and surmounted during the 1930s, e.g. in the work of some of the Frankfurt School thinkers, and Siegfried Kracauer, indicates that there were indeed intellectuals, not to mention artists, other than the kind Einstein portrays.

That Einstein cites the tectonic forms as the result of a 'Suche nach verpflichtenden Formen' is telling. The artists had engaged in that search, but so too had Einstein, if we recall the role he ascribed the tectonic forms in answer to the volatile world of liberalism and aestheticism, with their 'Anhäufung ungeordneter Erfahrungen und übervieler Wirklichkeitsdeutungen' and 'regellose Deutungsmasse' (W 3, 263), as denounced in *Georges Braque*. It appears, then, that he is consciously rejecting and distancing himself from a previous tactic of theoretical contingency management. That begs the question whether it is replaced in FF by a new and comparable tactic or whether

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wollten.' Cf. Albrecht Wellmer, *Zur Dialektik von Moderne und Postmoderne: Vernunftkritik nach Adorno* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1985), pp. 75 and 76-77.

[119] For this criticism, see K 3, 236-40.

the entire strategy is abandoned and contingency allowed to thrive. This question will be addressed in the context of the alternative Einstein offers in FF (see below, page 356f.).

3) The Avant-garde's failure on account of social structure: economic factors

The third prong of Einstein's argument, the structural quandary of the artists' and intellectuals' lack of genuine independence vis-à-vis the market, has already been discussed to some extent in another context. The artists of the Avant-garde, with their stated allegiance to the revolution, face the dilemma of serving the revolutionary cause by producing subversive, radically challenging work on the one hand, and on the other ensuring that their work has an equitable market-value, to sustain their livelihood. With this dilemma, therefore, comes the compromise of having to negotiate, directly with art-dealers and agents (Einstein's much-maligned 'Parvenuschicht'), and indirectly with the art-buying public ('Großbürger', 'Elite', 'besitzende Klasse', 'zahlungskräftige, kapitalistische Minorität'), via art critics, theorists and apologists, all of whom of course fall within Einstein's category of intellectual. With the Avant-gardists, Einstein observes, the dilemma can find quite a favourable resolution. To be revolutionary and challenge existing norms, they are required to satisfy the innovation demand made by older, and especially Romantic, theories of art. Yet the fulfilment of this demand is precisely, in Einstein's social-psychological argument, what makes their work so attractive to the upwardly mobile groups that constitute their main client-base, as these groups define themselves in terms of the newest and latest, and are eager to displace and forget their past. Innovation, indeed, becomes the predominant criterion, so that the work is gauged increasingly according to it alone. The use of material from dreams and the sub- and unconscious serves this criterion, too, in that the symbolic combinations tend to deviate from the traditional symbolic content of artworks. Thus, the symbiosis occurs, between artists, art-traders and consumers.

As Einstein is at pains to point out, however, it is not, despite some of the rhetoric, social or political norms that are called into question or undermined, but only aesthetic ones. And this kind of aesthetic subversion, although it at best criticizes not only another artistic style or trend in art but art itself as an institution, is easily defused by

integration, as was shown above.[120] Thus, according to Einstein, as long as the Avant-gardists make their work palatable to the bourgeoisie and can count on it as a client-base, there is no question of their having any revolutionary function whatever. Social, economic and political structures remain tacitly intact. In these circumstances, Einstein insists, the revolutionary claims of the Avant-garde artists amount to nothing but sham and mockery.

Not only do social and economic structures remain intact, but they are even reflected, as Einstein contends, in aesthetic structures. Einstein draws structural analogies between the economic mechanisms determining the ruling classes and the kind of art, i.e. consciously and exaggeratedly subjectivist, experimental and autonomous, that they champion. Einstein registers not only the dramatic increase in intellectual production in his time, but also the unhingeing of intellectual production from material goods, an insight that gives rise to a focus on the phenomenon of circulation as opposed to material production and its preconditions:

> Der Spekulant legt sich in keiner Produktion fest, er bestreitet sein Spiel mit wirtschaftlichen Illusionen, da er meistens keine Ware schafft, sondern nur verhandelt. (FF, 250/346)

As the stock-exchange speculator plays with options and shifts allegiances on the economic front, with virtually no relation to the material goods, so the Avant-garde artist plays with signs in a kind of vacuum, where virtually all semantic restraint, i.e. the contact with any referent, has been eliminated. Einstein's critique of Symbolism will be recalled (Chapter 2 page 93f.). Here, in FF, it is radicalized:

> Wir zeigen rasch die Verwandschaft zwischen spekulativem Parvenu und imaginativem Dichter. Beide überschätzten den Einfluß der asocialen Spekulation, beide leben von fiktiven Konjunkturen, die auf Suggestion beruhen; der Spekulant ist eben ein Phantast im Wirtschaftlichen. Die Parvenus wie die modernen Literaten waren egozentrische Anarchisten. [...] Beide Typen waren an der Hausse der ökonomischen und formalen Illusionen interessiert. (FF, 250/347)

In an article entitled 'Critical Theory and Technoculture: Habermas and Baudrillard', Mark Poster remarks as follows on Jean Baudrillard's critique of Marx:

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[120] 'Such a nearly institutionalized shock probably has a minimal effect on the way the recipients run their

> Marx's analysis overlooked, according to Baudrillard, the function of social exchange. Limited to the metaphor of production in the analysis of social practice, Marx missed the force of the social exchange of meanings that envelops commodities in a non-productivist logic. If, on the other hand, society were seen as a system of symbolic exchange, the power of the code would reveal its force.[121]

Let us pause at these remarks in relation to Einstein and Baudrillard for a moment. In the Western tradition of thought, representation was generally taken as an equivalence between sign and reality.[122] That meant there was a basis for exchange: a sign could be given and meaning received for it. This transaction had an ultimate guarantor, called God.[123] This model is defunct, according to Baudrillard. There is nothing more to which signs could in particular refer, and which would not itself be just another sign. There is no longer any truth, any reference and any objective ground. That is the starting point of Baudrillard's considerations. With the loss of the real, we enter the age of simulation, which dissolves all traditional semantic and social structuring principles and ideas:

> Caught up in the universe of simulations, the 'masses', the 'silent majorities,' are bathed in a media massage without messages or meaning, a mass age where classes disappear, and politics is dead, as are the grand dreams of disalienation, liberation, and revolution.[124]

Where Baudrillard speaks of simulation, and the logic of simulation having replaced the logic of facts and meanings, we find a precursor in Einstein's FF with the idea that fictions, or 'die deplacierende Metapher' (FF, 242/334), have replaced 'positive Tatsachen', 'konventionelle Tatsachen' (ibid.), 'Fakten' (FF, 250/347). With his insight that 'die Intellektuellen folgten nur der ökonomischen Tendenz' (FF, 291-92/413), Einstein begins to explore the economy of signs in circulation and attempts a functional

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lives. The shock is 'consumed'', as Peter Bürger aptly puts it in *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, p. 81.

[121] Mark Poster, 'Critical Theory and Technoculture: Habermas and Baudrillard', in *Baudrillard: A Critical Reader*, ed. by Douglas Kellner (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1994), pp. 68-88 (p. 77).

[122] Cf. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, 4th paperback edn (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 79 and 120.

[123] The realization that 'God', too, was just another sign came about in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Fritz Mauthner, whose language pessimism is built to a certain extent on Nietzsche's critique of language, remarks, 'Wir geben Worte wie Banknoten aus, ohne zu fragen, ob sie einen materiellen Garant haben'. Fritz Mauthner, *Beiträge zu einer Kritik der Sprache*, 3 vols (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1901-02), I: *Sprache und Psychologie* (1901), p. 449.

[124] Douglas Kellner, 'Introduction: Jean Baudrillard in the Fin-de-Millennium', in *Baudrillard: A Critical Reader*, pp. 1-24 (p. 10). The text in which Baudrillard expands these ideas is *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. by S. F. Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994).

analysis. He sees in exchangeability the feature that unites (poetic) metaphor, concepts and money:

> Zweifellos besteht ein Zusammenhang zwischen dem überentwickelten Kapitalismus und der Entwertung des konkreten Objekts, die wir in den jüngeren Kunstwerken beobachten. [...] Distanzierung und Verselbständigung von Geld, Form und Ideologie gehören zusammen. Eine Generation von Artisten verliert den Blick für das Gemeinsame, und somit werden Geld, Bilder und Gedichte nur Selbstzweck. (FF, 81/124)

> Dichter und Kapitalist sind Dynamiker und suchen ein Maximum an Beweglichkeit. Dem Poeten scheint das Gedicht geglückt, wenn seine schmale Sensation [...] hundert Zeichen durcheilte. Der Spekulant wünscht, daß sein Geld möglichst häufig die Placierung wechsle. Beide Typen sind metamorphotisch besessen. Geld wie Metapher verwandeln sich mimisch und lösen die konkreten Tatbestände auf. (FF, 311/452)

All three, (poetic) metaphor, concepts and money, are governed by a logic of equation or levelling: metaphor by means of the infinite associations of words brought on by the (Symbolist) focus on their sensuous specificity;[125] concepts by means of their annihilation of the specificity of the particular thing; and money by means of the principle of exchange.[126] And all three are subject to an inflationary dynamism: the more they move or the more exchanges occur, the greater their value becomes in society's terms. But Einstein perceives negative consequences in all this busy activity: the loss of any kind of intrinsic value ('Entwertung des konkreten Objekts'), but also the inertia of all this apparent movement. The neutralization of concrete things and people the capitalist effects by deforming people and things with the power of abstract money is

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[125] In fact, the constant deferral of meaning reflected in Derrida's term 'différance' can be traced back to Symbolism. The Symbolists' attendance to the sensuous specificity of words—how words related to each other by sound, rhyme, rhythm—led them to discern 'correspondences' meaningless for a non-sensuous understanding of language. The Symbolists began to notice how one word, or one signifier, is associated with so many others just by its sensuousness, regardless of the signified. In discovering these correspondences, they also began to understand that that is the only way signifiers actually signify anything at all—by dint of their sensuous difference from other words. This leads to Saussure's principle of relationality, or mutual determination, which leads to the other principle of arbitrariness, and an understanding of language as a system of arbitrary and relational signs is born.

[126] And yet in a dialectical twist typical of Adorno, Einstein points out, in an undated posthumously published fragment, that trading in signs, in codes, rather than in things, is as old as society itself and crucial to it, and not just a feature of modern capitalist society: 'die Zeichen, der Mensch vom Magier begonnen, gehörten zu den wichtigsten Waren der Menschen; immer haben sie mit ihren Zeichen Handel getrieben'. (W 4, 338)

effected also by the poet. With the autonomization of his signs, his language abandons concrete human experience.[127]

The consequent loss of the opposition between the general and the particular means that the chief dialectical tool employed in (older) attempts to grasp the process of abstraction has become illusory.[128] And, as opposites collapse in upon one another, the apparent dynamism of the ceaseless exchange processes reveals itself as stagnation: with the structures for perpetuating the frenzied activity so firmly in place, it looks like nothing can threaten the simulated world order. In it, there are no alternatives. There is no meaning to the notion of an attempt to 'break out': as the individuals are entirely constituted by the simulation processes, any move to change the status quo translates into self-destruction: 'Die Individuen durften nichts ändern, sollten sie sich nicht selber vernichten' (FF, 317/464) The 'Permanenz der Krise' (FF, 31/36) Einstein registers consists in this inertia, a standstill at breakneck speed, 'das Tempo des Wirklichkeitsschwunds' (FF, 216/308). The crisis is so unending, it has become the norm. It recalls that model of the sublime experience in which the third or reactive phase is never reached: the dissolution of subject-object boundaries persists, and the consequence for the subject is arrested development. (See Chapter 1, page 32f.) In some comments that eerily pre-empt descriptions of a postmodern society and even how postmodernism itself becomes a kind of determinism, Einstein characterizes his era as 'weightless':

> Das Schicksal der Schicksallosigkeit. Relativität als unser Absolutes. vor lauter Dynamik gibt es keine Bewegung mehr. Egoism ohne Ich. [...] Die Monotonie jedmöglicher Wahl, deren man überdrüssig wird. Es ist dies nicht seelische Komplikation, sondern Spaltung und Zersplitterung durch Zufälle. [...] [L]etzten Endes dynamischer Impressionism, der völlig undramatisch ist, da er des Konflikts ermangelt. Daher ist diese Zeit untragisch, zu gewichtlos; eine Zeit der quantitativen Rekorde. (W 4, 440)

For Baudrillard likewise forty years later, the permanent crisis already seems old and outdated. He opts for a viewpoint uniting past, present and future: the catastrophe has already happened. There is nothing else, not even nothing else *yet*, only endless,

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[127] Cf. Jochen Schulte-Sasse, 'Carl Einstein; or, The Postmodern Transformation of Modernism', in *Modernity and the Text: Revisions of German Modernism*, ed. by Andreas Huyssen and David Bathrick (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), pp. 36-59 (p. 54).
[128] Cf. ibid.

weightless simulation. This is the catastrophe persisting, becoming normality/banality, whereby also this pair of terms—catastrophe and normality—collapses together.

> Yet the growth, acceleration and proliferation have reached such extremes, Baudrillard suggests, that the ecstasy of excrescence is accompanied by inertia. [...] [T]he objects themselves take over in a 'cool' catastrophe for the exhausted subject whose fascination with the play of objects turns to apathy, stupification, and an entrophic inertia.[129]

But for all these parallels in Einstein's and Baudrillard's diagnoses of late modern society, one might argue that a crucial difference prevails, a difference often seen to divide the modern from the postmodern. Einstein certainly speaks of 'Wirklichkeitsverlust' (CEA, 130), a 'Krise des Wirklichen' and 'Verfall einer Kultur' (FF, 72/110). In his case, the phenomena are registered and described, but there is an appeal to an alternative, the overriding sense that there still is or at least ought to be a 'Wirklichkeit', however smothered and reduced it might be, to be defended. For Baudrillard the state of affairs is simply to be registered; in a stance of 'is' without 'ought', he does not reject it but neither does he exactly embrace it. As Douglas Kellner is quick to point out having synopsized the age of simulation, however, Baudrillard's response to the situation is suspended between nostalgia and nihilism, certainly until the early 1980s:

> Baudrillard at once exterminates modern ideas (i.e., the subject, meaning, truth, reality, society, socialism, etc.) and affirms a mode of symbolic exchange which appears to manifest a nostalgic desire to return to premodern cultural forms.[130]

One instance where Baudrillard's nostalgia generates a highly questionable theory about the response of the masses to media monologic domination will be mentioned here in passing, as it evinces a curious parallel to Einstein's championing of Léger in the face of technological and machine domination. Both provide the inkling of a hope that by way of wily and subversive response, a triumph against the tyranny of the forces in society that rob subjects of their subjecthood may not be wholly out of the question.

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[129] Kellner, 'Introduction: Jean Baudrillard', p. 15. For a discussion of Baudrillard's simulacra theory as a version of the sublime, see Ralph Kray, 'Dynamisierung des Erhabenen? Kritisch-exemplarischer Rückblick auf eine fortschwelende Diskussion', in *Arcadia: Zeitschrift für vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft*, 29 (1994), 58-66 (p. 60f.).
[130] Ibid.

In Baudrillard, it is the idea that the masses, by being silent and refusing to have a will, refusing to vote, decide, speak, participate, express themselves and so constitute themselves as subjects, actually resist the power of the media.[131] For Baudrillard, this reflective response of the masses is grounds for claiming they are not entirely passive and alienated. It suggests that there is still some kind of conflict, something at stake that is being struggled for. In Einstein's interpretation of Léger a structurally similar reflective response is at work. The use of 'Maschine und Kalkül', it will be recalled, was to act as a counter-strategy in confrontation with a proliferation of technologization and calculation (see Chapter 2, page 67). In both instances, however, the theoretical investment in such reflective responses is unsatisfactory. In Baudrillard's case, it is very difficult to discern how the masses' allegedly subversive silence would amount to anything but effectively handing over power to those who exploit and dominate them:

> Playing dead may be a ruse, but it is not one which subverts the status quo – the masses are ultimately the ones who get caught in the snare of their own lack of desire to will.[132]

The problems of Einstein's reading of Léger will be considered later in this chapter.

Despite the apparent deadlock in the foregoing, Einstein indicates at various points in FF but most succinctly in two paragraphs (FF, 14/3 and 101/155) that there is another path revolutionary artists can take. Rather than pander to the bourgeois and newly-rich, they can orient their work quite deliberately towards a working-class audience. The potential for hypocrisy and a sell-out are so much the greater in this case, Einstein suggests, as the predominant focus is on maximizing profit, and the potential for profit is so greatly increased by the sheer increase in scale. The art industry produces mass wares, which deliberately underchallenge the cultural expertise and aesthetic judgment of the consumers:

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[131] Cf. Deborah Cook: 'Baudrillard defines the media as an 'irreversible model of communication *without response*,' and by mirroring the media's irreversibility, the silence of the masses actually serves to reciprocate with the media by sending back to them their own logic. 'This absence of response may be understood, no longer in the least as the strategy of power, but as a counterstrategy of the masses themselves in confrontation with power'. [...] In silence, they reflect the media's demand 'like a mirror,' and 'it is hard to imagine what powers of deception, of absorption, of deviation—in a word, of subtle revenge—there is in this type of response.'' Cf. Deborah Cook, 'Symbolic Exchange in Hyperreality', in *Baudrillard: A Critical Reader*, pp. 150-67 (pp. 152-53). Cook is quoting Jean Baudrillard, 'The Masses: The Implosion of the Social in the Media', trans. by Marie McLean, in *Baudrillard: Selected Writings*, trans. by Jacques Mourrain and others (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988), pp. 207-19 (p. 213).

[132] Cook, 'Symbolic Exchange', p. 154.

