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JONATHAN GILMORE

Beginnings and Endings in the Narrative History of Art

The Life of a **Style**

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The Life of a **Style**

Beginnings and Endings in the Narrative History of Art

JONATHAN GILMORE

WHAT DOES IT mean to say that a form of art is "exhausted," that an artist has brought his or her work as far as it can go, that modernism began with Edouard Manet, or that cubism reached a natural ending in 1914 (even if members of that movement continued to paint in a cubist style)? Contemporary theories of art history tend to treat such issues as matters of narrative form, of the manner in which history is represented—with beginnings, turning points, and endings belonging to the narrative itself, and not constrained by historical fact. In *The Life of a Style*, Jonathan Gilmore claims that such narrative developments inhere in the history of art itself.

By exploring such topics as the discovery of perspective, neoclassical models of composition, the end of cubism, and the evolution of Jackson Pollock's paintings, Gilmore proposes a way of understanding how artistic styles develop in an internal or organic fashion and how their development relates to their social and biographical contexts. In Gilmore's view, there are intrinsic limits to a style, limits that are present from its beginning but that emerge only as, or after, it reaches the end of its history.

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The Life of a Style

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The Life of a **Style**

Beginnings and Endings in the Narrative History of Art

JONATHAN GILMORE

Cornell University Press
Ithaca and London

This One

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For Bianca

. . . campami un spirto vivo solamente,
e que' riman perché di voi ragiona.

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I well consider all that ye haue sayd,
And find that all things stedfastnes doe hate
And changed be: yet being rightly wayd
They are not changed from their first estate;
But by their change their being doe dilate:
And turning to themselues at length againe,
Doe worke their owne perfection so by fate:
Then ouer them Change doth not rule and raigne;
But they raigne ouer change, and doe their states maintaine.

—Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene* (Mutabilitie vii. 58)

It is the curse and the blessing of the systematic study of art that it demands that the objects of its study must be grasped with necessity and not merely historically. . . .

—Erwin Panofsky, "Der Begriff des Kunstwollens" (1920)

Swann listened to all the scattered themes [of Vinteuil's sonata] which would contribute to the composition of the phrase, like the premises of a necessary conclusion, and he witnessed its birth.

—Marcel Proust, *Du côté de chez Swann*

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Contents

List of Figures
xi

Preface
xiii

INTRODUCTION
Internal Art History
1

CHAPTER ONE
History, Art History, and Narrative
13

CHAPTER TWO
Endings as Limits
38

CHAPTER THREE
Beginnings and Style
75

CHAPTER FOUR
Stylistic Change, Emergence, and the End of Art
112

Bibliography
143

Index
155

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Figures

1. J.-B. Regnault, *Socrate arrachant Alcibiade des bras de la volupté*, 1791 2
2. H. Daumier, *Battle of the Schools—Realism versus Classic Idealism*, 1855 3
3. J. Sandrart, *Dibutade*, 1683 4
4. J.-B. Regnault, *L'origine de la peinture: "La jeune corinthienne Dibutade dessinant le profil du berger son amant,"* 1785 5
5. H. Daumier, *Penelope's Nights*, 1842 6
6. P. Picasso, *Portrait of Max Jacob*, 1915 39
7. P. Picasso, *Portrait of Olga Picasso in an Armchair*, 1917 40
8. P. Picasso, *Glass and Bottle of Suze*, 1912 42
9. P. Picasso, *Grande Nature Morte*, 1917 43
10. P. Picasso, *Three Musicians*, 1921 44
11. P. Picasso, *Studies*, 1920 46
12. P. Mondrian, *The Sea*, 1914 49
13. P. Mondrian, *Composition No. 10*, 1915 50
14. P. Mondrian, *Composition in Black and White*, 1917 51
15. P. Mondrian, *Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue*, 1921 52
16. P. Mondrian, *Farm at Dulvendrecht*, 1906–8 53
17. Giotto di Bondone, *Last Judgment*, 1305–6 90
18. S. Levine, from *After Edward Weston #5*, 1980 93
19. E. Manet, *Portrait of Émile Zola*, 1868 94
20. V. Van Gogh, *Le Père Tanguy*, 1887–88 95
21. J.-L. David, *Death of Seneca*, 1773 102
22. J.-L. David, *Death of Socrates*, 1787 102
23. J.-L. David, *The Oath of the Horatii*, 1784–85 103
24. J.-M. Vien, *La marchande d'Amours*, 1763 117
25. J.-M. Vien, *Jeunes grecques parant des fleurs l'Amour endormi*, 1767 118
26. J. Pollock, *Going West*, 1934–38 123
27. J. Pollock, *The She-Wolf*, 1943 123
28. J. Pollock, *Moon Woman Cuts the Circle*, ca. 1943 126
29. J. Pollock, *Composition with Pouring II*, 1943 127
30. J. Pollock, *Eyes in the Heat*, 1946 128
31. J. Pollock, *Autumn Rhythm*, 1950 129

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Preface

IN THIS book I ask why art has a history. Or, less grandly, I try to explain why periods, movements, and individual artistic careers have a history: a developmental shape or structure in which their endings appear to follow from their beginnings in not just a temporal but also an internal or organic way. So, for example, I inquire into what it means to say that a longstanding form of art is "exhausted"; that an artist brought her work as far as it could go; that a style developed autono-mously; or that a movement reaches an ending, even if members of that movement go on painting in the movement's style.

I treat these questions through the philosophy of art history—a form of inquiry in which the disparate approaches to art of historical inquiry and theoretical reflection are no doubt uneasily conjoined. Of course, art history as a discipline is not deaf to the blandishments of theory and is perhaps now closer than ever to its theoretically shaped foundations in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. But art historians have not often found that the style of abstract and systematic theorizing characteristic of contemporary philosophy offers an approach to art of any great urgency. And although philosophers acknowledge the importance of knowing the history of the concepts or practices about which they theorize, the abstract form of that theorizing tends to frustrate insightful reflection on those concepts or practices in any of their real historical instantiations.

Thus, in what follows I try to draw some philosophical conclusions from the study of art history. My intent is not to arrive at merely an internally consistent theory—the solution to a puzzle of my own making—but to a theory that makes perspicuous something about the nature of the art history from which it is formed. I am aware, however, that although this work means to speak to two disciplines, its very manner of drawing from each threatens it, like a child trying to emulate each of her incompatible parents, with estrangement from both.

I should like to express how very grateful I am for the criticism, questioning, and guidance offered by readers of various versions of this work. Arthur Danto, possessed of an intellectual *sprezzatura* beside which my fumbling attempts to say something meaningful about the

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arts could only seem more crude, has shown a care and generosity of spirit to me that I have no hope of ever being able to repay. Whereas any mistakes in this work are my own, I think it is to Arthur that is due any depth it might achieve. I've learned much in matters of style and substance from Lydia Goehr who read this material twice, first as an advisor, then as a friend. In each capacity her (simultaneously delivered) exacting criticism and warm encouragement made this a much better work than it would have been. In many ways David Carrier's singular writing in the philosophy of art has been foundational for this study. I've benefited greatly, moreover, from his kind counsel and, at pivotal moments, heartening support. This work has also been much improved through the often extensive comments and suggestions made by Bianca Finzi-Contini Calabresi, Jonathan Crary, Richard Kuhns, Mary Mothersill, and an anonymous reader for Cornell. The book was also refined in discussions with graduate students in my seminar on art historiography in the Department of Art History at Northwestern University and my colleagues in the Society of Fellows, Columbia University. And conversations with Whitney Davis have taught me ways in which art history, historiography, and theory intertwine. I offer, finally, my gratitude to David Freedberg and David Rosand, not just for their specific scholarly guidance, but for the seriousness and openness with which they have endorsed the efforts of one trained in philosophy to write a form of art history. This book is only the beginning of my attempt to find that form.

JONATHAN GILMORE

New York City

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The Life of a Style

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INTRODUCTION
Internal Art History

IN A PAINTING by Baron Jean-Baptiste Regnault (1754–1829), *Socrate arrachant Alcibiade des bras de la volupté* (fig. 1), a classically garbed Socrates struggles to pull an ambivalent Alcibiades from the erotic embraces and enticements of a group of three young women. Completed around 1791, a few years after neoclassical painting—especially that of Regnault's contemporary Jacques-Louis David—had decisively triumphed in critical estimation over the art of the rococo, the painting offers a wry comment on that struggle of the one style with the other. Socrates, who figures in the art of the latter half of the eighteenth century as an exemplar of sobriety, stoicism, and, after the Revolution, civic virtue, stands here for those ideals of classical antiquity which Regnault's reform-minded contemporaries tried to evoke and instill in French painting in their opposition to the sensuality and frivolity of the rococo. The painting is divided into two parts: on the left, Socrates stands in an open pavilion surrounded by antique fluted columns, with a classical bust in the rear and a ceiling inscribed in ancient ornamental designs; on the right, in a darkened, recessed bedchamber replete with luxurious fabrics, flowers, and a rug are the three women: one, her breast exposed, laments Alcibiades' departure, and another, whose nudity is barely concealed by her diaphanous dress, grasps him pleadingly. Alcibiades, pulled in both directions, is caught in the middle.

Although Regnault distinguishes Socrates and the erotic trio through motifs conventionally associated with the different styles of, respectively, neoclassicism and rococo, the overall style of the painting bears the marks of the struggle between those two styles. While the nude body of Alcibiades may be meant to recall a Davidian form, his golden curls, soft, insubstantial skin, and the flickering light on the elaborate folds in the fabric of his tunic suggest impulses closer to those motivating Fragonard's art than David's. And while the painting displays an array of items that evoke antiquity, in its complex space, powdery hues, soft contours, and flickering highlights it bears little resemblance to those stylistic features of antique art which neoclassical painters adopted through studying the ancient Greek and Roman exemplars they encountered in Rome. So Regnault's painting both represents or

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Fig. 1. J.-B. Regnault, *Socrate arrachant Alcibiade des bras de la volupté*, 1791. Musée du Louvre, Paris. © Photo RMN—Arnaudet; J. Schormans.

comments on a moment in the history of art, and, perhaps unwittingly, expresses that moment: the painting explicitly refers to the demands of the neoclassical, but expresses or is symptomatic of the sustained influence of the rococo. We might contrast Regnault's work with Honoré Daumier's *Battle of the Schools—Realism versus Classic Idealism* (fig. 2), where the two schools are embodied, respectively, in a slovenly dressed, uncouth painter in workers' sabots with palette and brush in hand, and a nude painter in a classical stance, wearing an antique Roman helmet and holding his mahlstick as a spear.[1] Here, however we decide to characterize Daumier's style, it does not belong to either of the two art-historical styles whose contest he parodies.

A singular type of visual representation which comments on its own history is illustrated in the theorist and artist Joachim von Sandrart's preface to his discourse *The True Cause, Nature and Mysteries of the Noble Art of Painting* in the first volume of his *Teutsche Academie*, published in 1675. There the author illustrates a story from Pliny the Elder's *Natural History* that purports to account for the origin of painting: Dibutades, a Corinthian potter's daughter, traces the outline of the shadow of her departing lover as it is cast on the wall by lamplight (fig.

[1] Published in *Le Charivari*, 1855.

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Fig. 2. H. Daumier, *Battle of the Schools—Realism versus Classic Idealism,* published in *Le Charivari,* 1855. Courtesy of Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

3)[2] One of the earliest representations of the story is Bartolomé Esteban Murillo's work of circa 1660, a painting in, appropriately, a chapel dedicated to Saint Luke—a painter himself—in the parish church of San Andres, Seville. Later representations include Joseph Wright of Derby's 1784 version, commissioned by Josiah Wedgwood (perhaps attracted to the element of the story describing how the profile drawn by Dibutades was later modeled and baked by her potter father); Regnault's version designed as an overdoor for the Grand Cabinet de la Reine at Versailles in 1785 (fig. 4); Anne-Louis Girodet-Trioson's 1820 illustration accompanying a passage from his own didactic poem *Le peintre* on the role of

[2] One finds a similar story of the discovery of drawing in Leon Battista Alberti's reference to Quintilian's account, in his *Institutio Oratoria,* of a drawing originating in the outline made of a person's shadow in the soil. Erwin Panofsky mentions Leonardo's allusion to this theme, as well as other treatments. *The Codex Huygens and Leonardo da Vinci's Art Theory* (London, 1940), p. 61n. 4. Robert Rosenblum surveys eighteenth- and nineteenth-century treatments in "The Origin of Painting: A Problem in the Iconography of Romantic Classicism," *Art Bulletin* 39 (December 1957): 279–90. See also Ernst Kris and Otto Kurz, *Legend, Myth, and Magic in the Image of the Artist,* trans. A. Laing (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979).

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Fig. 3. J. Sandrart, *Dibutade*, from *Teutsche Academie der Bau-Bild- und Mahlerey-Künste*, vol. 2, Nuremberg, 1683 edition.

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Fig. 4. J.-B. Regnault, *L'origine de la peinture: "La jeune corinthienne Dibutade dessinant le profil du berger son amant,"* 1785. Châteaux de Versailles et Trianon. © Photo RMN—Gérard Blot.

erotic love as an impetus for art; and, finally, Daumier's ribald version published in 1842 of Penelope as she concupiscently swoons before an outline drawing of her husband's smiling profile on the wall (fig. 5).

These images, like Regnault's more knowing painting, represent an event in a history—the history of art—to which they themselves belong. But in representing the same mythical event, the beginning of that history to which each work in its time was the latest installment, they display figures who were part of that event not as they might have appeared, but, rather, in the style contemporary with or belonging to the artist himself. They are like the typography in volumes written about the origin of writing or Orphic operas sung about the origin of song, where the vehicle of representation and the event represented belong to the same history and mode of representation, and thus where the question is raised of to what extent the vehicle of representation imputes its properties to that which it represents.

We have, by turns, figures depicted in baroque, neoclassical, romantic, and realist styles, enacting the origin of painting, but the drawings that are that origin, as mere outlines of shadows, show little evidence of the styles of the paintings in which they are situated. So these paint-

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Fig. 5. H. Daumier, *Penelope's Nights*, published in *Le Charivari*, 1842. Courtesy of Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

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ings illustrate the view that the history of painting originates in registering the appearance of the world, where art may change because its object, the world, changes. But, together, the paintings exemplify changes in the history of art, which, however they are understood, cannot be explained as changes in the appearance of those things in the world the art represents. The painters of the Corinthian maiden represent an artist—or proto-artist—attempting to capture the appearance of a small part of the world, but their paintings reveal styles which must be explained by recourse to sources other than the appearance of the world itself. It is not surprising that the story of Dibutades was a significant theme for neoclassical painters, who, with their style owing so much to the contour drawings of artists such as Gavin Hamilton, were naturally attracted to an account in which the origin of art is found in line. In any case, there is a distance marked in these paintings between the origin of representation and their representation of that origin. That is to say, these paintings depict, rather than just exemplify, how representation has a *history*. Unlike a painting of Veronica's cloth, say by Hans Memling or Simon Vouet, in which the painting and what it represents do not belong to the same history because the representation of Christ's face, the *vera icon*, is something of a miracle and thus outside of history, paintings of the Corinthian maiden impute a structure to the history of art to which both they and their subject belong.[5]

Although Pliny describes the Corinthian maiden's achievement of mimetic representation as the origin of art, it is not clear if he sees the history of art as anything other than the achievement of better and better means to realize such representations. Understood in the context of the *Natural History* as a whole, Pliny's comments on art belong to a survey of the ways various kinds of natural materials are taken from the earth and used and where the only historical development to be found is in progressive achievements of better techniques for manipulating those materials. So it is in the context of discussing the manipulation of stone and marble that he refers to sculptors in marble, in the context of discussing copper alloys and bronze household utensils that he treats cast bronzes, and in the context of discussing the extraction of metals from the earth and their medicinal uses that he engages in a lengthy digression on pigments and painting. For Pliny, mimetic success is what distinguishes the technical achievements in the history of an art, where it is in terms of the specifically technical achievement of a kind of realism that Pliny says, for example, that Zeuxis completes the task in

[5] See Hans Belting, *Bild und Kunst*, for a discussion of the Veronica (*vera icon*) and other representations of *diipeteis*, "things cast down by Zeus" which belong to the "legend of the unpainted image." Translated as *Likeness and Presence*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), pp. 210, 222, 431.

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painting begun by Appollodorus and that "Polyclitus is deemed to have perfected the art of sculpture," whose potential Phidias has revealed.[4]

We have to wait until the Renaissance artist Giorgio Vasari to find a broad synoptic treatment of art that invests it with its own history, the kind of history reflected in the various representations of the Corinthian maiden, whose differences are owed not to differences in the maidens represented, but to differences in the moments in art history to which the representations belong.

Saying he undertook to provide more than a "mere list of the artists," Vasari, although modeling his account on Pliny's, speaks of art as developing autonomously. For him it was "inherent in the very nature of these arts to progress step by step from a humble beginning, and finally to arrive at the height of perfection."[5] This progressive development begins with the "imperfect" art of Giotto and Masaccio, which attempts to represent nature faithfully, and ends with the supreme achievements of Michelangelo, who triumphs, Vasari writes, not only over nature but over the arts of antiquity.

One way of describing the difference between Pliny and Vasari is that, although each was committed to a view of the arts as allowing a kind of progressive development or history, only Vasari saw this history as *internal*. That is, Pliny explained the developments he saw in the history of art not by reference to anything intrinsic to the art itself but by reference to the progress of the human enterprise of trying to understand and manipulate the various elements—bronze, gold, stone, gems—of the natural world. The history of art Vasari narrated was, by contrast, internal, in that the form the development of art took was, in his view, explained by the nature of the art whose history it was. In describing this sense of art's entelechy, Vasari found an appropriate analogy in the life history or biological development of an organism, where the contours of that development are explained by the nature of the organism itself, even if certain external conditions must be in place for the development to occur at all. So in Vasari's narrative, art has a kind of natural life, like the life of a human being, with periods of birth, growth, maturity, and a threat of decline. For Vasari—and for later writers such as Karl van Mander, Giovanni Bellori, and Johann Joachim Winckelmann who each adopted the organic analogy—this natural life of art was also a progressive matter, where later stages were compared with earlier stages in terms of how well they realized some overarch-

[4] Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, book 35, para. 61 and 34, para. 56 and 54 (trans. H. Rackham [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, Loeb edition, 1995], 9: 307, 167, 169 [translation modified]).

[5] Giorgio Vasari, *The Lives of the Artists*, 2d ed. of 1568, trans. Gaston du C. de Vere (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996), 1: 247 (translation modified).

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ing and defining goal. Winckelmann for one, stressed that by virtue of the developmental principles he employed, his history was "not a mere chronicle of epochs, and of the changes which occurred within them"; rather, it aimed "to present a system."[6]

Only with the institutionalization of academic art history do these two ways of speaking about art's development—as organic and progressive—become disengaged. Stressing the conceptual independence of these two kinds of development, Heinrich Wölfflin, a founder of academic art history, writes, "it is an arbitrary judgement to say that the rose-bush lives its supreme moment in the formation of the flower, the apple-tree in that of the fruit."[7]

Wölfflin changed his views over time, but central to his final account of how to explain changes in art history were what he called the "two roots of artistic style," which he identified as the culture or society of the artist and the visual tradition the artist belonged to. But rather than seeing the explanatory roles played by these two factors as identifiable only on a case-by-case basis, as Jacob Burckhardt, Wölfflin's teacher, proposed, Wölfflin asserted that the visual tradition the artist belonged to uniquely explained how the artist's work developed from his or her predecessors. So in Wölfflin's account, art develops in a sense autonomously, as a "form working itself out inwardly," where the artist's social context does not enter into the explanation of the form of his work, except as the initial conditions that encourage or frustrate the visual tradition's development along its own trajectory. This stress on the notion of immanent causes of art's development was shared by other early art historians such as Alois Riegl and Paul Frankl, who spoke of internal drives leading to the manifestation of the potential variations of a form, and Henri Focillon, who asserted, "form liberates other forms according to its *own* laws."[8]

A fundamental difficulty in these accounts of art's development was that while they spoke of causes or explanatory factors "internal" and "external" to an allegedly autonomous visual tradition, they did not provide any systematic account of just what internal features of art or a tradition of art explain its history. Such an account is required, however, if sense is to be made of the assertion that it is in reference to exclusively intrinsic features of the tradition that the development of art

[6] Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *History of Ancient Art*, trans. G. Henry Lodge, 4 vols. (Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1872), 1:149.

[7] Heinrich Wölfflin, *Principles of Art History: The Problem of the Development of Style in Later Art*, 7th edition, trans. M. D. Hottinger (1915; New York: Dover, 1950), p. 14.

[8] Henri Focillon, *The Life of Forms in Art*, trans. C. B. Hogan and G. Kubler (New York: Zone Books, 1992), p. 97.

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must be explained, that is, if sense is to be made of the assertion that art has its own history.

To be sure, some such intrinsic features were assumed in the analogy made between art and organic forms. That is, it was assumed that just as some *natural or biological law* relating to the intrinsic features of an organism could describe the shape of its life history from beginning to end, so some *historical law* relating to the intrinsic features of art or the tradition of art could explain the putative life cycle of artistic styles or the history of art as a whole. The problem here was not just that no credible examples of such a "law of form" could be discovered to explain the beginning, development, and end of artistic styles, but that there was no obvious reason why the analogy between the development of artistic styles and the development of organic forms that promised the discovery of a law of form was a valid analogy at all. Why, one might ask, should the explanatory structures that explain the internal development of organic forms cast any light on the development of artistic styles? Of course, artistic forms may *appear* to have the developmental history, described in these narratives, of growth, maturity, and decline. But the important question is whether those descriptions of the artistic development from beginning to end are underwritten by whatever genuinely *explains* the development from beginning to end. If the identifications of the beginning and ending of the development of an artistic style are not constrained by what actually explains the development, such descriptions seem to be without objectivity, or, as in the view of many contemporary art historians and theorists of history, merely products of the narrative form—the discursive structure of beginning and ending—used to represent the so-called development.

This book is about the nature of those beginnings and endings in narratives of art history, hence, about how to understand beginnings and endings in the art history those narratives represent.

As I understand it, this is a question about the nature of art history, not as an academic discipline, but as what exists logically prior to that discipline, and what that discipline studies. So while it will be necessary to inquire into how narrative concepts are employed in the representation of art history, a distinction will be maintained between the analysis of those concepts and the study of the history they describe. Of course, how the concepts of historical beginnings and endings are used may say something about their nature, but it is possible that the use of such concepts is incomplete or inconsistent in ways an analysis merely of their meaning or rhetorical uses would not reveal. In fact, I will argue that some paradigmatic uses of, and critiques of, the concepts of beginnings and endings are in their theoretical commitments miscon-

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ceived. There are features, in other words, of historical beginnings and endings, especially features associated with their internal connections, that our use of them often denies or fails to reflect.[9]

Thus, what I offer is neither an analysis of notions of art historical closure nor a study of art historical writing. Rather, I suggest a way of understanding how the narrative shape that art history in whole or part appears to exhibit is grounded in a certain constitution of artistic style. I propose, in other words, that the nature of artistic style explains something fundamental about the nature of art history.

The first chapter treats (at a somewhat abstract philosophical level) influential theories of narrative histories of both *realist* and *constructionist* orientations and asks whether the kind of beginning and ending each theory affirms or denies the existence of is characterized well enough to grant the theory the comprehensiveness it claims. Both kinds of theories claim to characterize the narrative structure of history writing in general, not just some species or examples of it. I argue that neither kind of theory achieves the generality it purports to have. In particular, I show that a certain kind of narrative structure, emerging out of an internal relation between historical beginnings and endings, is left by these theories unrecognized. This ground clearing opens up space for the theory I propose.

Chapter 2 narrows the focus from the general representation of history to the representation of development in the history of art. Here I introduce the concept of the *brief*, which I use, in Michael Baxandall's sense, as a shorthand way to capture the set of mental representations an artist has about the means and ends of his or her practice. The concept of the brief allows me to propose a way of understanding an art-historical ending as the reaching of a natural limit, that is, a limit inscribed in the nature of the art form or style itself.

Chapter 3 expands on the nature of the brief, the role of artistic practices in which it is formed, and the nature of the limits to art-historical developments that it imposes. I ask, if we conceive of this limit as an ending, what manner of beginning does it entail? Here, a theory of artistic style is proposed in terms of which the development between a beginning and an ending is conceived as the internal unfolding or emergence of an artistic style.

Chapters 2 and 3 speak of the beginnings and endings of individual artistic developments and movements in the history of art. Chapter 4

[9] This methodological description draws from J. L. Mackie's introduction to *The Cement of the Universe: A Study of Causation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974).

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asks what the difference is between a change from one style to another and a development within a single style, and what manner of development this is. This chapter ends by addressing the question of whether such an internal development can be said to belong, not only to the history of an individual artist or movement, but to the history of art—a portentous phrase—as a whole.

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CHAPTER 1

History, Art History, and Narrative

IN HIS *History of the Art of Antiquity*, Johann Joachim Winckelmann explains how the historical pattern of rise and decline that he attributes to Greek art is not merely analogous to, but grounded in, the principles governing the structure of dramatic narrative:

> For as every action or event has five parts, and, as it were, stages—namely, the beginning, development, state of rest, decease and end, in which lies the reason for the five scenes or acts in dramatic pieces—so it is the same with the chronological ordering of art.[1]

Later historians of art may not have adopted the quasi-Aristotelian poetics of plot so puzzlingly alluded to by Winckelmann, yet their narratives of art history are still shaped by the devices of beginnings and endings. These narratives describe the beginnings and endings of periods such as the Renaissance and modernism, of movements such as cubism, and of developments that cut across periods and movements such as the emergence of landscape painting, the rise of abstraction, or the evolution of Rembrandt's style. This narrative terminology no doubt expresses something about how we view the past, namely, as exhibiting a sense of closure.

Yet, unlike a story of a fictional or theatrical subject, about which it is inappropriate to ask whether the story begins and ends in the right place—just because part of the story's identity is that it begins and ends where it does—a narrative of a historical subject invites the question of whether the subject's beginning and ending are properly identified.

Although there has been an extensive philosophical analysis of narrative representation which was initially devoted to answering the question of whether historical writing, hence, historical narratives, are properly explanatory, it was only in the context of that discussion about explanation that the components of narratives—such as the concepts of begin-

[1] Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *History of Ancient Art*, trans. G. Henry Lodge, 4 vols. (Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1872), 3: 177 (translation modified).

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nings and ending—were scrutinized.[2] A widely held conclusion was that narratives do succeed in being explanatory, even in a way consistent with the influential "covering law" model of scientific explanation proposed by Carl Hempel, and that beginnings and endings play a logical role in that explanatory capacity: a beginning and an ending are those events at either end of a given casual chain which together serve to individuate some manner of change in the objects that are constituents of the events of that casual chain.[3] A narrative describing the events of that casual chain explains the *change or development* that occurs through the events bordered by the casual chain's beginning and ending.[4]

This analysis supplied the formal structure of narrative explanations that refer to beginnings and endings, but not any criteria for identifying those beginnings and endings. For to refer to one event in a chain of causes and effects as a beginning, and another as an ending, does not deny that the earlier event was caused by a still earlier event and the later event was a cause for a still later one. In other words, casual chains can go on and on, originating before and extending after any development or change they are part of. So while we should recognize that it is a formal requirement in explaining a given development that

[2] For representative philosophical treatments of history, see Arthur C. Danto, *Analytical Philosophy of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965); W. B. Gallie, *Philosophy and Historical Understanding* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1964); Morton White, *Foundations of Historical Knowledge* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965); William Dray, *Laws and Explanation in History* (London, 1957).

[3] Hempel's view was that only to the extent that a historical account could bring the event it sought to explain under a general law—as he proposed scientific explanations must—could it be genuinely explanatory. Carl Hempel, "The Function of General Laws in History," *Journal of Philosophy* 34 (1942): 35–48. William H. Dray and others proposed to show that historical representation can be explanatory, but denied that this depended on an appeal to general laws. Arthur Danto argued that the explanatory role of historical explanations could be assimilated to the requirements of explanation set out by Hempel but that because those historical explanations explained not historical events but historical changes, they took on the form of a narrative.

[4] The connection among *events, causes* and *effects, changes*, and *objects* I am assuming here is a standard one: events are the terms of a casual relationship. That is, given a relationship of cause and effect, the cause is an event and the effect is an event. When the occurrence of an event is associated with a change, that is a change in the properties or relationships of one or more constituent objects of the event. For an account of these relations, see Jaegwon Kim, "Causation, Nomic Subsumption, and the Concept of Event," *Journal of Philosophy* 70 (1973): 27–36. For an account of causal relations that sees causation as a relationship not between events but between facts, states of affairs, or whatever else can correspond to a complete sentence, see J. L. Mackie, *The Cement of the Universe: A Study of Causation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974).

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we identify two events as the termini or borders of that development, we still want to ask whether there is any matter of fact involved in asserting of those two events that they are a real beginning and ending.[5]

Consider the narrative John Richardson offers in his biography of Picasso. At the end of the first volume, Richardson writes that had he finished his account describing the creation, in 1907, of the *Demoiselles D'Avignon*, it would have, while furnishing a dramatic climax, wrongly implied the painting was a conclusion:

> For all that the *Demoiselles* is deeply rooted in Picasso's past, not to speak of such precursors as the Iron Age Iberians, El Greco, Gauguin and Cézanne, it is essentially a beginning: the most innovative painting since Giotto . . . it established a new pictorial syntax; it enabled people to perceive things with new eyes, new minds, new awareness. *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* is the first unequivocally twentieth-century masterpiece, a principal detonator of the modern movement, the cornerstone of twentieth-century art. . . . The *Demoiselles* cleared the way for cubism.[6]

Whether it is true that the *Demoiselles* is the "first unequivocally twentieth-century masterpiece" depends on what criteria there are for exemplifying such a kind. The deep question is not what makes the *Demoiselles* a "first" but in the development stretching from the precursors Richardson cites to the cubism it makes possible, what makes the work a *beginning*? This is not yet to ask whether the *Demoiselles* is really the beginning of all that Richardson claims for it. His implication that the painting belongs to the origins of cubism draws on a view of both the painting and the movement that, although long held, many scholars no longer find tenable.[7] The question I am concerned with

[5] In his "Narrative Versus Analysis in History," William H. Dray analyzes narratives as representing causal chains but says, "to my knowledge, no analytical philosopher of history has in fact seriously asked whether there can be good reasons, even rough ones, traceable to the very nature of the casual concept, for regarding one episode of a chainlike explanation as a more appropriate point of origin than another; and that is certainly unfortunate—the more so since how far back particular casual explanations should be pushed is something that historians argue about a good deal." In *Rationality, Relativism and the Human Sciences*, ed. J. Margolis, M. Krausz, and R. M. Burian (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1986), p. 25. For an account that conceives of all explanations as causal ones, see David Lewis, "Causal Explanation," in *Explanation*, ed. David-Hillel Ruben (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

[6] John Richardson, *A Life of Picasso*, vol. 1 (New York: Random House, 1991).

[7] This view originates in D. H. Kahnweiler's 1915 identification of the *Demoiselles d'Avignon* as the beginning of cubism and was propounded by Alfred Barr in,

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here is not whether the painting is a beginning, be it of cubism, of the modern movement, or of twentieth-century art, but what is it for such a painting to be a beginning. What is a beginning in art history?

A compelling response is, of course, that a beginning belongs only to a narrative, and thus the *Demoiselles* is a beginning only in historical narratives that represent it that way.

Conceived of as a general theory, this view, which I will call *narrative constructionism*, sees the narrative beginnings and endings employed by historical accounts as in some sense features merely of historical representation, part of the structure of a narrative about the past, but not, qua beginning and ending, constrained by any facts about the past. David Carrier, who treats the texts of art history this way, writes,

> you can tell a story ending wherever you choose about whatever you wish. . . . there are endings in texts, but not in history as such; and so whether we see the history of art continuing or ending depends upon our goals.[8]

And Hayden White, who sees all historical representation this way, asks,

> Does the world really present itself to perception in the form of well-made stories, with central subjects, proper beginnings, middles, and ends, and a coherence that permits us to see "the end" in every beginning?[9]

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for example, his 1939 assertion that the *Demoiselles* "may be called the first Cubist picture." Kahnweiler, *Der Weg zum Kubismus* (Munich, 1920); Barr, *Picasso: Forty Years of His Art* (New York: MOMA, 1939). Leo Steinberg's seminal essay on the painting, "The Philosophical Brothel," initiated the trend among scholars to disassociate the painting from the origin of cubism. See further comments on the beginning of the movement in chapter 3, and Steinberg, "The Philosophical Brothel," *October* 44 (spring 1988): 53.

[8] David Carrier, *The Aesthete in the City* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), p. 33.

[9] Hayden White, *The Content of the Form* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), p. 24. As this quote suggests, White argues that the narrative form of historical accounts does not correspond to anything "immanent" in the events those accounts represent. He describes historical narratives as *constructions*, by which he means that their form *imposes* a structure on the past in representing it. So while White does not deny that there are past events, the occurrence of which constrains the truth of descriptions referring to them, he maintains that no facts about these events constrain the narrative terms—beginning, turning point, ending—in which they are described.

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And, finally, Louis Mink, for whom "narrative form in history, as in fiction, is an artifice, the product of individual imagination," cautions against our "implicit presupposition" that historical narratives tell us what really happened, in the sense that there is a true but "untold story" in the past waiting to be told.[10]

Just as theorists of historical narratives dismiss beginnings and endings as quasi-fictional devices, so theorists of fictional narratives assert that the plot structures they study have no place in representations of the real world. Thus, Frank Kermode writes that "in 'making sense' of the world we . . . feel a need to experience that concordance of beginning, middle and end which is the essence of our explanatory fictions," but such fictions "degenerate" into "myths" whenever we take them to reflect the real world. Roland Barthes asks of historical representation, "does this narration, differ . . . from imaginary narration as we find it in the epic, the novel, the drama?" And Seymour Chatman asserts that the beginning-end structure of narratives applies to "story events as imitated, rather than to . . . actions themselves, simply because such terms are meaningless in the real world."[11] Narrative constructionism is an elusive doctrine to describe, as it asserts an ontological claim about the nature or structure of history, but in many of its formulations wraps this assertion in an epistemic thesis about what kind of knowledge of the past it is possible to have. Here, I try to peel away the constructionist claims that are epistemic in character; I return later to assess the ontological claims at constructionism's core.

A central charge leveled by narrative constructionists is that narratives falsify what they represent because they are selective. In the temporal span covered by a historical narrative, only a limited quantity and kind of the indefinite number of events that occur are represented. This leads narrative constructionists to speak of narratives as falsifying because there are, as it is said, "other histories" to be told of that time, histories that represent different events, or events under different descrip-

[10] Louis Mink, "Narrative Form as a Cognitive Instrument," in *Historical Understanding*, ed. Brian Fay et al. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), pp. 199, 188.

[11] Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 35–36; Roland Barthes, "The Discourse of History," trans. Stephen Bann, in *Comparative Criticism: A Year Book* 3, ed. E. S. Schaffer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), p. 47. See David Carr's discussion of these writers in *Time, Narrative, and History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), p. 13 and passim. I should mention here that, given the wide variety of treatments of fiction as essentially mimetic, we should be suspicious of the above claims since the narrative structure of fiction may implicitly reflect narrative structures in human life. See the section on MacIntyre and Carr below.

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tions.[12] Thus the primary task of a historian, Paul Veyne suggests, is not to treat his subject but to "invent it":

> Les historiens racontent des intrigues, qui sont comme autant d'itinéraires qi'ils tracent à leur guise à traverse les tres objectif champ événementiel . . . ;aucun historien ne décrit la totalité de ce champ, car un itenéraire doit choisir et ne peut passer partout: aucun de ces itinéraires n'est vrai, n'est l'Histoire.[13]

No doubt, eighteenth-and nineteenth-century speculative historians are notorious for providing large-scale histories in which events outside their interests or knowledge are treated only as evanescent occurrences in provincial quarters, inconsequential to history's "real story," as Hegel, for example, saw whatever happened in Africa and Siberia as inconsequential with respect to the historical development *Geist* exhibited.[14] Recognizing how problematic were the ambitions of those earlier narrative histories, constructionism suggests we ought to have a similar skepticism toward the historical narratives of today. However, the evident failure of those earlier narrative histories to satisfy the epistemic demands of narrative constructionists ought to be attributed, first, to their specious teleology and only secondarily to the selectivity that teleology enjoined. To make sense of the constructionist claim we would do better to ask whether such an epistemic critique applies in any general way to the narratives shorn of such teleology that are written today.

[12] Describing Clement Greenberg's narrative of modernist painting, Carrier writes,

> "the capacity to construct alternative genealogies suggests that they are ultimately arbitrary ways of describing artworks . . . the history of modernism may be told many ways, and even while I admire Greenberg's brilliant telling of the story, I recognize that the story may be told differently. In other accounts, different painters will play roles, and the painters Greenberg discusses will have different roles . . . recognizing that the story of modernism can be told differently undermines the plausibility of Greenberg's account."

David Carrier, *Artwriting* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987), p. 54.

[13] Paul Veyne, *Comment on écrit l'histoire: essai d'épistémologie* (Paris, 1971), pp. 339, 351.

[14] Speaking of the inhabitants of Eastern Europe, Hegel wrote, "These people did, indeed, found kingdoms and sustain spirited conflicts with the various nations that came across their path. . . . The Poles even liberated beleaguered Vienna from the Turks. . . . Yet this entire body of peoples remains excluded from our consideration, because hitherto it has not appeared as an independent element in the series of phases that Reason has assumed in the World." *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (New York; Willey Book Co., 1944), p. 350.

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Insofar as a historical narrative representing a series of events does not describe them from every standpoint from which they were significant, and does not represent every event that occurred, there is an uncontroversial sense in which a narrative is essentially a selective representation. But it is difficult to see what force narrative constructionists think this has against such a narrative's truth. Historians do not record every event that occurs within the time frame covered by their narratives. And of the events they do record, they do not record them under every description of them that is true.[15] But both forms of selectivity reflect the fact that not every event, under every true description, occurring within a given time will have a function in explaining whatever it is the historian's narrative attempts to explain.

For example, a history of the events leading up to the French Revolution might describe the death of Louis XIV as the ending to unconfined royal absolutism, for Louis XV was not strong enough to resist the French Parliament's demands for legislative power. But a history of French art of the period might describe that same event as the beginning of the demand for rococo painting, for it meant that the nobility was no longer required to be present at the royal court at Versailles, and thus could move to Paris and build the elegant but small *hôtels* that required the intimate, delicate, small-scale, and fanciful decoration so well provided by the art of the rococo. So, here, "the ending of royal absolutism" and "the beginning of the demand for rococo" describe the same event—"the dying of Louis XIV"—in different ways, corresponding to different explanations, because belonging to different historical developments in which that same event figures. Thus, when a narrative functions to explain some historical change, *what is to be explained* is individuated or identified in such a way as to make irrelevant the charge that the narrative has a lack of scope. Irrelevant, but not wrong, for an explanatory narrative does lack the kind of scope that would allow it to represent those events which play no part in the explanation it offers.

Of course, historians do more than offer explanations. They describe sequences of events that may be casually irrelevant to the events they are trying to explain. So the constructionist's point could be understood

[15] Because a narrative takes what White calls "bare facts" and gives them a particular content—a "meaning"—he characterizes the narration of events as a form of interpretation. But while White rejects the idea that events in history possess, together, any *closure* independently of their being represented in historical narratives, he does not thereby conclude that the narrative form of historiography serves only as a device of factual exposition. Rather, he thinks that the narrative form carries with it a certain kind of content—the "content of form"—that is not reducible to facts about the historical events themselves.

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as challenging the truth claims in general of historians, not just those that serve as ingredients in explanatory narratives. The problem with this challenge is that it is not clear what would be a *nonselective* historical account that could serve as a standard by which all actual accounts presumably fail. White's arguments for the fictionality of historical narratives hinge on contrasting narratives with the notion of a "copy" of the past. Any subtraction of detail, as is involved in selection, from such a copy is evidence for White of distortion. The problem, of course, is elucidating in a nontrivial way such a notion of a copy.

Taken figuratively, the notion of a copy of the past might be employed to suggest that historical accounts inevitably have lack of scope. For the constructionist, a copy might mean a very detailed representation, one that neither excluded certain events from being represented nor described its events in only a limited number of ways. But this still does not work as an ideal representation against which to challenge all historical representations as, in principle, deficient. For just because between two temporal points an account gives a more fine-grained analysis, represents more events and more casual linkages, describes the events in more ways, or individuates them more "thinly" does not mean that such a representation is any better than a selective one. In fact, the more detailed account might obscure the relevant descriptive or explanatory points a selective account makes salient. A victim of a mugging, asked to explain how his assailants held him up, would not usually enlighten an investigating officer by describing the attack of indigestion he also suffered at the time.

Commenting on this conception of what criteria a true narrative must fulfill, Noël Carroll makes a persuasive diagnosis of White's and many other narrative constructionists' epistemic relativism: in asking whether a certain kind of representation satisfies the demands of truth, they appeal to a theory of what makes such representations true whose criteria are impossible to meet. But rather than jettisoning that theory for a better one that is not so idealized, such that it allows for at least some representations to be true, they preserve their theory and claim that, by its lights, all representations are fictional, arbitrary, or in some sense without objectivity.[16]

Paul Ricoeur's wide-ranging analysis of the relations between narrative and the experience of time seems to suffer from a similar defect. From a study of Augustine's *Confessions* he concludes that narrative takes the disparate elements of the human world—"agents, goals,

[16] For an extended exposition and trenchant analysis of White's theories, see Noël Carroll, "Interpretation, History and Narrative," *The Monist* 73 (April 1990): 134–66.

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means, interactions, circumstances, unexpected results etc."—and harmonizes them into a meaningful order. "The ideas of beginning, middle, and end are not taken from experience: they are not features of real action but the effects of poetic ordering."[17] Here, Ricoeur assumes that only a strictly empiricist characterization of experience could capture the nature of the experience and avoid attributing to it an external order. But if one *begins* with this account of what it is to characterize experience, one cannot even introduce such "elements" as agents, goals, and unexpected results. For those concepts *already* belong to a world organized in terms of human concerns. No strictly empiricist description of the world could locate a "goal" in it. If the argument is to be made that narratives impose an order or structure on events they do not have of themselves, that theory must start with a conception of the world that includes both those features available to empiricist descriptions as well as those features—"social constructions"—described in terms that necessarily refer to human affairs.[18]

We might salvage some import from White's postulate that narratives are not "copies" of the past by suggesting that perhaps he means narratives *purport* to be akin to copies of the past, as if they were presenting the *one* story of a sequence of events, not a historian's selective interpretation.[19] This is a charge made by Bernard Williams, who observes that in a way "every narrative is a lie," by which he means that narratives purport to tell *the* story of a course of events when in fact they tell only one story of those events, under only a limited number of the many true descriptions which apply.[20] However, it is not clear who, historian or reader, naively thinks that a narrative's description of a course of events represents the only events that occurred, or the only way those events could be described. In any case, the problem is not in the epistemic status of historical narratives but in the unfounded claims for totality that might be made for them, or, at worst, the naive response of some audiences to what they read in historical narratives.

[17] Paul Ricoeur, *Temps et récit* (Paris, 1983), 1: 102, 67 (*Time and Narrative*, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984], 3 vols.)

[18] See John Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality* (New York: Free Press, 1995).

[19] White appeals in this regard to the notion of "narrativizing discourse" employed by continental literary theorists, such as Gérard Genette. Such discourse presents itself to the reader as an unmediated depiction of reality or a "transparent" vehicle through which to see events just as they occurred. See Gérard Genette, "Boundaries of Narrative," *New Literary History* 8 (1978): 11.

[20] Bernard Williams, "Integrity, Insight and the Heroism of Self-Understanding," the third of his Woodbridge Lectures: "The Virtue of Truth," delivered at Columbia University, March 25, 1993.

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Finally, the charge by constructionists such as Louis Mink that a narrative's truthfulness is corrupted through its requiring an "effort of the imagination" is unpersuasive without some account of why such a feature of a historical investigation should compromise the truth of the results that investigation yields. It is true that a historian may need to use his imagination to piece together the explanatory connections among ingredients of a course of events. But that a representation of a course of events is not simply found like a map showing a lost trail does not entail that such courses of events are not there to be discovered.[21] And that a course of events represented by a narrative exhibits a kind of coherence, one issuing from a common *relevance* of the events and situations mentioned, does not lend any support to the idea that these events form a unity only via an effort of imaginative storytelling.

In any case, the very idea of telling the "whole truth" about every event that occurred is, in principle, incoherent, in that events are often, perhaps always, redescribed with what Arthur Danto has called *narrative sentences*—i.e., descriptions of an event that refer to later events (in the occurrence of which it has an explanatory role) employing knowledge contemporaries of the earlier event could not have had.[22] This is to say that as long as history continues, historical events may always be redescribed in light of the occurrence of later events to which they have contributed.[23] In the example above, no one at the time of Louis XIV's death could have known that that event was the *beginning of the fall of royal absolutism* and the *beginning of the demand for the art of the rococo*, yet those are descriptions whose truth was borne out in the history that followed.

[21] The term "courses of events" comes from John Passmore, "Narratives and Events," in *History and Theory* 26 (1987): 68–74. It refers to those elements narratives follow, such as background conditions, causes and effects of events, the context of those events, and the practical deliberations of the agents involved. Passmore expresses a form of narrative constructionism: "I do not agree that outside narratives there is such a thing as a beginning, a middle, and an end" (p. 73).

[22] As in, for example, the sentence, "The Thirty Years War began in 1618." Arthur Danto, *Narration and Knowledge* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), pp. 143–82 and passim.

[23] Louis Mink wrongly assumes such narrative redescription supports the constructionist point: "stories are not lived but told. Life has no beginnings, middles, or ends; there are meetings, but the start of an affair belongs to the story we tell ourselves later, and there are partings, but final partings only in the story. There are hopes, plans, battles and ideas, but only in retrospective stories are hopes unfulfilled, plans miscarried, battles decisive, and ideas seminal." "History and Fiction as Modes of Comprehension," in *Historical Understanding*, p. 60. It is compatible with both realist and constructionist views of the concepts of beginnings and endings that events might be redescribed retrospectively with reference to what effects they were causes of.

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If these relatively familiar criticisms of the constructionist position are persuasive in showing that the theory fails to demonstrate that there is some *general* sense in which the truth of historical representations is compromised by their narrative form, this does not, of course, indemnify any particular historical narrative from being charged with making false claims, or falsely narrating the history of its subject. One could share the postmodern suspicion J.-F. Lyotard voices toward "Grand Narratives"—the so-called Enlightenment narratives of the intertwined progress of human knowledge and freedom—without believing that all narratives are similarly discredited.[24] Moreover, that historical narratives are not in principle distorting, does not deny that there might be better ways of representing the past than through narrative form.

Indeed, a methodological premise of the work of the *Annales* school of historiography is that the concentration on events—*l'histoire événementielle*—in the typical historical narrative leads to only a superficial understanding of the narrative's subject, and has whatever value it does achieve only insofar as it rests on a study of deeper *structures* of the *longue durée* that define that subject's existence. So Fernand Braudel devotes only about one-third of his magisterial *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II* to a detailed narrative account of the struggles between the Spanish and Turkish empires for mastery in the Mediterranean between 1551 and the death of Philip II in 1598. The bulk of the work is, by contrast, devoted to a relatively nonnarrative analysis of such features of the region as its mountains, plateaux, plains, seas, and climate, and, at a higher level of description, the region's economics, population densities, distances, commerce, civilizations, societies, and forms of warfare. These are what Braudel calls "those great underlying currents which so often run silently, and whose true significance emerges only if one can observe their workings over great spans of time." For the *Annalistes* these ongoing rhythms and structures of the natural and social world are the proper subject of historical representation, a subject more fundamental in their view than the brief lives of the individuals to which those structures mutely give a substance and shape.[25]

[24] "The State resorts to the narrative of freedom every time it assumes direct control over the training of the 'people,' under the name of the 'nation,' in order to point them down the path of progress." Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. 32.

[25] Braudel cautions that we must beware of "that history which still simmers with the passions of the contemporaries who felt it, described it, lived it, to the rhythm of their brief lives, lives as brief as our own. It has the dimensions of their

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But to conclude that narratives do not necessarily falsify the past, or the past at least at the level of description the Annalistes allow, does not shed any light on what—the world or its representation—the *form* of those narratives belongs to.

In an essay on the need to live historically, Friedrich Nietzsche characterizes human existence by contrasting it with the form of life inhabited by animals, say a herd of cows, which, he says, live in "blindness between the walls of the past and the future."[26] What the animals (and children, Nietzsche adds) are blind to are precisely those walls, the hinges between past and future that bring into relief the present. Human existence, by contrast, is often defined by those walls, where moments of one's life are seen as beginnings, turning points, or endings only with reference to the past and future to which they are joined. Some theorists, call them *narrative realists*, argue that there is a fundamental narrative character to human life, and this accounts in a way for the narrative form in which historical accounts are rendered. For such theorists the narrative form of historical representation is *continuous* with the narrative form with which human experience is constituted. Thus, Charles Taylor writes,

> it has been often been remarked that making sense of one's life as a story is . . . like orientation to the good, not an optional extra; that our lives exist also in this space of questions, which only a coherent narrative can answer. In order to have a sense of who we are, we have to have a notion of how we have become, and of where we are going.[27]

Alasdair MacIntyre and David Carr offer two sustained defenses of this view of historical narratives; an analysis of their accounts will let me make salient what I think are, in general, the limitations to such an approach, and, by extension, the limits to any attempt to offer a general theory of the fit between narratives and the historical events they describe.

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anger their dreams, and their illusions." Both quotations are from the preface to Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, 2 vols., trans. Sian Reynolds (New York: Harper and Row, 1972–74).

[26] Friedrich Nietzsche, "On the Utility and Liability of History for Life," in *Unfashionable Observations*, trans. Richard T. Gray (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 88.

[27] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 47. Other theorists who stress the role of narratives in making experience intelligible are Jerome Bruner, *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986); Mink, *Historical Understanding;* and Frederick Olafson, *The Dialectic of Action* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).

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MacIntyre suggests that all human lives embody narratives having definite narrative forms. Both our identities as individual persons and our continuing responsibility for our past actions, he argues, are predicated on what he calls the narrative unity of our lives.[28]

MacIntyre begins by considering what conditions must be satisfied for a person's behavior to be intelligible. In most contexts, we are able to understand someone's behavior when we can adduce both the reasons for acting from which the person's behavior follows, and how those reasons make sense, or are what he calls "good reasons" given the "setting"—the institution, practice, or other relevant context—in which the behavior is performed.[29] But there is a third constraint on intelligible action, MacIntyre suggests, that the above view elides: the narrative history of the person who performs the action. He asks us to consider a case such as that of an employee of a power plant who one day recognizes that the plant has the same disastrous flaw as one by which he earlier was injured. Nonetheless, the employee continues to show up for work on time each day and perform his usual duties. Here, his reasons for acting and his actions themselves might be intelligible with reference to his daily routine and the role he plays in the workplace setting, but his behavior is unintelligible given the narrative of his history. Of this last feature MacIntyre writes:

> There is an important way in which the intelligibility conferred upon an action by its place in a particular agent's narrative is more fundamental than that conferred by its relationship to practices [that is, settings]. For that an action is what a particular form of practice prescribes in this type of situation may satisfy a necessary condition for intelligibility and in many contexts may be sufficient to warrant a judgment of *prima facie* intelligibility, but by itself is never a sufficient condition of intelligibility as such. The question can always arise: why or how can that particular person with those particular narrative an-

[28] MacIntyre stresses the need for a theory of morality at the center of which is a conception of a human good or *telos*. I am not interested here in his specific arguments about the need for and content of this kind of morality, as much as in his recognition that to see human life as having a *telos* requires our being able to "envisage each human life as a whole, as a unity." It is to establish that this is how we conceive of human lives that he proposes his theory of narrative history. Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), p. 204.