> Die Einen dichteten für eine vage Elite, die Andern fabrizierten Massenartikel, wobei man das Niveau der Verbraucher bewußt unterbot. [...] Parole war, keine Anstrengung vom Publikum zu fordern, damit der Profit verbürgt sei. (FF, 14/3)

> Künstler wie Dichter arbeiteten an der Konstruktion dieses privaten Menschen, den sie unablässig abänderten oder ausbesserten. (FF, 97/148)

These observations can be seen in connection with Einstein's social-psychological insights. He sees not only how consumers are schooled or submitted to a kind of dressage by the intellectuals to desire their placative entertainment. 'Tatsächlich wurden die Bürger den ästhetischen Tendenzen angepaßt', '[d]ie Intellektuellen verfertigten nach Bedarf die erotischen Typen', 'unterstützt von Schneider und Coiffeur' (FF, 167/245), as he puts it. But he sees also how the economic and social circumstances (massification, long working-day, alienated labour product, increasing bureaucratization, subsistence living, cultural confusion) apparently conspire to make the intellectuals' job easier. The question of the function of psychology and psychoanalysis has already received some attention. It was of course discussed as a middle-class phenomenon, not in relation to the class now in focus, the working class. But while the finer nuances of various psychological complexes, compulsions and weaknesses may not have had the same attraction for the working class, escapism and fantasy of one sort or another was sought by both classes. Looking at the nexus of observations and mutual determinations FF unfolds on this question, in conjunction with Einstein's thinking about the cultural construction of spatial experience, it becomes clear that Einstein is considering more than just an 'art industry', more, even than a 'culture industry'. He wants to expose the 'consciousness industry'.

The rhetorical structure 'Die Einen ..., die Andern' in the first of the two last quotations conveys Einstein's sense of the interchangeability, and ultimately insignificance, of whether an artist produces for an élite or for a mass audience. Einstein underscores this later in FF, when the following comment appears just after a description of how 'die Modernen' commanded the interest, both aesthetic and financial, of 'die liberale Minderheit':

> Drüben auf dem anderen Bürgersteig lärmte lauter Betrieb. Film, Theater und Kunstkitsch schimmerten hinter roten Ampeln. (FF, 101/155)

The suggestion seems to be that artists themselves have limitations imposed on them and can choose 'another path' only in the sense of two paths along the one road. Paths are for moving short distances on foot. They typically connect only places within the one settlement. If one really wants to go elsewhere, the road must be taken.

4) The Avant-garde's failure on account of social structure: political factors

The case of the Proletkult

Among these paths were, in Einstein's view, attempts to align aesthetic innovation with socialist propaganda, such as the Proletkult and the agitprop groups of the 1920s. An attack on the premises of such attempts constitutes the fourth prong of Einstein's argument, which is directed in particular towards a special case: the Avant-gardes of the Soviet Union, where the 1917 revolution had brought about the installation of a socialist government. The Proletkult had been founded in the Soviet Union in 1917 as a workers' educational organization with a strong emphasis on the arts and with the intention of becoming 'a third force in the revolutionary state. As such, it was to balance the political element (the Party) and the industrial element (the trade unions) and ultimately serve to create a new working-class culture to replace that of the bourgeoisie'.[133] Western Europe followed suit with their own Proletkult groups. In Germany for instance, Erwin Piscator led the way from 1920 onwards in Berlin, first at the Volksbühne and later at the Gropius-built 'Totaltheater' at Nollendorfplatz. In 1926 the Young Communists set up the first agitprop group under Maxim Vallentin to further their own militant form of entertainment, later becoming Das Rote Sprachrohr (The Red Megaphone). There were also the Roter Wedding (from the Berlin district Wedding), the Hamburg Nieter and Proletkult Cassel.[134]

Certainly, the movement's overarching goal of creating a new working-class culture was not at odds with Einstein's own concerns. However, some of the ideas—and figures—in the broader surroundings of the movement were. The Proletkult had been

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[133] John Willett, *The New Sobriety 1917-1933: Art and Politics in the Weimar Period* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978), p. 41.

[134] Cf. Walter Fähnders and Martin Rector, *Linksradikalismus und Literatur: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der sozialistischen Literatur in der Weimarer Republik* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1974), I, 141f. and II, 217f. Cf. also Willett, *The New Sobriety*, pp. 156 and 246.

founded with the support of Anatoly Lunacharsky as Commissar for Enlightenment, who had in fact been partly responsible for the laying of its theoretical foundations at the turn of the century. Between 1917 (i.e. immediately after the revolution) and 1929, he held the post of Soviet Minister for Enlightenment, a portfolio which covered education and the arts. On the question of the arts and cultural education Lunacharsky stood quite close to Lenin and other major Party figures: the traditional cultural heritage of humanistic Classicism was to be preserved, and cultivated among the people as the soil out of which an organic proletarian culture would grow. Now this doctrine obviously stood in diametrical opposition to the tenets of the Avant-garde groups of Futurists, Suprematists, Constructivists, and parts of the Proletkult, who wished to see the bourgeois artistic and literary heritage liquidated. And Einstein's own thinking on the question, perennially disputed in Marxist or Marxian circles to this day, of the validity of cultural heritage, coincided with that of the radical art movements of the early twentieth century.[135]

All the same, Lunacharsky was not averse to more contemporary and avant-garde art, in fact he gave it considerable support. As Commissar for Enlightenment he was given a relatively free hand: 'neither Lenin, Trotsky nor Bukharin thought it the Party's business to impose an aesthetic line of its own, and within the sphere presided over by Lunacharsky, though loyalty to the new State was essential, Party affiliations [i.e. of the artists] were not all that important.'[136] A dramatist of some merit himself, Lunacharsky had known some of the young Russian artists in pre-war Paris, perhaps in circles overlapping with those in which Einstein moved. Though not pro-Cubist, Lunacharsky had intervened critically in a lecture Plekhanov gave in Paris in 1912 mocking Cubism and specifically Léger's influential *Femme en bleu*.[137] His own writings and lectures (in 1926 he held a series of lectures in Berlin, where the Proletkult had found considerable resonance) reveal his penchant for the Greek classics, Goethe and the great nineteenth century Russian realist writers. In his study *The New Sobriety 1917-1933*, John Willett states that Lunacharsky, while personally favouring the 'revolutionary romanticism' of Whitman and Verhaeren, had vis-à-vis the visual arts, where there was nothing to

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[135] Even by the time of writing FF, when Einstein is apparently underscoring his critical distance from those movements, his thinking on this question has not changed. This is a further argument in the case for more continuity than discontinuity between on the one hand Einstein's work prior to FF, and on the other FF itself and his subsequent work.

[136] Willett, *The New Sobriety*, p. 40.

[137] Cf. Willett, *The New Sobriety*, p. 34.

correspond with that, 'a capacity for enthusiasm and a wide-ranging curiosity from which the most extreme movements might profit'.[138] And Willett shows how they did indeed profit, with Lunacharsky treading a fine line. On the one hand, he was actively supporting new strains in all the arts and advancing art and art-technical education that included up-to-the-minute instruction in areas such as architecture, sculpture, graphics, textiles and tailoring, woodwork, metalwork, pottery and painting given by working artists, among them some of renown such as Kandinsky, El Lissitzky, Malevitch and Tatlin. Meanwhile, on the other hand, he was resisting to a considerable extent the enthusiasm of the Avant-garde on the question of sweeping away what they argued were relics of bourgeois rule. In 1919 there was a series of State Exhibitions and in 1920 and 1921 exhibitions representing the work of 'Obmokhu', a group of young Moscow artists, and, although only a tiny number of books were being published, the sense of a great cultural shake-up reached over to Europe. There, as Willett notes, even Mondrian and Arp were not producing such advanced work.[139]

Einstein's relation to the Proletkult

So, one might legitimately put the question as to why Einstein, who apparently shared the broad goals of the Soviets where the formation of a new proletarian culture was concerned, was so averse to what was happening in the Soviet Union. There had been a time when Einstein himself had set high hopes on the Soviet Union and its potential for creating a new culture.[140] Einstein had also been in personal contact with Lunacharsky since 1922 or 1923.[141] According to a letter (CEA, 387), probably sent in 1922, from

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[138] Willett, *The New Sobriety*, p. 34.
[139] Willett, *The New Sobriety*, p. 38.
[140] One could cite the euphorically revolutionary mood of Einstein's 1921 essay Revolution durchbricht Geschichte und Überlieferung' (W 4, 146-52), which was written as a contribution to the *Große Sowjet-Enzyklopädie*. As Kiefer points out in *Diskurswandel* (p. 261), however, any kind of conviction behind the euphoria evinced in that essay may have already been out of date by the time the essay was being sent for publication. Kiefer cites in evidence a letter from Einstein to his then partner Tony Simon-Wolfskehl from about March 1923, which indicates that what Einstein published did not always reflect his current position: 'Gestern Meier-Graefe [Einstein's main rival in the field of art criticism] angepöbelt – heute sieben alte Aufsätze nach Rußland verkloppt – so geht das.' The flippant tone suggests also self-irony or even mockery: Einstein's awareness of the economic dependency of the art critic is all too acute and immediate. In evidence of the fact that any hopes of Einstein's for the Soviet Union had, by 1926 at the latest, definitively given way to a more sceptical distance, the chapter 'Russen nach der Revolution' in the first (1926) edition of *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts* can be cited, as Katrin Sello does in her introduction to the text, in ALT, 253-57. In this first published scholarly engagement with the text, Sello also provides her own title for the essay, 'Abolute Kunst und absolute Politik. Aus der Einleitung für den Russischen Maler'.
[141] See letters from Einstein to Tony Simon-Wolfskehl (CEA, 387, 390, 392 and 393). Cf. also Kiefer, *Diskurswandel*, p. 262 and Franke-Gremmelspacher, *Notwendigkeit der Kunst*, p. 147.

Einstein to Tony Simon-Wolfskehl, his partner at that time, certain works of Einstein's were, with the consent and support of Lunacharsky (contracts were to be prepared), to be translated uncensored and published in Russia. Einstein's play *Die Schlimme Botschaft* was also to be translated and performed.[142] However, internal developments in the Soviet Union were to stand in the way of these projects. Already in 1920 Lenin, sensing the unfettered growth of a movement parallel to the Party and anyway placing basic social and economic organization over the practice of art in such a time of shortage, had the Proletkult subordinated to the ministry. He called for the development of the existing cultural heritage and its models according to Marxist principles instead of the immediate introduction of a new proletarian culture. The movement nonetheless retained autonomy over its aesthetic ideas and in fact, in the reshuffle of personalities that ensued, became much more open to the (essentially non-proletarian) Avant-garde.[143] In effect, the cultural power-struggle continued until a severe clamp-down in 1922 by Lenin, in other words, just at the time of Einstein's promising contacts with Lunacharsky. In a letter to Tony Simon-Wolfskehl from March 1923, Einstein remarks as follows on the situation in Russia:

> Die Sache mit Russland; L[undberg] telefonierte für ein neues Angebot. In Russland ist die Situation insofern schwierig – als jetzt eine verschärfte Zensur herrscht. Da man ökonomisch stark nachgibt, eröffnete man die ideologische Offensive – eine politische Zensur, die bis zu Lenin geht; der ich mich aber nie fügen werde. Kommt hinzu, dass ich wohl einige bissige Bemerkungen gegen Lunatscharsky, den Minister für Volksaufklärung, und einige seiner Bonzen gemacht habe. Ça m'est égal. Ich lasse mich nicht terrorisieren, selbst nicht von Leuten, mit denen ich sehr sympathisiere. Aber Lundberg glaubt fest an den Vertrag. Ich selber mehr an politische Intrigue. (CEA, 393)

It is not known whether and which of Einstein's texts in fact reached the Soviet Union and were circulated in Russian. It is further not known whether his play was ever performed there, but it seems more likely that it would have been dropped for political reasons, given the newly repressive climate.[144]

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[142] Cf. also Franke-Gremmelspacher, *Notwendigkeit der Kunst*, p. 147.
[143] Cf. Willett, *The New Sobriety*, p. 42.
[144] Kiefer reaches similar conclusions in *Diskurswandel*, p. 359.

Einstein's rejection of the Proletkult: the dangers of didacticism and demagogy

Einstein no doubt thus felt firsthand the effect that political coercion can have on budding aesthetic projects. He was, it can be imagined, disappointed that Lunacharsky was in no position to obstruct the repressive measures, perhaps even disgusted that the minister apparently did not even try to get himself into such a position. At any rate, however deeply Einstein sympathized with those referred to at the time of writing the letter quoted above, his sympathies for the rebuffed minister and the curtailed Proletkult movement do not seem to stretch so far. Einstein and Lunacharsky differed starkly, as noted above, on the question of cultural heritage, and this was to become largely the basis for the former's vociferous attacks on the latter.[145]

For Einstein, Lunacharsky represented what he saw as 'historicising classicism',[146] and could therefore be denounced in one breath along with others who stood for the preservation and perpetuation of classicist norms. Einstein appeals to the materialist base-superstructure model in making his case. The classical norms had arisen in a fundamentally class-based society, that of ancient Greece, in which only a small minority of the population enjoyed the privilege of education and appreciation of the aesthetic wealth of their culture.

> There is no doubt that Greek humanism represented an absolute slave economy and a sharply divided caste society in which only the possessing minority had the privilege of education. (W 3, 212)

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[145] Curiously, FF contains a glowing appraisal of Lenin in a passage that appears as a footnote in the published edition. The editor writes simply: 'Im Manuskript folgt der gestrichene Passus: Es war die Leistung Lenins, den Marxismus als Mittel zur Tat und nicht als beliebige Interpretation zu verkünden. Ohne dies wäre man nie zum praktischen Entschluß gelangt. Dieser Mann hatte begriffen, daß es sich hier nicht um ein intellektuelles Problem handelte, das theoretisch aufzupolieren sei. Er arbeitete die kommunistische Formel so zwingend und eindeutig heraus, daß man bei gebotener Gelegenheit unvermittelt zur Aktion übergehen konnte.' (FF, 43) Some further remarks on the Europeans' use of the Communist doctrine follow in the same footnote, but these are not relevant here. The point to be stressed is that it seems Einstein held Lunacharsky personally responsible for anything that looked like retrograde tendencies or measures in Soviet policy on education and the arts. Although it was in fact Lenin who felt the need to intervene in and curtail Proletkult developments, while Lunacharsky passively resisted (cf. Willett, *The New Sobriety*, p. 42), Einstein lauds what he sees as Lenin's impeccable revolutionary credentials. He overlooks, or is ignorant of, Lenin's more evolutionary stance in matters of education and the arts, but publicly chastizes Lunacharsky for a similar and, if anything, more pro-proletarian-culture stance.

[146] Einstein, 'Obituary 1832-1932' (W 3, 209-18), which, on the occasion of the centenary of Goethe's death, Einstein contributed to the magazine *Transition*. The original, in French, no longer exists. It was translated into English by Eugène Jolas, who was also the editor of the magazine. The article, a polemical and programmatic piece, is also a platform for some scathing invective against Lunacharsky (see W 3, 212-13).

That paradigm could therefore not be adequate, Einstein reasons with reference to 'the Marxist doctrine' (W 3, 212), for a new classless socialist society in which the art produced was to be representative not of some privileged minority but of the whole working population.

Franke-Gremmelspacher, identifying in the quotation above about Greek humanism Einstein's insight into the dialectic of bourgeois culture, proceeds to mention in this context the 'Kunstlump' debate, with the example of Kokoschka versus Heartfield and Grosz, whose position Einstein undoubtedly shared.[147] Franke-Gremmespacher also quotes thesis number VIII from Walter Benjamin's 'Über den Begriff der Geschichte', which contains the well-known sentence: 'Es ist niemals ein Dokument der Kultur, ohne zugleich ein solches der Barbarei zu sein.'[148] While this is certainly contextually appropriate, Franke-Gremmelspacher passes over an important distinction: whereas Benjamin makes this claim for all past cultures, thus underscoring the fundamental fact of power struggle and brutality wrought on somebody or bodies in bringing forth something that will be recognized as a cultural achievement, Einstein often seems to harbour a residual notion of a past culture ('primitive' culture) as somehow free of that fundamental fact. To be sure, Einstein's express wish is for a new culture free only of the exploitation and submerged brutality of the bourgeois age. But the idea that 'die Ausbeutung von Leid und Tod der Unbekannten' (W 3, 643) would be absent in a 'true' collectivity indicates the presence of a strongly utopian strain in Einstein's thought, which Franke-Gremmelspacher neglects to take into account.

An attempt will now be made to illustrate how Einstein's discourse gives the lie to interpretations that either attempt to discount the utopian strain or to give it too much weight. It will be argued that while a utopian thrust can indeed be detected in Einstein's work, it often has the distinct function of a heuristic tool rather than any positive content.

In an argument against 'pseudorevolutionary' art Einstein makes the following revealing comment:

> Darüber hinaus gibt es noch einen weiteren Aspekt: die Ausbeutung von Leid und Tod der Unbekannten. Man findet nur die Fiktion der Kollektivität, aber die intellektuelle Arbeit

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[147] Cf. Franke-Gremmelspacher, *Notwendigkeit der Kunst*, p. 151f.
[148] Walter Benjamin, 'Über den Begriff der Geschichte', in *Walter Benjamin: Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. by Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser, 13 vols (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1977), I, 691-704 (p. 696).

hat zu oft dazu gedient, das Opfer und das Kollektiv selbst zu vermeiden. (W 3, 643)[149]

The quotation can be read in two opposing ways, underscoring the ambivalence of Einstein's position. '[D]as Opfer' can, on the first of these interpretations, be taken to refer to those exploited and abused by modern society. If read like this, it suggests that Einstein wants attention drawn to the case of the victims, and the wrong done them. In other words, he wants the work of the intellectuals in society to address itself to the question of mass exploitation and the grave injustices of power politics and power systems. What this interpretation elides, however, in attributing this understanding of 'das Opfer' to Einstein, is the fact that so-called primitive societies often had and have as an integral part the notion and the procedure of sacrifice, or ritual victimization of one kind or another, and sometimes the sacrifice of a full human life. Reading Einstein like this makes it seem as though he does not share Adorno and Horkheimer's insistence in *Dialektik der Aufklärung* on the inherent barbarousness of societies free of the violence of identity logic and the equivalence principle found in Western capitalism but structured instead around magic practices.[150]

Rather than absolute, the distinction being worked out here is one of degree. The contention, with this first interpretation, is that for Einstein a certain figure of thought remains a crucial degree more tenable than for Adorno and Benjamin. The figure of thought in question is the triadic model of history: golden age, fall and out-of-jointness, and restoration of the golden age. Of Adorno and Benjamin one can safely if somewhat oversimply say that the very problem of salvaging the critical potential of (Avant-garde) art while avoiding the pitfalls of an inadmissibly utopian understanding of history and society, in a sense founds their respective (epistemological-linguistic-historical and in Benjamin's case also theological) aesthetic theories. Certainly, it is not a question of

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[149] The quotation is from an interview Einstein gave, 'Einige sensationelle Erklärungen von Carl Einstein. Miró und Dalí – Revolutionäre Kunst – Die Rolle der Intellektuellen', which appeared in Catalan in the Catalan magazine *Meridià, Setmanari de literatura, art i pólitica. Tribuna del Front intellectual Antifeixista*, Barcelona, on 6 May, 1938. The interviewer was the Spanish art critic Sebastià Gasch. The interview was first printed in German, trans. by Reinhold Görling, in: *Bochumer Archiv für die Geschichte des Widerstandes und der Arbeit*, 8 (1987), 72-74. The quotation above is from p. 73.

[150] See also the section 'Adornian mimesis: the backward-looking dimension' in Chapter 3. Adorno and Horkheimer draw no hard and fast distinction between the two kinds of society, maintaining that the exchange principle was already germinating in animistic society (see A 3, 26). They are therefore extremely careful not to make 'primitive' society into a scene of utopian projection. The utopian spark residing in their text is related only in a highly qualified, derived and conceptually mediated way to the idea of a pre-capitalist society.

Einstein consciously theorizing history in terms of the simplistic triadic model. As became apparent in the chapter on *Georges Braque*, Einstein is deeply critical of models of history as teleological, or progress-driven, but also as cyclical. However, a residual pull of the triadic model seems in operation where his theories of the 'primitive' come to meet his ideas on the proletarian and the future proletarian society and culture.[151]

Calling to mind again the quotation in question—

> Darüber hinaus gibt es noch einen weiteren Aspekt: die Ausbeutung von Leid und Tod der Unbekannten. Man findet nur die Fiktion der Kollektivität, aber die intellektuelle Arbeit hat zu oft dazu gedient, das Opfer und das Kollektiv selbst zu vermeiden.

—the second interpretation is as follows. The reader may have been a little uneasy about the article preceding 'Opfer'. If it was to refer to the unknown victims of exploitation, one might have rather expected a plural: 'die Opfer'. Bearing in mind Einstein's immersion, since early in his writing career, in ethnological and psychological theories of primitive society, this second reading takes 'das Opfer' to refer not to the victim or victims, but instead to a more abstract 'sacrifice'. In this sense, the intellectuals and the effects of their ideologies would have served to avoid the sacrifice and the collective. This might be interpreted as follows: On account of the smokescreen and white noise of ideology, sacrifice, which is and ought to be an integral part of society,[152] has become invisible and inaudible, and with it the collective itself. This interpretation would fit in with the thrust of the argument in FF: 'das Wirkliche', that according to the text and even in the title ('Eine Verteidigung des Wirklichen') is to be defended, would then refer to the sacrifice and the collective, which have been smothered by so many fictions. What is more, in FF there is evidence to suggest that Einstein posits a certain line of continuity, despite all the differences, between the mythically oriented groups in so-called primitive societies and modern-day intellectuals and Avant-garde artists. As noted above, Adorno likewise drew no solid dividing line between the imaginative practices, i.e. sign practices, of animistic society and those of modern society. Here are Einstein's remarks on the issue:

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[151] On the problematic overlap of aesthetic and political impulses in Einstein's discourse cf. also Kiefer, *Diskurswandel*, pp. 259-62.

[152] Einstein's discourse hinges to a great extent on his thinking about sacrifice and self-sacrifice, from the asceticism thematized in *Bebuquin* up to and beyond the artist's self-annihilation in *Georges Braque*. FF fits in this context too, as Einstein sacrifices himself and his previously-held theories to his own critique.

> Die individuell und isoliert gebildeten imaginativen Prozesse (der) Modernen ähneln vielfach den religiösen Typenerlebnissen. (Jedoch ihre funktionelle Achse ist nach dem Individuellen hin umgedreht worden.) Die Intellektuellen nutzten jetzt religiöse Rudimente, um die Individuen zu halten und die Bildung einer kollektiv gültigen Wirklichkeit zu verhindern. Bei veränderten socialen Bedingungen zeigten die Intellektuellen die gleiche Unzufriedenheit mit der naiven Wirklichkeit {wie die mythomanen Primitiven. Vordem hatte man mit transcendenten Hierarchien eine Gegenrealität ersonnen, woran das positive Sein zur Fiktion verfallen sollte. Jetzt kündet man, daß die Kunstwerke die wesentliche Wahrheit, den stärksten Realcharakter besitzen. Also selbst die Ästhetiker reflektierten archaisch.} (FF, 144/214)

In a sense, Einstein goes further than Adorno in recognizing a continuity when he points out that signs themselves are among the most valuable of human commodities and that trading in signs, in codes, rather than in things, is as old as society itself and crucial to it, and not just a feature of modern capitalist society (see W 4, 338 and footnote 126 in this chapter). Once this continuity has been uncovered, one might dispute that it is difficult to see how the notion 'das positive Sein' can have anything more than heuristic and critical value. But neither should this value, which it retains, be underestimated. It allows Einstein to hold out against what he sees as potentially harmful developments occurring within the framework of allegedly liberating processes.

This holds in the case of Einstein's critique of the Proletkult movement. In his condemnation of historicist Classicism outlined above, Einstein held the artistic norms of ancient Greece to be inadequate for a new classless socialist society, in which the art produced was to be representative not of some privileged minority but of the whole working population. That demand is, in Einstein's view, not being met by the Proletkult either, and in *Georges Braque* he voices concerns that just such a didactic project could easily be deformed into a manoeuvre to safeguard the interests of a ruling élite, i.e. of intellectuals:

> Man hat gegen die individualistisch bestimmte Kunst die Ideologie einer Proletkunst gestellt; diese halten wir vorläufig für unmöglich, da die Arbeitermassen, und gerade die russischen, noch nicht den ihnen eigenen Ausdruck zu finden vermögen. [...] Der Proletkult ist gewiß ein Erziehungsmittel, doch droht Gefahr, daß ihn Intellektuelle mißbrauchen, um die Massen in überalterter Bildung zu verhaften. Wir erblicken im Proletkult teilweise einen verzweifelten Versuch der Intellektuellen, mit verfallenen rationalen Methoden die eigene Stellung zu retten. Man stelle furchtlos fest, daß die

> Massen zunächst andere Aufgaben lösen müssen und der Kunst kaum bedürfen. [...] man verzichte, die Massen in einen proletarischen Akademismus zu zwingen [...]. (W 3, 276)

It may initially look as though Einstein's critique of the Proletkult coincides with Lenin's: both are of the opinion that the Proletkult is wrongheaded, that its priorities for the new dictatorship of the proletariat are amiss, and that the workers have more basic and pressing tasks to fulfil. However, the contrast soon emerges.

Einstein and Lenin: united in opposition?

In Einstein's view, the development of a proletarian culture is 'vorläufig [...] unmöglich'. He is thus not ruling out the possibility of such a development in a future, more favourable climate. The problem, as he sees it, is that Russian workers are not yet ready to create their own culture, which would reflect proletarian concerns and operate as a socially consolidating rather than atomizing force. For the moment they hardly need art, he says. Moreover, the attempts to create such a Proletkult in unripe social and economic circumstances are particularly susceptible to ideological thwarting by the intellectuals that initially constituted the vanguard in the transition to socialism, but are increasingly organizing themselves as an oligarchic intelligentsia.

Lenin, on the other hand, is opposed to the Proletkult on account of his position in the cultural heritage debate. He argues, as outlined above, for reflective continuity rather than an abrupt break. He dismisses the idea of inventing a proletarian culture to straight away replace the bourgeois cultural heritage, advocating instead the preservation of existing cultural traditions and their development from the standpoint of a Marxist world-view. In other words, with regard to cultural practices his is an evolutionary rather than a revolutionary socialist position. This view is no doubt informed by Lenin's knowledge of the educational requirements, i.e. deficit, of the people: as late as 1928 43% of men and 66% of women in the Soviet Union were illiterate.[153]

> Nicht *Erfindung* einer neuen Proletkultur, sondern Entwicklung der Vorbilder, Traditionen der *bestehenden* Kultur vom *Standpunkt* der marxistischen Weltanschauung und der Lebens- und Kampfbedingungen des Proletariats in der Epoche seiner Diktatur

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[153] See Stephen Lovell, *The Russian Reading Revolution: Print Culture in the Soviet and Post-Soviet Eras* (London: McMillan, 2000), p. 13: 'By 1920 the literacy rate had gone up significantly, but two thirds of the population still could not read or write. Even when literacy had been achieved by the majority of the Soviet people, their inexperience as readers placed definite limits on the uses to which they could put their new skills.'

her.[154]

The upshot of both of these views, however, is oddly similar. While Einstein speculates in *Georges Braque* (in the passage about the Proletkult quoted above) that 'vorübergehend kunstlose Zeiten möglich und notwendig sind' (W 3, 276), art in the USSR is increasingly neutralized by politics.[155] Nevertheless, there is an obvious difference. Einstein presumably means the people themselves, producers and consumers of art, would automatically and consensually leave art to one side until more suitable conditions arose. In the case of the Soviet Union, however, it was Party intervention which put paid to the relatively autonomous development of a popular movement, or rather stymied it for the twin purposes of basic education and Party propaganda.

The reason both views, that of Einstein and of Lenin, end up with a prescription for a (temporary) end to art[156] is that both are, in differing ways, beholden to a similar understanding of the function of art. Art is tacitly—and this 'tacitly' must be stressed—perceived by both as a luxury, a pursuit for times of affluence, which must be dispensed with until the new socialist society is firmly established. That of course begs the question at what point it would be reintroduced, and in what way. This idea of art resuming after the revolution is, at bottom, an ethically and politically driven understanding of art as something which has no necessary correlation with the development of a society and which is ultimately divorced from everyday reality. It can be construed as a backlash against the Avant-garde's 'Wunsch nach Abschaffung aller Grenzen',[157] and implicitly therefore also against art's autonomy, which historically provided the precondition or the site from which such a demand could be launched in the first place. Both Lenin and Einstein, each in his own way, wish for a reinstatement of a clear dividing line between the social-political on the one hand and the aesthetic on the other—to paraphrase Boris

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[154] Kiefer, *Diskurswandel*, p. 356, quoting Lenin, 'Über die proletarische Kultur', as cited in *Proletkult*, ed. by Peter Gorsen and Eberhard Knödler-Bunte, 2 vols (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 1974), I: *System einer proletarischen Kultur. Dokumentation*, p. 166.

[155] The growing Proletkult was first subordinated to the Commissariat for Education, and then, in 1925 (i.e. after Lenin's death), to the All-Russian Central Committee for the Federation of Trade Unions. Superseded at Stalin's behest by the new, aggressively 'proletarian', i.e. propagandistic, arts movement of the late 1920s, with its attacks on modernist music, cinema and architecture, in 1932 the Proletkult was completely dissolved as an organizational unit. Cf. Willett, *The New Sobriety*, p. 181ff.

[156] Although this is not what Lenin directly advocated, the subordination of the Proletkult meant in effect that the production of genuinely ground-breaking and challenging art was increasingly crippled in favour of what Einstein had called 'proletarisch[er] Akademismus'.

[157] Boris Groys, 'Werbung für den Kommunismus', *Die Zeit*, No. 10, 27 February 2003, p. 38.

Groys, a 'Wunsch nach Abschaffung der Abschaffung aller Grenzen'. An awkward phrase, certainly, but it demonstrates the idea of a rollback or repeal of a historical situation at which Lenin and Einstein, but others too and for various reasons, balked once its momentum became apparent. It is not too difficult to see how older models of society in which the aesthetic was given its nominal autonomy and held at bay from the 'weightier' concerns of day-to-day politics, policy-making and statesmanship, might have suddenly gained a fresh attractiveness. To put it straightforwardly: after the revolution—social-political in the USSR, only aesthetic in Europe, to the disappointment of European radicals on both ends of the political spectrum—management of contingency is on the agenda.

Conjuring a Sorelian alternative?

In the small area being covered in this part of the present discussion, the management of contingency vis-à-vis the aesthetic looks as follows. For Lenin, the primacy of the economic aspect of the socialist revolution (the New Economic Policy having been introduced in 1921), as well as a power-political consideration requiring him to curtail the autonomy of the budding Proletkult movement, inform moves to drastically reduce state expenditure on the arts. Einstein, for his part, is to some extent beholden to what amounts to an ideology of the deed. This becomes clearer in FF. On account of a virtually totalizing critique of the arts and of all professions requiring a critical assessment of society, its values and intellectual output, he apparently sees fit to liquidate all positions involving thinking and expression. In other words, society is (temporarily, it would appear) to become a collective of spontaneous doers, driven simply by the intuited insights into the needs that must be met for that collective to establish and consolidate its viability and self-sufficiency.

Klaus Kiefer's scant comment on an apparent affinity between Einstein's position on the deed and that of Alfred Rosenberg, outspoken Nazi polemicist and author of *Der Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts* (1930), could be supplemented here. After very briefly addressing but leaving open the question of the relationship between Einstein and Heidegger, Kiefer goes on to comment:

> Auch zu der Aussage Alfred Rosenbergs, es werde 'einmal eine Zeit kommen, in der die Völker ihre großen Träumer als die größten Tatsachenmenschen verehren werden'[foot-

note], finden sich zahlreiche Analogien im Einsteinschen Idiolekt.[158]

Certainly, the affinity can be made to apply, but it depends on which of Einstein's texts one has in hand. With *Georges Braque*, for instance, it could be quite straightforwardly done; there Einstein too championed a certain kind of dreamer. With FF and *BEB II*, however, matters are more complex. The time that Rosenberg lodges in some unspecified future has already come, in the later Einstein's view, and it must be sent away again. The very notion of honouring the great dreamers as the greatest men of the deed now comes under fire. However, Einstein at this point has taken a sharp pendulum-swing across to the opposing position. The doer is championed over every kind of dreamer, and the deed glorified. Meanwhile, all kinds of complex conceptual or theoretical work are zestily and polemically dismissed as 'intellectual' or 'contemplative', with the catalogue of negatively valued attributes those terms carry.

Adherence to such an ideology of the deed might suggest that Einstein is propounding a basically irrationalist social-political-aesthetic mass revolt, whereby the apparatus of reason is simply by-passed. It is anything but as straightforward as this, however. There are relativizations aplenty within the FF text itself. At various points, one can find evidence to suggest that Einstein advocates a renewed rationality, the basic rationality of the working masses:

> Die Intellektuellen hatten das Monopol der Kritik des Wirklichen und Geschehens erobert [...]. (FF, 194/280)

> [Sie] wandten gegen das konkrete Geschehen ein, es sei (verlaufe) unlogisch aufgebaut = sobald jedoch die Massen über ein rationales Wirklichkeitsbild verfügten, entwerteten sie dieses wiederum und flüchteten ins unbewußt Halluzinative oder Irrationale, um die klassenhafte Unterscheidung zu bewahren =. (FF, 194/281)

This is clearly a criticism of the reactionary underpinning of the various forms of irrationalism prevalent in Weimar, first and foremost, the irrationalism of the

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[158] Kiefer, *Diskurswandel*, p. 375. Kiefer is quoting Alfred Rosenberg, *Der Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts. Eine Wertung der seelisch-geistigen Gestaltenkämpfe unserer Zeit*, 90th edn (Munich, 1935), p. 453. It is not a case of redressing an erroneous assumption of Kiefer's, as he afterwards follows up his brief comments on Einstein and Heidegger, Einstein and Rosenberg etc., with a broader discussion of affinities between writers of the Left and Right in Weimar, ideological ambivalences and discursive homologies and the problems of critical assessment. Rather, a case in point is being highlighted in order to demonstrate the development and complexity of Einstein's own position.

intellectuals' rationalism. That rationalism has become shrouded in mystery, as was shown in relation to Einstein's discovery of the dialectic of Enlightenment. Having detected unconscionable flaws in the increasing rationalization of society, but having recognized also the deformation of the process, Einstein is steadfastly unwilling to deliver society up to the forces of irrationalization. The problem he faces and grapples with, though, is how to reinstate a humanized rationality, i.e. how to salvage a genuine project of enlightenment. It is at this juncture that his inadequately dialectical grasp leaves him theoretically shuttling between the posts of condemning the thinkers and their rationalism and promoting the doers and their rationality, without being able to conceptualize how the latter could begin to replace the former, except by direct action. In theoretical terms, that is somewhat closer to Sorelian irrationalism than it is to a conceptualization of a 'more rational' rationality.