[29] MacIntyre leaves unspecified what makes a reason for action a "good reason," except to say that the goodness depends on how well it follows everyday routines and the implicit norms of the setting to which the behavior belongs: "there are not contextless good reasons." Alasdair MacIntyre, "The Intelligibility of Actions" in *Rationality, Relativism and the Human Sciences*, ed. Margolis, Krausz, and Burian, p. 74.

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tecedents be intelligibly engaged in that type of activity *now* and *here*?[50]

So the intelligibility of an action is dependent on three interrelated factors: the intentional, the social, and the historical. We understand a particular action by (1) identifying an agent's behavior with reference to the intentions or reasons it embodies; (2) relating the agent's behavior to a setting or context where such intentions or reasons are appropriate or otherwise "good"; and (3) recognizing how the action coheres with the prior history of the agent.[51] It is specifically the *narrative* history of the agent—his or her past conceived of as an ongoing story—with which the action must cohere to be intelligible. For MacIntyre this intelligibility of behavior concerns not just those who observe it. The ability to understand another's behavior and to act in an intelligible manner oneself are, he says, of a piece: to share a culture is to share "schemata which are at one and the same time constitutive of and normative for intelligible action by myself and are also means for my interpretation of the actions of others."[52] A widely held view of the explanation of behavior holds that we understand an intentional action by understanding its purpose; and the purpose of an action is the purpose the agent had in performing the action, where we understand that agent's purpose by understanding the agent's reason for so acting.[53] MacIntyre does not reject this analysis so much as stress how our understanding the agent's reason for acting depends on our being able to see it as embedded in the agent's social and, more fundamentally, historical situation. Because MacIntyre thinks the intelligibility of such actions depends on their fitting within a narrative history, he speaks of one's life as *lived out* as an enacted narrative.[54] The narrative is enacted rather than just retrospectively recited because the intelligibility that

[50] MacIntyre, "Intelligibility of Actions," pp. 74–75.

[51] Concerning what is encompassed in this notion of "coheres," MacIntyre says very little. He does say that as these criteria are necessary to render an action intelligible, they compose "objective" constraints on intelligible action: "Intelligibility is an objective property of actions or of sets of actions; it is not in the eye of the beholder." "Intelligibility of Actions," p. 64

[52] Alasdair MacIntyre, "Epistemological Crises, Dramatic Narrative and the Philosophy of Science," in *The Monist* 60 (1977): 453–54.

[53] See, for example, Donald Davidson, *Essays on Actions and Events* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980); and Charles Taylor, *The Explanation of Behavior* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964).

[54] This narrative form has a certain teleological character: "There is no present which is not informed by some image of some future and an image of the future which always presents itself in the form of a telos—or of a variety of ends or goals—toward which we are either moving or failing to move in the present." MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, pp. 216–17.

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the narrative affords a piece of behavior is part of the behavior, not something made of the behavior after the fact. "Stories are lived before they are told—except in the case of fiction."[35]

MacIntyre's analysis is meant to show that, rather than being an arbitrary or dispensable form of description, historical narrative plays a necessary constitutive role in intelligible human behavior. If true, this would certainly controvert the narrative constructionist claim that narratives are only formal, contingent ways of representing past actions and events. The defect in this theory, however, is that although MacIntyre means for his argument to show that the intelligibility of actions depends on narratives, the constraints listed above are not so much narrative constraints as *historical* ones. The identity of an agent's intentions, reasons, or desires, whether those intentions, reasons, or desires are appropriate to the agent's context, and whether they are consistent with, or coherent in light of, the past history of the agent, are facts *primarily* about the history (and present state) of the agent and only *secondarily or derivatively* facts that may be represented in a narrative. That is, it is the set of constraints provided by the history and context of the agent that make his behavior intelligible; the narrative in MacIntyre's account only *represents* this history or makes it explicit. One may want to appeal to a narrative of the agent's past and the past of the context in which he acts in order to show the intelligibility (according to MacIntyre's criteria) of his behavior, but if this intelligibility exists, it must (according to the same criteria) have existed prior to and outside of its place in a narrative. So what MacIntyre succeeds in showing is not how a certain kind of narrative gives intelligibility to a piece of behavior, but how certain historical facts give it intelligibility, facts through which the behavior is rational, customary, and expresses a character in which memory, beliefs, and intentions are integrated. But this then obviates the allegedly necessary role for narratives, except perhaps as a form of argument in a demonstration (to one who thought otherwise) that an agent's behavior was intelligible. Ironically, MacIntyre shares an assumption with the narrative constructionists such as Hayden White whom he means to oppose: that the intelligibility or coherence of events represented within a narrative is predicated on their being represented in a narrative. Without an account of what intelligibility or coherence a narrative representation *adds* to the perception and experience of events, what MacIntyre shows is only that the intelligibility of behavior represented within a narrative follows from the intelligibility of that behavior outside of or independent of that narrative.

[35] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 212.

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David Carr argues for conclusions similar to MacIntyre's about the continuity of narratives with everyday life, but offers a deeper and more general theory of how human lives are bound up with narrative form. This theory ultimately encompasses the narrative form of collective histories, such as those of cultures, communities, and nations.[36]

MacIntyre's aim is to show that there is an essential narrative dimension to a human life. But, as an argument against the constructionists' claim that narrative form is an imposition on historical events, one can readily see that his point needs elaboration. For the typical subjects of historical narratives—large-scale changes in social groups, broad historical processes linking many lives—cannot be accommodated in a theory of narrative based on just the single life as it is lived. Even biographies describe the history of the context or setting to which their subject belongs. MacIntyre points in this direction with a discussion of how interaction among different people or groups could be seen as a conversation with a dramatic form, a conversation to which narrative genres apply. But it is Carr who offers an account of the narrative character of the interpersonal or collective, not just individual, past.[37]

Carr proposes that it is not in the nature of events or actions, as we experience them, to combine in a merely additive way. That is, we do not experience ourselves doing one thing, then another, then another. Rather, we experience events and actions as combined in various ways such that small-scale events "make up large-scale events of which they become structural, not merely sequential, elements."[38] Carr says that because most large-scale actions are practical in nature, they are performed to achieve a projected result. Such actions are "storied" in having a beginning where something is to be done and a goal is articulated, and a closured end when the result is achieved. This means-end structure of action not only exemplifies a narrative by virtue of its beginning-middle-end structure but is also "held together" by narrative. By this, he means that as we perform large-scale actions such as completing a project at work, playing a game of tennis, or finding our way home, we organize with reference to our goal the elements that are the

[36] Carr, *Time, Narrative, and History*.

[37] In his classic study of personal identity, Derek Parfit makes an analogy between the unity of a human life and that of larger social groups such as nations: "A nation is in many ways unlike a person. Despite these differences, the identity of persons over time is, in its fundamental features, like the identity of nations over time. Both consist in nothing more than the holding over time of various connections, some of which are matters of degree." *Reasons and Persons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 316.

[38] Carr, *Time, Narrative, and History*, p. 52

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means to that goal. We give a "shape" to these elements in which they form a unity starting with the initial condition and ending with the achieved result. But this shape is not produced only retrospectively. It exists at any moment by virtue of our reflection on how previous elements have contributed to the goal, and our projection toward what elements remain to be put in place. Phenomenologists such as Husserl and Dilthey speak in this connection of the notion of a *Besinnung*—a "taking stock" or "temporal grasp"—through which we join together in a unified whole experiences that are spaced out over time. For Carr, the unity possessed by the whole is a kind of narrative unity.

Carr argues that not only do extended human actions have a narrative shape but entire lives do as well. Narrative not only configures experiences and actions but also is the organizing form of the self that has experiences. A person is born into a culture already possessed of a narrative through which the culture understands itself, characterizes its past, and projects its future. This narrative serves as an implicit background to who a person is. Even if she is not interested in continuing the narrative or chooses to rebel against it, it still provides the beginning and range of possibilities for the person's "life story."[39] Owen Flanagan argues for a similar view of how a person's identity is constituted:

> The construction and maintenance of the self involves many players. . . . Our selves are multiply authored. [Yet] it is fair to say that normally we are one of the main authors of our identities. Once our characters are well formed and we have a good grasp of them, our powers of self-authorship increase dramatically. We gain the power to guide our lives more self-consciously in terms of our model of who we are.[40]

[39] For a related point, but one that sees the self as derived from, but no more than what is posited by, narratives, see Daniel Dennett's "The Origins of Selves," *Cogito* 3 (1989): 163–73:

> *We* (unlike *professional* human storytellers) do not consciously and deliberately figure out what narratives to tell and how to tell them: like spider webs, our tales are *spun* by us . . . These strings or streams of narrative issue forth *as if* from a single source—not just in the obvious sense of flowing from just one mouth, or one pencil or pen, but in a more subtle sense: their effect on any audience or readers is to encourage them to (try to) posit a unified agent whose words they are: in short to posit . . . a *center of narrative gravity*. (p. 169)

[40] Owen Flanagan, *Consciousness Reconsidered* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992), p. 201. See also Michael Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982): "others made me, and in various ways continue to make me the person I am" (p. 143).

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Now individuals do not typically regard themselves as existing autonomously. They conceive of themselves as belonging to groups, communities, or nations, each of which has a past that is not the past of any one of its members. Likewise, such corporate entities have projects or goals that are the projects and goals of individuals only as they see themselves as members of those groups. Carr wants to show that these societal groups can exhibit the same reflective-prospective structuring of their experience that individuals do. He suggests that, however one understands the ontology of such groups, they exist in a certain specifiable sense, the sense in which individuals who compose them *take them to exist.* That is, the existence of the group is at least minimally constituted in the belief of each of its members that they are engaged in a common enterprise:

> If we now make the shift to the group, we can say that events of common experience and actions undertaken in common are constituted when we gather together sequences of events of sub-actions by projecting onto them a structure comprising beginning, middle and end. The group itself, as we-subject, is constituted as the unity of a temporally extended multiplicity of experiences and actions . . . In a kind of collective reflection, we act or experience in virtue of a story we tell ourselves about what we are going through or doing.[41]

Carr gives the example of a barn raising, in which the distinct actions of many individuals are identified as parts of a common project by being brought together within a narrative. If such a narrative can incorporate the multifarious actions of different people, and those people accept the narrative characterization of their actions, then a group with a common enterprise is thereby constituted. And, as in the case of an individual's behavior, the practical deliberations, decisions, and actions of the members of the group will in part be conditioned by the narrative history they see as "immanent" in their collective enterprise.[42]

One might be persuaded, with narrative realists such as MacIntyre and Carr, that narratives play an indispensable role in the intelligibility of human behavior. The problem is that if certain kinds of narratives do

[41] Carr, *Time, Narrative, and History,* p. 149.

[42] Frederick Olafson argues that the connection and narrative continuity of actions of several agents may be understood to arise out of each agent's reflecting on his or others' past events and actions, and proceeding in light of how he understands them. There may, in fact, be no causal links between the previous events, but only the link that the agent supplies in acting in light of his reflection on what the past events mean for him and what he plans to do. A historical narrative will then represent the successive events or actions as connected in virtue of their role in the practical inferences of the agents involved (*Dialectic of Action*).

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play such a necessary role, these are, nonetheless, not the narratives that historians write in their representation of the past. The kind of narrative a historian tells about the past is usually not concerned just to *reproduce* the narrative with which his or her subject's experience was made intelligible, no matter how great a role such narratives played in giving a structure to, and explaining, the behavior of those individuals. In fact, historians often represent the experiences people had with concepts those people could not understand or in terms that would contradict the narratives that made their behavior intelligible to themselves. For example, a historian might describe how ancient Romans saw themselves, with Virgil, as descended from the Trojans of Homer's *Iliad*, and how their lives and unity as a nation were understood through this narrative of their origins—a narrative dependent on Homer's having allowed Aeneas to escape the death suffered by other defenders of Troy, and thus be available to Virgil as the hero of the Roman writer's story. But the historian would not, or need not, accept the content or form of this narrative of Rome's origins as the content or form of *his or her narrative* of Roman history. The Virgilian foundation myth would be only one kind of element that entered into the historian's narrative, and might there be contradicted, as in a true narrative of Roman history it certainly would. There is a distinction to be made between a true narrative and one that, regardless of its truth, gives a shape or intelligibility to one's experience. That a narrative serves an explanatory role in how individuals understand and carry out their lives no more makes it true than the explanatory power of adverting to a person's beliefs in understanding his behavior makes those beliefs into knowledge. Narrative realists tend to elide this distinction, in large part because of the stress their methodology places on the first-person perspective a subject has on the situation he finds himself in—the "facticity" Heidegger describes a subject as "thrown" into. Even if one were persuaded that human experience is inseparable from the narratives with which it is configured or described, one would still want to know whether the truth of those narratives is constrained by any nonnarrative feature of the world. Don Quixote sees his life through an internalized narrative, where whatever experience he undergoes is fitted into the romance of chivalry he tries to enact. Sheep become armies, a barber's basin becomes a helmet, and when his Dulcinea does not appear to be the "duchess of beauty" he expected, but a farm girl on a donkey, Quixote attributes it to a malign enchanter. As intelligible and coherent as this narrative is from the inside to him who lives it, and as much as Sancho Panza and others begin to accept its terms, it is not supposed by a reader to be true. MacIntyre may be correct in saying that "narrative history . . . turns out to be the basic and essential genre for the charac-

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terization of human actions."[43] But that this describes a formal feature of a historian's account of the past says nothing about whether and how that form gains a purchase on the world.

If a narrative represents a change or development, it must have some central subject in which the change or development occurs.[44] Without reference, implicitly or explicitly, to such a central subject, the events that constitute a historical representation can form, at most, a chronicle: a series of event descriptions with no indication of what change or development those events may be constituents of. The *Lives of the Saints* is such a chronicle—a record of how and when saints lived but not a narrative change or *history* to which each of those lives contributed. Vasari's *Lives of the Artists,* by contrast, not only recounts the lives of individual painters, sculptors, and architects but purports to chart the development of a central subject, the "true style," the history of which began with Giotto and culminated in the work of Michelangelo.

A narrative constructionist sees such a central subject as constituted or produced by narrative representation, not as a unified enduring entity existing prior to that representation. For example, contrasting a history whose subject is Giorgione's work and a history whose subject is Venetian painting, David Carrier says that, unlike Giorgione, the latter subject "has only a fictional unity; we must decide what works belong to the *subject*, Venetian painting."[45] And in discussing how Ernst Gombrich's narrative *Art and Illusion* includes such different artists as Giotto and Constable, Carrier writes,

> Treating a Giotto as a precursor to a Constable is to point to their common features: unlike Byzantine works, both aim to re-present

[43] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 208.

[44] Arthur Danto writes, "to speak of a change is implicitly to suppose some continuous identity in the subject of change . . . whatever the metaphysical status the subject is to enjoy," and "it is [the] implicit reference to a continuous subject which gives a measure of unity to an historical narrative." *Narrative and Knowledge*, pp. 235–36. For a discussion of the concept of a *continuent*, a thing that exists through time and change, see C. D. Broad, *An Examination of McTaggart's Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 138n.; E. Hirsch, *The Concept of Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982); Sydney Shoemaker, *Identity, Cause, and Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); and David Wiggins, *Sameness and Substance* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980).

A continuent persists if its temporal parts are connected in the right way. Depending on the kind of continuent it is, the right connection might be spatiotemporal continuity, causal dependence, or, for persons, continuity of consciousness.

[45] Carrier, *Artwriting*, p. 12.

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some actual scene.... Gombrich's *subject* elegantly brings together otherwise different works, Renaissance religious narratives and landscape painting.[46]

What is missing in this characterization of a narrative's subject is an acknowledgment of its explanatory dimension. In Gombrich's narrative the subject "naturalistic painting" brings together otherwise different works, not simply because of features they have in common, but because of a more fundamental explanatory connection they putatively share: works surveyed early in Gombrich's narrative are assumed by him to play a role—as background conditions or links in a causal chain—in the creation of works that come later. That such works have naturalism in common is a *result* or expression for Gombrich of their explanatory connections. Giotto and Constable are brought together because Constable's naturalism is explained by events and conditions in which Giotto, or the kind of art his work exemplified, played a role. The causal and explanatory connections are what make "naturalistic painting" a subject constituted from temporally separate parts. This is so even if it was the naturalism of such works that in the first place led Gombrich to posit such an explanatory connection.

Now, Gombrich may, in fact, be wrong in asserting such an explanatory connection. His theory of "making and matching" provides a controversial description under which the events he narrates are to be explained. There, naturalistic artists are said to form a tradition in which each compares earlier representations of what he sees to the world as it appears before him and creates his own representation, fixing what his vision tells him the earlier images missed. But if that description does not accurately represent the genesis of Constable's work, then there is no such explanatory connection (under that description) to be drawn between the English painter's naturalism and earlier naturalistic art. This, of course, does not deny that there might be other descriptions under which Constable's actions can be explained with reference to earlier naturalistic art.

So I do not think Carrier adequately captures the role of what he calls a narrative's *subject*; perhaps the problem is that he focuses on a narrative in which dubious or less than explicit explanatory connections are made. Carrier's example of a chronicle:

Giotto paints the Arena Chapel, 1306
Leonardo paints *Mona Lisa*, 1502
Constable paints *Wivenhoe Park*, 1816

[46] Carrier, *Artwriting*, p. 18.

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which is given a narrative shape ("*Wivenhoe Park* marks the culmination of the naturalist tradition, exemplified in Leonardo's *Mona Lisa* and begun by Giotto's work in the Arena Chapel") appears *already* to have had an implicit subject, "naturalistic art," which accounts for the events selected.[47] While there is in principle no limit to the number and kinds of descriptions those events of the chronicle could be placed under, they are already described in terms that relate to the potential places they might occupy in a narrative. The only element Carrier's allegedly unnarrated chronicle of events needs to be a narrative is some indication of the explanatory connection joining the events together.

What is plain is that for something to be a central subject of the kind narratives explain the development of, there must be some explanatory connection from one state of the central subject to the next, or, more precisely, from one *part* of the central subject to the next.[48] I say *part* here rather than *example* because if a narrative traces the development or change of something through time, then reference to it at one time is reference to a spatiotemporal part of the thing that exists through time, not just an example of it. In referring to a particular thirteen-year-old boy who became a ninety-year-old man, we are referring not to an *example* of that ninety-year-old man, but to a temporal part of him. Giotto's and Constable's works, are, likewise, *parts* or moments of the naturalist tradition; that is why it is appropriate to say they exemplify naturalist painting, not the other way around. Traditions, selves, and, I would suggest, anything else historical narratives represent are, in this way, *historical particulars*, entities that exist at a particular time and place, whose continued existence over time requires causal continuity.

Philosophers of biology make a similar distinction in speaking of species that exist through time as historical particulars, rather than as types or classes (membership in which could be accounted for in terms

[47] Carrier, *Artwriting*, p. 16.

[48] Sydney Shoemaker remarks how in a view about identity going back at least to Hume, the identity of a thing through time consists at least in part in the "holding of causal relations of certain kinds between momentary entities—events, or momentary thing-stages (phases, slices)—existing or occurring at different times. The idea is that what links these entities into the history of a single persisting object, or at least what makes us regard them as belonging to the history of a single object, is their being causally related in certain ways."

It is a further question whether this identity of a thing through time—in any particular case or in general—is the result of human thought, language, or conventions. It may be only pragmatic considerations that make the stages of a knife those of the same continuent and the stages of a knife on even days of the month and the stages of a cat on odd days of the month *not* altogether stages in a continuent. See Shoemaker, "Identity, Properties, and Causality," in *Identity, Cause and Mind*, p. 234–60.

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of necessary and jointly sufficient conditions). Speaking about what the identity of a species over time consists of, David Hull writes, "The important feature of central subjects is that from the point of view of the historical narrative associated with them, they are *individuals*. The identity and continuity of such individuals can and must be determined independently of the events which make up the narrative."[49]

Now, the temporal borders of a historical particular, just like the physical borders of an object, say a piece of property, may be difficult to discern. Historical particulars do not arise ex nihilo. There must be events prior to the origin of the historical particular that enter into the causes of its creation without being part of the historical particular itself. And historians who differ over what feature of a historical particular is most characteristic of it may differ over which prior events belong to it. British histories of World War II often treat the war as beginning on September 3, 1939; Poles naturally assert it was September 1, when the German army crossed their border; for Albanians (and Italians), it began when Mussolini attacked Albania in April of that year; and for the Chinese (and the Japanese), it had begun either in 1931 when Japanese forces invaded Manchuria or in 1937 when they moved into central China. The same sort of differences exist in identification of the war's end: British and American historians emphasize the significance of V-E Day in May 1945 and V-J Day in August 1945; but the Greeks, Chinese, and Ukrainians did not see the end of the war in their countries until, respectively, 1947, 1949, and 1951. That these accounts differ over what the shape of the war was does not mean they are in any way arbitrary descriptions of that shape. Not just any account is possible, as we see in the failure of Soviet historians to persuade others of their view of "The Great Patriotic War, 1941–1945," ignoring the inconvenient fact of the Soviet-German pact signed in August 1939.[50]

But even if one accepted a realist view of narratives, such that one believed that there are real beginnings and endings in history of a sort that narratives of that history may track, one could still doubt—without being a relativist about *all* historical beginnings and ending—whether the kinds of beginnings and endings attributed to the development of *artistic styles* are grounded in matters of fact. As Meyer Schapiro—not a relativist about style—writes in an influential essay:

[49] Hull adds, "What is or is not an individual or natural kind is theory-dependent." David Hull, "Central Subjects and Historical Narratives," *History and Theory* 14 (1975): 253–274.

[50] See Gerhard L. Weinberg, *A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); and Norman Davies's review, "The Misunderstood War," *New York Review of Books*, June 9, 1994, pp. 20–24.

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> the characteristics of styles vary continuously and resist a systematic classification into perfectly distinct groups. It is meaningless to ask exactly when ancient art ends and the medieval begins. There are, of course, abrupt breaks and reactions in art, but study shows that here, too, there is often anticipation, blending and continuity. Precise limits are sometimes fixed by convention for simplicity in dealing with historical problems or in isolating a type.[51]

What I will conclude here, then, is that the question of whether there are genuine beginnings and endings in history cannot be decided on an a priori basis, through, say, a theory of narrative. What must be asked is whether in any particular case the central subject a narrative represents is the kind of central subject that can have a development that begins and ends.[52]

It would be encouraging at this point if we could just look at the narratives of art history and ask whether the beginnings and endings they employ have, in principle, anything like the reality claimed for them by narrative realists and denied by narrative constructionists.

The frustrating problem, however, is this: in the debate between realists and constructionists, both sides express an unquestioned presumption that we have a satisfactory analysis available of just what it is their debate would cede to either historical fact or historical representation. It goes unremarked, however, that there exists no unequivocal theory of what creates a genuinely narrative structure and what is contained in the concepts of beginnings and endings. An even cursory survey of the work of literary theorists (for example, Mieke Bal, Peter Brooks, Frank Kermode, Gérard Genette, Edward Said, Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg, and Meir Sternberg) shows theories of plot and closure in a great variety of contrary forms. And, even if there were unanimity among theorists of fictional narratives about what is entailed in the claim that an event in a fiction is a beginning or ending, this would still leave unanswered the question of how fictional closure is related to closure in the historical narratives of actual events. So historical realists and constructionists argue over whether there are so-called real beginnings and endings in history without a clear sense as to just what each side is denying or affirming the existence of.

[51] Meyer Schapiro, "Style," in *Theory and Philosophy of Art: Style, Artist, and Society* (New York: George Braziller, 1994), p. 54.

[52] In answering the question of what makes a person at two different times one and the same person, or what is necessarily involved in the continued existence of each person over time, Derek Parfit suggests that we will also answer the question of what is the nature of a person: "the necessary features of our continued existence depend upon our nature." *Reasons and Persons*, p. 202.

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I suggest, then, that we ought to look back to the kinds of beginnings and endings spoken of by the founders of art history which I discussed earlier. In their view there was something intrinsic to art that explained the kind of development, in any one period, that it would have. Wölfflin and Riegl were concerned not simply with how particular styles of art start and stop being made, according to forces that were externally applied, but rather with the way in which a style's intrinsic nature, existing throughout its development, explains how that development from beginning to end unfolded.

The kind of continuity these historians found within the development of a style and the discontinuity they found between different successive styles was *not*, therefore, the same kind of continuity spoken of by narrative constructionists, or discontinuity spoken of by writers who, like Michel Foucault, see history as marked by conspicuous caesurae. The kind of continuity spoken of by the critical historians of art—to use Michael Podro's phrase—was based on a form of *explanation;* the kind of continuity or discontinuity narrative constructionists address is based on a form of *description.*[55] That is, where as the critical historians of art and the narrative constructionists could agree on where one style ends and another style begins, the narrative constructionists would say this would be a matter of how they appear to us, while the critical historians would say this was a matter of how the appearance of those styles—with reference to their intrinsic nature—is to be explained. Those earlier organic explanatory models are, of course, no longer sustainable. Yet adverting to some sort of explanatory account of beginnings and endings offers a way of grounding such attributions of narrative structure in how historical events unfold, rather than merely in how a narrative representation of those events gives them a discursive form.

Thus, if we are to try to find some basis for the kinds of beginnings and endings these historians recognized, we should look to those beginnings and endings that are grounded in explanations of the developments for which they serve as termini. We should look, in other words, for beginnings and endings to developments where the nature of that which develops explains the beginning and end. A persuasive account of how there could be such an *internal* or organic development of a style would let us say, for example, that although cubist paintings continued to be made into the 1920s, cubism's natural development, or *story*, had by 1914 already ended. It is to articulating such internal developments that this work now turns.

[55] Michael Podro, *The Critical Historians of Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).