To complicate matters further, however, Einstein's imagined collective of doers would, according to FF, indeed have recourse to reflection to guide their actions. But what kind of reflection would it be? Arguing that the abandonment to contemplation typical of what is called thinking in the intellectuals' world cannot initiate action ('da eben die aktivierenden konkreten Momente ausgeschaltet sind' (FF, 201/291)), he counters a different concept of thinking that is necessarily related to action:

> Eine Überlegung, die aus einer bestimmten menschlichen Situation abgeleitet wird, führt zur praktischen Reaktion, zur Handlung. Die Überlegung bildet ein minderes Glied zwischen Zuständen und Aktionen, sie besitzt keine größere Bedeutung als irgendein Vorgang. Die Reflexion findet ihren Sinn, soweit sie durch eine Handlung ergänzt oder fortgesetzt wird. (FF, 203/293)

In a passage some pages further on, this concept of thinking is put in direct relation to the idea of revolutionary action. The 'reflektive[r] Typus' referred to here counters the contemplative type, the stagnant idealist, who is of course also reflective, but infinitely so, and never acts.

> Wir skizzieren kurz den entgegengesetzten, reflektiven Typus. Eine Doktrin kann aus gemeinen Tatsachen gefolgert werden, wobei diese revolutionär abgelehnt werden. Hier ist die Reflexion nur Übergang zwischen einem Zustand und einer Aktion, kraft der man andere Verhältnisse erzwingt. Die Reflexion ist hier nicht Selbstzweck, sie ist konkret bestimmt und findet ihren Sinn nur im abändernden Handeln. (FF, 217/309)

At the end of FF Einstein also speaks of reaching 'eine aktive Geistigkeit' (FF, 327/479). Thus it is clear that Einstein's view is more complex than the set of neat argumentative oppositions or typifications described above (page 308f.) might suggest, as these oppositions are made to collapse within the text. The problem with the 'good' type of reflection, however, is that, given the actual historical situation Einstein is writing from, it amounts to little more than a rejection of that historical reality in favour of a simpler, more humane society formed around a simpler, more humane rationality. It is greatly nostalgic, asking for a different kind of mindset than the modern mindset. But that different mindset is more conjured and suggested than specifically sought.

Problematic conflations

The aim of the foregoing discussion of Einstein's position in relation to the artistic Avant-garde of the Soviet Union and the issue of contingency management was to show the complexity of Einstein's position with regard to the question of the Avant-gardists' room to manoeuvre and how that can be curtailed. Notwithstanding some initial convergence on stated aims, Einstein progressively distanced himself from the Proletkult movement so that by the late 1920s divergence ultimately prevailed. The above discussion shows, however, that there is some degree of overlap between Einstein's response to the Proletkult developments and the response of those forces that slowly brought it to its knees. While a certain rivalry with Lunacharsky's Proletkult can be seen as a factor of some significance in Einstein's watchful criticism of it,[159] there is more at stake. Einstein is confronting and tackling the problems thrown up by the early twentieth century's attempts to conflate the aesthetic with the social and political, and, while he keeps sight of certain fundamental social and political issues, he is ultimately unwilling to jeopardize the autonomy of art.

This may sound paradoxical, especially when the paragraphs above are recalled, in which it was argued that both Einstein and Lenin were seeking a rollback of the Avant-garde's abolition of all boundaries. And in a sense it is paradoxical. What Einstein criticizes is the sham autonomy of art that amounts in the West to nothing but the

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[159] Cf. also Kiefer, *Diskurswandel*, p. 264: 'Die Konkurrenz mit Lunatscharskis Proletkult einerseits und einem sozialdemokratischen Kulturverständis andererseits beschäftigt Einstein noch im "BEB II". Hier heißt es z.B.: "die goetherede des sozialisten; widerrede BEBs; er fliegt raus, man zitiert Lunatscharski."' Kiefer is quoting from Einstein's *BEB II* manuscript (CEA, 37).

commodification of cultural produce, and in the USSR to first a pedagogic oligarchy of the intellectuals or leading Party functionaries and later, under Stalin, to a streamlining of, on the one hand, mock proletarian art and, on the other, Party propaganda and a cult of the leader's personality and of the Communist lifestyle. In a recent article re-assessing the art of the Stalin era, Boris Groys makes a robust argument for its ability to absorb all sorts of currents within itself ('Repräsentanten der 'linken' avantgardistischen wie der 'konservativen' Kunst gleichermaßen').[160] This argument is already present in Einstein's double-sided notion of 'Ideologie einer Proletkunst' and 'proletarische[r] Akademismus' (W 3, 210). In deftly satirical strokes not unlike Einstein's own, Groys comments as follows:

> Die Kultur der Stalin-Zeit war nichts anderes als eine große Werbekampagne, die das Ziel hatte, für den Aufbau des Kommunismus zu trommeln. [...] Die kommunistische Werbung rief die ganze Menschheit dazu auf, das Produkt Kommunismus zu erwerben – wie heute die Menschheit aufgerufen wird, Coca-Cola oder Big Macs zu kaufen. [...] Unter Stalin wurden unzählige Diskussionen über die Frage geführt, wie die sowjetischen Menschen – aber auch Kühe, Schweine oder Maschinen, die ein glückliches kommunistisches Leben führten, 'richtig' dargestellt werden sollten [...]. [...] Die Stalin-Zeit führte zum ersten Mal vor, wie eine konsequent moderne, eine utopische, avancierte und auf die Zukunft hin orientierte Kunst ihr Ende findet. Und zwar in der Werbung für sich selbst wie für die Gesellschaft, die sie fördert.[161]

Einstein's rejection of Proletkult art as well as art of the Western Avant-gardes hinges on precisely this last point. Identifying in both types their function of advertising or promoting as a product or a lifestyle the particular society in which they are produced, he comes to expect a critical function of neither as they are, and thus reaches the preliminary conclusion that autonomy of art is a myth. Yet what he has done is to expose the failure of certain kinds of art to live up to or even aspire to any genuine kind of autonomy, in other words, to stand over and against an existing society without becoming propaganda. Thus he can—and does—still tacitly retain the idea of art's autonomy: it has a corrective or regulative function. As Klaus Kiefer observes, Einstein's own biography bears witness to this paradox:

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[160] Boris Groys, 'Werbung für den Kommunismus'.
[161] Ibid.

> Der Avantgardist Einstein wird weder zum proletarischen Literaten noch zum Tendenzschriftsteller, als Intellektueller nicht zum Parteimitarbeiter. Später hat er die ästhetische Einstellung als die zentrale Problematik seiner Existenz begriffen.[162]

Kiefer is willing to grant, too, that Einstein's refractoriness, like Adorno's, vis-à-vis any and all of what he saw as phoney solutions to the quintessentially modern conundrum of the willed imbrication of art and life, holds the door delicately ajar to the critical potential of the Avant-garde:

> Durch seine ästhetische Renitenz – ähnlich Theodor W. Adorno – bewahrt Einstein [...] die utopische oder kritische Potenz der Avantgarde vor politischem Verschleiß.[163]

This holds, I would contend, in only an extremely qualified way for the Einstein of FF.

Einstein's insistent condemnation of the continuity model in the cultural heritage debate and his demand rather, with the radical Avant-garde movements, for a liquidation of older norms and practices, give the impression of an unhistorical or ahistorical and undialectical stance. He seems to want to make it possible to step outside of the historical continuum and simply create a new culture from scratch. It would be a mistake to downplay this demand as simply a rhetorical strategy or put it entirely down to his polemical tactics, especially also since it underpins his position vis-à-vis movements, thinkers and developments of his time. However, his own writings offer relativizations in various places. For instance, in the context of a critical discussion of both the teleological and cyclical models of historiography, Einstein writes:

> In beiden Versuchen steckt der Wunsch, Geschichte zu einem Kontinuum zu vereinheitlichen und die beunruhigenden Spannungen, die erschreckenden Widersprüche abzuschwächen. Im Kern bedeutet solche Bemühung lediglich reaktionäre Geschichtsschreibung; man begreift eben das Jüngste als Wiederkehr oder Folge, doch nicht als Gegensatz und Wende. (W 3, 259)

In notes that remained unpublished during his lifetime but were most probably written around the same time as *Georges Braque*, i.e. 1931-32, Einstein also comments:

> Geschichte ist also keine vollendete Kontinuität, diese besteht nur provisorisch bei einer Stabilisierung der Anschauung und wird von Änderungen durchbrochen, wobei keine

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[162] Kiefer, *Diskurswandel*, p. 265.
[163] Ibid.

> sekundären visuellen Elemente variiert werden, sondern primäre dh. der gesamte Formhabitus ändert sich. Die geschichtliche Kontinuität wird also von einem Unterstrom begleitet – der periodisch hervorbricht, dh. Geschichte wechselt zwischen Kontinuas (Heredität) und Mutation (Tendenzen des Wechsels). (W 4, 392)[164]

The question of Einstein's recognition and rejection of the continuity model of history is thus an issue, like numerous others one encounters in attempting to provide some interpretive orientation on his writings, where equally plausible readings point in opposing directions and expect of the reader/interpreter a tolerance of discursive ambivalence or multivalence not recognized or theorized before the advent of post-structuralism.

The following quotation is a typical instance of how, in FF, Einstein reintroduces a point made earlier in the work, repeating certain elements, but also adding new ones, such as the irresponsibility and reactionary nature of the intellectuals' mass production:

> Man betrachtete [die Masse] als dumpfe Herde, die man griffig melkte. Die Intellektuellen fabrizierten für die Masse eine Kunst, die nach unten züchten und verblöden sollte. Der liberal intellektuelle Massenbetrieb wurde somit verantwortungslos und reaktionär geführt. (FF, 101/155)

Not only are such points supplemented and refined on repetition, but sometimes a dialectical inversion is added elsewhere.

> Die gleichen Literaten, die sich revolutionär gebärdeten, waren gewerbliche Masochisten, die zugunsten der zahlenden Minderheit träumend sich melken ließen. (FF, 275/384)

This view puts paid to any idealistic notion of the autonomous artist living and working independently of a supporting public. The Avant-gardists, with their countless manifestos and proclamations, must be artists and theorists combined, or producers and self-publicists, and while they keep their public in servile awe of what they produce, they, in their turn, are also kept in servility (cf. FF, 251/349). What they produce is '[e]ine Flut von Artikeln, Bildern und Gedichten', 'ein Markt der Illusionen und Idealisierungen' (FF, 14/3), i.e. escapist entertainment, 'den ästhetischen Ersatz für den notwendigen Wechsel der Gesellschaft und der Zustände' (FF, 264/367). Without that change, their own position of servility, as well as that of the masses, persists. But, in the zeal of the

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[164] Cf. also the section 'Einstein's critique of historicism and its implications for art history' in Chapter 5.

critique, and as the interpretation in this section set out to clarify, the sense of a conviction that and, to a much lesser degree, how, it could be otherwise, prevails.

Two final questions: the issue of responsibility and the suggestion of an alternative

To bring to a close this summary of and commentary on Einstein's four-pronged argument as to why the so-called revolutionary Avant-garde was much more a force of reaction than revolution, two questions remain to be dealt with. They have already emerged to some extent in the above discussion, but without being directly confronted. First, there is the question of responsibility, which, in the heated tirade of FF, quickly becomes a question of blame. Where and why Einstein allots it must be considered. This hangs together with the second question, namely, whether an alternative, a '*how* it could be otherwise' is put forward, and if so, how it can be assessed. Such an alternative would have to counter what Einstein calls, in a curious foreboding of Adorno's term 'Verblendungszusammenhang', 'die blendende Einheit der Systeme' (FF, 209/299).

As was observed much earlier in the chapter, FF is far from a systematic treatment of the topics it alights on. That said, there is no need to consider it futile to look for answers to the two questions just posed. Obvious or definitive answers may not be at hand, but there is a submerged logic to the text that gives the interpreter some orientation.

Einstein sees that innovation is the chief criterion built into, indeed uniting, the market structure and the concept of the modern work of art. For all the overhauling of traditional aesthetics, this criterion has survived intact. Einstein analyses structural problems, problems engendered by the system, conflicts and contradictions sublated within it. He also traces some of these problems towards their roots in earlier forms of social organization and in younger forms of capitalism. But at the same time he seems to level blame quite harshly and unswervingly at the Avant-garde artists and intellectuals themselves, pouring scorn on their opportunism and hypocrisy and full of moral outrage at their lack of integrity and commitment. Though they go unnamed, the argument proceeds substantially *ad hominem*: the dissolution or demise of the Avant-garde is partly the result of the movement's dissolute participants.

This may give the impression Einstein is suspended between an idealist and a materialist position. On the one hand, a broadly materialist view of the Avant-garde is

given to account for their economic and social position: artists and intellectuals, like everyone else, are subject to the force of the laws of social existence, which are determined by economic factors. On the other hand, it can hardly be a case of pure economic determinism. To begin with, Einstein rails in FF against the various determinisms thrown up by previous ages as well as his own, from evolutionary determinism to the fatalism suggested in certain popularized theories of psychology, sensing in these theories their potential for placation and renunciation of responsibility. On its own that critique might make Einstein's subscribing to pure economic determinism less likely, but it would not necessarily rule it out. However, he also chastizes the Avant-gardists for not rising above or defying those economic and social laws, as if the assumption could be made that they could, as conscious subjects, be actively determining the course of (their) history. Nowhere does Einstein state that they missed their historic opportunity, in fact his critique seems to leave the intellectuals little room to manoeuvre at all. Yet the demand remains that they turn society around, and their shortcoming remains that they failed and, given the current circumstances, apparently can only fail in this task. Such a reading of the matter makes it look like a problem of absolute criticism, shorn of any conception or recognition of what an individual writer, painter, etc. within Weimar society *could* actually reasonably achieve.

This reading is, I think, too black-and-white. Although many Einstein scholars discount the view that he was a dialectical thinker, Einstein's understanding and, as the foregoing interpretation of FF shows, application of dialectics undoubtedly encompasses Marx's notion of an intertwining influence between economic forces and the human subject as an agent of historical determination. Recalling Einstein's relation to Adorno's procedure, it might be useful to distinguish here between different levels of dialectical operation. The distinction between a dialectical use of concepts with and without terminological rigour was made in the chapter on Einstein and Adorno. Here, we might differentiate again between the use of historical materialist methods within a particular analysis, investigation or theory (the dialectical use of concepts with or without terminological rigour) and the use of historical materialist methods in relating that analysis, investigation or theory to opposing analyses, and analyses that come from opposing discursive models.

Using this distinction, it can be argued—and this study, while fulfilling other aims, has mapped out some of the major steps in such an argument—that Einstein's texts

indeed reveal a dialectical use of concepts. The use of dialectical methods in relating an analysis, investigation or theory to opposing analyses, and analyses that come from opposing discursive models, on the other hand, is only accomplished as an interpretive stance of the reader of Einstein's works. Einstein did not explicitly carry out the mediation that would, for instance, confront the theoretical premises and conclusions of *Georges Braque* with the those of FF.

Nonetheless, the major strands of a dialectical reading of the function of modern art can be read across Einstein's later works: *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts* suggests a way of approaching visual art by maintaining the tension between image and word, or the hiatus between artwork and aesthetic theory, so as to defend, and thus maximize, art's resistive or revolutionary potential. 'Il se pose la question' theorizes the need for artistic autonomy, understood not in the sense of *l'art pour l'art* or Symbolism, but as the autonomy of the aesthetic instant itself as an instant also of cognitive value. In 'Il se pose la question' art's 'revolutionary' potential is limited to a tiny spark, an instantaneous flash, which may change perception and perceptions in a very small, piecemeal, but nonetheless significant way. *Georges Braque* provides a critique of the reified notion of the artwork, defending art against heteronomy but also problematizing an older understanding of the artist as a sovereign, formative figure and marking out a space for the function of art towards a society free of reification. At the same time, FF offers a critique of allegedly autonomous art in the context of the 'blendende Einheit der Systeme', fundamentally questioning its ability to resist the seduction of that 'Einheit'.

In one respect an analogy could be drawn to Adorno's position on Surrealism.[165] Like the disparate elements in Surrealist montage as Adorno describes it (see A 11, 103), Einstein's œuvre lacks the mediation between the individual texts. As with the montage, however, this does not prevent the juxtaposition in itself from serving a critical and progressive function (cf. A 11, 104-05). To the degree that certain of Einstein's texts present themselves for juxtaposition in this way, one can say that the macro level of dialectics begins to 'write itself' in his œuvre.

By and large, it is *between* the texts of Einstein's œuvre that the macro dialectic can be made to operate. Thus, pairing the *Georges Braque* text with FF, one will observe that, taken together, they provide a richly complex view of the function of art and the

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[165] See Adorno's essay 'Rückblickend auf den Surrealismus' (A 11, 101-06).

artist within capitalist society. Yet in an earlier chapter it has already been shown that Einstein himself provides dialectical mediation (i.e. macro level dialectics), this time within a single text—'Il se pose la question'—between the thrust of the ideas of *Georges Braque* and of FF. A mediated solution is sought to the problem of the incommensurability of the work of art when confronted with rationality and conceptual arsenals on the one hand, and with the pressures and demands society makes on art on the other.

With the question of Einstein and dialectics, we are confronting yet another instance of the problem of Einstein's own declarations versus that which is detectable in the way the texts function. Many instances of Einstein's explicit rejection of dialectics could be cited. An early one, from 'Die Verkündigung' (1911), is as follows:

> Und hier birgt sich, was ich mich zu fassen bemühe; die Form als dialektisches Mittel ist leicht wie ein spiritistischer Trick, der nichts erweist und nicht verpflichtet, die Form as Erkenntnis hingegen --- weiter. (W 1, 77-78)

But it would be a mistake to ignore the points at which dialectical manoeuvres are at work in the texts simply on account of such a declared distance from dialectics. Two things need to be taken into account. The first is the fact that Einstein often criticizes a particular concept on account of its traditional 'baggage', and then rather than re-instating a critically differentiated use of the term, as Adorno tends to, avoids using it altogether. But this must not be taken as grounds for presuming that a critically differentiated version of the concept does not remain an active and motive force within his writing.[166] A further quotation from the text quoted above will indicate the complexities:

> Geringe Leichtigkeit jedoch nur bedarf es, alles mit einer absoluten Form abzutun, wenn man an den Peripherien des Denkens verbleibt, die Form nicht zu einem fruchtbaren Pfadfinder gebraucht, indem man sie unermüdlich probend bezweifelt, sondern Schwierigkeiten abstößt. (W 1, 77)

This quotation clarifies that the criticism of what was called 'Form als dialektisches Mittel' above refers only to a notion of dialectics predicated on ultimate synthesis and closure. The idea of form Einstein advocates is, instead, open and agonal. It has much

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[166] This is alluded to in relation to the concept of the sublime in the phrase 'the invisible sublime'.

more to do with confronting contradictions and difficulties and painstakingly and critically viewing and reviewing one's results, an operation that has more in common with Adorno's micrologies than might at first appear plausible.