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CHAPTER 2

Endings as Limits

IT MAY DEFY the canons of narrative continuity to analyze the concept of an ending in art history without first discussing the concept of a beginning. But, as this chapter will argue, the concepts of beginnings and endings are internally related such that two observations follow: only by understanding the idea of an ending can one understand what a beginning is; and only by identifying the ending to a particular historical development can one be sure of how to identify its beginning. So let us analyze an example of, and then the concept of, an art-historical ending.

Scholars of cubism have found it difficult to convincingly explain why, after 1914, Picasso adopted a realistic, "neoclassical" style in some works while still creating other works in a style continuous with that of cubism. Of course, Braque's departure for the war in 1914 made it impossible for cubism to continue as before—as a style constituted through a collaborative investigation between the two painters—but Braque's leaving may only have confirmed what was already the case, that cubism's development was over. Picasso did continue to create works bearing the impress of cubism into the 1920s, but these appear to stand in a different relation to the motivations and development of cubism than did the paintings composed in and prior to 1914. The very fact that such apparently cubist works were painted alongside naturalistic linear representations such as the hyperrealistic play on Ingres in the drawing of Max Jacob of 1915, and the 1917 *Portrait of Olga Picasso in an Armchair* (figs. 6 and 7) suggests that at that time cubism was less a style that Picasso felt driven to work through than a stylistic vocabulary or convention, like the "neoclassical" style, that was only one option among others Picasso might choose to employ. The portrait of Max Jacob, with its virtuoso display of technically achieved realism and intense focus on the sitter's hands and face, ventriloquizes Ingres as it comments on the style of cubism. The move toward illusionism, Thomas Crow suggests, "canceled Cubism's claim to logical and descriptive necessity, and acknowledged that it had become a portable style, one ready-to-wear variety among many on offer."[1] This notion of a style's

[1] Thomas Crow, *Modern Art in the Common Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), p. 33.

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Fig. 6. P. Picasso, *Portrait of Max Jacob*, 1915. Musée Picasso, Paris. © 2000 Estate of Pablo Picasso/ARS, N.Y. © Photo RMN—Michèle Bellot.

"necessity," and how the Ingresque work could withdraw it from cubism, is the subject of the next chapter. For the moment, the relevant point is that when the features of the so-called cubist works after 1914 are compared with those features peculiar to cubist paintings that come before—features in terms of which those earlier paintings seemed all of a piece—the later so-called cubist paintings, in their sub-

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Fig. 7. P. Picasso, *Portrait of Olga Picasso in an Armchair*, 1917. Musée Picasso, Paris. © 2000 Estate of Pablo Picasso/ARS, N.Y. © Photo RMN—R. G. Ojeda.

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ject matter and the way that subject matter is given form, reveal an identity that may be far from cubism indeed.[2]

Both Picasso's *Glass and Bottle of Suze* of 1912 and *Large Still life* of 1917 (figs. 8 and 9), for example, contain typical cubist devices, such as the representation of a form through the delineation of its negative space; metonymic and symbolic rather than strictly naturalistic depiction of objects and their respective positions within the tableau; an upward tilting of the horizontal to the vertical plane; and an oscillation of the distance among the planes of the canvas support, the depicted objects, and the apparent surface. Yet, despite possessing these properties to a degree consistent with almost any paradigm cubist work of 1911–12, the ingredients do not add up in the *Large Still Life* to a cubist painting. The properties associated with cubism are possessed by the work, but they belong to it only externally. That is, the cubist elements one finds in the work do not determine its character; rather, they are subordinated pictorially, symbolically, and expressively to the overriding realization of a traditional naturalistically rendered tableau. Despite the symbolic rather than naturalistic or iconic representation the forms effect, the forms taken together function as the central prop in a naturalistically rendered and navigable space, before, behind, and on either side. There is no such room in which to breathe in the genuinely cubist *Glass and Bottle of Suze.* Also in that earlier work the horizontal table of the café, with newspapers laid across it, both functions as ground for the iconic or figurative depiction of the drinking glass and bottle of Suze, and, simultaneously, swings radically forward as a vertical plane on which the elements of the café are only symbolically represented and spatially arrayed. The elements of the later still life, however, painted rather than pasted on, resolve into a depiction of a horizontal plane on which sit other planes planted vertically: as if a still life composed of cut out cubist forms rather than a

[2] Kenneth E. Silver describes Picasso's turn toward naturalistic depiction—especially the portraits rendered in an Ingres-like style—as his response, in large measure ironic, to the conservative and nationalistic pressures on art that were occasioned by the war. *Esprit de Corps: The Art of the Parisian Avant-Garde and the First World War, 1914–1925* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

Pierre Daix and Joan Rosselet state the more traditional view that, however it is explained, Picasso's return to naturalism predates, and thus is not motivated by, the French mobilization. *Picasso: The Cubist Years, 1907–1916* (Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1979), cat. no. 763. Daix also maintains that in his Ingresque style Picasso "didn't leave cubism," that "there is no falling off, no break, even if his cubism becomes classical. . . ." "Le retour de Picasso au portrait (1914–1921): Une problématique de généralization du cubisme," in *Le retour à l'ordre, 1919–1925* (Saint-Etienne: CIEREC, 1975), pp. 90, 92.

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Fig. 8. P. Picasso, *Glass and Bottle of Suze*, 1912. Pasted papers, gouache, and charcoal. Washington University Gallery of Art, St. Louis. University Purchase, Kende Sale Fund, 1946. © 2000 Estate of Pablo Picasso/ARS,, N.Y.

cubist still life.[5] The same structure inheres in the *Three Musicians* of 1920–21 (fig. 10), where the now conventional indicators of cubism or

[5] Describing such works in which the appearance and compositional structure of collage are replicated in paint, Clement Greenberg writes, "only when the col-

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Fig. 9. P. Picasso, *Grande Nature Morte*, 1917. Musée de l'Orangerie, Paris. © 2000 Estate of Pablo Picasso/ARS,, N.Y. © Photo RMN—J. G. Berizzi.

its pictorial clichés (planar, overlapping forms defined by what is external to them) serve as ingredients in representing the commedia dell'arte subject of a clarinet-playing Pierrot, a singing monk, and a guitar-strumming Harlequin. This trio, Theodore Reff has convincingly argued, is a portrait of three friends: the recently deceased Guillaume Apollinaire as Pierrot, Max Jacob as the monk (the Jewish poet had converted to Catholicism and lived in the spring of 1921 at a Benedictine monastery), and Picasso himself as Harlequin. In this work the space is naturalistically rendered, even if, as with cubist works, the forms within that space are not. Also unlike those cubist works, figure and ground are here clearly distinguished. The background is perpendicular to the floor and surrounding walls, the tabletop is placed nearly parallel to the ground beneath it, and below the table there sits

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lage had been exhaustively translated into oil, and transformed by this translation, did cubism become an affair of positive color and flat, interlocking silhouettes whose legibility and placement created allusions to, if not the illusion of, unmistakable three-dimensional identities." "Collage," *Art and Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), p. 79.

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Fig. 10. P. Picasso, *Three Musicians,* Fontainebleau, summer 1921. Oil on canvas. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Mrs. Simon Guggenheim fund. © 2000 Estate of Pablo Picasso/ARS,, N.Y. Courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art.

a dog.[4] The contemporary critic Maurice Raynal intuited here the purely external employment of cubist forms, independent of any defining force they may once have had, when he described the *Three Musicians* as "rather like magnificent shop windows of cubist inventions and discoveries."[5]

Both the *Large Still Life* and *Three Musicians* were created with what was only one among many styles available to Picasso at the time, as if

[4] The backward-looking character I attribute to the work stylistically coincides with what Theodore Reff calls its status as an elegy for Picasso's "lost bohemian youth, for freedom of the Bateau-Lavoir days and the gaiety of Apollinaire and Jacob. . . ." "Picasso's *Three Musicians*: Maskers, Artists and Friends," *Art in America* 68 (December 1980): 124–42.

[5] Maurice Raynal, "Quelques intentions du cubisme," *Bulletin de l'effort moderne* 4 (1924): 4.

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he was exploiting his own past work the way he exploited, without actually taking on the style of, the work of Ingres in his *Portrait of Max Jacob* and *Portrait of Olga*. He employed the devices of cubism—forms are schematized, planes of depicted objects function as both figure and ground, shapes are defined variously by the internal space they occupy and the negative space they do not—but used those devices in the service of composing traditionally ordered and themed tableaux.

Yet the most telling expression of Picasso's relation, after 1914, toward cubist practice is a work of 1920 referred to as *Studies* (fig. 11), a painting composed of several separate compartments, each an image in a different style or format: a dancing couple in a naturalistic style, six still life images employing such cubist motifs as pattern-backed playing cards and *faux bois* surfaces (four painted as if framed), the repeated configuration of a circle suspended above small arches that signifies a glass, a profile in the heavy style used in his massively composed women of 1921, and two similarly painted hands. This single work exhibits different styles, or, rather, exhibits a single eclectic and omnivorous style that allows the appropriation of such different styles of the present and past. As such, it expresses a sense that cubism, along with the other historical styles that were finished, could be mined in the service of ends other than those for which it was formed, and from which in its first manifestation its identity was shaped.[6]

Thus, while the cubist paintings reveal a consistent repertoire of forms, subjects, and techniques from 1908 to 1914, and exhibit a kind of development toward certain cubist ends,[7] Picasso's cubist paintings after 1914, when considered in a context that includes his contemporaneous "neoclassical" and realist works, seem to bear no developmental structure at all. There may be a development in Picasso's own style—however supervenient that is on the appropriated styles of others—after 1914, a style in which he sometimes uses cubist structures and motifs. But such a development is no longer a development of Picasso's

[6] Gérard Genette treats all of Picasso's successive styles, even the cubism with which he was most closely identified, as external to his artistic identity: "Picasso is only himself *through the vehicle of* the styles that belong successively to Lautrec, Braque, Ingres, etc . . . ." *Palimpsestes* (Paris: Seuil, 1982), p. 144.

[7] Semiologically oriented accounts of cubism see this development as exploring the conditions of possibility for representation. In the so-called analytic stage of cubism prior to 1912, the notion of representation treated is specifically illusionistic depiction. The "synthetic" stage of cubism after 1912 broadens this analysis to encompass symbolic and indexical forms of depiction as well. For such an account, see Rosalind Krauss, "The Motivation of the Sign," in *Picasso and Braque: A Symposium*, ed. William Rubin and Lynn Zelevansky (New York: MOMA, 1992), pp. 261–86.

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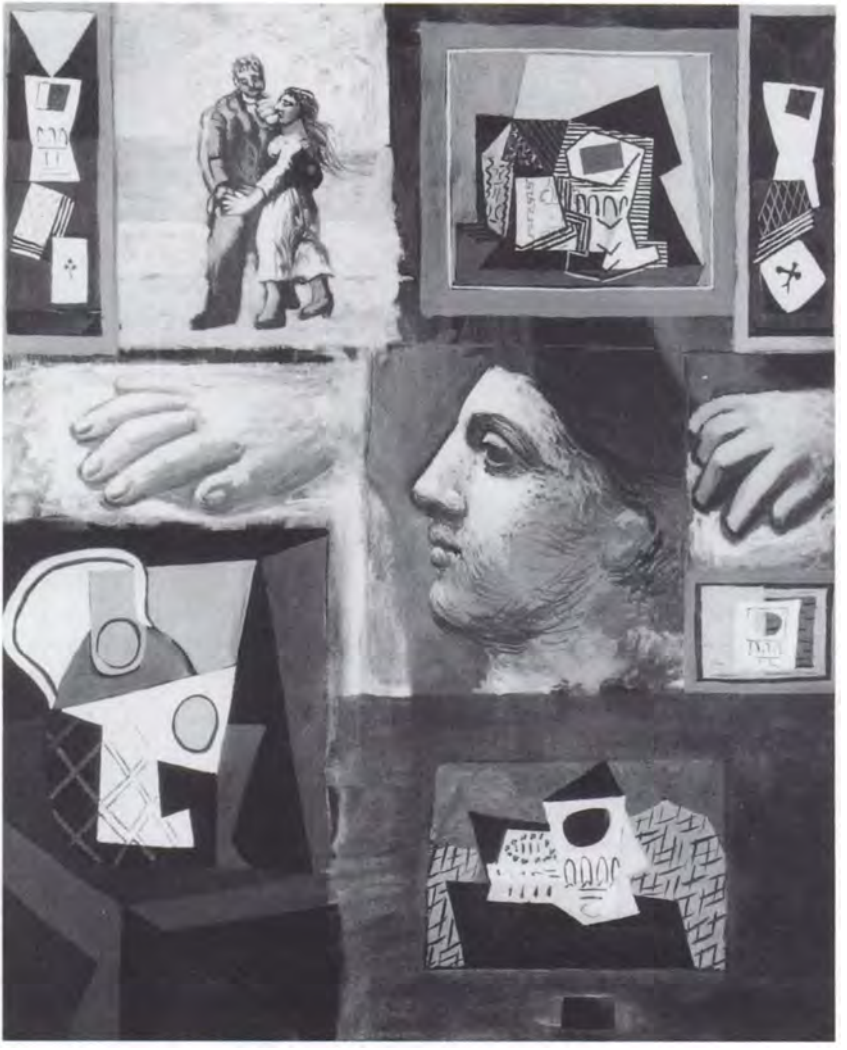

Fig. 11. P. Picasso, *Studies,* 1920 Musée Picasso, Paris. © 2000 Estate of Pablo Picasso/ARS, N.Y. © Photo RMN—R. G. Ojeda.

cubism, when that style is understood as more than merely the employment of a certain readily available stock of techniques and forms.[8]

[8] See the exchange recorded in *Picasso and Braque: A Symposium*, pp. 256–57. There Benjamin Buchloh suggests that compared with what occurred outside of Paris after 1914 in response to cubism—in the work of Malevich, Tatlin, and Duchamp—the work that emerged out of cubism was "relatively provincial."

William Rubin objects that after 1914 cubism was still developing from within: "Picasso demonstrates after 1914, if not every day of the week, then three, four, or

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So the departure of Braque for the First World War ended his collaboration with Picasso, but the story of cubism, which was a result of their collaboration, had by that time already ended. But if Braque's leaving for the war was a kind of ending imposed *externally* on his collaboration with Picasso, such that there was nothing in the nature of the collaboration itself from which it could have been derived, in what sense can we say the ending of cubism was internal to its development, an ending that was explained by or "contained in" its beginning?

It will be helpful here to draw on the explanatory model Michael Baxandall develops in his *Patterns of Intention* in which an artist's work is treated as akin to the solution to a given problem. There may be a set of general and basic problems that attend an artist's activity as a painter, derived from the general ends, if there are any, that the art of painting has. But what is important in explaining the creation of any particular painting is understanding how those general problems are conceived of, in a particular context, in an individual's activity as a painter. Baxandall calls these contextualized problems a painter's *brief*.[9]

The brief refers to the problems a painter faces, described in a way that captures the painter's *own*, not necessarily unique, understanding of the nature of the problems. Although a brief is a generally applicable explanatory device, it is always composed of specific historical factors. That is, several painters over time may address the same problem, but the way each understands the problem—what each would consider a proper solution, what means each believes are appropriate for reaching the solution—may be different. This is particularly so if, as is usually the case, artists understand their own attempts at solving a particular problem against a background consisting of other prior attempts at solving it.

So whereas depicting a three-dimensional reality on a two-dimensional surface while acknowledging the material and phenomenological picture planes was a very old and general problem for painters, the

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five days out of the week, the incredible elasticity of Cubism, and the unbelievable things that you can do with it that lead to Surrealism."

Leo Steinberg concurs, in a way, with Buchloh: "In the Museu Picasso in Barcelona there is a series of Picassos of 1917 that seem incredible because they show the purest conception of the figure, but in them the whole of Cubism is perspectivized; they are, in the literal and metaphorical sense, Cubism in perspective. . . . I feel very strongly that in late 1913 to 1914 Picasso has a sense that Cubism is exhausted, and starts mocking it, sometimes playfully, sometimes in a way that is bitter and mordant."

[9] Michael Baxandall, *Patterns of Intention* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), passim.

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forms the problem took as it entered the briefs of Cézanne, Matisse, and Picasso were very different. Cézanne's still life paintings of the 1870s and 1880s employ colors in uniform hue and intensity throughout the back, middle, and foreground, creating a continuous pattern over the pictorial plane, even as the elements represented by the picture stand behind or in front of one another. A viewer is thus simultaneously aware of the solidity of the depicted fruit and the pictorial surface plane—an effect enhanced by the relatively consistent character of the brushstroke whether it renders objects deep in the background or immediately in front. Matisse gives his work over almost entirely to the articulation of the surface pattern, inscribing his figures with thick borders that flatten the forms out, trading their illusionistic volume for their role as elements in a flat design. Picasso preserves the solidity and volume of Cézanne's forms, yet it is not through the manipulation of color that he thematizes the picture plane. Rather, it is through the manipulation of those forms themselves—for example, radically tilting upward the objects in an image so the horizontal surfaces of those objects, which are usually perceived as extending into space, are parallel to the picture plane. Two of the figures of the *Demoiselles d'Avignon* lose none of the corporeal solidity of an odalisque, even as they have been rotated ninety degrees forward, so that their bodies fill the spatial depth of the picture and, at the same time, articulate the surface plane.[10]

That Baxandall treats an artist's painting as a solution to the problem contained in his particular brief does not entail that such a solution would be explicitly formulated before work on the painting began. For Baxandall clearly recognizes the inappropriateness of a model of artistic creation that requires a fully perspicuous articulation of a problem and then a bit by bit progressive fabrication of its solution. Baxandall writes, "in painting a picture the total problem of the picture is liable to be a continually developing and self-revising one. The medium, physical and perceptual, modifies the problem as the game proceeds. Indeed some parts of the problem will emerge only as the game proceeds."[11]

This sort of process is vividly recorded in Leo Steinberg's account of the creation of the *Demoiselles d'Avignon*, where it was in the course of creating the work that Picasso clarified and isolated that which he was seeking. The insertion and deletion of a medical student holding a skull, reflect not so much a change in Picasso's intentions in creating the work as a clarification or revealing of those intentions, a discovery of what would satisfy what he wanted his work to achieve. It was in the course of the preparatory drawings that Picasso came better to realize

[10] Leo Steinberg, "The Philosophical Brothel," *October* 44 (spring 1988): 7–74.
[11] Baxandall, *Patterns of Intention*, pp. 62–63.

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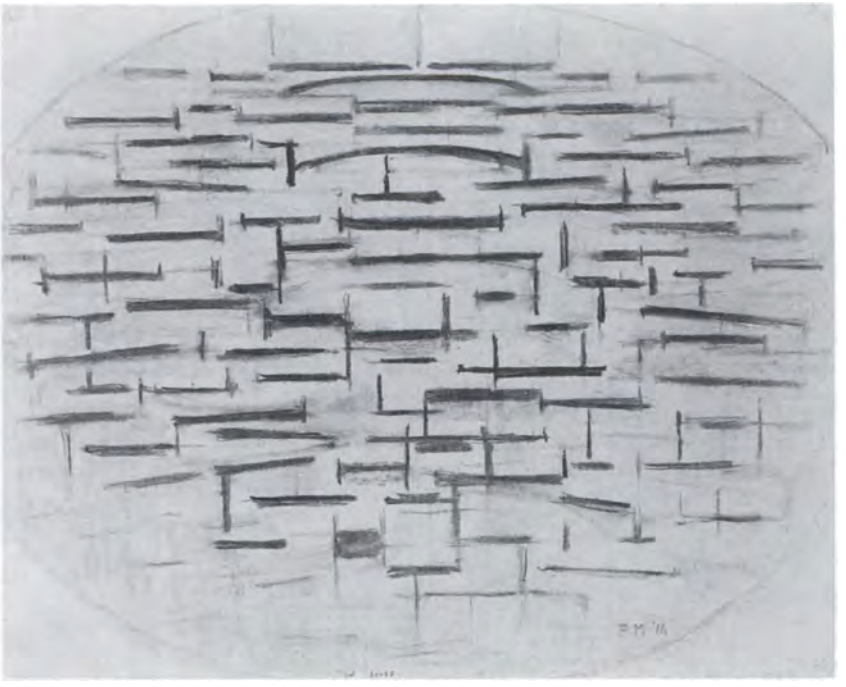

Fig. 12. P. Mondrian, *The Sea,* 1914. Courtesy of Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, Germany.

what the problem of his work was, what subject he was trying to represent. So when Picasso encountered African masks in the course of creating the *Demoiselles*, Steinberg writes, "the primitive was let in because that's what the subject craved."[12]

If the *Demoiselles* is the singular, inaugural work identified by so many commentators, the problem it embodied for Picasso may have been peculiar to that painting, never posed in those terms before or after. Most problems a painter faces, however, would not be confronted in just one painting, but would characterize several of the painter's creations, where later works employ discoveries made in earlier works, and where both later and earlier respond to the same brief. The shimmering fields of softly sketched vertical and horizontal lines of Mondrian's pier and ocean compositions of 1914–15 (figs. 12 and 13) are developed out of his response to the more firm and densely faceted surfaces of cubism. And, like the cubist paintings, Mondrian's works remain representational—showing the water surface and the reflected sky—if to an attenuated degree not matched by

[12] Steinberg, "Philosophical Brothel."

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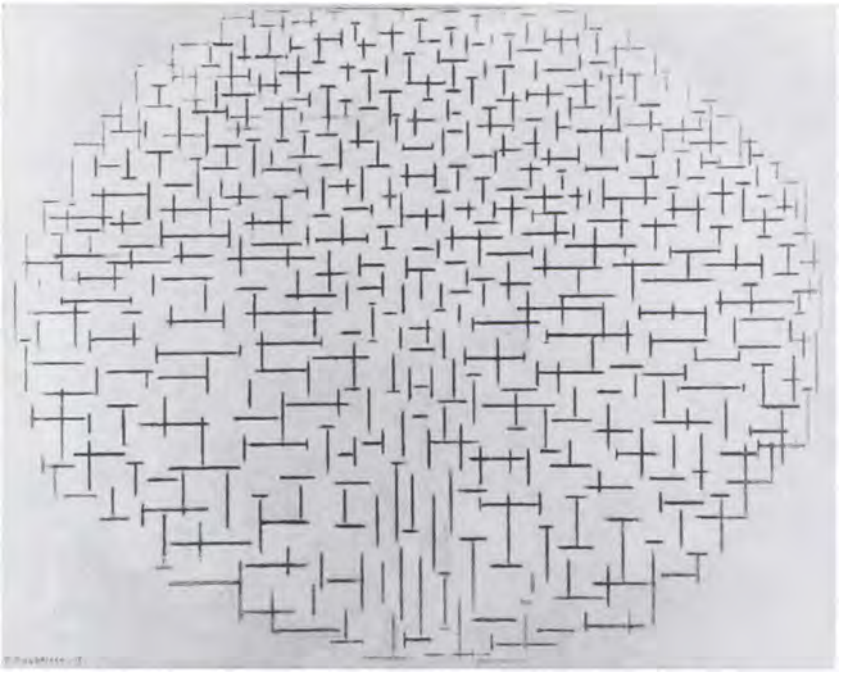

Fig. 13. P. Mondrian, *Composition No. 10*, 1915. Courtesy of Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo, the Netherlands.

cubism. Yet, in their reduction of an already flat surface to its barest constitutive elements—planes of light and the lines that define them—and their diminution if not outright elimination of definite borders, these works by Mondrian should be seen as confronting in a preliminary form the same problems that occupy him in his later, even more abstract, "plus and minus" paintings such as *Composition in Black and White* (fig. 14) and the Neoplastic paintings of 1920–21 (fig. 15). These later works confront in abstraction what the earlier works above address in figuration, that is, how to obliterate the apparent differentiation between figure and ground while still preserving the distinctiveness of the elements—lines, edges, planes, unmarked surfaces—that constitute the composition; how to do this, moreover, so that the *relationships* between the elements are as pictorially significant as the elements themselves. Mondrian's concern, for example, with how pictorial marks relate to the canvas edge is seen in the way he would often employ an oval-shaped composition with vague edges on a rectangular canvas in the earlier works and would rotate by forty-five degrees a square canvas to compose his Neoplastic paintings on a diamond or lozenge shape in the later works. What this al-

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Fig. 14. P. Mondrian, *Composition in Black and White,* 1917. Courtesy of Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo, the Netherlands.

lowed was, in part, an escape from the traditional tendency to view what the works represent as if through a window, in a space behind and beyond the canvas—an effect heightened by the ambiguity of how within a single Neoplastic composition some lines would continue to the edge, implying that the pictorial image was cut off from a larger field, and other lines would stop short of reaching the image's border, implying that the abstract image was contained within the work's pictorial field. The imperative this problem posed for these paintings is especially conspicuous when they are compared, as a group, with a work made before such an end became part of Mondrian's brief—his naturalistic painting *Farm at Dulvendrecht* of 1906–8 (fig. 16), for example. In the terms I borrow from Baxandall, Mondrian's brief explains features of not just one work but several through which his response to the brief evolves.

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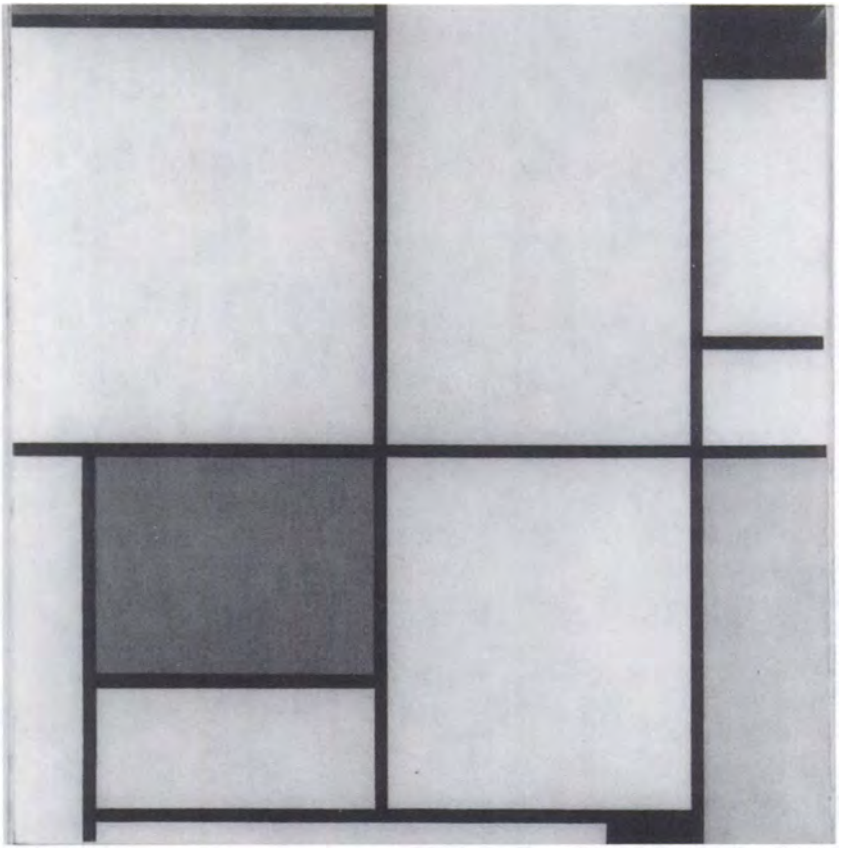

Fig. 15. P. Mondrian, *Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue*, 1921. Courtesy of Gemeentemuseum, the Hague, c/o Beeldrecht Amstelveen.

Finally, just as the creation of a single work or series of works by a single artist may be explained by reference to that artist's brief, so the work of different artists in a movement can be explained as collaborative attempts at solutions to problems contained in their brief: the set of problems they collectively see as important to address in their work. The cubism of Picasso and Braque was certainly such a collaborative enterprise, where each artist responded to advances made by the other, as the style of the movement developed in terms of a brief both painters shared.[15] And, just as in Steinberg's account the precise nature of Pi-

[15] The specific parameters of a shared brief distinguish the group of artists who share it from other groups possessing different briefs. This is so even if within a movement artists express the shared brief in their respective works in different ways.

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Fig. 16. P. Mondrian, *Farm at Dulvendrecht,* 1906–8. Courtesy of Gemeentemuseum, the Hague, c/o Beeldrecht Amstelveen.

casso's brief emerges only in the course of his work on the *Demoiselles*, so the precise nature of a movement's brief may emerge only in the course of its development, as certain qualities or techniques that respond adequately to the brief are preserved from work to work. Rich passages of painted color are largely suppressed throughout cubism's development. However, colored articles of mass culture such as handbills, playing cards, bottle labels, printed oilcloth, and commercial packaging, once introduced into cubist works, are readily deployed until the movement ends.

The initial resistance to color in early cubism may have been, as Baxandall suggests, predicated on a sense that there was a greater sort of pictorial objectivity in the linear and planar representations of forms than in an investigation of such a secondary property as color. But this emphasis on form would have been reinforced by an association made between the coloristic effects of contemporary art and the technical manipulation of color in commercial printing. That is, while decorative color was employed by symbolist and postimpressionist painters as a device of direct emotional and spiritual expression, the subsequent adoption of such color in the cheap mass productions of advertising may have made the notion that color guaranteed an expressive immediacy no longer tenable. Even Matisse, with his singular devotion to the expressive power afforded by the decorative use of color, felt threatened by mechanical techniques of reproduction and design: in a 1942 interview he complained, "after the rediscovery of the emotional and decorative properties of line and color by modern artists, we have seen

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our department stores invaded by materials, decorated in medleys of color, without moderation, without meaning."[14] One might add that as Picasso and Braque began to explore the symbolic or conventional (as opposed to the mimetic or iconic) capacity of pictorial signs, color remained one property of an image that resisted functioning in a non naturalistic way. That is, although the cubists were able to establish that the *forms* in their paintings represented objects in the world only conventionally, the painted *color* may have remained understood naturalistically, as the actual color of the real object the painting represented.[15] One can see these attitudes toward color in the cubist brief, once color did eventually enter into cubist painting, by the way it was precisely through those commercially produced papers and surfaces that so challenged artists who employed decorative color. Yet in the collage constructions the color is only, as it were, quoted. That is, the expressive capacity accorded to color in those contexts remains a feature of the appropriated commercial material, logically distinct from the expressive properties of other elements of the work and of the work as a whole (just as one may quote an expletive without thereby expressing what the expletive expresses in the act of swearing).

Whereas in the collages of Italian futurists, who were critics of cubism, the pasted color paper produced by mechanical processes was employed to heighten a sense of expressive immediacy (to, say, promote Italian nationalism or proclaim the utopian promise of modern technology), in the cubist collage the same sorts of materials were incorporated because they allowed a *lack* of immediacy: a representation of color and form at least once removed.[16]

We learn of the problems and parameters forming the cubist brief not just through one moment or another in its development but also through its treatment of those problems within those parameters over time: the eventual introduction of commercially produced materials into cubist art was not so much an invention of a new form of repre-

[14] From a radio interview in 1942, cited in Christine Poggi, *In Defiance of Painting: Cubism, Futurism, and the Invention of Collage* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 140.

[15] Rosalind Krauss, *The Picasso Papers* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998), p. 171.

[16] Braque described this in a much later interview:

> The problem of color was brought into focus with the *papiers collés*. . . . With that we arrived at cleanly dissociating color from form and at seeing its independence in relation to form, because that was the main concern: color acts simultaneously with form, but has nothing to do with it.

Dora Villier, "Braque, la peinture et nous. (Propos de l'artiste)," *Cahiers d'Art* 29 (October 1954): 13–24; translated in Poggi, *In Defiance of Painting*, p. 15.

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sentation as a discovery of what form of representation would satisfy the demands of the cubist brief.

The cubist brief is expressed neither in color's exclusion from the movement, nor in its eventual embrace through the medium of colored paper in collage. Rather, the brief is expressed through the development that includes *both* these moments. Cubism's brief does not change from the earlier moment to the later: rather it emerges or becomes perspicuous throughout the development as a whole.

What makes the brief of painters in a movement shared is not simply that it enters into the explanation of works created by each painter of the movement, but that there are explanatory connections among the various painters' possessions of the brief. That is, the kind of shared problem described here is not one that the works of two or more painters may just *happen* to respond to. Rather, it is a problem different painters face only by virtue of there being some sort of connection among them that explains why they have the same brief. Cubism exhibited two such explanatory connections, collaboration and competition, where Braque and Picasso each exploited the other's discoveries in trying to solve problems they both recognized as problems *for them*, that is, problems the two would confront together.

But movements represent only one place in which shared problems are treated throughout the course of more than one artist's work. Some problems get worked out only over a period of time extending through several painters' careers, where the only explanatory connection among the different artists' contributions is that later painters rely on the work of earlier painters to push further the solution to the problems occupying them all. The development of naturalistic painting is the most familiar history accounted for in such terms. In Gombrich's narrative, the central problem with which artists from Cimabue to the impressionists are concerned is naturalistic depiction, and the development toward solutions to this problem is carried out in the process of "making and matching" through which artists, step by step, from generation to generation, improve on their predecessors in achieving in their images an accurate representation of the visual world.[17]

I do not want here to offer a general critique of Gombrich's view. I wish only to note that for him to treat artists within the history he charts as occupied by the same problem, he must assert, I think implausibly, that the widely different forms of naturalism exhibited through art history are responses to the same motivations, that their forms of naturalism are attempts at solving a problem whose particular formulation

[17] In his *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972).

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they all share. No doubt the various techniques of naturalistic depiction, such as modeling, foreshortening, mathematical and aerial perspective, had to be progressively developed over time, and were each solutions to problems that sometimes occupied artists of very different moments in the history of art. But to say *art* develops progressively, rather than saying merely that techniques of naturalism develop progressively, requires that Gombrich show that the motivation of art throughout its history was this desire or need for naturalism. But surely at many moments in art history this reverses the proper order of explanation. For even if at times naturalistic art was considered an end in itself, at other times it was motivated only by an end that it served better than nonnaturalistic art: such as to educate the illiterate through pictorial narratives, to offer portraits that flattered or probed the character of their subjects, or to examine the nature of visual perception. Even if throughout the history of art there was progress in the techniques of mimetic representation, this progress cannot be identified with the development of art. It cannot be that in which the development of art consists. For sometimes the progress of naturalism was a *consequence* of art's development, which means that that development must be characterized on independent grounds. To offer an answer to the question of why art has a history cannot be to explain how techniques of realistic depiction—Gombrich's subject—have a history.[18] The explanation must be of a higher order, where what is asked is why art throughout its history required such a form of realism—with this concept construed broadly enough within the tradition to have framed discourse about painting from Pliny through Baudelaire—or why art required realism at all. The progress in techniques of naturalistic depiction between Cimabue and the impressionists is a feature of the development of art, not a cause of it. It is one feature of the development of art, among others having little to do with realism, that an explanation of why art has a history must explain.[19]

A history of art without a demand for the techniques of naturalism is, of course, seen in such traditions as that of Chinese painting, where,

[18] "The purpose of this book was to explain why art has a history, not why its history developed in one direction rather than another." Gombrich, *Art and Illusion*, p. 388.

[19] Such a higher-order explanation would have to account for why pictorial naturalism is only one demand placed on painters, a demand often contrary to other pictorial goals. John White, for example, argues that painters from Giotto to Piero della Francesca structured space arbitrarily in order to sustain the integrity of the picture plane, for dramatic effect, or to manipulate the viewer's eye. *The Birth and Rebirth of Pictorial Space*, 3d ed. (1958; Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1987). Paul Hills, in an account of early Italian painting, describes how Florentine painters "balanced the illusionistic demands of narrative and the decorative de-

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whatever techniques of realistic depiction were developed, they were not based on the mimetic notions of realism Western artists employed. When exposed to a Western system of linear perspective by missionary artists, from Giuseppe Castiglione (called Lang Shih-ning), who arrived in 1715, to Giuseppe Panzi, one of the last, who died in Peking in 1812, Chinese artists recognized the illusionistic payoff of such a technique but refused to make use of it. Here is a comment on Western naturalism by the court painter Tsou I-kuei:

> The Westerners are skilled in geometry, and consequently there is not the slightest mistake in their way of rendering light and shade and distance (near and far). In their paintings all the figures, buildings, and trees cast shadows, and their brush and colours are entirely different from those of Chinese painters. Their views (scenery) stretch out from broad (in the foreground) to narrow (in the background) and are defined (mathematically measured). When they paint houses on a wall people are tempted to walk into them. Students of painting may well take over one or two points from them to make their own paintings more attractive to the eye. But these painters have no brush-manner whatsoever; although they possess skill, they are simply artisans and cannot consequently be classified as painters.[20]

In *Die Perspektive als "symbolische Form,"* Erwin Panofsky offers a way of speaking about this technique of realistic representation in terms of problem solving without implying that the technique is a response to an identical problem that occupied all periods in art history just because the inhabitants of those periods created realistic art. Or, rather, this is *one* component of Panofsky's theory, one that sits uneasily with another component implying a view more Gombrichian, wherein problems of representation are in some sense identical wherever the desire for realistic representation occurs. In the latter view, Renaissance artists employed perspective to solve problems that were faced by the painters of antiquity. But for those painters of antiquity, perspective of the sort Renaissance artists achieved was not available; hence, since

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mands of wall painting." *The Light of Early Italian Painting* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), p. 94. Michael Baxandall asserts that "even in the Italian Renaissance the almost paradoxical relation between a general goal of imitation of nature on one side and the attractively distinctive personal style on the other lay largely undefined and unresolved." *The Limewood Sculptors of Renaissance Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), p. 123.

[20] Michael Sullivan, *The Meeting of Eastern and Western Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), p. 80. For a discussion of the Jesuit demonstrations of perspective in China, see George Loehr, "Missionary Artists at the Manchu Court," *Transactions of the Oriental Ceramic Society* 34 (1963): 51–67.

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they did not know the solution to their problems required mathematical perspective, their problems went unsolved. (As Augustine would say of his younger self, although searching for God, he did not know it was God whom he sought.) Describing the change in the representation of space that occurs between ancient and medieval painting, Panofsky writes, "when work on certain artistic problems has advanced so far that further work in the same direction, proceeding from the same premises, appears unlikely to bear fruit, the result is often a great recoil, or perhaps better, a reversal of direction." Thus, the same problems occupied the ancient, medieval, and Renaissance painters, but the Renaissance painters discovered the tools to solve these problems, which the earlier artists, without those resources, merely gave up on: "turning back to apparently more 'primitive modes' of representation" or engaging with older problems.[21]

It is the other component of Panofsky's theory that I want to appeal to, where he considers each period's way of depicting space as an expression of underlying principles of the period's culture, principles which individuate the period, and which are also expressed in its science, philosophy, religion, and any other "symbolic from."[22] Here, the Renaissance perspectival achievement was "nothing other than a concrete expression of a contemporary advance in epistemology or natural philosophy," while Byzantine space expressed "the metaphysics of light of pagan and Christian Neoplatonism," and "antique perspective is . . . the expression of a specific and fundamentally unmodern view of space [and an] unmodern conception of the world."[23] It is a natural concern, alluded to above, whether these two components of Panofsky's system are consistent. For if different periods express their underlying principles through different forms of spatial representation, then it seems the problem of spatial representation is different for each period. But if different periods do not confront the same problem of spatial representation, how can Panofsky maintain that there is progress exhibited from

[21] Erwin Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, trans. Christopher S. Wood (New York: Zone Books, 1991), p. 47.

[22] The concept was adopted from the neo-Kantian philosopher Ernst Cassirer's *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, an account of the structures or categories through which we organize experience (such as the experience of bodies in space, events occurring in time, and relations of cause and effect) but which do not belong to experience itself. Unlike Kant, who thought such categories, as innate, were the same for all minds, Cassirer theorized that different cultures or times had different structures through which their experience was different. Different cultures did not simply experience different things, but the a priori categories through which experience was made possible were different.

[23] Panofksy, *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, pp. 65, 43.

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earlier to later periods' response to that problem?[24] If different periods have different problems they want to solve, then there is not one ideal solution or end with reference to which later periods can be said to improve on earlier ones. Thus Michel Foucault argues that certain assumptions we have about progress in fields such as science and medicine are undermined by attention to the way in which different moments in the history of those fields constituted their goals.[25] However, shorn of its progressive implication, and the ontological position that each period is individuated through its underlying principles, Panofsky's account of perspective does illustrate a problem faced by painters that requires certain premises for it to be a problem for those painters at all.[26] That is, the development of Renaissance perspective is not a response to the problem of spatial representation *tout court.* It is not as if any period or culture faced with the problem of trying to represent objects in space were necessarily, if unwittingly, preoccupied by the problem of perspective. Rather, Renaissance perspective, in Panofsky's account, was a solution to the problem of spatial representation where how that problem was understood and expressed was bound up with certain assumptions concerning what had to be features of its

[24] Panofksy compares the construction founded on the notion of "sphere of projection" of antiquity to the pyramidal construction of modern perspective, saying of the former that "this mode of representing space suffers, in comparison to the modern mode, from a peculiar instability and internal inconsistency. For the modern vanishing-point construction distorts all widths, depths and heights in constant proportion, and thus defines unequivocally the apparent size of any object . . . that is precisely the enormous advantage of the modern method, precisely why it was so passionately pursued." *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, p. 40.

[25] Against historical accounts of how evolutionary theory emerged from classical natural history of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries into nineteenth-century biology Michel Foucault argues that the forms of thoughts characteristic of those two sciences were so different as to make their investigation into *life* incommensurable. "In any given culture and at any given moment, there is always only one *episteme* that defines the conditions of possibility of all knowledge." *The Order of Things,* trans. A. Sheridan (New York: Random House, 1970), p. 168.

[26] In emphasizing what he felt was the period-specific nature of the system of Renaissance perspective, Panofsky claimed that ancient Greeks and Romans, in particular Euclid and Vitruvius, conceived of the visual world as curved, and that this matched the concave curvature of the human retina. Postulating that this shape of the retina leads us to tend to see straight lines as curved, Panofsky concluded that classical optics were perhaps better than Renaissance perspective—which assumes a flat visual field—in characterizing our perception of reality. Samuel Y. Edgerton Jr. argues, however, there is little evidence that the ancient writers on optics ever thought the visual world was curved. *The Renaissance Rediscovery of Linear Perspective* (New York, 1975), p. 155.

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solution.[27] Whether or not we adopt Panofksy's appeal to symbolic forms as a way of explaining the constitution of the problem of perspective in the Renaissance—a position he downplayed in his later writings—we can still accept the central assertion that painters of antiquity did not realize a system like modern perspective because their system of spatial representation answered to different demands.[28] These demands, Panofsky says, were founded in antiquity on the idea of space as aggregative—simply existing in the gap between objects—but were founded in the Renaissance on the idea of space as systematic and infinite where bodies and the gaps between them were only differentiations in what is a continuum at a higher order.[29] Describing what he identifies as the sort of technical refinement that would transform antique perspective into that of the moderns, Panofsky asks, "Why did the ancients fail to take the apparently small step of intersecting the visual pyramid with a plane and thus proceed to a truly exact and systematic

[27] It is still an unresolved question about Panofsky's system whether the *absence* in a period or culture of a perspectival system comparable to that of the Renaissance tells us that the culture possessed different underlying principles or merely indicates that, whatever the culture's underlying principles were (same or different from those of the Renaissance), they were not *expressed* in a system of spatial perspective.

[28] In " 'Renaissance'—Self-Definition or Self-Deception?" Erwin Panofsky employs the same idea of a culture's underlying nature but no longer invokes the notion of symbolic forms. Indeed, his ambivalence about the nature of historical periods is reflected in this essay in which, on the one hand, he says of historical periods: "their characterization must be carefully qualified according to time and place and must be constantly refined according to the progress of scholarship. We shall probably never agree—and, in fact, should not even try to agree in a number of cases—as to precisely when and where one period or 'megaperiod' stopped and another started. In history . . . the very definition of a period . . . implies continuity as well as dissociation." Yet, on the other hand, he adds: "In spite of all this, however, a period . . . may be said to possess a 'physiognomy' no less definite, though no less difficult to describe in a satisfactory manner, than a human individual." *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), pp. 3, 4.

[29] Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, p. 41. Edgerton makes a similar distinction: "unlike the renaissance painter depicting his scene in perspective, the medieval artist viewed his world quite subjectively. He saw each element in his composition separately and independently, and thus paid little attention to anything in the way of a systematic spatial relationship between objects." Edgerton alternates, however, between the defensible position that the different experience and knowledge of people of the Middle Ages and Renaissance caused them to attend to, organize, and structure what they saw of the world in different ways, and the spurious claim that people of the two periods had different *innate* visual capacities because of which they saw the world differently. *Renaissance Rediscovery of Linear Perspective*, pp. 19–23 and passim.

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construction of space? They did not do it because that feeling for space which was seeking expression in the plastic arts simply did not demand a systematic space."[50]

Described in terms of the notion of a brief, Renaissance perspective is a response not to the *general problem* of spatial representation, but to the problem of spatial representation as defined in a certain way, in terms of particular assumptions about what would count as a solution and what are among the appropriate means of reaching that solution. I hasten to add that these assumptions need not be limited to purely formalist or compositional demands. John Berger offers a succinct formulation of a widely held view about the humanist and anthropocentric meaning of perspective constructions:

> The convention of perspective . . . centres everything on the eye of the beholder . . . The visible world is arranged for the spectator as the universe was once thought to be arranged for God . . . Every drawing or painting that used perspective proposed to the spectator that he was the unique centre of the world. . . .[51]

So let us chart the development of Renaissance perspective. Ultimately, I mean to suggest how, when understood as a response to a particular brief, perspective's development can be shown to reach an internal ending. Characterizing the relationship between the development and its ending will then let us explain the endings of other, less easily circumscribed developments in art history—such as those of a movement or style. In the next chapter, the threat of artificiality that attends this talk of art in the language of problems and solutions will, to a large extent, be allayed. I should stress that what follows does not entail a position on the long-standing question of whether mathematical perspective reflects an innate feature of the way humans see the world, or whether it is merely a convention of representation that influences how we see the world and that, as a convention, could conceivably be changed. Whether a technique of spatial representation reflects biology, on the one hand, or culture, on the other, is a question distinct from whether it speaks to a particular way in which the problem of spatial representation is conceived and the development of a solution is brought about.

Mathematically constructed perspective was invented and given its first demonstration by Filippo Brunelleschi in the early part of the fif-

[50] Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, p. 13.

[51] John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin Books, 1972), pp. 16, 18.

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teenth century.[32] Linear perspective as a technique of naturalistic depiction was used in antiquity, and later artists such as Giotto had developed techniques for the perspectival representation of certain kinds of forms in space such as ceiling coffers or floor tiles receding into pictorial depth.[33] Only with Brunelleschi, however, were the piecemeal rules of linear perspective used by these earlier artists brought together and shown to reflect a general, internally consistent mathematical system.[34] This system promised to those who used it rules for representing objects in space on a flat plane so as to preserve their apparent size, shape, and position with respect to one another.[35] We lack precise information about Brunelleschi's demonstrations, which consisted of paintings of Florence's Baptistry of San Giovanni and Palazzo de' Signori (now the Palazzo Vecchio). But his earliest biographer, a near contemporary, describes how Brunelleschi created an image of the Bap-

[32] R. Krautheimer and T. Krautheimer-Hess propose a reconstruction of Brunelleschi's demonstration in *Lorenzo Ghiberti*, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 1: 229–53.

[33] For this reason, and because they no longer express a "medieval representational principle," Panofsky treats Duccio and Giotto as "the founders of the modern perspectival view of space." *Perspective as Symbolic Forms*, pp. 54–55.

[34] The precise nature of Brunelleschi's achievement is a matter of controversy. By a mathematically consistent system I mean rules that derive from a consistent set of geometric axioms. Earlier artists had adopted some discrete rules for the placement of orthogonals in a picture. These, however, were incomplete, and unintegrated as a means of describing the geometric space of the image, for the associated rule for deciding at what depth intervals to place transversals (such as on the floor) had not yet been discovered. Indeed, Alberti says that in his time artists still diminished the size of each strip of the floor by one-third. This rule would have been mathematically inconsistent with what the other rules demanded. See Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, p. 62.

Edgerton treats Brunelleschi's real discovery as being what today is called the vanishing point, in reference to which the individual rules for creating pictorial recession in depth could be organized. *Renaissance Rediscovery of Linear Perspective*, pp. 124–42. Martin Kemp, however, asserts that any vanishing point would have been given little emphasis in Brunelleschi's demonstration paintings, as his depictions of the exterior of the Baptistry or the Palazzo de' Signori would not have included obvious receding diagonals. *The Science of Art: Optical Themes in Western Art from Brunelleschi to Seurat* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), p. 345.

[35] To be sure, perspective was not just an accidental discovery whose advantages were then exploited. In addition to the separate components of the system already available, there had been various cultural demands for the study of geometry in the pictorial representation of space. The thirteenth-century Franciscan monk Roger Bacon exhorted artists to study geometry in order to better represent the earthly work of God. Bacon had no conception of, and thus could not have advocated, mathematical perspective per se, but he did appear to ask that painters learn a systematic, less ad hoc, way to represent the geometry of objects in the world. Edgerton, *Renaissance Rediscovery of Linear Perspective*, pp. 18–19.

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tistry on a wooden panel and how, having painted the patterns of the inlaid marble of the Baptistry in such a way that "no miniaturist could have done better," he then drilled a small hole in the panel at a point on the image equivalent to where his line of sight would have struck the Baptistry along a perpendicular axis.[36] Spectators then peered through the hole from the back of the panel at a mirror that reflected the painted image on the panel's other side. This setup both controlled for parallax and enabled the spectator to occupy a virtual position in relation to the depicted Baptistry that matched the position Brunelleschi had in relation to the actual building. The reportedly astounding illusionistic result, greater than could be explained by the reproduction of the surface of the marble, confirmed the power and accuracy of the system with which the painting was composed.

Although Brunelleschi's experiments gave perspective a vivid practical demonstration, only with Leon Battista Alberti was the technique formally theorized, where the principles embodied in the demonstrations were explicitly articulated as technical rules of thumb that painters could adopt to improve on and systematize the spatial order of their work.[37] Perspective's later development included such elaborations as the sculptor Lorenzo Ghiberti's demonstration that its rules cohered with the contemporary science of optics, and Piero della Francesca's situating of the technique within the larger context of Euclidean geometry, a logical extension of Alberti's more specific comments on the geometry of vision.

The development of perspective came to an end with Leonardo. But this is not because he brought perspective to the point where it became an optimal solution to the problem of representing objects in space, but, rather, because he brought perspective to its limits. By this I mean Leonardo exposed limits in the system while using it to accomplish goals that had been considered realizable with the system yet never until his investigations attempted. First there is the limit contained in the

[36] A. Manetti, *The Life of Brunelleschi*, ed. H. Saalman, trans. C. Engass (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1970), pp. 38–39. Quoted in Kemp, *Science of Art*, p. 12.

[37] James Ackerman suggests that what differentiates the Albertian account of perspective from Brunelleschi's is that Alberti supplied a way of combining the plan and elevation of a perceived or imagined space in a single geometrical construction, unlike what we know of Brunelleschi's system, which suggests that its three-dimensional effects were achieved by superimposing two-dimensional constructions. Alberti conceived of the image in perspective as a plan intersecting the visual pyramid; Brunelleschi's image intersects two visual triangles (one for plan, the other for elevation). See "Alberti's Light," in *Distance Points: Essays in Theory and Renaissance Art and Architecture* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991), p. 92 n. 46.