The issue of responsibility

Einstein's ascription of responsibility or accountability for what he sees as the bankruptcy of the Avant-garde can perhaps be better gauged in this light. It is at times unclear whether he intends the intellectuals' isolation and regressive introspection to be understood as something they themselves strategically intended and implemented, or rather as a legacy of their caste, a historically determined feature of their inherited role in society. The following quotations provide evidence of that ambiguity:

> Solch archaischer Aberglaube [einer märchenhaften Wirkung der isolierten, geistig gereinigten Conception —cf. footnote on same page as this quotation] hinderte (die Intellektuellen) an jedem kräftigen Tun. (FF, 33/40)

> Die Religionen hatten faillite gemacht; doch die Avantgarde der Intellektuellen erregte die leerlaufenden religiösen Schichten weiter, und (sie) verwaltete die (theologische) Erbschaft. Sie nutzte die alte Scheu vor dem Unsichtbaren. (FF, 264/368)

> Wissend oder unbewußt betrieben die Intellektuellen die Rettung der herrschenden Machtgruppen. (FF, 16/7)

Rather than the case set out in the previous paragraph, it may well be that Einstein differentiates, but deliberately not too sharply, between those Avant-gardists who appropriated transcendental values in full knowledge of the ideological power that would accrue to them, and those who more innocently took on the role of intellectual as legislator[167] without realizing the vast ideological potential involved. As regards the latter kind, some mitigating factors are intimated in FF. Remarks like the first of the three quotations immediately above suggest the Avant-gardists' proneness to superstition. In addition, there are a number of uses of the word 'tragisch' in describing their predicament. These factors give to understand that they were duped by the ruses of a

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[167] On the role and demise of the intellectual as legislator see Zygmunt Bauman, *Legislators and Interpreters: On Modernity, Post-Modernity and Intellectuals* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1987), esp. chapter 8, 'The fall of the legislator', pp. 110-26.

complex system and the pressure to serve the ruling classes just as their many clients were duped by them. The crux of the matter for Einstein, is, it seems, that regardless of whether they were deliberate or naive in their involvement with ideological whitewashing, their actions (or inaction) amounted in both cases to complicity with the ruling powers and so to affirmation of the status quo. He perceives too much collusion of intellectuals with the status quo to be able to conceive of 'reforming' the intellectual, and therefore advocates the drastic measure of liquidating the intellectuals until some nebulous time 'after the revolution'. His demand is, once again, for an abrupt break in the historical continuum, whereby it is unclear just how the intellectuals could be meaningfully reintroduced as a cultural force after the revolution.

It has come to light in the course of this chapter that Einstein's understanding of the Weimar intellectual or artist is one in which he/she is precluded from producing 'proletarian' art. The role Einstein assigns to the intellectual or artist of his day only emerges *ex negativo*, in his crtiticism and in the way he describes how both have failed to fulfil certain demands. The conclusion is that the artist and intellectual in their present guises are superfluous. Here the limitations of the way Einstein applies the base-superstructure model emerge. As it is applied here, there is no accounting for the ways in which base and superstructure interact, except purely negatively, with the superstructure as a source of endless oppression, repression, ideology. There is no question of any democratic power of the people, except the power they might seize actionistically. This is a stance typical of critics of the Weimar state on the far Right and far Left, and also a contributing factor in the steady demise of popular faith in democracy as a system and the notion of any kind of power of critical input by the people. In such a stance, whatever the genesis of the argument in each individual case and whatever its (utopian) telos, far Left and far Right join forces in ousting democracy.

The role Einstein assigns to the intellectual or artist of a future, changed society ('Ein neuer geistiger Stil ist nur nach einer Revolution möglich' (FF, 326/479)) remains quite nebulous. What is more, there is a contradiction in Einstein's normative concept of the intellectual and artist: on the one hand, the tacit assumption that initiatives for revolution or radical change should come from them underpins FF. Without this assumption, they would not be open to Einstein's criticism at all. On the other hand, Einstein's ideas about the post-revolutionary artist, though he uses the word 'eingeordnet' and not 'untergeordnet', suggest that he/she is subordinated to social

determinants and so stripped of the responsibility, but also the potential, to initiate change:

> Künstlerische Konventionen sind nur sekundäre Folgen von bestimmenden socialen Übereinkünften. Von diesen erhalten jene ihren Sinn. Intellektualität besitzt nur Bedeutung, wenn sie in einen großen gesellschaftlichen Prozeß eingeschaltet und diesem eingeordnet ist. (FF, 327/479)

Art is to be given a more modest role, as Einstein explicitly states:

> Es geht nicht darum, wie die Intellektuellen glaubten, die Wirklichkeit abzulehnen, sondern diese kollektiv umzubilden. Innerhalb dieser Arbeit kann die Kunst wieder ihren Platz finden, wenn sie bescheiden an der Produktion einer neuen Wirklichkeit mitarbeitet. (FF, 326/480)

The discussion of Einstein's view of the Proletkult pointed towards a problem that the views in focus now about a new society and a new role for art are likewise unable to solve: how the situation is to be prevented whereby a pedagogical political intention thwarts the function of the new art. That problem was one of the chief reasons for Einstein's rejection of the Proletkult. His own alternative does not seem to be any more safeguarded against it.

The suggestion of an alternative

The aesthetic alternative Einstein presents is realism. At the end of FF he ascribes to the future intellectuals the task of 'Mitarbeit bei der Umschichtung gesellschaftlicher Tatsachen' (FF, 327/480), and more specifically, of creating socially 'repräsentative Typen' (FF, 327/479). This notion of representative types is anchored in his alternative concept of art, namely 'realism'. To find out what he means by this, however, one must look beyond FF to the later 'Handbuch der Kunst', which was most likely written some time after 1933 (cf. W 4, 322). Both Ines Franke-Gremmelspacher and Klaus Kiefer have provided some coverage of this issue; their findings will be summarized and the conclusions assessed in the light of the question of form under discussion here.

By realism Einstein does not mean a revival of imitative representative art in the manner of the nineteenth century Realists or Naturalists, or indeed any older model involving the 'true-to-life' depiction of people or things. In Einstein's view, the aesthetic

norm of copying nature is anachronistic, at least since the advent of photography.[168] To paint according to that norm in the twentieth century is to follow a doctrine or style that bears no inherent relation to contemporary society. That, for Einstein, is to be irrelevant.[169]

In Chapter 2 a re-emergence of the enthusiasm for the work of Fernand Léger was hinted at. What Einstein means by realism can perhaps be best illustrated with reference to the works of that painter.[170] Although Léger is working before any revolutionary transformation of society, he paints with a sense of art as an object for collective use, 'Kunst als kollektiver Gebrauchsgegenstand', which is the title of a presentation Einstein is reported to have given on 14 October, 1935 at the Schutzverband Deutscher Schriftsteller in Paris.[171] As Franke-Gremmelspacher points out, Einstein had, in the third (i.e. 1931) edition of *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*, already juxtaposed the work of Léger to that of the artists he called 'die romantische Generation'. Hallucinations and psychogrammes, introversion and an arbitrarily subjective approach to space and motif association characterize the work of the latter. In Léger's work, by contrast, inner processes are short-circuited and objects predominate – normal, conventional, purposeful

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[168] On this issue, Einstein has the following to say in FF: 'Erlebte Weite der visuellen Erlebnisse und Vorstellungen wurde durch die Photographie erfüllt. Künstler, welche die Anpassung vermeiden wollten, mußten die Bezirke der technischen Vulgarisierung meiden. Durch die Photographie wurden also die Möglichkeiten der Kunst beschränkt oder verändert.' (FF, 117/177) However, it is not simply the visual arts that are challenged on account of technological developments. Preceding the paragraph just quoted is a passage in which the impact of 'die Schnelligkeit der technischen Entwicklung' on language is considered: 'Die Tagessprache war durch die Masse an Journalistik abgegriffen und unbrauchbar geworden, um einen individuellen Tatbestand wiederzugeben. Nun suchten die Dichter nach neuen Worten und Zeichen. Sie bildeten eine hermetische, sektenhafte Dicht-Sprache. {Der moderne Manierismus war geboren.} (FF, 117/176)

[169] Here, his unmistakably Avant-garde credentials come to the fore once more: the idea that certain materials, modes or styles are inherently anachronistic or out of date, and therefore incapable of being used in any artwork that is to stand in an authentic and critical relation to society. This idea of the most advanced artistic material is shared by Adorno, albeit with significantly different consequences. Cf. Peter Osborne, 'Adorno and the Metaphysics of Modernism: The Problem of a "Postmodern" Art', in *The Problems of Modernity: Adorno and Benjamin*, ed. by Andrew Benjamin (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 23-48, especially pp. 41-45.

[170] Cf. Kiefer, '"Halbvergessen" oder unbekannt – Prolegomena zur Wiederentdeckung Carl Einsteins aus dem Nachlaß', in Kiefer, *Avantgarde – Weltkrieg – Exil: Materialien zu Carl Einstein und Salomo Friedlaender/Mynona*, Bayreuther Beiträge zur Literaturwissenschaft, 8 (Frankfurt a. M.: Lang, 1986), pp. 70-84, of particular relevance is p. 188, note 105. Cf. also Franke-Gremmelspacher, *Notwendigkeit der Kunst*, p. 139f. and more recently again Kiefer, *Diskurswandel*, pp. 362-64 and p. 373. On p. 363 Kiefer states: 'Gerade die Intellektuellen- und Künstlerkritik der 'Fabrikation der Fiktionen' postuliert ex negativo einen Kunsttyp, der kein anderer als der Légersche hätte sein können [...].'

[171] Cf. Franke-Gremmelspacher, *Notwendigkeit der Kunst*, p. 139 and Kiefer, *Diskurswandel*, p. 363, who both cite in evidence Alfred Kantorowicz, *Politik und Literatur im Exil. Deutschsprachige Schriftsteller im Kampf gegen den Nationalsozialismus*, Hamburger Beiträge zur Sozial- und Zeitgeschichte, 14 (Hamburg: Christians, 1978), p. 166.

objects. The allegedly hubristic and infinitely powerful subject-conception, i.e. idealism, of the Avant-garde art movements, with their view of the object as 'störende Belastung' (K 3, 100) and their various attempts to sideline and destroy it, is countered. According to Einstein, Léger sees the human being not as a free subject, but as an object among objects, determined by forces largely beyond its control. Einstein demands a kind of Copernican shift of the artist: he/she must see that the subject is something quite tiny and insignificant in comparison with the forces operating around and on it, and be prepared to revise his/her art on the basis of this changed perspective. The task of the artist is to be an 'Exponent des sachlichen Milieus', to expound the norms that correspond to the mass and its concerns. What is typical of the group or collective is reflected by the artist. The artist thus opposes individualism and creates 'repräsentative Typen'.[172]

Beyond this summary of Einstein's own interpretation of Léger's work Franke-Gremmelspacher does not go. The assessment of this interpretation offered in Chapter 2 (page 62f.) suggests already, however, that from the point of view of its implications for a theory of form with implications for the issues of subjectivity and power, it is problematic.

This new concept of art as 'realism' of course does not sit easily with Einstein's ideas, up until the very early 1930s, about the restlessly self-revising and re-creating artist, the paragon of which was Picasso, 'dieser proteische Maler' (K 3, 127). Far from reflecting collective norms and standards, that kind of artist was engaged, as part of his raison d'être, in resisting, subverting and even annihilating every norm, every standard that came his way. Einstein calls on art, from 1928 onwards, for 'eine Steigerung des Sinnlosen und Chaotischen' (W 4, 209), 'Vermehrung des Chaotischen' (W 4, 219), and that sits easily enough with his Surrealist theory.[173] In FF there is an echo of that call in the following quotation:

> Die Chance von Zufall und Unordnung wurde ausgeschieden, Zustände, welche die schwachen Typen nicht ertrugen. (FF, 195/281)

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[172] Cf. Franke-Gremmelspacher, *Notwendigkeit der Kunst*, p. 140.

[173] In *Georges Braque* Einstein had for instance written: 'Man betrachtete Kunst allzu häufig als einen Versuch zur Ordnung des bereits gegebenen Weltbildes; uns gilt sie vor allem als Mittel, das Dichterische sichtbar zu machen, die Gestaltmenge und Unordnung des Konkreten zu vermehren und damit die Sinnlosigkeit und Unerklärbarkeit des Daseins zu steigern.' (W 3, 376)

Here, however, in the light of the new concept of art being expounded, art that would create 'repräsentative Typen', it is difficult to imagine how chance and disorder would hold their own. In *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts* (1931 edition) Einstein had already earmarked, so to speak, Léger, as an artist whose understanding of art coincided peculiarly well with his own. The sense of the collective to the fore, Einstein remarks on the regressive tendency that entails. The regressive tendency now appears, curiously, in the context of a positive evaluation:

> Man findet bei Léger einen klassischen Sinn für das Typische, eine Regression zum kollektiv Gruppenhaften. (K 3, 114)

As Kiefer contends, this points towards 'eine pragmatisierte, ja didaktisierte und kollektivierte Avantgarde'.[174]

A theoretical impasse is reached. The re-introduction of the figure of Léger as the (sole?) representative of Einstein's 'realism' does not function as a dialectical lever with which to overcome 'subjectivist' art. The same problem emerges as that on which Einstein's rejection of the Proletkult had hinged. An intentionally progressive art movement is overseen and legislated for, not, as in the case of the Proletkult, by a group of vanguard politicians acting as intellectuals, but by one intellectual attempting to theorize a way out of the thicket of social-political-aesthetic interconnections. Kiefer had, in an earlier work, made the case that Léger would have 'wohl als einziger Einsteins ideologiekritischer Wertung in der 'Fabrikation der Fiktionen' standgehalten'.[175] In other words, Léger's work was to provide the model for the *one* legitimate approach to art. Peter Osborne argues in a not altogether dissimilar way vis-à-vis Adorno, that it is Adorno's too rigid 'conception of the tendency towards the reification of all social relations inherent in the development of capitalism',[176] i.e. his insufficiently dialectical social theory, that 'led him to prejudge the aesthetic issue'.[177] Osborne quotes Peter Bürger:

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[174] Kiefer, *Diskurswandel*, p. 363.
[175] Kiefer, 'Carl Einstein – Exil in Frankreich', in Kiefer, *Avantgarde – Weltkrieg – Exil*, pp. 112-34 (p. 131). Also quoted in Franke-Gremmelspacher, *Notwendigkeit der Kunst*, p. 140.
[176] Osborne, 'Adorno and the Metaphysics of Modernism', p. 43.
[177] Osborne, 'Adorno and the Metaphysics of Modernism', p. 45. It may be granted, as Osborne prudently does, that Adorno would have seen the necessity to disallow this theoretical bias to interfere with the assessment of individual works. For such assessment, meticulous, detailed and conscientious analysis is required. Cf. Osborne, p. 45.

> Holding firmly to the idea that artistic material reflects the total social development without the consciousness of the producer being able to see this connection, [Adorno] can recognise only *one* material in a given epoch.[178]

In a recent article on art in the Soviet Union under Stalin, Boris Groys makes the point that the goal of the radical Avant-gardes was to promote the work of art to a lifestyle, preferably the lifestyle of the entire society. The viewer was to be included in the work, the strategies included aesthetic provocation and shock, the shock of the new and the breaking of traditional taboos and conventions. 'Die Betrachter sollten verunsichert und entmachtet werden,' Groys writes, in a sentence that echoes Einstein's remark in *Georges Braque* about 'Identifizierung des Betrachters mit dem Bild, dem er hörig verfällt' (W 3, 393).[179] Groys sees the Avant-garde project as one of expansion, whereby the artists, weary of the 'Diktatur der Kunstkonsumenten', arrange for a 'Diktatur der Kunstproduzenten'. He arrives at the initial conclusion, however, that their legislation in effect reached no further than their own realm, the aesthetic.

Groys comments as follows on the relationship between a dictatorship of art and one of politics:

> Die Entmachtung des Betrachters mit rein ästhetischen Mitteln konnte nicht gelingen. Der Kontext, in dem sich die Kunst präsentierte – Kunstmarkt, Museum, Ausstellung und so weiter –, all das blieb trotz der avantgardistischen Revolutionen und Grenzüberschreitungen immer noch sozial, wirtschaftlich und politisch begrenzt. Eine konsequente ästhetische Diktatur hat vielmehr eine politische Diktatur zur Voraussetzung, eine politische Diktatur, die imstande ist, den Kunstmarkt abzuschaffen und ein bestimmtes ästhetisches Projekt jenseits seiner Rentabilität zu verwirklichen.[180]

The term 'Diktatur der Kunst' (Groys's term) is strongly reminiscent of Einstein's 'Diktatur des Sehens' and 'Diktatur der Vision' from *Georges Braque* and also from the essay 'Absolute Kunst und absolute Politik. Aus der Einleitung für den russischen Maler' from 1921,[181] so it might seem that the above quotation would fit more appropriately with Einstein's own critique of his earlier position.