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fact that for a perspectival representation to be convincing, the spectator cannot move too far from the ideal viewpoint, especially in the case of wide images, as Leonardo realized in his *Last Supper* (ca. 1497). Although a master of perspective, Leonardo was unable to avoid the distortions caused when one moves out of the position of the ideal viewpoint, not because of his limitations as a painter, but because of limitations inherent in the system he used.[58] Then there is the limit of perspective as a system oriented toward a single point of vision, while a viewer's vision is typically binocular. Finally, there is the problem associated with the use of perspective in paintings whose horizontal dimensions extend to a great degree to either side of a spectator. Unless viewed from a good distance away, the scale of objects appears progressively distorted (because of foreshortening of the material or physical picture plane itself) moving from those represented in the center to those at the edges. An inverse kind of distortion occurs from a close viewpoint. Leonardo describes this in a drawing of a row of columns seen at a right angle to their axis, and indicates that, given a fixed eye-position, the column opposite the eye will appear to be the thinnest, and those on either side will appear to increase in width with distance. This results from the fact that the perspectivally correct projection of a sphere or circle (placed horizontally when it is the circumference of a column) becomes an elongated ellipse when and to the extent that the sphere is not directly opposite the eye. While many of the *apparent* distortions caused by a rigorous use of mathematical perspective are naturally compensated for by the human visual apparatus, this is not the case with the apparent distortions caused by representing a sphere or circle in "correct" perspective. In *The School of Athens* (1510–11), Raphael did not depict circles and spheres (such as the orb at the right and the base of the nonexistent column at the left) as the ellipses that would be called for by a consistent and completely rigorous use of perspective. He used, instead, a circle—the only shape that appears to spectators to be correct when spheres are projected onto a flat surface.[59] (Leonardo commented on this limit to perspective, despite the fact that it featured, and thus required correction, in few paintings of the period.) And finally, however exacting is the use of perspective, the color and form of a depicted figure still affect our perception of its apparent size and distance, in ways that require a departure from the or-

[58] The viewpoint is placed at the level of the heads in the painting, but the ideal position for a spectator this entails is at a position more than twice the height of a person of average stature.

[59] On this point see Michael Kubovy, *The Psychology of Perspective and Renaissance Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 114, and James Ackerman, "Alberti's Light," p. 89 n. 23.

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thodox use of perspective as compensation. It is not clear to what extent these limitations were recognized at the beginning of perspective's development.[40] They all emerged, however, at least by the time of Leonardo.[41] So while there was a development of perspective that began with a problem to be solved, the projected solution to the problem did not in fact mark the development's end. This is not because the development of perspective did not happen to go that far—owing, say, to painters and theorists giving up on understanding the system—but because it *could not* go that far, given the inherent limitations in the technique itself.

It is important to note here that even though the development of perspective exemplifies a development in which the solution for a problem is sought, the ending of the development was not the solution that would have answered the problem that drove the development, and was contained in its beginning. The ending the development of perspective reached was contained in its beginning, not as a solution that just took time to reach, but, rather, as a limit built into the system. The limit was part of the system, even if it took the use and theorization of perspective over time for that limit—for that property of the system—to be disclosed.

Thus, in this schematic history of perspective there is an illustration of the view I argued for earlier, and more abstractly, that a historian representing a development does not take the structure of his narrative from the narrative of those people who are the subjects of the historian's account. Here, perspective reached an internal limit in its development, but this limit was something the inventors or discoverers of perspective could not have known about until it was reached. To those who drove it forward, the development of perspective appeared to lead to better and better refinements in a technique that, when perfected, would allow them to create images reproducing the appearance of the space of the natural world. The development, however, was in fact

[40] The single hole of Brunelleschi's demonstration painting does seem to reflect an awareness of the need to isolate a monocular viewpoint.

[41] Some other distortions or inadequacies associated with perspective Leonardo notes are: "among objects of equal height which are higher than the eye, that which is farthest from the eye will seem the lowest, and if the object is below the eye, that nearest to the eye will seem lowest"; "the line of the horizon must be curved since the earth is spherical." *Treatise on Painting*, ed. and trans. A. Philip McMahon (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956), paras. 493 and 988, cited in Ackerman, "Leonardo's Eye," in *Distance Points*, p. 139n. 7. See also M. H. Pirenne, "The Scientific Basis of Leonardo da Vinci's Theory of Perspective," *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 3 (1952–53) 169–85, and C. Pedretti, "Leonardo on Curvilinear Perspective," *Bibl. de l'Humanisme et de la Renaissance* 25 (1963): 69–87.

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(something known retrospectively) only of the means to represent the size, position, and shape of forms in an image in a mathematically—but not necessarily apparently—consistent way. The true character of what developed became salient only sometime around its end, as expressed in Leonardo's distinction between "artificial perspective," "which is made by art" and sometimes results in distortion, and "natural perspective," which concerns the perception of objects in nature.[42] I do not mean here that we found out the end result of the development only when that result had been reached. Rather, we found out the nature of the system, that which the development of perspective began probing and ended in finally revealing, only at the development's end. The limits to the development were limits because they were properties of the system itself: there in the beginning, but uncovered only as the terrain of the system was mapped over time.

The limits to mathematical perspective were eventually learned, but it should be recognized that whether or not they were exposed, they still represented an end, if only a potential end, to the system's development. Artists might have continued to try and develop perspective into the guarantee of verisimilitude they thought it could be, but if the limits to the system were objective limits, any further real development would have been impossible.[43] Of course, different ways of using perspective were discovered, as in the Baroque period's illusionistic decoration of flat ceilings, made to appear as the concave interior of the celestial sphere. And, as Alberti recommended, painters often used perspective in only incomplete and varying degrees, depending on the needs of their work. But the *development* of perspective—in, that is, its identity as a technique of illusionistic representation—had already reached an internal ending. The ending was explained by the beginning by virtue of deriving from a property inherent in the system with which the development began.

In saying that the limits to the system are *internal*, I mean that they are features of the system that belong to it by virtue of the goals or functions for which it was created and employed. The mention of goals is required because the natural features in question are limits only with reference to those goals. In this way, not all properties of a thing are natural limits. It is a natural property of a given type of metal that it ex-

[42] Ackerman *Distance Points*, pp. 101, 134.

[43] This is not to deny that further refinements in the system were made. Dürer exploited a feature of Alberti's study of perspective projection to calculate geometrically the shadows cast by an object lit from a single point source. See Thomas da Costa Kaufmann, "Perspective of Shadows: The History of the Theory of Shadow Projection," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 38 (1975): 258–87.

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pands at a given temperature at a certain rate. But this is a natural limit only from the standpoint of trying, say, to use it in building a computer chip or engine part. It is a natural feature of human beings that they cannot grow above a certain height without losing their center of gravity, but this is a natural limit only from the standpoint of a given function (defined, say, by pressures of natural selection) which would be served by taller human beings.

Finally, glass and stone have properties that are natural limits from the standpoint of their use in reaching particular ends. In the development of the skeletal structure of Gothic architecture, driven by the goal of allowing more light to enter into the building's interior, there was a continual revision of forms, as James Ackerman describes, "in the direction of substituting glass for stone—first by concentrating stresses in the skeleton, and second by reducing the mass of the skeleton itself." But this development toward increased light proceeded, because of the material limits of glass and stone, only at the cost of decreased skeletal support. This meant that, like its material constituents, the structure of the Gothic cathedral had its own limits: there was a point past which the development in the structure toward increased interior natural light could not go.[44] The result of attempts to go past those limits can be seen in the collapse of the choir of the Beauvais Cathedral.

The above examples illustrate limits to material entities, but I see no reason why we should not speak of limits to theoretical entities as well. It is a natural feature of Newtonian physics that it explains the motion of objects at speeds slower than that of light. But this is a natural limit from the standpoint of using Newtonian theory to explain, for example, events that approach that speed, such as nuclear fission.

And it was a natural limit to Ptolemaic theory of how to predict the positions of the planets that it conceived of the earth as the center of our planetary system. Whatever development toward greater accuracy was achieved—through various ad hoc principles and generalizations with more and more exceptions—the limits to that development were revealed with the introduction of the heliocentric view. This is not just because the heliocentric view had much better predictive capacity, thereby exposing how flimsy were the predictions of the geocentric view, but because the introduction of the Copernican view made man-

[44] "The invention of the rib vault and the flying buttress made it possible to lighten vaults and walls, which had been uniformly massive in Romanesque building, by concentrating stresses in chosen points. The lightening process was barely noticeable in the first experiments with bulky members, but once conceived, it was continued to the limit of the structural strength of stone. . . ." Ackerman, "Style," in *Distance Points*, pp. 14, 13.

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ifest what properties or features of the Ptolemaic view made any greater development in the accuracy of its predictions impossible.

Finally, whatever power was achieved in the development of behaviorism as a general explanation for human and animal action, the limits to the theory were exposed in the attempt to apply it to the use of language. Noam Chomsky's 1959 watershed review of B. F. Skinner's *Verbal Behavior* demanded that whatever success Skinner's view had had in some instances of the explanation of behavior, a different theory was required to explain how humans use a natural language—a theory that did not, like Skinner's theory, treat the development and use of language as simply responses to external stimuli, but took into account the underlying structures innately possessed from which particular utterances were generated. But far from showing merely that Skinner's theory was inappropriate in only one domain of human behavior, Chomsky's argument suggested the ways in which the theory was illegitimate in the other domains in which it had claimed success. The very extension of the theory from animal to human behavior became suspect. In the terms I have employed, Skinners's attempts to characterize the use of language through behaviorism exposed the limits to that theory, hence its actual nature and intrinsic flaws.

The above examples—concerning the limits belonging to elemental properties, anatomical structures, architectural designs, and theories based on fact and falsehood—may suggest that every thing has limits so long as it can be described with reference to some end or goal which it cannot achieve. Is it an internal limit of a hammer that it cannot be used to perform brain surgery? In a sense, yes, but there is a distinction between limits that are attributed to a thing from the standpoint of just any given end or goal, and limits from the standpoint of the end or goal that the thing was created or employed to achieve. To describe the end or goal for which mathematical perspective was created is in a deep sense to identify an essential feature, or identity condition, of the system of perspective itself. We may be able to list essential features of a physical artifact such as a hammer without knowing the point for which it was created. But a list of features of the system of mathematical perspective, that is, a list of those rules by which a pictorial representation in perspective is to be composed, would be incomplete without a specification of what end or goal those rules are meant to serve. The rules of perspective, moreover, exist *as a system* only in connection with certain ideas belonging to those who use it about the function or end meant to be realized in following those rules. Without some reference to some end or point of the system, there is nothing that individuates the systematically connected rules of perspectival representation from any number of associated rules for representation derived from

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the general theories of mathematics and optics on which the system of perspective is grounded.[45]

If, because of a lack of talent or a loss of interest in the technique, perspective had never been developed to the point that it satisfied whatever goals those who brought about its development aimed for, that would have been merely an external limit, something that stopped the development. But, in fact, the development reached an internal limit, a genuine ending, because the theorists and practitioners of perspective brought it as far as was possible—given its intrinsic makeup—toward satisfying the goal or end in terms of which, as a system, it was defined.

Because the ending to perspective's development is, as a natural limit, explained by the nature of perspective itself, it exemplifies a narrative ending—the sort of ending to a story's development which, while not necessarily the last event, forces whatever comes after to be merely part of the novel, not part of the story per se. So it is part of the history of perspective that it was rejected in the nineteenth century in favor of other means of indicating spatial depth, such as the atmospheric effects of the impressionists. But this event, this external ending to the history of perspective, came well after the internal ending had been reached.

Now, having outlined the manner in which the response of several theorists and painters to a particular problem—the problem of representing space—can reach limits determined by how the problem is conceived, I want to suggest that we can see the response of a movement to a particular problem reach internal limits determined by the way the problem—contained in the movement's brief—is conceived.

To repeat my earlier example: I suggested that the problem of how to acknowledge both the represented surface of a form in a painting and the surface of the painting itself entered the brief of Picasso and Braque as a matter of how both to represent the forms of objects and make those forms emerge through the plane of the canvas organized as a grid or set of interlocking planes. Now just as there was a limit to how far the impressionist development in these terms could be taken, so cubism's development in the way it construed the problem was carried as far as possible, to the point in the summer of 1911 where the paintings threatened to become abstract. Here, the surface qualities and forms of the represented objects were almost completely subsumed in the all-over effect of the skein of the painting's surface. Even if abstract expressionist painting would later carry this development toward an all-

[45] By analogy laws governing the physics of sound waves exist whether or not any reference is made to the functions sounds serve. The syntax of a particular language, however, exists as an individuated group of principles only with reference to an end or function served by the language, that is, communication.

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over effect without a represented figure, the all-over effect of the paintings of the summer of 1911 were a limit for cubism, perhaps because part of its brief was that it was a figurative art. That is to say, the particular problems constituting its brief were formulated, implicitly, in terms of images that represented a motif. Mondrian developed out of this moment of cubism works with a lattice-like composition, but, because he was not subject to cubism's limits, he could evolve from these to works *without* a represented object—moving, for example, from his pier and ocean compositions to *Composition with Lines*.[46]

One limit that did not belong to cubism was the necessity of addressing pictorial problems in terms only of paint. The Fauves addressed the issue of how to disassociate the surface color of a painting from the local color of its represented objects, but this investigation was limited to manipulating the color of paint on the surface of canvas. To distinguish, for example, between a depiction of an orange face and an orange depiction of a normally complexioned face was a problem for the Fauves to be dealt with only through the use of traditional materials of art. Cubism possessed no such limits and was able to address this problem further and differently in the colored and printed paper imported into collage. In, for example, Braque's *Still Life with Guitar* (1912), the *faux bois* pasted paper used in the representation of the guitar is read not as indicating the appearance of the instrument's surface so much as symbolizing it, standing as an emblem for such a surface. This is in contrast to the use of *faux bois* in trompe l'oeil painting in which such a feature imitates or illusionistically reproduces a surface. But while Picasso and Braque made use of the most diverse media in their collages, it was a limit to cubism's development that it remained primarily an art of the tableau, a flat surface with objects represented on it. And even though cubism's development brought mass-cultural objects, the artifacts of advertising, journalism, and machine-made materials, into the realm of fine art and thereby dismantled certain barriers between art and common culture that most earlier artists had assumed could never be breached, it was a limit to this development that the manipulation of such materials occurred largely at the level of for-

[46] Mondrian expressed it this way: "the intention of Cubism—in any case in the beginning—was to express volume. Three-dimensional space—natural space—thus remained. Cubism therefore remained basically a naturalistic expression and was only *an abstraction*—not true abstract art. This attitude of the cubists to the representations of volume in space was contrary to my conception of abstraction which is based on belief that this very space *has to be destroyed*." From "Eleven Europeans in America," *Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art* 12 (1946); reprinted in Herschel B. Chipp, ed., *Theories of Modern Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), p. 364.

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mal composition. That the mainly formal, aesthetically transfigured identity of these materials in cubism was a limit to the movement is seen in the alternative ways mass-cultural materials qua mass-cultural materials are used as content (as well as form) in Weimar photomontage, dada and futurist collage, and pop art.

There are other types of limits that might be considered internal to an artistic movement, such as those that arise from conventions which are so deeply embedded in the practice of the art that they serve as an implicit background to an artist's behavior. As unquestioned conventions they would be already incorporated into how the problems in the brief are formulated. The very use of an easel, and the posture a painter takes before it, are such conventions, ones that implicate the artist in a wide variety of institutions, traditions, and practices, such as the market for easily transportable paintings. We see this as a limit internal to the tradition of easel painting when confronted with a type of painting that eschews the convention, such as the wall paintings of the minimalist painter Sol Lewitt, or the panels of vertical stripes Daniel Buren creates in situ in galleries and museums. These apparently contentless works, which in Douglas Crimp's analysis "pose" as traditional painting, seek to show how such institutions function as "the necessary condition of the artwork's intelligibility."[47] In my terms, they expose the background conventions that make such painting possible.

One needs to be careful in determining whether a given limit is a limit to the artist, the movement the artist belongs to, or the tradition in which the movement is contained. If a limit such as the convention of easel painting is a feature of the tradition, it does not have the same explanatory import in understanding the development of a particular movement within the tradition as would features peculiar to, or peculiarly integrated in, the brief of the movement. It would not be a limit to the Pre-Raphaelite movement that, in trying to undo several hundred years of painting which, since Raphael, they thought had gone grievously wrong, they did not consider opting for icon painting. For it was a part of the tradition they belonged to, even if the tradition they wanted to start anew, that painting was understood as a naturalistically representational art. That may have been a limit to the Renaissance paradigm defining the period of art until, say, Kandinsky, but it does not explain a limit to the developments of individual movements that period contained.

The above examples of limits to an artistic development are *internal* limits when going beyond them would be impossible given the terms in

[47] Douglas Crimp, *On the Museum's Ruins* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993), pp. 87–88.

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which the development is carried out. So while cubism invented a different form of pictorial space from that exhibited in linear perspective, its development was nonetheless carried out in terms of representing an object, as still-life, portrait, or landscape, in *some form* of pictorial space. Extruding all represented space from their images, or representing space without an object by which to define it, was outside the limits of—because inconsistent with—the terms in which cubism's brief was formed and its development was carried out.[48]

So the limits to a movement's development are an expression of what, given the nature of the movement, it was possible for it to do. This conforms in a certain sense to Wölfflin's famous dictum that "even the most original talent cannot proceed beyond certain limits which are fixed for it by the date of its birth. Not everything is possible at all times. . . ."[49] But while Wölfflin refers here to various kinds of possibility—historical, material, and technical—the kind of possibility I mean limits to define is more specifically of a conceptual sort. Where one operates with a certain conception of what are the appropriate means and ends of creating art, the range of materials appropriate for addressing a problem, and the kinds of solutions that would count as solutions, that conception imposes certain parameters on what can be done, as long as that conception is sustained.

The point of saying that a limit is a *conceptual* constraint on what is possible for a movement to do is to emphasize that the limit is part of the formed identity of the movement; it is not among those explicit decisions members of the movement make in carrying out the movement, but part of the background set of implicit beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and so on, against which those decisions are made. So, once a limit to a painter's development is reached, the painter cannot just alter the conception responsible for that limit and still continue the same development. Retrospectively, one may be able to see that the limit or parameter was there all along, but to give up whatever feature of one's

[48] We see this in a statement by Braque: "The acute angles in the paintings I did at L'Estaque in 1908 were the result of a new conception of space. I said goodbye to the 'vanishing point.' And to avoid any projection towards infinity I interposed a series of planes, set one on top of another, at a short distance from the spectator. It was to make him realize that objects did not retreat backwards into space but stood up close in front of one another. . . . Instead of starting with the foreground I always began with the centre of the picture. Before long I even turned perspective inside out and turned the pyramid of forms upside down so that it came forward to meet the observer." From an interview with Jacques Lassaigne, 1961; quoted in the exhibition catalog *Les Cubistes* (Bordeaux: Gallerie des Beaux-Arts, 1973).

[49] Heinrich Wölfflin, preface to *Principles of Art History: The Problem of the Development of Style in Later Art*, 7th ed., trans. M. D. Hottinger, (New York: Dover, 1950), p. ix.

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conception accounts for that parameter is in a very real way to change one's project, to engage in a different kind of development, one perhaps with its own limits.

The view I have proposed here is that artistic movements may exhibit a certain form of development in which the aims of the movement are pursued within parameters or limits that determine how far the development can go. Such a development is *internal* when the parameters or limits belong to the very constitution of those aims—to how they are formed. The ending of a movement is thus, in a sense, explained by its beginning, as the reaching of limits inscribed in the nature of the movement itself.

There may be no single set of general characteristics that account for the limits inherent in all artistic developments. Nor do all movements reach their limits, as they might leave opportunities for further development unexplored. This would be to say that such movements merely *stop* rather than end, or that they reach only *external* endings—endings explained by nothing intrinsic to the movement itself. But to the extent that a given artistic movement does reach its limits, those limits will serve to indicate which features are essential to it and which only accidental. In this way, as the limits to a movement become known, the movement's identity becomes revealed, and only after its end may we know the essential characteristics of that which developed. Several of Picasso's and Braque's paintings look so superficially similar as to have been painted by the same man. But the individual developments of Picasso and Braque turn out to have such different limits that those superficially similar paintings can be seen to embody quite different principles. The identities of the paintings are revealed by the limits to the individual developments in which, respectively, they figure.

The foregoing seeks to offer an initial characterization of how a movement in the history of art may reach an internal limit: a limit beyond which no further development is possible. Such an internal limit, correctly understood, lets a narrative represent the *story* of the movement, even if those who were part of the movement should go on painting in the movement's style after its story has ended. An important question is, How generally does this account of internal limits apply? Do all movements in the history of art have internal limits, and thus internal endings? Or do the above remarks apply to only a narrow range of movements whose members see themselves as belonging to a movement, or perhaps an avant garde? Do artistic developments that are not associated with movements possess intrinsic limits? And, finally, what is the relation between the concept of ending construed as a limit and the merely temporal notion of an ending featured in a standard history

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of art? These questions need to be addressed, and the specific way in which limits become part of a development needs to be elaborated. But to the extent that the above characterization holds true of at least *some* movements in the history of art, it serves to show how a historical development can exhibit an ending that is internally related to, because explained by, its beginning. As such, the development possesses a narrative form that belongs not only to historical representation but also, in a way, to the structure of history itself.

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CHAPTER 3
Beginnings and Style

IN THE PREVIOUS chapter I argued that a development of a certain kind in art history may reach an internal limit and that the reaching of that limit has the form of a narrative ending. As an objective feature of a historical development, such an ending is a truth constraint on historical narratives in which the development is represented.

This chapter treats beginnings in historical narratives. The specific question asked here is, If we understand the concept of a historical ending as a limit, what concept of a historical beginning does this kind of ending imply? In other words, if developments in art history reach an internal end, then how do they begin?

My discussion reintroduces the notion of the brief which I described in the preceding chapter as comprising those representations a painter has about both the ends of his or her activity as a painter and the appropriate means to reach those ends. For reasons that will become clear, I am unhappy with the suggestion the term carries that these representations a painter has are necessarily conscious representations, or representations the painter has explicitly articulated and reflected upon in his or her deliberations about how to proceed. I might have instead chosen to adopt the existentialist idiom and spoken of the artist's "project," or adopted Riegl's Hegelian notion of the *Kunstwollen,* but those terms, in some ways, carry their own unsightly baggage. The notion of a project implies too volunteerist a conception of the means and ends to which an artist subscribes. The notion of a *Kunstwollen*, however that ambiguous term is understood, suggests too deterministic an account of what the artist chooses to do. The notion of the brief at least has the virtue of allowing that the sources of what an artist considers the appropriate means and ends of art may not be up to him or her, but the ways in which those means and ends are realized are. The following expands on the concept of the brief, ultimately situating it within an explanatory model of style.

To see oneself as participating in a practice such as painting is to be committed to goals that are not just identical to one's goals in deciding to participate in the practice. One may decide to become an artist in order to become famous, to frustrate the professional aspirations of one's

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parents, or like Stephen Deadelus, "to forge . . . the uncreated conscience" of one's race. But to be engaged in the practice of an art is to pursue goals, purposes, or ends internal to that practice. Game playing is often taken to be paradigmatic of practices—as the notion is employed here—since there are usually ends or goods realized in playing a game which can be realized only through playing the game. Such internal ends or goods may not justify the practice or reveal its value to those who are outside of it, but for those who are part of it those ends both define the practice and express its point.[1]

As a matter of fact, the goals or ends that define a given practice may have changed radically over time. But their status and effectiveness as practice-defining ends depend on their being taken in some sense as stable and enduring by those who engage in the practice. One way in which painting as an art has had the character of such a practice is through a shared and continuing sense that there are ends or purposes to painting that are internal to the activity—ends that serve as the background against which choices of how and what to paint are made. In nineteenth-century France, for example, the representation of the "truth" or *verité* of the natural and social world functioned as an end apparently internal to the practice of painting. The supposition was that a value could be uniquely realized in art's disclosure of the nature of reality and that art could do this in a way distinct from, not just approximate or subordinate to, that of science and other representational practices. Baudelaire's "Salon of 1859" divides artists into two groups practicing contrary ways of reaching that end: one through fidelity to the optical effects of nature, the other through fidelity to the artist's own temperament or singular understanding of the world:

> The immense class of artists . . . can be divided into two quite distinct camps: one type, who calls himself "réaliste" . . . says: "I want to rep-

[1] I do not mean here to offer anything approaching a comprehensive theory of practices, only to introduce the notion as a way of thinking about how painting as an art is a kind of structured activity that, at any one time, has certain purposes or ends that participants in the activity implicitly accept as applying to the form of their participation. Art is a practice also in the sense that, while art changes in response to external demands, there are already motivations, means, and relevant criteria for changing the practice available within the practice itself. In this way, painters need not look outside of the defining ends of the practice to justify their desire for changing it. For an account of how the notion of a practice can function in the definition of art, see Noël Carroll, "Art, Practice, and Narrative," *The Monist* 71 (April 1988): 140–57. For the limitations of a theory of practices in explaining behavior, see Stephen Turner, *The Social Theory of Practices: Tradition, Tacit Knowledge and Presuppositions* (Cambridge: Blackwell and Polity Press, 1994).

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resent things as they are, or as they will be, supposing that I do not exist." . . . And the other type, "l'imaginatif," says: I want to illuminate things with my intellect and project their reflection upon other minds.[2]

In examining any particular practice, it may be difficult to discover which are its internal ends and which only values or ends that contingently attach to the practice. But one consideration in favor of a particular end's being practice-defining—in other words, *internal*—is that participants in the practice compare themselves with one another in terms of how well they achieve that end. That, for example, the representation of visual actuality was an internal end for the impressionists is seen in the way such an end was appealed to in the service of comparisons the impressionists made between their work and very different painters such as romantics, realists, and academics. If such groups did not see themselves as trying to achieve the same (practice-defining) ends, it would be difficult to understand why any one group would have described itself as painting better, more authentically, or more genuinely than the others rather, that is, than described itself as just painting differently. Yet, if various painters do see themselves as sharing the same practice-defining goals, and nonetheless arrive at very different ways of bringing those goals about, then an appeal to those goals does not go very far in explaining why artists paint in the different ways they do. What is needed to explain why the impressionists painted the way they did is not a description of the general ends they and other painters shared but a description of the particular, perhaps idiosyncratic, form in which the impressionists conceived those ends, and the particular understanding they had of the proper means by which they could be achieved. That is, an explanation of the impressionists' activity as artists requires reference to the particular shape, and means for achieving that shape, in which they thought the practice-defining ends would be satisfied. Such a description of the specific way a group of painters represents the purpose of their activity as painters and the means to realize that purpose is what I refer to as a movement's brief. The brief doesn't exclude the general practice-defining goals of painting; rather it contains a particular formulation of them, one that may in fact be incompatible with a formulation of those same practice-defining goals found in other briefs.

By virtue of seeing oneself as engaging in a practice, one implicitly commits oneself to seeking the means and ends that define the prac-

[2] Charles Baudelaire, "Salon de 1859," *Écrits sur l'art*, ed. Yves Florenne, 2 vols. (Paris, 1971), 2: 36–37.

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tice, but how one understands those means and ends may be very different from—even incompatible with—the understanding of the means and ends of someone else engaging in the practice. It should be stressed, however, that seeing oneself as participating in a certain practice makes the particular means and ends of others in the practice *relevant*—or even unavoidable—considerations in the way one formulates or construes one's own means and ends. That is, in seeking certain ends as a painter, one's immediate point of comparison is how other painters sought those ends, not, say, the means by which scientists or philosophers seek ostensibly similar ends. This is not to deny that how one practice as a whole defines its internal ends may influence how another does. Nineteenth-century positivism in science, in its construal of knowledge as achieved only through empirically verifiable claims about observed phenomena, was a source for much of the technical vocabulary and assumptions concerning vision through which critics came to terms with the art that departed from academic norms. The critic Jules Antoine Castagnary, for example, says that Manet "reproduces the sensation that his eye brings him" but transforms this raw sensory data into a publicly available knowledge.[5]

But while one does not need to explain why painters see the means and ends of their activity differently than do people engaged in other kinds of practices, one does need an explanation of why, within the practice of painting, different painters can see themselves as addressing the same problems or practice-defining ends, and yet have different briefs. Such an explanation might appeal to a number of different factors, such as changes in the structure of art institutions, the demands of patrons, the market, or the public. But as the brief contains ideas about the proper means to satisfy ends considered internal to the practice of painting, a force central to the shaping of that brief is what its holder thinks of other attempts at satisfying those practice-defining goals, such as the attempts of other movements.

For example, while the impressionists shared the contemporary realist and Barbizon painters' view that through landscape painting one could signal one's repudiation of the stock repertoire of idealized subjects prescribed by the Academy, the way the realists composed their low or genre scenes on a grand scale formerly reserved for history painting may still have connoted to the impressionists an obedience to the received conventions of history painting and the concomitant hierarchy of allegorical (and mythical and universal) themes over the rep-

[5] Jules Antoine Castagnary, "Salon de 1874," *Salons*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1892), 2: 179–80.

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resentation of the here and now. The Barbizon and realist painters preserved not just some of the conventions and content of earlier academic and history painting, but, in a sense, the hierarchy of genres in which that earlier painting was judged. That is, while Millet and Courbet painted peasants in the landscape instead of heroes in battle, their images did not so much escape from the conventional hierarchy of genres in which heroic history painting was paramount as shift the terms of the hierarchy around. Furthermore, while the realist landscape suggested an avoidance of academic conventions, the impressionists may still have found the chiaroscuro in those landscapes too close to the academic techniques of lighting and modeling used for allegorical or idealized subjects. The impressionist propensity for painting landscapes on overcast days may in fact have been due to the desire to avoid sharp contrasts in lighting that would suggest any chiaroscuro.

The impressionists thus accepted that landscape painting would be a *means* to avoid tradition, but the particular way in which other movements used this means shaped the manner in which the impressionists employed it. By painting out of doors, or at least giving the appearance of having completed their works on site, the impressionists felt they could thereby have their work judged not by its chosen scene and accuracy of representation, but by its means of representation, whatever the scene. So, while the Barbizon painters and the impressionists made use of many of the same resources and techniques for painting in plein air, the impressionists felt that the very idea of the genesis of a painting out of doors could be an expressive or thematic element of the painting, an element missed by the Barbizon painters who saw the content of a painting as supplied only by what theme or motif the painting represented, not by facts about its materials or how it was painted.[4] But whereas impressionists rejected the form of realism of the Barbizon painters because they saw the content of their works as derived only from the represented content, not the *means* of representation, symbolist painters felt the impressionist form of realism was constrained or limited by its valorization of "accurate" vision. Referring to this limit, Paul Gauguin writes, "the Impressionists study color exclusively [for

[4] See Renoir's remark to Vollard concerning Manet: "He was the first to establish a simple formula, such as we were all trying to find . . . You can imagine how those [Barbizon 'dreamers' and 'thinkers'] scorned us, because we were getting paint on our canvases, and because, like the old masters, we were trying to paint in joyous tones and carefully eliminate all 'literature' from our pictures." From Stephen F. Eisenman, "The Intransigent Artist *or* How the Impressionists Got Their Name," in *The New Painting: Impressionism 1874–1886*, ed. Charles S. Moffett, exhib. cat. (San Francisco: Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 1986), p. 54.

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its] decorative effect, but without freedom, retaining the shackles of verisimilitude." It is a "purely superficial art, full of affectations and purely material. There is no thought there."[5]

Thus, various movements can have the same idea of what constitutes the ends of their activity as painters and nonetheless still have very different, often incompatible, conceptions about what form of painting would realize those ends. Whatever role the contemporary practice of painting has in forming a painter's brief, it is the painter's brief, not the contemporary practice from within which it and other briefs emerge, that explains the nature of the painter's work and, as I described in the previous chapter, the limits to the development the painter's or movement's work exhibits.

So I have characterized a movement's development as the changes a movement exhibits in response to a brief members of the movement hold. And I have described a brief as composed of beliefs, attitudes, desires, and so on, about the central problems or ends of painting and the proper ways in which to solve those problems or reach those ends. There is a feature of this scheme, however, which threatens it with artificiality. It is the implication (alluded to at the beginning of this chapter) that, in saying a brief explains an artist's process of painting, the artist is constantly reflecting on those constituents of the brief as she paints toward one type of effect rather than another. That is, there is the implication that as an artist paints she makes each decision concerning the direction in which the painting will go in light of an explicit consideration of her view of the proper means and ends of painting. We might respond to the question of why a painting was composed in a certain way by referring to the beliefs, desires, intentions, and attitudes the painter had about the means and ends of painting, and how those representations entered into the creation of the work at hand. Yet it is not clear how this sort of routine explanation tracks the process by which a painting is created. For in a practice such as painting, part of the process by which an artist comes to know what her goals in a given work are is engaging in the act of creating the work. Trying to paint one way, and then another, being satisfied and dissatisfied by turn, and then reflecting on why one way of working or one element in the work seems right and another not, all seems to be part of the process of figuring out just what one wants to achieve in one's work—that is, what one is trying to do. Of course, some ideas about what kind of end one is trying to

[5] From "Diverses Choses, 1896–1897," an unpublished manuscript, part of which appears in Jean de Rotonchamp, *Paul Gauguin, 1848–1903* (Paris: Crès, 1925), pp. 210, 216, 211. Reprinted in Herschel B. Chipp, ed., *Theories of Modern Art: A Source Book by Artists and Critics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), p. 65.

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achieve will structure what one does. But it seems extraordinary to describe the process of painting as one in which a painter reflects on, and then deliberately acts from, the beliefs, attitudes, and intentions she has concerning the art of painting. This seems to attribute a conscious form of deliberation alien to the actual process the so-called deliberation describes. The problem is not just that such a model of behavior—where one deliberates among various means with reference to a given end—assumes that such beliefs, attitudes, and intentions are transparently available to the paimter to consider, but that so much of human behavior, and especially creative behavior, involves acting from beliefs that do not need to be consciously reflected upon to be causally effective.

So while one's behavior *expresses* mental representations such as beliefs and desires, this need not mean that in acting one reflects on or is aware of those mental causes or constituents of one's behavior. What is needed is a way to see the set of such representations as functioning analogously to what Sartre calls a person's fundamental "project," a sort of extended goal that defines, as a long-term strategy defines short-term tactics, the individual choices the person makes.[6] In Sartre's scheme the fundamental project shapes the person's conscious decisions but is not itself reflected upon in those decisions. How, analogously, can the explanatory power of what I have called the painter's brief can be sustained without requiring the claim that the painter is always consciously reflecting on and acting from the representations the brief contains?

To clarify the question, I have said that to the extent that a painter sees herself as engaging in the practice of painting, the painter has a set of views or mental representations concerning the proper ends of painting, and the proper means for reaching those ends. Described in the terms in which the painter understands them, those views constitute the painter's brief. We refer to the brief in explaining why the painter behaves as she does. But what kind of causal process does this explanation rely on? How are an artist's representations about the means and ends of art effective?

I suggest that the explanatory power of those representations— of the brief—depends on an intermediary mechanism. This is the niechanism of *artistic style*. The structure of explanation I envisage is this:

A painter has a set of representations about the ends she ought to reach in painting and the appropriate means to reach those ends. In

[6] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1966), part 4, p. 601 and passim.

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trying to reach those ends via those means, certain procedures or techniques are discovered or appropriated that seem to respond to or fit with what those representations of means and ends require. These procedures or techniques are internalized in a sense that allows the painter to act in accord with the requirements of those mental representations without acting *from* those representations, that is, without continually reflecting on those representations and what they require. The painter just paints with those procedures that were developed in response to the brief. But the brief has explanatory power in what the painter does because it explains why those procedures with which the painter acts were formed and internalized in the first place. And the *development* of the painter's work should then be understood as the change the work goes through with those procedures remaining, at one level of description, constant. That level of description is the one that makes explicit how the procedures respond to the brief. So there is room for saying that, for example, a technique was sharpened or clarified—while remaining the same technique—so long as there is a description that applies to both its less and more realized state that connects it to the brief.

The limit to the development of the painter's work is the point past which the painter in that style—with those internalized procedures—cannot go. The painter cannot go past a given limit in that style if the intentional descriptions of the action involved in going past that limit would be incompatible with the contents of the painter's brief. That is, in describing a painting, we might identify features that happen to be incompatible with its painter's brief. But such an identification could not follow from an intentional description, that is, a description under which the painter's creation of the painting was intentional in the broad sense of issuing from a representation, articulated or only embodied, that she has. If, for example, a painter's development is to be explained as her creating works from a particular brief, and that brief is formed in terms of representational art, then the creation of abstract art is not an intentional description of what she does, however abstract her work may appear to us. Second-generation abstract expressionist painters found a precursor in the late work of Monet, but this occurred under various forms of description of the impressionist's painting. Some were consistent with Monet's brief—an all-over effect, emphatic brushstroke, and apparent continuation past the edge, posited as arbitrary, of the canvas. Some—as tending toward the absence of figuration and expressive of the artist's bodily engagement in the act of painting—were not. Only under those descriptions that are in some sense intentionalist can the development of the artist's work toward its limits be charted.

A corollary of this is that just because two painters employ similar or

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identical procedures does not entail that they are subject to the same limits. For while the two could create works in a similar manner, toward a similar effect, there still might be descriptions of the work under which one painter's work is within the limits to his development and the other painter's work is outside the limits to his development. This is because even if two procedures are identical in terms of what material results they bring about, this does not entail that the procedures are identical in terms of the kinds of mental representations they respond to. Two works, for example, might be visually identical because they issue from the same set of procedures, but in one case those procedures were developed using a concept of art as an exclusively figurative medium, and in the other case those procedures were developed with a concept of art as something both figurative and abstract. Unlike, and to the dismay of, Pollock, whose brief called for an art that, if not without figuration, at least demanded the absence of the human figure, De Kooning, though sharing with Pollock the abstract expressionist brushstroke, never felt the need to exclude figuration, or, as in his *Women* series, exclude the human figure. De Kooning ridiculed those painters who decreed that there were certain subjects that could not belong to art: "the question, as they saw it, was not so much what you *could* paint but rather what you could *not* paint. You could *not* paint a house or a tree or a mountain."[7] The point here is that the descriptions of an artwork under which it can be placed within a painter's development are constrained by the representations the painter had from which the procedures that created those works were derived. Those descriptions of the artwork, under which it represents an ending, or, alternatively, a continuation, of a development, are constrained by the identity of the artwork, and that identity is given, in part, by the painter's representations that entered into its creation.

This outline has been exceedingly abstract, but the argument boils down to the claim that a painter has particular representations about the means and ends of his activity as a painter. His style is formed in response to those representations, but the style limits how far toward realizing those ends the painter in that style can go. This can also be extended to describe a number of painters in a particular movement. We can say that members of a movement share certain representations about the means and ends of their activity. Their style is formed in response to what—from their point of view—those representations require, but the style limits how far toward realizing those ends the painters can go. The parallel in my discussion of the development

[7] Willem de Kooning, "What Abstract Art Means to Me," *Museum of Modern Art Bulletin* 18 (spring 1951): 5–6.

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of perspective is that a number of individuals shared beliefs about certain ends associated with the construction of pictorial space and the appropriate means to reach those ends. They formulated a system of mathematical perspective to achieve those ends. The use of that system over time allowed for its components, hence the system itself, to be better understood.[8] At some point, however, the inadequacy of the system to fully realize the ends for which it was developed became apparent. The limit, hence ending, to the development of perspective was the furthest point that could be reached toward the ends for which it was developed. So the system of perspective, like a particular style, had natural limits to how far its users could go. And just as the intention to develop a system of spatial representation entered into the causes of the development of perspective, but the system of perspective turned out not to be what was intended, so an artist's intentions to paint in a given style may enter into the formation of her style, but the style that *results*, the style she forms, need not match the content of any such intention.

Given this structure of brief-style-limit, the question of what both individuates a movement independently of the events it goes through and is responsible for any internal ending it might reach is answered through appeal to the conjunction of the movement's brief and style. Or, since each style is internally related to a particular brief, we can say, more simply, it is a movement's style in which its identity and limits consist.

The above view, of course, depends on a certain kind of theory of style, a theory in which style is a generative phenomenon: a property of what is responsible for how a work is created, not of the material work itself. What is more, the view outlined above requires that a style is not propositional, like, say, a set of rules specifying a certain way to paint, but, rather, is expressed in those rules, as it is causally prior to them. This latter point, we shall see, distinguishes a work that has a style from a work that is just in the style of something or someone else.

Richard Wollheim conceives of the description of an artist's individual style as an account not of visual or material features of the artist's work

[8] In an interview with Christian Zervos in 1935, Picasso remarked upon such retrospective revelation: "When we invented Cubism we had no intention whatever of inventing Cubism. We wanted simply to express what was in us. Not one of us drew up a plan of campaign, and our friends, the poets, followed our efforts attentively, but they never dictated to us. Young painters today often draw up a program to follow, and apply themselves like diligent students to performing their tasks." Published as "Conversation avec Picasso," in *Cahiers d'Art* 10 (1935): 173–78. English translation from Alfred H. Barr, Jr., *Picasso: Fifty Years of His Art* (New York: MOMA, 1946), p. 273.

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but as a stand-in for an account of the processes by which those features came about. In this view the description of an artist's style is shorthand for the description of an artist's style process. Here, individual style has explanatory worth: to identify a work's style is to point to those processes by which the appearance of the work is caused and thus explained. In describing the ingredients in a style process, Wollheim says an artist internalizes in a psychomotor fashion certain procedures or rules for acting on a given set of resources (such as line and color). Acting on these internalized rules or procedures is what results in the style of a work. Thus, for Wollheim, the style of an artist has a psychological reality, which gives it an explanatory role in the appearance of the works produced by the artist whose psychology it is. If Wollheim is right, then one constraint on style descriptions is that they accurately represent those features of a work that are the effects of the artist's psychomotor processes.

A difficulty I find in Wollheim's account is understanding the criteria by which he thinks stylistic features of a work that are the result of the artist's psychomotor processes can be isolated from other, *nonstylistic* features that issue from the artist's psychomotor processes. Wollheim says that those features (he calls them "schematized resources") are stylistic that play a "distinctive functional role" in an artist's painting.[9] This may be acceptable to someone who already believes that *some sort* of generative theory of style must be correct, but it would not persuade those who hold a relational or relativist view of style which the generative view stands contrary to. For Wollheim supplies no independent account of what it is for a feature of a painting to play in it a distinctive functional role. And the worry is that playing such a role—what is said to individuate features of a style—may ultimately be explicable only with reference to playing a *stylistic* role. A circular definition of this sort would not trouble those who hold a generative conception of style, for they would of course agree that stylistic features of a work play a role in its style. But a relativist about style would balk at the assumption that the identity of these features as stylistic features is in any sense necessarily unchanging or invariant from one true account of the artist's style to another.

The relativist view of style holds that a work's style is constituted from just those features of the work which happen to be significant in some way to those who compose style descriptions. This need not be as subjective as it sounds, for there could be some division of labor, where experts in a field—art historians, critics, curators—write style descrip-

[9] Richard Wollheim, *The Mind and Its Depths* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 177.

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tions, and perhaps reach at any one time some sort of consensus about the style of certain works, and then others adopt the experts' views and come to see the works in question in those ways. Here, any feature of a work is a potential constituent of a style description, even if a factor such as how the history of art subsequent to the work proceeds determines what kinds of features turn out to be significant to those who write style descriptions. Perhaps features not recognized by contemporaries of a work are "revealed" (which is to say, they become of interest) when seen through later art and thus enter into a style description of the work. Or perhaps a feature with only a minor presence in an artist's early work comes to be considered stylistic because of the important role it plays in work that comes much later. In the relativist view, style is to be defined *relationally*; as our interest in a work changes, so does the work's style. Even if a relativist about style accepted Wollheim's claim that a style description is implicitly a description of a style process, the relativist could, consistently, still maintain that the description of those elements playing a "distinctive functional role" in a painting changes over time. With changes in what those who write style descriptions find significant come changes in which processes out of which the work emerged are called stylistic.

Wollheim's criticism of the relativist view of style is that

> we often make judgements of style-identity and style-diversity without making explicit use of a style-description. However the true value of the judgement of style-identity or style-diversity is dependent upon what style-description is invoked, in that we cannot rationally believe any such judgement unless we can first retrieve the description employed in arriving at it.

But, Wollheim continues, "we believe, and feel entitled to believe, many such judgements in the absence of the relevant style-description."[10] The point here is that since the relativist about style says that style is just how the work is described, any judgments of the identity or diversity of styles among works must derive from the identity or diversity of those descriptions. However, we often make such comparative judgments about style in the absence of such descriptions; thus the descriptions do not, in Wollheim's view, play the role the relativist assigns to them.

Wollheim's criticism of the relativist position is less than secure if only because we may be wrong in our belief in the principled nature of the judgments we arrive at about the style identity of any given works. Or we may in some way only tacitly or unconsciously employ conventional style descriptions in claiming two works are in the same style.

[10] Wollheim, *Mind and Its Depths*, p. 180.

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Our judgments of the style identity or diversity of any two works may, for example, derive from beliefs we have internalized about how to describe their styles, or the style of all works made by their respective creators.[11]

If the realist view of style is to be defended, perhaps those procedures that are stylistic can be individuated not by their *function* within the artist's work, but by their *origin*, that is, by identifying by what part or process of the mind they are caused. Arthur Danto suggests something along these lines in identifying artistic style with the artist's character or self. Danto writes, "With those qualities referred to as style, the artist, in addition to representing the world, expresses himself, himself in relation to the content of the representation. . . ."[12] If this kind of appeal to the origin of stylistic procedures individuates them in a way required for a concept of individual style, there is still the problem of how to extend this account to a concept of general style, viz, the style of a movement. For a group of artists, unlike an individual artist, has no single psychological makeup or self. There are only the separate psychologies of the individual artists, and appealing to their individual selves would not serve to explain how they all end up working in the same style. But if style is seen as the set of procedures developed in response to a set of representations they share (the brief), such an explanation can be given. For unlike the selves of individuals, which, we assume, are unique, mental representations about the world can be shared or acquired and held in common. And if, as Danto suggests, selves (or "we") are "systems of representations, ways of seeing the world,"[13] then there may be no fundamental difference in kind between the individual style identified with the *self* of the artist and the general style identified with the *representations* of the group.

I suggest that what distinguishes stylistic features of a work from its nonstylistic features is that the stylistic features derive from the representations contained in the brief from which the work was created. Because it contains not just any representations that may play a causal role in creating the work, but only those representations about the means and ends of art, the brief explains features of the work qua work of art. The intuition behind this claim stems from the recognition that

[11] For a subtle history of the ethnic, nationalistic, and racial character attributed to artistic styles, and their consequent use in defining those forms of identity, see Carlo Ginzburg, "Style as Inclusion, Style as Exclusion," in *Picturing Science, Producing Art*, ed, Caroline A. Jones and Peter Galison (New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 27–54.

[12] Arthur Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981), p. 198.

[13] Danto, *Transfiguration of the Commonplace*, p. 204.

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the properties of a work of art are not identical to the properties of the material object the work of art is identified with. As Danto has shown, certain features of artworks such as their meaning, point of view, and their incorporation of features of an art-historical context, such as a theory of art, are not possessed by nonart objects materially or visually identical to them.[14] Warhol's *Brillo Box* is an object that conjoins both a material object—one that looks very much like an ordinary Brillo box—and a particular content or meaning. An ordinary comic strip tells a story and thus it has a content, but the comic strip is not *about* its content; it just presents it. A Lichtenstein painting in the form of a comic strip, however, both reproduces the content of the comic strip and is about that content; in addition to presenting it, it expresses a point of view in relation to the content it displays.

Once this distinction is recognized, a problem in some cases arises in deciding which features of an object are features of the object qua artwork and which are features qua "mere real thing." It was a property both of the material structures out of which certain earthworks were formed and of the earthworks themselves that they would, with time and tide, be destroyed. It was, as well, a property of the Cor Ten steel Richard Serra used in making his outdoor sculpture that it would eventually rust and thereby acquire an often stunningly rich, purple-black patina, but we still need to ask, given the imposing and sometimes threatening power of the artworks, whether the beauty of the steel is a property of the artwork the steel entered into the creation of. A conservator of a Renaissance fresco in the interior of a church has to ask if the work was painted in such a way as to anticipate the years of wax and smoke that would change its appearance. For if so, the effects of those years would be features of the artwork (an artwork thus unfinished in its time), not just changes that happened to it. And the preservation of the work will not entail restoring it to its original condition, for that may mean to change the identity of the work, a work for which some of its properties must come from its history subsequent to its being painted.[15] The words "GIANT SIZE" and the phrase "SHINES ALUMINUM FAST" printed in sans serif type gracing every Brillo box, are probably a property of Warhol's *Brillo Box*, for they exemplify the kind of exuberant claims for

[14] See his *Transfiguration of the Commonplace*, passim.

[15] Analogously, Otto Kurz writes, "The Patina on paintings is a sign of age, but not of decay; on the contrary, artists regard it as an enhancement . . . [A]rtists were aware that their pictures would be seen through a yellowish varnish, and they chose their colors accordingly." "Varnishes, Tinted Varnishes, and Patina," *Burlington Magazine* 104 (1962): 58; see also David Carrier, "Preservation as Interpretation," in *Principles of Art History Writing* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), from which this example derives.

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household efficiency pop artists thematized. But if the locutions of advertising appear in a cubist collage one must ask whether they might be only a property of the newspaper that is a part of the artwork and not part of the artwork itself. Some current analyses of cubism try to show that not only is newsprint and its typography part of cubist collage but the contents of the stories printed on those strips of newspaper—dealing with the war in the Balkins—are properties of the artwork as well.[16]

Finally, ultramarine blue is a property of most works of art in terms only of its color (especially after the early-nineteenth-century invention of a synthetic substitute); but in some works, such as those Renaissance paintings in which it was made from precious lapis lazuli, its use implied the value of the item it was used to render. So, in one of a series of paintings of Saint Francis by Sassetta, the blue color employed to paint the cloak Saint Francis gives to a poor soldier is a property of the artwork in terms of both the pigment's color and, significantly for the meaning of the saint's gesture, the pigment's cost.[17] Distinguishing between those properties that belong to the work of art and those of the physical object it is identified with may sometimes be difficult, but one of the ways we distinguished the two kinds of features is by asking whether the concept that would be required for the property in question to be part of the work of art was a concept that could be drawn on by the artist in creating the work. If not, such a feature may only be part of the object, not the work of art it is identified with. But to answer the question of whether such a concept could be appealed to by the artist is to provide some constraints on a characterization of what representations the artist had concerning the means and ends of art, that is, of the artist's brief. Titian was probably aware of the visible drips of paint on his harrowing *Flaying of Marsyas*—in which the satyr is skinned alive for losing his musical challenge to Apollo—but whether he thought of these as properties of the object or as properties of the artwork and, if of the artwork, whether the drips, say, offer a material incarnation of Marsyas' blood, depends on what understanding of the practice of art, and its means and ends, he employed in painting the work. In Giotto's *Last Judgment* in the Arena Chapel (fig. 17), there are angels pulling back the blue surface of the wall as if opening the church itself. That this property of the painting recalls a passage from the prophet Isaiah ("The heavens shall be rolled together as if a scroll" [34:4]) may be part of the artwork, but that it happens to

[16] As in Patricia Leighten's *Re-Ordering the Universe: Picasso and Anarchism, 1897–1914* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

[17] Sassetta, *St. Francis Giving His Cloak to a Poor Soldier*, London, National Gallery, 1437 / 44. See Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy*, 2d ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 11.