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[178] Osborne, 'Adorno and the Metaphysics of Modernism', p. 44, quoting Peter Bürger, 'The Decline of the Modern Age', *Telos*, 62 (1984-85), 117-30 (p. 120).
[179] Boris Groys, 'Werbung für den Kommunismus'.
[180] Boris Groys, 'Werbung für den Kommunismus'.
[181] See ALT, 256-57. This essay is reprinted as 'Revolution durchbricht Geschichte und Überlieferung' in W 4, 146-52.

However, what the overall interpretation offered here wishes to underscore is the way in which Einstein's later position, and to a lesser extent Adorno's,[182] because they both set their sights on *one* particular approach to art, are in constant danger of embracing exactly that which their respective theories were designed to stave off. An aesthetic which began more or less explicitly from the premise of opening up the discourse of aesthetics to the contingency of aesthetic experience in its diversity and sensuous specificity ends up encroaching on that diversity and sensuous specificity on account of the pull of ethical/political considerations. That this had a personal, existential dimension for Einstein is documented in the plans, most of which were probably written in the early to mid 1930s, for his partly autobiographical novel *BEB II*:

> eine ekelhafte kaelte, die alles laehmt, ist ueber die welt gekommen. eine eiszeit des moralischen und des gefuehls; man ist so kokett dynamisch, da man nichts starkes bindendes mehr verspuert. menschen in vager wueste. wann kommen die begluckenden grenzen? (CEA, 40)

But Einstein himself is unwilling to leave this at the level of a personal lament. He is keenly aware of the implications of seeking anew any such 'begluckende grenzen':

> Der mensch ist so geschwaecht, dass er allenthalben beweisbare gewissheit verlangt. damit verliert er das meiste. (CEA, 130)[183]

Concluding consideration

The intention here is, it must be emphasized, not to brand Einstein (or Adorno, for that matter) as a covertly fascistic or proto-fascistic aesthetic theorist. Enough historical evidence to the contrary is provided by Kiefer and other scholars to render such a claim highly indefensible, if not absurd. Einstein would have been anything but welcome

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[182] I am thinking here also of Adorno's entirely negative stances on film (apart from the silent film) and jazz. The former he rejects on the grounds that it discourages critical distance on the part of the audience and the latter because, he maintains, it succeeds only in reflecting alienated society without challenging it at the level of artistic form. He sees both solely in the context of the 'Verblendungszusammenhang'. See his essays 'Zeitlose Mode. Zum Jazz' (A 10:1, 123-37), 'Filmtransparente' (A 10:1, 353-61) and 'Über Jazz' (A 17, 74-108), and comments in *Ästhetische Theorie* (A 7, 322).

[183] This quotation is from notes and plans for *Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen* from about 1930.

aboard the Nazi bandwagon.[184] The intention, instead, is to pinpoint the theoretical problems that, for all the rigorous criticism of FF, befall this social-critical thinker, who aimed at a reintegration of the aesthetic and the social, all the while actually understanding the social as somehow decidedly external to the aesthetic. The social, i.e. the collective as a project, was even considered worthy of the total (if temporary) subjugation of the aesthetic to it, if we recall Einstein's remarks about 'kunstlose Zeiten' (W 3, 276) in *Georges Braque*. But abstaining from art, whether the ban is voluntary or imposed, in itself will not make for good or better politics, a point made also by Rüdiger Bubner in relation to the ban on artistic production of the 1960s:

> Ich erinnere mich an jene Buchmesse, die unter der herausfordernden Gegenthese stand, das Ende der Literatur sei gekommen. Dies war, wie mir damals schon schien und wie man heute besser sehen kann, eine überdrehte Umsetzung von künstlerischer in politische Praxis. Die Abstinenz von der Kunst macht noch keine gute, neue Politik.[185]

This approach conflating the aesthetic and the political, certainly not exclusive to Einstein but repeated with more or less subtlety across the Avant-garde, demonstrates the limits of the conceptual resources then available for grappling with the issue of the interdetermination of aesthetics and politics. Not that this issue has been solved or become easy to grasp now, almost a century on. But in the process of seeking an understanding, which in Einstein's case also yields considerable new insights for his time and builds critically on older ones, certain theoretical cul de sacs become apparent. These theoretical cul de sacs may be ways in which a discourse tends either towards systematic closure or towards a retrograde schema with highly questionable implications for social or political praxis. Alert to these tendencies, one can also contribute, by providing a reading of the language and concepts of one particular writer, to a demonstration of how the pooled resources were put to work and stretched to, and at times beyond, their limits by thinkers of Left and Right alike.

With regard to Einstein, it might be added that identifying a lack in the conceptual tool-kit certainly does not render his discourse(s) transparent to readers of our own time.

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[184] Cf. especially Kiefer, who provides a detailed account of the developments in Einstein's later theory of art in the context of the unfolding political situation in Germany in the late 1920s and early thirties, in *Diskurswandel*, pp. 376-84.

[185] Interview with Rüdiger Bubner, in Florian Rötzer, *Philosophen: Gespräche zur Kunst* ([n.p.]: Boer, 1991), pp. 96-109 (p. 100).

Rather, at the point where the conceptual lack is identified, the reader is made aware of the precariousness of the discourse, its immanent collapsibility into its opposite, as was shown towards the end of this chapter. What sets Einstein's work apart from the less complex and more univocal work of some of his contemporaries is his own acute awareness of that precariousness, and the consequences this has for his writing. In the plans for *BEB II*, Einstein makes a diagnosis of himself and his generation:

> zeigen; immer der drang BEBs die bewegung zu verraten, um nicht festgenagelt zu werden. er schwankt zwischen ueberindividualism und kollektive; immer verraet er das eine ideologisch. zum ende sieg dieser verraeterischen synthese in einem adorierten ueberindividualism, fuehrer oder duce, und einer ungefaehrlichen rethorischen [sic] collective. dieser mischmasch kann nur provisorisch sein. aber menschen und generation sind durch diese konception, die sich brutal durchsetzt, vernichtet.
>
> BEB will sich in die primitive des arbeiters retten und in die staerkste fantasieloseste realitaet; diese als rettung, als gegengift. [...] gerade an der einfachen arbeiterin die ganze dialektische DON QUICHOTERIE des BEB zeigen. (CEA, 43)

The same awareness impels the incessant 'Demaskierungsversuche'[186] and highly critical and self-critical onslaughts that result in the texts which constitute his œuvre. That is one of the reasons why, rather than being considered only in terms of its place in the history of culture and mentalities, Einstein's œuvre retains relevance and continues to stir debate across the disciplines.

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[186] Cf. Hans Joachim Dethlefs, 'Die Überwindung des Ästhetischen: Über Carl Einsteins Braque-Projekt', in *Text + Kritik*, 95: Carl Einstein (1987), pp. 23-43 (p. 37).

Conclusion

Following sublime trajectories

Towards the beginning of this study the concept of the sublime was considered in connection with the relationship between image and word as understood and problematized by Carl Einstein. Further on, the sublime—as an experiential mode or moment and a concept with a problematic history—came under scrutiny, as well as certain attempts to get to grips with that problematic history and conceive of the sublime afresh, within a changed philosophical and, more particularly, aesthetic constellation. An idea was put forward in relation to theories of the sublime, namely that they become of necessity sublime theories. In other words, the attempt to theorize the sublime in some way exceeds itself, draws itself into a paralyzing contradiction with itself, sends itself lurching headlong into its own inadequacy, as the imagination does when faced with the excessive impact of the unnamable or unrepresentable that is the *sine qua non* of the sublime experience.

Moving towards two final points now, one about the problem of normativity in aesthetics arising contemporaneously with modern art and the other about the role of the active subject, the case can be made that on the readings of *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*, *Georges Braque*, 'Il se pose la question' and *Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen* offered in this study, the latter part of Einstein's œuvre can be construed as following the trajectory of the sublime experience, or perhaps more accurately trajectories, since, as we have seen, there can be differing outcomes. The scholarly interest in the question of how the dissolution of subjectivity is resolved originates in a theoretical correlation between certain types of outcome, or indeed critical assessment of certain outcomes, and an openness or closure to contingency. This openness or closure to contingency need not be absolute; it may be qualified, either intentionally—theoretically or by means of literary strategies—or unintentionally—by the workings of a particular discourse within a text. It is one factor that may be considered in gauging the progressiveness or restorative, nostalgic tendencies of a discourse, a work or an œuvre.

My contention in Einstein's case is that the textual structures of the later works, acutely in tune with the contingency issues of the day, analogically 'try out' or 'test'

various outcomes of the sublime moment. It is in these textual procedures that some of Einstein's subterranean work on the concept of the sublime takes place. As was clarified at a number of points throughout this study, there is no need to see the first case as the beginning of a development that reaches a peak with the last. Rather, each case occurs within its own specific set of circumstances, motivations and opportunities, both textual and biographical. And while our retrospective historical viewpoint attempts to let the preconditions and historical plausibility of each case emerge, it also of course constructs each case, and each in relation to the others.

While the first and to a great extent also the second edition of *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts* endure under the aegis of a cohesive theory of Cubism, the sublime is already implicitly there as a theme, namely in the problem of the relationship between image and word and in the agonal ekphrastic solution. In the third edition of the encyclopedia volume a rift shows up: the sublime is no longer only a theme. The process referred to in Chapter 5 as form unraveling impacts also on the structure or form of the writing.

'Il se pose la question', covering just over seventeen pages, is a small fraction of the length of *Georges Braque* and an even smaller fraction of *Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen*. The editors of the Berlin edition note the 'inhaltliche Geschlossenheit des Textes' (see W 4, 194); despite recognizing the impossibility of discursive access to the creative moment of imagination or the properly aesthetic moment of thought, the text gives a sense of dealing in a relatively adequate way with its subject matter. But while the text is written with an eye to many of the concerns of the later *Georges Braque*, its subject matter is not any particular kind of art, or works of art. It therefore includes no judgements about specific art or artists. The subject matter is rather the aesthetic as a mode of cognition. There is relatively little repetition of themes and ideas, and the reader gets a sense of the coherent build-up of an argument. While the text itself is quite cohesive, there is no programmatic closure. Even the last sentence testifies to an open or negative dialectical movement:

> Durch unvermitteltes und imaginatives Handeln [...] überwinden wir die Aufspaltung in Subjekt und Objekt; doch [...] indem wir aus unserer imaginativen Isolierung heraustreten und das Neue anpassen, vergrößern wir unsere Knechtschaft [...]. (W 4, 464)

There is no attempt to give art an overriding purpose (e.g. a social or political agenda of overcoming alienated relations or hierarchies of class) beyond that extremely important but intangible purpose of continually challenging sensual and conceptual formations and thus keeping the horizons of perception and thinking open. This may of course at some point amount to resisting reified consciousness and, from there, to tackling the existing orders, social, political, cultural or otherwise. But the text of 'Il se pose la question' sets no such goals in advance of the aesthetic act, whether productive or receptive. It therefore leaves an open space, beyond the criterion just outlined, for what the artwork is to do, be or become, i.e. the possible functions it will have in the institution of art, in the wider societal system and in relations between subjects of that system.

Form had been the binding feature in the cohesive theory of Cubism. While its concept still appears to inform the *Georges Braque* monograph, form itself has in fact already slipped from the discourse at this point and is only present as an absence, something that haunts the text even as the text itself tries to carefully conjure it. The text cannot conceal the tension arising from the fact that Einstein sees a need to retain the tectonic for form to succeed while at the same time encouraging Braque's later, much less structured works. These seem to have increasingly less need of the tectonic and go further and further into a kind of hallucinative free-fall. Furthermore, pains are taken in the text to dispel the notion of an overlap between the hallucinative psychogramme and the work of children and the mentally ill (see for instance W 3, 382-83). This suggests that the absence or presence of form in these works is not easily discernible and may in fact remain the preserve of an initiate critic making apodictic claims.

The slippage of the sublime is palpable in the textual structure of *Georges Braque* as it attempts to house those tensions and contradictions: the text appears to circle in on crucial matters, never pinning them down but instead reaching towards them asymptotically. There is a spiraling of repeated themes, ideas, arguments, concepts and phrases, which are explored, dropped and resumed, perhaps from a slightly altered perspective. The reader gets the sense that the text is never quite finished with something, never quite satisfied with the new position it has reached. There is a sense of an insurmountable inadequacy or grave mismatch, at both a thematic and structural level, between what has been written and what is to be written, what can be communicated and what needs to be communicated. The signifier-signified relationship is disturbed and

does not find resolution. The text does, however, at times gesture outward to points of apparent resolution. One such instance is the following:

> Es gilt, Gedichten und Bildern wieder den Machtanspruch zu verleihen, das Wirkliche zu beeinflussen und damit wird die Abspaltung [zwischen Mensch und unmenschlich gewordener Welt] letzten Endes aufgehoben. (W 3, 386)

This points to a cancellation of difference, and so to a harmonious, pre-individuation utopia (or an 'un-eating' of the fruit of the tree of knowledge in Kleist's parable). Another instance is a projected cancellation of all artistic activity:

> Man [...] gewöhne sich daran, daß vorübergehend kunstlose Zeiten möglich und notwendig sind. (W 3, 276)

But neither of these represents plausible options from within the work's own fraught logic and perhaps for this reason are not pursued with comparable zeal.

Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen marks, at a thematic level anyway, a kind of withdrawal from the slipping and spiraling, the paradoxes and contradictions of *Georges Braque*. To the extent that it brings the Avant-garde movements to book, it is a *rappel à l'ordre*, no longer open to the contingency of art that engages with hallucinative, ecstatic or pre-rational experience. But when the structure of the text is also considered, it is difficult to decide how to interpret this in terms of the three-phase model of the sublime that was used in the chapter on *Georges Braque*. Thematically *Die Fabrikation* pulls back from the theory of the sublime that *Georges Braque* offers and enacts; we have seen how Einstein's fraught 'Verteidigung des Wirklichen' involves an attempt to re-anchor the subject after the slide. There is indeed a return to contingency management, in other words, a restoration of a controlling subject that negates the moment of dissolution.

But structurally *Die Fabrikation* belies this restoration: in perhaps an even more acute way than *Georges Braque*, the sentences and paragraphs of *Die Fabrikation* swarm dizzyingly around each other, none offering a definitive word on any of the manifold themes broached. Here, theme and textual fabric are both gruesomely at odds with one another *and* curiously at one. The theme of defending reality against the ever-accelerating vortex of displacements of metaphors and exchanges of commodities characteristic of an advanced capitalist society is agonizingly at odds with a textual fabric in which phrases, sentences, indeed whole paragraphs and tracts, that are so similar as to

be interchangeable, displace each other and jostle for the reader's attention. The reality to be defended seems quite lost to the text, functioning only as a phantom, a utopian space outlined in vague terms of 'Gemeinschaft' and 'Schicksal'. In another respect, however, one might ask what other kind of textual fabric would be adequate to the experience of such an ever-accelerating vortex. A link between Adorno's concept of 'Verblendungszusammenhang' and Einstein's 'blendende Einheit der Systeme' (FF 209/299) was made in the chapter on *Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen. Die Fabrikation*, regardless of its gesture of a call to order, insists on the omnipresence of the blinding effects of ideological systems it denounces, so that it becomes difficult to imagine a nook, unsaturated by the blinding light, from where resistance might begin. In this sense, *Die Fabrikation* offers this crisis as a textual experience, thus fusing theme and form. 'Eine Verteidigung des Wirklichen', it will be recalled, was stricken out by Einstein on the manuscript: '~~Eine Verteidigung des Wirklichen~~'.

But, working from our analogy of the text testing or enacting an outcome of the sublime, does the text then re-instate an Idealist subject predicated on control over inner self and outer world? Or is the dissolution consummate? Or again, is it neither of these outcomes and does the process issue instead in a changed paradigm, establishing a different kind of subjectivity, altered in its relations to the world by the experience of sublime sliding?

The point must be recalled that *Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen* is by no means Einstein's final work but only the last work in which he offers a theory, if nebulous, of the work of art, as well as sustained commentary on the art around which his career was based. Plans from the late 1930s for a number of works on aesthetics and the history of art ('Traité de La Vision', 'Handbuch der Kunst', 'Une Histoire de l'Art Moderne par Carl Einstein') suggest that any of these, if realized, would have turned into an enormous tome.[1] The fragmentary, partly autobiographical project *BEB II*, begun in the early 1930s

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[1] A careful study of these and other late writings, both individually and in relation to *Georges Braque*, *Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen* and other writings of Einstein's on art, ethnology and art historiography, as well as in relation to other approaches to art historiography at the end of the 1930s and in the early 1940s is one area of Einstein research yet to be broached. As with the *BEB II* project, which has not been published at all yet, a deterrent has no doubt been 1) the fact that such a study would predominantly require archival work in Berlin and Paris, and 2) the very fragmentary nature of the material, both because of the way it was written and because not all of it has survived.

or perhaps even late twenties[2] but continuing into the late thirties, indicates a tendency, also found in *Die Fabrikation*, to do what the German word 'ausufern' so aptly captures.[3] The chances of the *BEB II* project turning into anything more structured were very slim after *Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen*. Kiefer alludes to the problem when he comments on the impact *Die Fabrikation* may have had on Einstein's burgeoning *Bebuquin* sequel:

> Bekanntlich zieht das Einsteinsche Pamphlet von der "Fabrikation der Fiktionen" [...] einen (vorläufigen) Schlußstrich unter die gesamte Moderne, somit auch unter Einsteins eigenes Werk. [...] Damit mußte aber das "BEB II"-Projekt selber radikal in Frage gestellt werden. "BEB II" gebiert sozusagen das Pamphlet, das dem Korpus, der zerstört zurückbleibt, in der Tat auch die theoretische Quintessenz entzogen hat. "Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen" ist im geschichtlichen Sinne die Metatheorie von "BEB II".[4]

Although he still writes profusely, Einstein does not complete or publish any work after *Georges Braque*, apart from a review of a work by the French writer Louis-Ferdinand Céline and two articles relating to his experiences in the Spanish Civil War. His life's circumstances must be borne in mind: on the move much of the time, he was probably without the necessary provisions, time, and means for writing or storing what he could write.

Of the options presented above for the third phase in the model of the sublime: whether reifying subject restored, or terminal dissolution (i.e. no third phase), or a different kind of subjectivity established, it seems the last is the most fitting analogy for the late writings. After *Die Fabrikation* Einstein seems to have no appetite (and perhaps simply also no opportunities) left for close encounters with contemporary art. What he embarks on is a more descriptive project cataloguing past art according to his own ethnologically and psychoanalytically derived ideas. Fragments, notes and unpublished essays from the late 1930s suggest an approach to art marked much more exclusively by ethnological, theological, historical, sociological and cosmological considerations than earlier writings. The close encounters with contemporary art always begged the question of prescription or normativity: sympathetic but critical engagement with modern art required developing and continually revising a critical repertoire of categories and

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[2] Cf. Klaus H. Kiefer, '"BEB II" – ein Phantombild', in *Text + Kritik*, 95: Carl Einstein (1987), 44-66 (p. 51f.).
[3] It means (of a river) to overflow its banks or, figuratively, to get out of hand or run wild.
[4] Kiefer, '"BEB II" – ein Phantombild', p. 55.

criteria. One could contend that the need to preside over and get to grips with the latest art, to mediate it and transmit it to a perplexed public has given way to the more sovereign approach of letting the art be, and being satisfied with historically relevant description.

And yet Einstein's writing about art prior to *Die Fabrikation* was typically at pains to lever it out of closed systems of mediation and transmission; in this respect, the whole issue of the sublime in *Georges Braque* and 'Il se pose la question' is critical. One could likewise contend, then, that with the reversion to a historical sociology of art, Einstein loses the merits of being open to the contingency of modern art – in a sense its life-blood and the crux of the aesthetic mode of thought. He loses the sovereignty of confronting the shock, the change, the new, the unaccounted for – and precisely the possibility of *not* getting to grips with it.

Normativity at stake

In *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, Peter Bürger comments as follows on the rupture created by the movements of the Avant-garde:

> The meaning of the break in the history of art that the historical avant-garde movements provoked does not consist in the destruction of art as an institution, but in the destruction of the possibility of positing aesthetic norms as valid ones. This has consequences for scholarly dealings with works of art: the normative examination is replaced by a functional analysis, the object of whose investigation would be the social effect (function) of a work, which is the result of the coming together of stimuli inside the work and a sociologically definable public within an already existing institutional frame.[5]

In notes that remained unpublished until 1992, when they appeared in the 'Nachlaßband' of the Berlin Edition of Einstein's works, a number of comments Einstein makes about (art in) his own time cast a curiously anticipatory shadow forwards to our own and some of its by now familiar diagnoses:

> die dogmatische tradition stirbt [...] an mangel an geschichte ab; waehrend der moderne rapid manieren und geschichtliche einstellung wechselt und keine stilfixierung mehr erreicht. (W 4, 434)

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[5] Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. by Michael Shaw with a foreword by Jochen Schulte-Sasse, Theory of History and Literature, 4 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. 87.

> die technik der K[unst] reception ist eben auch nicht mehr durch ein Zeremoniell reguliert. D h dem 'freien' K[ünst]ler, der die Struktur nun 'frei' wählt entspricht der unverpflichtete Betrachter. (W 4, 398)

> Unser Leben entbehrt des Zwangsläufigen. es kann so und so verlaufen. [...] Das Schicksal der Schicksallosigkeit. Relativität als unser Absolutes. vor lauter Dynamik gibt es keine Bewegung mehr. Egoism ohne Ich; sondern Seelenvielheit. [...] wir leiden an Konfliktlosigkeit. [...] Varieté Circus. [...] Die Monotonie jedmöglicher Wahl, deren man überdrüssig wird. es ist dies nicht seelische Komplikation, sondern Spaltung und Zersplitterung durch Zufälle. [...] Daher ist diese Zeit untragisch, zu gewichtlos; eine Zeit der quantitativen Rekorde. (W 4, 440)

Bürger postulates the problem of normativity for a post-Avant-garde society. The comments just quoted, left undated by Einstein but probably written towards the end of the 1930s, are testimony to the way in which so many features of what we now associate with a postmodern society were already then gaining contours to the critical eye. In other words, they were becoming apparent to—and being confronted by—the critical observer even as the historical Avant-garde was emerging. With the end of 'dogmatische tradition' and 'stilfixierung', and the impression of a predominant and insurmountable relativism, the question of whether and how an aesthetic theory could still be constructed and legitimized poses itself. From the above quotations it is clear that even at this point in Einstein's career, after *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*, after *Georges Braque* and *Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen*, he has not lost his zest for grappling with the institution of art and its wider implications. The point of incursion is the question of aesthetic norms, as it had been for the testing of various outcomes of the sublime moment described in the previous section.

Both Einstein and Adorno were formulating their respective aesthetic theories at a time when the Avant-garde was young, Adorno continuing three decades beyond Einstein. The work of both is testimony to aesthetic normativity becoming deeply problematic. They share an acute awareness of the problem and its genesis in philosophical and cultural problems of a much broader scope. For Einstein as for Adorno there is always a dual focus in the question of, and quest for, aesthetic normativity. As critics with a particular interest in the formal constitution and import of a work, both are concerned simultaneously with the question of how to respond to a work critically

without smothering it under an externally derived conceptual framework, and with the question of the social and political import of the work. The level of consciousness at which their respective responses to these questions are developed assures continued interest in their work. Certainly, the level of philosophical embeddedness in the development of Adorno's responses is greater than that of Einstein. But, as I have attempted to show in relation to the concepts of ekphrasis and the sublime, there are substantial reassessments and re-routings of categories and concepts in Einstein's work even without such obvious philosophical embeddedness.

Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen saw Einstein abandoning the autonomous work and vociferously pointing up the illusory nature of that autonomy when confronted with the realities of economics and politics. The chapter on *Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen* demonstrates how certain insights into the social, economic and ideological realities of the Avant-gardes and their audience become for Einstein reasons for rejecting the Avant-gardes *tout court*. The issue of responsibility was discussed at the end of Chapter 6. Adorno shares many of Einstein's insights into the social, economic and ideological realities of the Avant-gardes and their audiences. But what he does instead of rejecting the Avant-gardes for what is to some extent an inevitable complicity on account of the structure of the modern institution of art, is to set the stakes of the dialectical movement even higher: he combines those insights with an adherence to the utopian potential of a work that to a certain extent does—and must—reflect reified society, but does not exhaust itself in such a reflection. Einstein, an art historian and critic by profession and therefore faced at perhaps a more concrete and existential level with the grim realities of an art world crumbling out of economic necessity, responds in a much more personal—disappointed and disillusioned—way to the problem of the Avant-gardes' complicity in market mechanisms and what he calls the 'blendende Einheit der Systeme'. His rejection of the Avant-gardes can be interpreted to a certain extent as a *rappel à l'ordre*, a move to contain contingency at a time when so many aspects of the world as Einstein and his contemporaries knew it were issuing in crisis. 'Anarchischer Liberalismus' (W 4, 321), the whipping boy of radical Left and Right alike, came in for yet another beating.

Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen therefore marks a turn to a certain kind of normativity that is not based in the form of the work as it had been in Einstein's theory of Cubism and, less unequivocally, Surrealism. In the chapter on *Die Fabrikation* some of the problems of that particular kind of normativity were discussed.

Some notes and plans unpublished during Einstein's lifetime, however, when read in conjunction with the relevant sections of *Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen*, give the impression that the concept of art theorized *ex negativo* and partly also explicitly in that work is perhaps more polemically motivated and therefore more exaggeratedly optimistic than one would have otherwise thought. Under the subheading 'Die Gueltigkeitsqualitaeten des Realen. Individuale / Kollektive / Gruppenhafte etc und des imaginativen' within a bundle of notes, Einstein's revised position vis-à-vis Léger becomes apparent.[6] Whereas previously he had welcomed and lauded Léger's peculiar 'Standardisierung des Wirklichen' (W 4, 431) as a promising instance of collectively oriented art, now he holds that 'standardisierte' and 'kollektive realitaet' are opposites (see W 4, 431). 'Standardisierung' he now sees as something capitalist society has an interest in achieving. In contrast to 'Kollektiv', 'Standardisierung' is now taken to be ultimately socially and culturally sterile:

> standardisierung: diese eine technische umgruppierung ohne die entsprechend sociale. durch specialisierung charakterisiert. Damit bleibt aber die standardisierung social wie kulturell steril. (W 4, 431-432)

This reassessment of Léger unweaves even the last threads in his theory of art that held the work of art to have some capacity, if limited, to positively influence or resist the given reality.[7]

The plans for 'Traité de La Vision' and 'Handbuch der Kunst', both undated but probably from the late 1930s, suggest Einstein is moving out from a theory of the artwork or of form and towards a broader sociology and cultural history of art and aesthetics. This had been the impulse already in *Georges Braque*, i.e. in the early thirties. In fact, *Georges Braque* can be seen as Einstein's last full and broadly cohesive attempt at a theory of the work of art. In his correspondence with Wasmuth he cynically refers to it as his last 'kunschtbuch' (see Chapter 5, page 249) and the years that follow yield no further large-scale aesthetic theory but rather what he had demanded in *Georges Braque*: a sociology of art, which would also be a critical history of aesthetics.

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[6] The notes are headed 'Notate: Realismus. Ultravisuell. Primitive. Kunstwerk. Das Unsichtbare. Moderne Primitive. Das Reale und das Imaginative. Byzantinische Primitive. Stil. Tradition. Subjekt – Objekt'.

[7] 'Sinn aller Bilder ist ihr Beeinflussen der uns gebotenen Welt, die dadurch noch stärker vermenschlicht wird' (K 3, 258), he had written in *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*.

Einstein's work consists of many discursive strands that are at times interwoven and at times unwoven again without much heed for the traditional boundaries of each discourse, or the demands of a consistent development. Some of the strands and their substantial import also figure in Adorno's philosophical aesthetics, as we have seen. But in Adorno's œuvre the strands are composed into an intricate structure – the dialectical model that Adorno builds in so many dimensions, thickening the structure with each new text, rather than simply adding things on. With Einstein, too, the structure thickens, but not always chronologically, from one text to the next. Rather than having an overall dialectical model that reaches such extraordinary dialectical density as *Ästhetische Theorie*, however, Einstein is free to follow some of the strands to where they might individually lead. This is not to suggest that Adorno was incapable of thinking particular issues on account of the rigour of his aesthetic model, only that certain issues would undoubtedly have interested him less or seemed somewhat irrelevant to him in the context of aesthetics on account of the specific criteria he develops for the work of art. For instance, because of his insistence on the autonomy of art as a precondition for its having any truthful import, it is only at the level of cultural criticism that he is interested in heteronomous art forms and the functions they can have. In fact, the rigour of his concept of art denies such art forms the status of art in the first place. Like (sound-)film and jazz, they are only seen by Adorno in the context of the 'Verblendungszusammenhang'.

In the quotations below from 'Handbuch der Kunst' Einstein is planning to follow up certain strands he sees as important in the context of a sociological approach to art:

> Kunstgeschichte als Geschichte der qualitativen Höchstleistungen d.h. als Geschichte der Ausnahmen. [...] Dagegen wäre eine Geschichte der kollektiven oder mittleren Leistungen zu versuchen wobei weniger das Individuum als Quelle der Leistung gilt, sondern das allgemeine gesellschaftliche ideologische und ökonomische Milieu. (W 4, 304)

> Die geschichtliche Rolle der Kunst. Ihre Bedeutungswechsel. (W 4, 305)

> Kunst und Gesellschaft. Kunst und Sexualität. (ibid.)

Einstein is following a strand here which has accompanied him throughout his career, whether in the fore-, middle- or background: the actual functions art or an artwork has within other institutions, and within contexts other than primarily as a privileged antidote to or antagonist of reification. Plans for 'Traité de La Vision' indicate he intends to devote a descriptive chapter of that project to the viewer or recipient (see W 4, 256f.). There are also plans for an 'esthétique expérimentale', involving the use of statistical material gathered presumably from the public on the question of experience of and response to works of art (see W 4, 259f.).

One could argue that this indicates a tendency in Einstein's late work that runs counter to that of Adorno: a tendency towards a much more sociologically than epistemologically oriented approach to aesthetics and indeed towards a statistical sociology, something Adorno fought hard to keep from engulfing his own more insistently theoretically informed approach.[8] And yet by the time Einstein was turning towards this approach, his work was in a sense already strongly moulded by an ethnological-epistemological project that shares many concerns with Adorno's work. It is only when both approaches and their implications for matters in modernist and postmodern aesthetics are taken into account that one can arrive at the idea of a 'complex normativity' as will now be briefly considered.

Peter Osborne, whose article 'Adorno and the Metaphysics of Modernism: The Problem of a "Postmodern" Art', was cited at the end of the chapter on *Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen*, responds critically to Adorno's implicit elevation of one type of work to a norm for evaluating all works of art. He maintains that Adorno's social theory is too absolute. (See Chapter 6, page 359.) Some implications of this argument are discussed in

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[8] In a recent, personal article to mark the centenary of Adorno's birth, Jürgen Habermas brings to light the tension between the philosophical and the statistical that characterized the Frankfurter Institut für Sozialforschung, as well as Adorno's unique position within it: 'Was im Rückblick trivial erscheint, war damals, als ich in das Institut für Sozialforschung eintrat, nicht selbstverständlich: dass die Reputation des Hauses von der ungebrochenen, jetzt erst ihrem Höhepunkt zustrebenden Produktivität Adornos eher abhängen würde als vom Erfolg der empirischen Forschungen, mit denen sich das Institut eigentlich legitimieren sollte. Obwohl bei ihm alle Fäden der Institutsarbeit zusammenliefen, konnte Adorno mit Organisationsmacht nicht umgehen. Er bildete eher den passiven Mittelpunkt eines komplexen Spannungsfeldes. 1956, als ich ankam, bestanden zwischen Max Horkheimer, Gretel Adorno und Ludwig von Friedeburg symmetrische Gegensätze, die dadurch definiert waren, dass sich ihre jeweils an Adorno gerichteten Erwartungen durchkreuzten.' Jürgen Habermas, 'Die Zeit hatte einen doppelten Boden', *Die Zeit*, no. 37, 4 September 2003, p. 45.

another context, namely Lambert Zuidervaart's study of *Ästhetische Theorie*.[9] Zuidervaart discusses Peter Bürger's historicizing interpretation of Adorno's aesthetic theory in *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, in which Bürger criticizes Adorno's emphasis on autonomous works and insistence on a necessary correlation of autonomy and truth in art. Zuidervaart is in agreement with Bürger's criticism of the emphasis on autonomous works. But Zuidervaart sees troubling implications for Bürger's own theory in the contention that the Avant-garde movements destroyed the possibility of positing aesthetic norms as valid norms. This contention of Bürger's implies abandoning normative aesthetics altogether, a move which would however implicate Bürger's theory in performative contradictions and the problem of deciding which artistic phenomena would merit analysis and defending selections in the face of criticisms.[10]

In order to get around the problem, Zuidervaart proposes the idea of 'complex normativity', which would guide procedures of establishing, assessing and revising norms. In Zuidervaart's work, 'complex normativity' refers to a network of norms which is not hierarchical and which does not give precedence to autonomous works of art. The norms are constructed in relation to aesthetic phenomena and are continually under critical revision. Philosophical aesthetics, redundant in the task of setting out monolithic programmes of traditional normativity, would then be entrusted with this task of revision, as well as explaining the contents of the norms in the context of a critical understanding of social history. Conceived in the widest possible cultural sense, the norms apply to the manifold functions a work can have, within the institution of art and within other societal institutions, but also at the edges of those institutions (a dimension Zuidervaart does not explicitly include):

> 'Complex normativity' refers to a network of norms, no one of which has preeminence, and many of which apply to phenomena outside of autonomous art. [...] With suitable extensions and revisions these various norms could also be shown to hold for related actions, events (for example, concerts), and processes (for example, the reception of a novel). A partial list of such norms could include technical excellence, formal depth, aesthetic expressiveness, social scope, political effectiveness, and historical truth. Rarely would a particular work meet all these norms, nor would very many works display

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[9] Lambert Zuidervaart, *Adorno's Aesthetic Theory: The Redemption of Illusion* (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1991).
[10] See Zuidervaart, *Adorno's Aesthetic Theory*, p. 241.

> exceptional merit with respect to every norm that they do meet.[11]

A given work could then be assessed with regard to the various norms and could be found to meet some norms in an exceptional way and perhaps others not at all or only a little. This would overcome the problem of using one style, tradition or type of work as a yardstick whereby all others are found deficient, a problem discussed at the end of the chapter on *Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen*. It would also oppose the tendency to dissolve the historical specificity of older works. The historical truth of a work, decisive for Adorno, would no longer be taken as the ultimate criterion, so the need to fuse its historical horizon with that of the interpreter would no longer be so crucial. In a comment entirely in line with the thrust of Einstein's late (unpublished) writings on art, Zuidervaart writes:

> Much more attention must be given to the functions of artistic phenomena in other institutions and to the operations of the art institution in both the societal system and the intersubjective lifeworld. Otherwise substantive questions about the human purposes of art might be ignored. Given the prominence of popular art in contemporary society, such questions need to be raised, not only about high art but also about popular art.[12]

Zuidervaart's list of norms and ideas about how they can be used and revised is useful, certainly, for a sociology of art and for understanding what popular art, as well as high art, is and does. But his phrase 'substantive questions about the human purposes of art' throws open a very wide field of discussion. Questions and concerns about the human purposes of art are, explicitly even, to the fore of both Einstein's and Adorno's considerations of the aesthetic.[13] Yet, in an age that grapples with the legitimacy questions of any and all of its theoretical output, just what the 'human purposes of art' might be is in itself a point of contention. What I would like to propose here is a working norm, an initial norm to guide the above ideas about normativity in art.

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[11] Zuidervaart, *Adorno's Aesthetic Theory*, p. 246.
[12] Zuidervaart, *Adorno's Aesthetic Theory*, p. 239.
[13] Adorno's insistence on the 'Zwecklosigkeit' of art should not confuse the issue: this is simply a term, originating in the Kantian tradition, that Adorno uses to qualify art as autonomous. It entails a rejection of art as bound into any teleological or instrumentalized purposes, and a conflation of art with politics, religion, etc. But Adorno on no account denies that art has certain functions in society and in this way—*de facto*—meets certain purposes.

Where theories of postmodernism have attempted to pluralize and democratize art, and declare equal merit in all kinds of approaches and responses to art,[14] Poststructuralism, on foot of its problematization of foundations grounding, has exposed the theoretical problems involved in attempting to ground or legitimize discursively or rationally this or that approach or set of qualitative judgements over another or all others. For all its theoretical merits, then, poststructuralism is likewise faced with the rigorous abandonment of normativity or the arbitrary instituting of norms, in full awareness of their arbitrariness – or with the charge of a very obvious lack of consistency.

Although this may have the appearance of a deadlock, the second option, which is unsatisfactory only on the terms of the older paradigm poststructuralist theories criticize, is still open. It is possible to posit norms in awareness of their arbitrariness, in other words, in knowledge of the fact that they cannot be defended in any absolute or total way.

In this context I would like to propose as a provisional norm the basic idea of the work of art shared by the Einstein of 'Il se pose la question' and Adorno, for the simple reason that it has the advantage of allowing a differentiation between work of art and cultural product, where all works of art are also cultural products but not vice versa. This basic idea of the work of art can be expressed as the notion of that which, on account of its form, offers potential for engaging with the world and ourselves—(our) culture, (our) society, (our) ways of perceiving and conceiving, (our) ways of making our world meaningful.[15] The merit of this idea of the work of art is that in the notion of engaging, it

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[14]—all the while affirming in practice that an after-effect of modernism is still in operation, the need to be new, in however small a way. If Martin Creed has won the Turner prize one year for a series of works that include a chewed piece of chewing-gum stuck onto a plain white wall at eye-level, then neither he nor anyone else can win it the next year for a work consisting of a chewed piece of gum stuck on a white wall. This gives rise to the curious irony that if he or someone else were to win it the second time round with the gum on the wall, the audience would be given a momentous opportunity to engage.

It thus becomes apparent that the abhorrence of all qualitative judgements preached by certain strains of postmodernism, apart from being a major qualitative judgement in itself, is not in fact borne out by the institution of art, which continues to function in an élitist manner. At any rate, it is mistaken to believe that élitism has been eliminated or even significantly curtailed by the success of postmodern theories. What has happened, in manner of Pareto's theory of political élites, is simply that one kind of élite has been exchanged for another: art audiences are now less beholden to the 'professional critic', a mandarin, dispensing high-brow judgements on high art, and more beholden to the trends that emerge on account of wealthy art collectors and investors. To argue that one is *per se* more or less conservative or progressive than the other is fruitless.

[15] I am using 'our' in brackets here to indicate that no engagement with culture etc. can happen without a cultural horizon from which to begin. This is not to say that Adornian mimesis as an ability then also to engage with something or somebody else on terms other than one's own is excluded. It simply highlights the fact that even such an ability must first be there in us, such an ability or potential must already be ours

demands that the work of art quite literally make something happen. It must not leave us, the recipients, the same in relation to (our) culture, (our) society, (our) ways of perceiving and conceiving, (our) ways of making our world meaningful as we were before the encounter. It does not prescribe what direction the change should take, but it does insist on movement; the recipient must be 'moved'.

The reason Adorno is the representative name now, in philosophy and sociology, as well as in aesthetics, and not the other members of the Frankfurt School, is that he had not only an extremely informed and nuanced understanding of society, history, and culture and their workings but also a quantum of intuitive understanding of what we in our particular cultural paradigm understand as art. Even his theoretical opponents grant this. Likewise Einstein, whose intuitively guided understanding of the art of his era has been described as 'treffsicher'.[16]

When matters of art are at stake, it is also a question of that intuitive gift animating certain works on those matters. On reading writing that is animated in this way, the reader, too, is grasped momentarily by the 'nowness', the 'thisness' of the experience: the writing suddenly *opens up the reader* in some new way. It is initially not even so much that the writing *opens up the work of art* to the reader in some new way, but simply that the reader is affected, struck by a flash, the flash of the question-mark that does not as yet carry a determining question. This aspect of Einstein's and Adorno's idea of the work of art is carried over (from Adorno) to Jean-François Lyotard's conception of the sublime from 1984:

> Not a major event in the media sense, not even a small event. Just an occurrence.[17]

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if we are to encounter anything or anybody else in that genuine way. If we read the sentence and exclude the 'our' in front of each word or phrase, 'culture', 'society', etc. become abstractions. I am suggesting that art has the potential to allow us to engage with these things also in an undetermined way, and therefore in a mode that can create a space for impulses toward change.

[16] Cf. Uwe Fleckner and Thomas Gaehtgens's introduction to the 1996 reprint of the third edition of *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*, '"Schauend ändert man Menschen und Welt." Carl Einstein und die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts' (K 3, 7-32), p. 23.

[17] Jean-François Lyotard, 'The Sublime and the Avant-Garde', trans. by Lisa Liebmann, in *The Lyotard Reader*, ed. by Andrew Benjamin (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), pp. 196-212 (p. 197). However, I am not in agreement with Lyotard's levelling of commodities along with everything previously in the domain of art, in a libinal economy that does not differentiate between the sources of the intensity, nor even between a positive and a negative intensity. This position, in its attempt to transcend criticism and especially left-wing critiques of alienation and anomie, amounts to a neo-conservative stance that at best has nothing to say on the issue of power abuse and exploitation, and at worst is in tacit collusion with them.

The flash may precipitate a new opening into the work. That would then be a matter for the discursive sphere, as it would already have a content, the 'quid', as Lyotard calls it—the what. The important moment is the 'quod', the happening itself, the mere fact that something rather than nothing happens, as it is in that moment that the issue of sustaining the vitality of a cultural tradition is decided. Therein, too, lies the possibility of an open epiphany, or of transcendence without closure, a possibility implicitly denied modernism in certain interpretations of it, as was shown in Chapter 1.

Both Einstein and Adorno defend a model of history as continuous and discontinuous. Both also defend the idea of a subject, which, despite the extent to which it is determined by the forces and institutions of society, is still to be considered as active and capable of transformative input into the society in which it functions. At the same time, both Einstein and Adorno adamantly renounce the world-generating excesses of Romantic Idealism, theoretically dismantling the model of subjectivity on which it was based. An aspect which is not carried over into Lyotard's conception of the sublime, and which I would like to draw attention to here, is the fusion of the idea of a flash precipitating something new with a revised idea of power and subjectivity – not as purely negative terms. This fusion ensures that the kind of sublime flash Lyotard theorizes is not susceptible to being bound back into a nexus of conservative or totalitarian power. In this fusion there resides then also the potential for refuting poststructuralist theories that apparently instinctively conceive of power and authority as exclusively negative. The possibility for such a refutation is important if the tendencies of poststructuralist ideas to become ideologically hypostatized as deterministic and arch-conservative are to be addressed. This is once again a question of openness to contingency versus closure.

The dialectical pair, 'Sinnesbefreiung' and 'Ordnungswut', that Inge Baxmann investigates in relation to modernist culture,[18] suggestive as it is of so many related dialectical pairs, is one of the enduring conundrums in our own cultural engagements. It is not the case that, by exposing the linguistic and therefore conceptual and historical relativity of such pairs, current theories have provided solutions to the social, political and cultural problems such pairs accompanied and perpetuated. However much

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[18] See Inge Baxmann, *Mythos: Gemeinschaft: Körper- und Tanzkulturen in der Moderne* (Munich: Fink, 2000). The fifth chapter of Baxmann's study is entitled 'Zwischen Sinnesbefreiung und Ordnungswut' (p. 99).

postmodern paradigms demonstrate an awareness of the mutual determination of both aspects, there is a sense in which they break against the same conundrum.

There is for instance the theory of a Jean Baudrillard, whose wry prompting to complicity with the gleaming, surface pleasures of a thoroughly simulated society is implicitly, never explicitly, elevated to a new prescriptive norm. This is 'Sinnesbefreiung' as a liberation from and to nothing, a monotonous affirmation that is self-consciously a pale imitation, a travesty and a parody of Nietzschean 'Ja-Sagen'. But there is also the painstaking historical interrogation of power of a Michel Foucault. In the midst of its useful insights into the determination of the human being in mind and in body—in mind via body—by a network of discourses, codified ways of using language that produce and perpetuate meanings, institutions and subjects, it tends to reduce the subject to an effect of discourse. The result, intentional or otherwise, is a theory that, in its inability or unwillingness to contemplate the possibility and potential of some kind of active human subject or agent in history, can be used to affirm the discourses of power it sought to expose. Both options drastically reduce conceptual possibilities and, with that, possibilities for human praxis.[19] It is on account of such reduction that Foucault's concept of history as a phenomenon that simply happens and power as a force with neither locus nor agent, along with Lyotard's diagnosis of the end of all 'grand narratives', elicits vibrant criticism from Terry Eagleton:

> For socialist thought there has indeed been a grand narrative. [...] It would be far better if the postmodernists were right, and there was nothing constant or continuous about the chronicle [of history] at all. But the price of believing this is a betrayal of the dead, along with a majority of the living. What strikes a socialist most forcibly about history to date is that it has displayed a most remarkable consistency – namely, the stubbornly persisting realities of wretchedness and exploitation.[20]

The grand narratives did not fail, according to Eagleton, because they were bad ideas or fanciful stories. Rather, Eagleton alleges, historicizing poststructuralism as a cultural phenomenon, it is the universe of the poststructuralists that shrank in accordance with

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[19] For a critique of Foucault's conception of the subject, see Manfred Frank, 'Was ist ein Diskurs? Zur Archäologie Michel Foucaults', in Frank, *Das Sagbare und das Unsagbare: Studien zur deutsch-französischen Hermeneutik und Texttheorie*, 3rd edn (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp 1993), pp. 408–426. See also Manfred Frank, *Was ist der Neostrukturalismus?* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp 1983), esp. pp. 137–243, for an analysis of consciousness and subjectivity in Foucault.

[20] Terry Eagleton, *The Illusions of Postmodernism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), p. 51.

what was perceived as the shrunken historical possibilities of the bourgeoisie. Thus, it is not the bankruptcy of grand narratives that has been established, but only

> the tragedy of a history whose ideals were bound to ring hollow to its inheritors because it was structurally incapable of giving them flesh. [...] Because bourgeois society is a puny patriarch, incapable of universalizing its ideas of freedom or justice or autonomy, its very conception of the universal becomes corrupted by this fact. But this is different from arguing that universality is specious as such.[21]

The poststructuralist thinkers who do argue in this vein are, in Eagleton's eyes, Oedipal children, who 'squirm with embarrassment at the gap between the big talk of the father and his feeble deeds'.[22] The problem of the poststructuralists' presumption about the negativity of power has to do with the fact that the forms of power that it investigates actually were negative.[23] But, as Eagleton argues, power and authority can be extremely positive things: it all depends on the uses to which they are put, by whom and under what circumstances:

> The power to undo wretchedness is to be celebrated rather than derided, and the power to undo it absolutely is absolutely to be celebrated.[24]

In Adorno's work, and sometimes in a remarkably similar but more covert vein in Einstein's, power and authority, starting with the subject itself, come to be conceived of in a different way, a way that is not reached by Foucault's critique of power. This re-conceiving of power and authority happens in both Einstein and Adorno by way of the aesthetic and, within the aesthetic, in that dimension of it traditionally known as the sublime. It is there that negotiation takes place, whether discursively, musically, through

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[21] Terry Eagleton, *The Illusions of Postmodernism*, p. 63.
[22] Terry Eagleton, *The Illusions of Postmodernism*, p. 63.
[23] Foucault may insist that the idea of power as negative, as repression, ideology, alienation, needs to be replaced by an idea of power as positive, as creative and productive. ('Verweigere den alten Kategorien des Negativen (Gesetz, Grenze, Kastration, Mangel, Lücke), die das westliche Denken so lange als eine Form der Macht und einen Zugang zur Realität geheiligt hat, jede Gefolgschaft! Gib dem den Vorzug, was positiv ist und multipel, der Differenz vor der Uniformität, den mobilen Dispositiven vor den Systemen!' Michel Foucault, *Dispositive der Macht: Michel Foucault über Sexualität, Wissen und Wahrheit*, Internationale marxistische Diskussion, 77 (Berlin: Merve, 1978), p. 141.) Yet in his reduction of the potential of the active subject to zero, Foucault in a sense theorizes a concept of power far more absolutely negative than some of the earlier theories he seeks to displace.
[24] Terry Eagleton, *The Illusions of Postmodernism*, p. 56.

literature or the visual arts, but in any case via such a medium, as to 'was Mensch-sein noch heißen kann'.[25]

[25] Cf. Stefan Bollmann, 'Vom Erhabenen zum komischen, vom geschichtlichen zum kosmologischen Denken – Botho Strauß im Kontext', in *Das Erhabene: zwischen Grenzerfahrung und Grössenwahn*, ed. by Christine Pries (Weinheim: VCH, Acta Humaniora, 1989), pp. 253-74 (p. 268).

Carl Einstein: Biographical Notes

1885 Born in Neuwied am Rhein to Jewish parents.

1894-1903 Secondary education in Karlsruhe. Discontinues a bank apprenticeship.

1904-1908 Studies in Berlin: philosophy, history, history of art, philology.

1907+ Visits Paris. Contacts include Picasso, Braque, Gris and the art-dealer Kahnweiler.

1910 Friendship with Kurt Hiller, Franz Pfempfert. Contributes to various journals: *Der Demokrat*, *Die Gegenwart*, *Der Merker*, among others.

1912 *Bebuquin oder die Dilettanten des Wunders*. Works for *Die Aktion*, *Die Opale*, *Hyperion*, *Pan*, *Die Weißen Blätter*; editor of the first issues of *Neue Blätter*.

1915 *Negerplastik*. Soldier in Upper Alsace.

1916-1918 Transfer to Brussels. Contact with leftist and pacifist groups. Friendship with Gottfried Benn, Carl Sternheim. Member of the Brussels Soldiers' Council.

1919 Returns to Berlin. Co-edits, with George Grosz, the weekly satirical newspaper *Der blutige Ernst*; contributes to *Die Pleite*.

1921 *Die Schlimme Botschaft*. Court proceedings on the grounds of blasphemy. Einstein is charged and fined. *Die afrikanische Plastik*.

1922-1925 Writes for journals: *Der Querschnitt*, *Das Kunstblatt*, and others. Co-edits, with Paul Westheim, the *Europa-Almanach*. Refuses offer of a post at the Bauhaus (1924).

1926 *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts* appears as vol. 16 of the History of Art series in the Propyläen Encyclopedia. The work appears in two further editions (1928 and 1931).

1928 Einstein moves to PAris.

1929 Founds the journal *Documents: doctrines, archéologie, beaux arts, ethnologie* with Georges Bataille, Michel Leiris, Georges Henri Rivière and the art-dealer Georges Wildenstein. Advisory editor of the journal *Transition*. Eugène Jolas is editor; contributors include Hans Arp, James Joyce, Gertrude Stein.

1934 *Georges Braque* appears in French. Einstein works on the script for a Jean Renoir film, *Toni*.

1936-1939 Spanish Civil War. Joins the International Brigade (CNT) under Durruti. Returns early in 1939(?), via an internment camp, to Paris.

1940 Arrested in Paris. Deported to an interment camp near Bordeaux. Escape over the Pyrenees is impossible because of role in the Civil War. Rather than await death by the Nazis, Einstein takes his own life. Buried in Boeil-Bézing, Pyrenées-Atlantiques.

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ALT *alternative: Zeitschrift für Literatur und Diskussion*, 75: Carl Einstein (1970)

CEA Carl-Einstein-Archiv, Akademie der Künste, Berlin. The material in the archive is ordered in folders, which are numbered and listed in a catalogue. For each quotation from the archival material, the number of the folder from which the quoted material is taken is given after the abbreviation CEA.

EKC *Carl Einstein Daniel–Henry Kahnweiler Correspondance 1921-1939*, German text trans., presented and annotated by Liliane Meffre (Marseille: André Dimanche, 1993). Letters from this correspondence will be referred to by the number provided by Meffre.

FF Carl Einstein, *Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen*, ed. by Sibylle Penkert, with an introduction by Helmut Heißenbüttel and commentaries by Sibylle Penkert and Katrin Sello (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1973). If the citation refers to Einstein's text and not the text of the introduction or commentaries, the page number is followed by the pagination of Einstein's manuscript, with the two page numbers separated by a forward-slash. Penkert uses two types of brackets. (See Penkert's editorial notes in *Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen*, p. 332) Penkert's use of square brackets is replaced with {...} because throughout this study square brackets are used to provide supplementary information within a quotation or to indicate excluded text.

K 1, 2 Carl Einstein, *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Propyläen Kunstgeschichte, vol. 16 (Berlin: Propyläen, 1926); 2nd, revised edn (Berlin: Propyläen, 1928)

K 3 Carl Einstein, *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*, reprint of the 1931 edition, ed. and annotated with an introduction by Uwe Fleckner and Thomas Gaehtgens. This constitutes volume 5 of the Berlin edition of Einstein's *Werke* (Berlin: Fannei & Walz, 1996). For convenience, it will be referred to as K 3.

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