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Fig. 17. Giotto di Bondone, *Last Judgment*, 1305–6. Scrovegni Chapel, Padua. Courtesy of Alinari/Art Resource, N.Y.

call attention to the flaking plaster surface of the chapel's wall—just as some twentieth-century paintings refer to the surface of their supports—is at most only a property of the material object. There was no room in his style for a conception of painting that would allow a desire to deny the status of painting as window, if only because that status had not yet been realized in a form, easel painting, that painters could react against. We might mobilize Wölfflin's expression that not every

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artwork is possible at every time to say that not every style is possible at every time. What can be an artwork today might not have been an artwork at an earlier time, and what can be stylistic features of an artwork today might not have been stylistic features of a work at an earlier time. This is not because there is some general style indexed to each age, which Wölfflin may have meant in positing a stylistic equivalence between Gothic architecture and Gothic shoes,[18] but because the stylistic features of a work of art are those features explained by what the painter thinks about the means and ends of painting. And what a painter thinks about the means and ends of painting is a matter of what can be generated out of the practice of art at the time. So which features of an artist's work are *stylistic* is limited by the contemporary practice of art and, more specifically, by the nature of the artist's brief formed within that practice.

It is important to stress that the representations entering into an artist's style, that is, the representations the artist has about the means and ends of art, should not be construed too narrowly. They may be as much about the appropriate materials for art (Duchamp's eventual aversion to oil painting—saying he was not an "olfactory artist"—is an ingredient in his style) as about the proper content of art (faith, domesticity, eroticism, the sublime) or the point or goal of art (to educate and instruct, to inspire patriotic fervor, *épater les bourgeois*, to lay bare the conditions of painting). So there are no mental representations that *in principle* cannot be contained in a brief and hence enter into a style. Style, I should add, cuts across any traditional distinction of form and content. An exclusively formal analysis of a work of art, if that were possible, would no more isolate its stylistic features than, by contrast, one that focused purely on its content or meaning. If, because of a method of calculating the cost of a painting in terms of how many full-length figures it displays, a patron had demanded of Guido Reni that his *Massacre of the Innocents* contain, despite the large ensemble the theme usually demands, only seven full-length figures, it is irrelevant to Reni's style *that* his painting realized that constraint but very much relevant *how* he realized it. How Reni arrived at a reduced version of this normally many-figured scene expresses his style.[19]

What role, then, does an artist's character or subjectivity play in his work? My treatment of style might appear to exclude the role of these factors in the artist's style, as if style were solely a matter of what representations the artist had about the means and ends of painting, what

[18] Heinrich Wölfflin, *Prolegomena zu einer Psychologie der Architektur* (1886), reprinted in *Kleine Schriften* (Basel, 1946), p. 44.

[19] Francis Haskell, *Patrons and Painters* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), p. 10.

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brief the artist happened to hold. But what my view maintains is that an artist forms a style in *response* to the specific contents of the brief he takes as applying to him. The specific contents of the brief shape how the artist forms a style as a painter (where *forms* does not entail *consciously or intentionally forms*), but the character and subjectivity of the artist enter into the style because they are, along with the artist's body, what does the responding. The artist's character or subjectivity is what responds to the requirements of the brief and gets expressed *through* the parameters of the brief. It is as if one were asked to perform a certain task, as, say, a surgeon, athlete, or programmer, and what one did could be explained only by a joint reference to the instructions or requirements one was given and the nature of one's self acting within those requirements. What is done is a result of one's acting through the parameters the instructions provide, and thus a focus exclusively on one factor or the other would not sufficiently explain what is achieved.

In any case, my primary concern is to articulate the view that those features of a work that derive from the brief are elements of the work's style. In this way two visually identical works can be in different styles. While Sherrie Levine's photographs of photographs by Edward Weston and Walker Evans are nearly visually identical, they exhibit very different styles (fig. 18). Weston's photograph of his son Neil alludes to the language of classical sculpture, construes human flesh as pure and pristine marble, refers the frame of the image to the contoured edge of the body, and produces substance out of negative space. Levine's photograph is not about the things Weston's is about, although it is about Weston's representation of those things. The coldness of her image belongs not to flesh transformed to stone, or to Weston's unyielding gaze, but to a dispassionate, ironic eye. Her art is about Weston's art or about the ideas of originality, creativity, and beauty out of which it emerged. And whereas a Weston photograph and an Evans photograph are in very different styles, a Levine photograph visually identical to the Weston and a Levine photograph visually identical to the Evans are, yet, very much in the same style. Mike Bidlo, by extension, creates paintings that reproduce works by Léger, Pollock, Warhol, Morandi, and others, and each would nearly match the appearance of its original, save for their having been painted by Bidlo from art book photographs, then enlarged, with commensurate loss of detail, to the original's dimensions. But although a Bidlo *Not Pollock* is very much in the same style as a Bidlo *Not Léger*, Pollock's and Léger's styles are very far apart. This is not because, as it happens, there is a consistent surface quality to Bidlo's works that those works he paints from do not have, but because his works emerge out of, and are defined by, considerations relating to art as a commodity, institutions of art as elitist, art history as closed,

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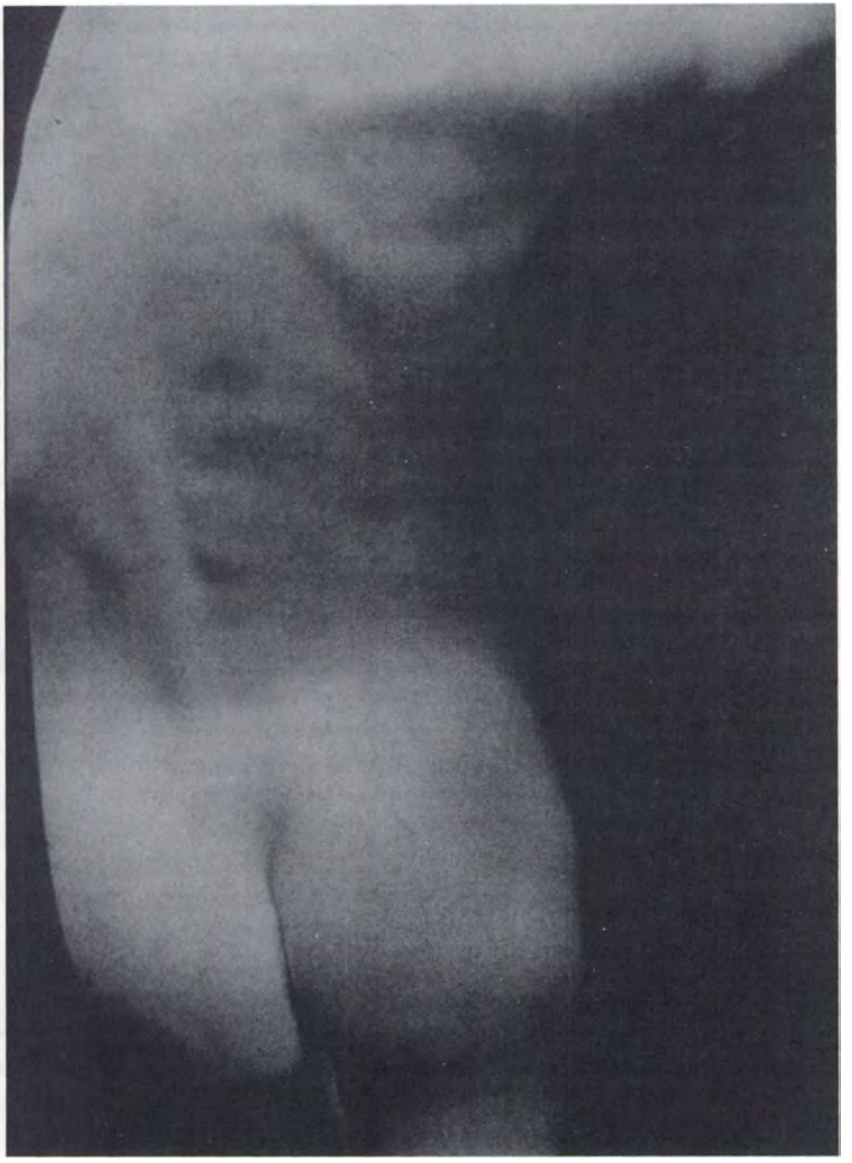

Fig. 18. S. Levine, from *After Edward Weston #5*, 1980. Courtesy of the Paula Cooper Gallery, New York.

and the *status* of style that are for the most part foreign to the motivations of the artists whose work he copies. Or if those works did enjoin such considerations, they were expressed through their work, not through appropriations of their work. Bidlo and Levine are closer in their styles to each other than to any of the works they reproduce.

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Fig. 19. E. Manet, *Portrait of Émile Zola,* 1868. Musée d'Orsay, Paris. © Photo RMN—H. Lewandowski.

But, leaving aside works that in themselves already interrogate the nature of style, consider the way in which differences in style between two works can be expressed even through similarities in their compositions. Both Manet's *Portrait of Émile Zola* (fig. 19) and Van Gogh's *Le Père Tanguy* (fig. 20) depict a Western figure before a backdrop assemblage of art from the East. Yet though the two works share this compo-

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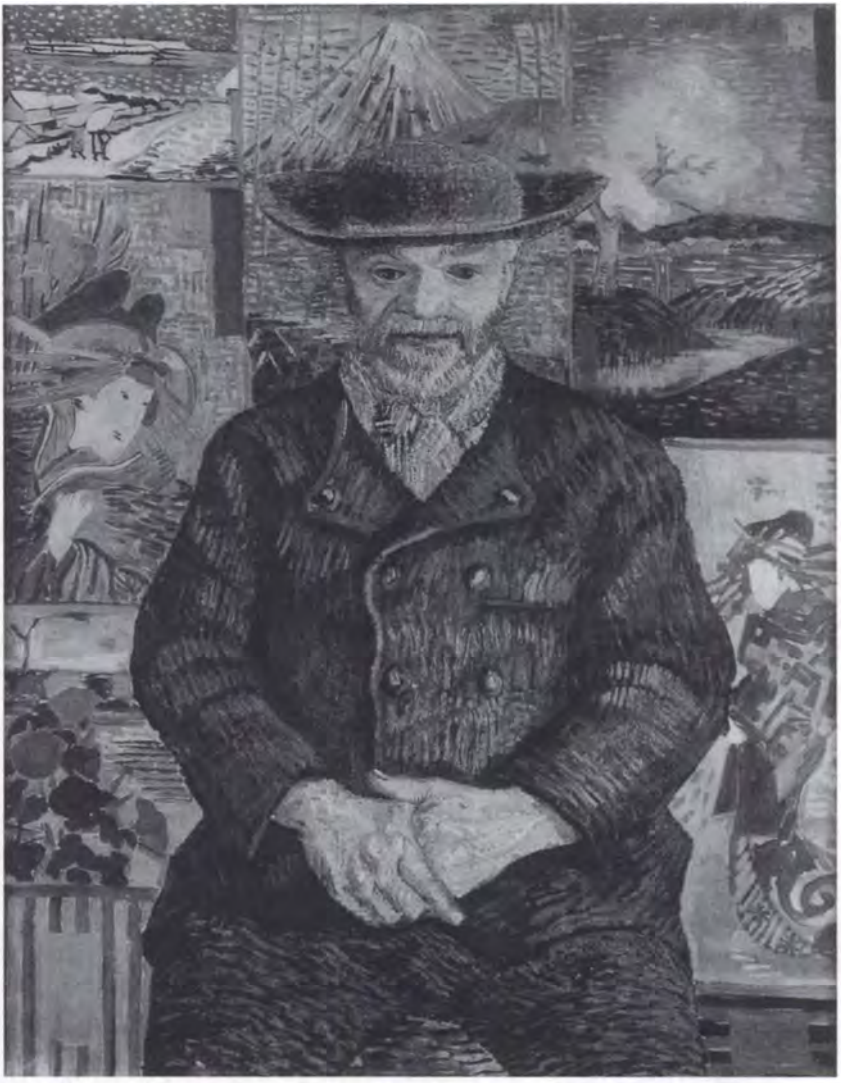

Fig. 20. V. Van Gogh, *Le Père Tanguy,* 1887–88. Oil on canvas. Courtesy of Musée Rodin, Paris.

sitional device, they express vastly different styles. In depicting Zola before a Japanese screen and a colored Japanese woodcut of a sumo wrestler, Manet treats the Eastern art as exemplifying a tradition whose techniques—like those of Velásquez, a print of whose *Drinkers* he includes, with an etching of his own *Olympia*—could be incorporated into his own painting's realist style, a style firmly situated in the

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tradition of the West. Zola is ensconced among Eastern objets d'art, but there is no doubt as to which of the traditions displayed has succeeded in appropriating the other.[20] Van Gogh, however, responding around twenty years later to a very different brief, one characteristic of many postimpressionist and symbolist paimters, presents his subject in a way that proposes the possibility (or result) of renouncing the whole of the Western tradition in favor of what is promised by that of the East. Not only does he circumscribe his figure with a bright vermillion line identical to, and in some places continuous with, the red in the Japanese paintings and prints—which also gives his work as a whole the kind of flatness those works exhibit—but he paints his depictions of the Japanese art in such a way as to emphasize those features, such as the bright, bold colors and strong, wide strokes, their style shares with his.[21] Differences in style, then, need not be reflected in the appearance or technique of a work, for they are a matter of things more fundamental: the beliefs, attitudes, desires, feelings, in short, the *mental representations* that explain that appearance and technique.

It is compatible with what I have said here that a work can express both a general style as an expression of some shared representations and an individual style as an expression of the artist's character or subjectivity. The features of a work that respond to a common brief are elements of the general style; the features that manifest the individual artist's self through the brief are elements of that artist's individual style. Manet developed his own style within a general style of nineteenth-century realism, Van Gogh developed his own within the general style of postimpressionism, Picasso developed his style within the shared style of cubism, and Levine and Bidlo have developed their own styles within a general style of postmodernism. Each artist formed an individual style through the interaction of his or her own subjectivity with a brief, but that brief emerged within the parameters of a shared brief of a general style.

[20] Michael Fried suggests that although Japanese woodblocks began to enter Paris in the mid-1850s, Manet began to acknowledge his use of Japanese art only after the Exposition Universelle of 1867, in which Japanese art and industrial products were broadly represented, and after which they became known to a larger group than the coterie of intellectuals and artists to which Manet belonged. *Manet's Sources, or The Face of Painting in the 1860s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 111–112.

[21] Van Gogh wrote to Theo: "Come now, isn't it almost a true religion which these simple Japanese teach us, who live in nature as though they themselves were flowers? And you cannot study Japanese art, it seems to me, without becoming much gayer and happier, and we must return to nature in spite of our education and our work in a world of convention." Jan Hulsker, *Vincent van Gogh: A Guide to His Work and Letters* (Amsterdam: Van Gogh Museum, 1993), letter 542.

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Furthermore, we can now understand that the distinction between *having a style* and *being in the style* of something else may be a matter of different works emerging out of the same processes or procedures, but in one case (the work with a style), procedures are explained by the painter's representations, and in the other case (the work in an appropriated style), those procedures no longer depend on those representations out of which they were originally developed. The standard case is when an artist engenders a *school style*, say, academic cubism of the 1910s and 20s in which still-lifes and portraits strictly followed the then nearly codified principles of cubism, but none emerged out the imperatives that drove the original cubism of Picasso and Braque forward. This is distinct from the situation in which an artist uses another's style through appropriation or parody, as in Picasso's adoption of Ingres's style in his drawing of Max Jacob (fig. 6). The difference between the appropriated style and the school style is that in the former, but not the latter, there is meaning both to the technique or style borrowed, and the act of borrowing itself.[22]

A natural objection at this point is that, in speaking of how a painter's style is constituted from the painter's mental representations, I seem to exclude nonrepresentational causes of the style. That is, even though I mean "representations" to apply to all kinds of representational features of the mind, be they beliefs, desires, attitudes, or aversions, this still seems to leave out important features of a painter's art that issue from his bodily response to, and manipulation of, his materials—such as how his body's size, weight, balance, speed, and force are expressed in his work. Compare the gentle, methodical hand one finds invested in the brushstokes of Robert Ryman's monochromatic paintings with the body's movement and muscle invested in the gestured application of paint in the large works of Franz Kline. Such features of these works express their artists' styles, but seem to derive more from the substance of their bodies than from the representations of their minds.

[22] I find an analog to the idea of working in a "school style" in Thomas Kuhn's description of scientists working with a paradigm that arrives after the dissolution of the paradigm in which they trained and developed as scientists. Kuhn describes a scientist who "like many of those who first encountered, say, relativity or quantum mechanics in their middle years . . . finds himself fully persuaded of the new view but nevertheless unable to internalize it and be at home in the world it helps to shape. Intellectually such a man has made his choice, but the conversion required if it is to be effective eludes him. He may use the new theory nonetheless, but he will do so as a foreigner in a foreign environment, an alternative available to him only because there are natives already there. His work is parasitic on theirs, for he lacks the constellation of mental sets which future members of the community will acquire through education." "Postscript—1969," *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 1970.

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Let me respond by suggesting that when we speak of attitudes, beliefs, desires, and other mental representations, these are, at least potentially, *embodied* features of the mind, that is, features that are expressed not just in how one thinks about things in one's environment abstracted from any engagement with it, but in how one physically responds to the things in the world, such as how one stands next to someone whom one defers to, envies, or loves.[23] In his *Treatise on Painting*, Leonardo cautions the artist to avoid, in representing another's body, unwittingly drawing what belongs to his own physique.[24] It is a mistake to see the relationship between mental representations and bodily behavior as one in which the physical body responds to or executes the plans or directives in the mind, a mistake perhaps Descartes was cautioning against in saying that a mind is not in a body the way a pilot is in his ship. Some kinds of representations, involved in, say, an explicit consideration of the costs and benefits of taking various courses of action, may be intelligible without reference to the body of the person who has them. But other kinds of representations, especially those that require physical expression, are embodied in the sense that they are not fully intelligible absent reference to the body of the individual whose representations they are. An abstract expressionist painter's intention to apply paint to canvas with broad, continuous gestures may have a degree of intelligible content independent of any consideration of the painter's physical constitution, but that content becomes genuinely perspicuous—to the painter and to others—only when the intention is realized in the act of making the gesture. The representation that calls for painting with that gesture is shaped through belonging to a particular person, with a particular body—through such attributes as the body's strength, size, stance, clumsiness, gentleness, and speed.[25]

[23] For a discussion of embodied representations, see Charles Taylor, "To Follow a Rule," in *Philosophical Arguments* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995). See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind," for the characterization of a "working, actual body," one whose movement does not just execute, but is formed by and forms, the demands posed by the representations of the mind; *The Primacy of Perception and Other Essays on Phenomenological Psychology, the Philosophy of Art, History and Politics*, ed. James M. Edie (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964).

[24] Leonardo da Vinci, "How figures often resemble their masters," *Treatise on Painting*, trans. and ed., A. Philip McMahon, 2 vols. (Princeton, 1956), para. 437.

[25] While Wollheim stresses that an artist's style is highly internalized, that it "involves a modification of the movements of the fingers, hands, the arms, indeed the whole body," I suggest that this relation ought to be understood as existing in both directions: the representations associated with a style modify the movements of the body that bring about the work expressing the style, and the body modifies, through giving corporeal realization to, the representations associated with the style. See Richard Wollheim, "Style in Painting," in *The Question of Style in Philos-*

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The representations thus encoded in the mind *and body* of the painter may not be something the painter is aware of or has any greater access to than a given observer. When a film of Matisse in the process of drawing a figure's face was shown in slow motion, what had appeared in real time to be a fluid continuous gesture inscribing the contour of an image on the support was revealed to be a series of continual fits and starts, interruptions, hesitations, directions taken, reversed, and abandoned.[26] Matisse was surprised and troubled (he said he "suddenly felt naked") in learning this from, so to speak, an external point of view.[27] He may have been aware of some of the explicit representations informing his technique, but he was not aware of those representations he had which were expressed only in the execution of his technique.

The account offered above explores how style enters into the explanation of a work. But what explains the emergence of a style? How is a style formed? And by what criteria is a style fully formed such that it has the explanatory value I attribute to it? So far a style has been described as just a set of processes (underwritten by mental representations) that are integrated in some way. But why do only some processes become part of the style, and at what point does this continual addition of processes result in a fully formed style?

In describing individual style, Wollheim speaks of it as the result of a series of discoveries that are internalized by the artist, acquiring at some point an explanatory role. But Wollheim does not describe what determines which effects of a painter's actions constitute "discoveries" and what criterion decides when an accumulation of discoveries constitutes a fully formed style.

Sometimes a new invention is appealed to in the explanation of a style. The innovation of oil paint, for example, allowed a manner of painting in semitransparent layers that had not been possible with the more opaque materials of tempera. Thus, in the oil painting light could reflect off not just the outermost layers of paint but also the inner layers and the panel or canvas itself, making the works seem as if illuminated from within. Similarly, the ease of painting out of doors offered by oil paints in metal tubes, which were made available only from the

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ophy and the Arts, ed. Caroline van Eck, James McAllister, and Renee van de Val (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

[26] *Matisse* (or *A Visit with Matisse*), 1946, directed by François Campaux, cited in John Elderfield, *Henri Matisse: A Retrospective*, exhibition catalog September 24, 1992–January 12, 1993 (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1992), p. 415.

[27] Matisse quoted in Gyula Brassai, *Picasso and Co.* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1967), pp. 220–21, and Rosamond Bernier, "Matisse Designs a New Church," *Vogue*, Feb. 15, 1949, p. 132.

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early 1840s, may be appealed to in accounting for the origin of impressionism. For although John Constable composed oil sketches outdoors before 1810, these, like watercolor sketches, served only as aids for larger studio compositions. And although Barbizon painters and Courbet began with studies and preliminary compositions in oil outdoors, they almost always finished their paintings in the studio.

The problem with these forms of explanation is that they do not in themselves furnish a reason why such inventions would have been desired, or why only some inventions are exploited as the basis of a new style or movement, and other inventions are merely incorporated into an already existing style or movement without generating a new one.

So let us say that a given result of what an artist intentionally or unintentionally does is sustained in the artist's work if she can attribute a specific function to the result in the context of her work. One might suppose that a particular result counts as a discovery only if the artist sees the result as potentially contributing to an end she is already in the process of trying to reach. But that would be too strong a requirement, for it implies that an artist knows throughout the formation of her style the contents of her brief, that is, the representations that cause and shape the formation of her style. Once a style is fully formed, or after the development of the style in a painter's work, the painter may come to see just what kinds of beliefs, attitudes, and desires explain the style. But these features of one's mind, not to mention genuinely embodied representations, are often no more manifest to oneself than they are to others, even if they explain how one behaves. So we need to allow that one's goals in painting in a certain way may become clear to oneself only in the process of painting, in the course of a career, well after that process has begun. Let us say, then, that an artist will incorporate an achievement or discovery into her work, or at least preserve it for later use, if the artist, given her interests, can see the new element as having *some* function or importance—but not necessarily the function it genuinely will have in her style. In this way, the particular interest or goal in relation to which something is treated as a discovery may be realized along with the discovery itself. As, that is, various procedures are adopted, the particular ends or aims in continuing to paint with those procedures are better articulated or realized. They are better realized in the sense that, before the process begins, the representations about what ends are to be achieved leave great latitude for how those ends should be realized, but as particular stylistic processes are picked up, these exclude processes incompatible with them and suggest or force certain further areas in which to search.

The manner by which a style enters into the creation of a single work is not an additive phenomenon, where each stylistic procedure

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can be employed and described in isolation from the others. Rather, the stylistic procedures exist in various sorts of integrated ways, such that there is a coordinated network of dependencies, in which one stylistic process influences, conditions, or excludes another. Another way to say this is that as processes, and as the results of those processes, features of a style are only notionally distinct. To draw a line in one way not only prevents it from being drawn in many other ways but forces certain decisions concerning, for example, how the shading of the figure described by the line will be achieved. The processes generating a certain hue of color will similarly stand in relations of dependency and constraint with those concerning the tint and saturation of paint and its application. Some processes will reinforce a given process; other processes will exclude or occur in tension with it. This is one reason why it may not be possible to fulfill completely the requirements of an artist's brief, as the realization in a painting of one element of the brief may be possible only at the cost of being unable to completely realize another. Clement Greenberg in a 1948 review described such a tension (which he found incompletely resolved) in William de Kooning's work: "Emotion that demands singular, original expression tends to be censored out by a really great facility, for facility has a stubbornness of its own and is loath to abandon easy satisfactions."[28]

If the elements incorporated into a style have an integrative structure, and if as more and more elements are integrated this progressively limits what other elements can be incorporated, then the point at which a style is fully formed must be that at which the style cannot substantially change, or sustain wholesale reorganization, even if how it is expressed can differ markedly from work to work.

Thus, in the series of works Jacques-Louis David completed before he realized a fully formed style, we see him bit by bit discarding or modifying the elements considered essential to the Baroque and rococo styles in which he was trained. His *Death of Seneca* (fig. 21), a student work, exhibits elements typical of rococo drawing and composition: a theatrical composition, oblique complex space, inconsistent and erratic lighting, an animated surface, excessively expressive and uncoordinated drapery, an incoherent architectural layout, and a delicate rendering of the body, portrayed as if without weight, only soft, insubstantial muscle and tendon. However, by the time David paints his *Death of Socrates* (fig. 22), two years after the turning point in the genesis of the neoclassical style—David's *Oath of the Horatii* of 1784–85 (fig 23)—the

[28] Clement Greenberg, "Review of an Exhibition of William de Kooning," in *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism*, ed. J. O'Brian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 2: 229.

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Fig. 21. J.-L. David, *Death of Seneca,* 1773. Musée du Petit Palais, Paris. Courtesy of Giraudon/Art Resource, N.Y.

Fig. 22. J.-L. David, *Death of Socrates*, 1787. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. All rights reserved.

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Fig. 23. J.-L. David, *The Oath of the Horatii*, 1784–85. Musée du Louvre, Paris. © Photo RMN—G. Blot/C. Jean.

nervous modeling of the earlier pictures has been replaced by bold, unambiguous contours; the diagonal, incoherent ground plan is supplanted by a planar, frontal view; the ambiguous space becomes clear, elementary, and shallow; the picturesque effects of the drapery give way to a concentration on individual actors and their gestural rhetoric; and the classical subject matter now takes on a commensurately classical form.

Once these features were in place in David's work, they remained, although differently manifested, in his subsequent production. But it would be wrong to think that David just picked up these elements one by one from different sources and eventually, at some point, had accumulated all the elements indispensable to neoclassicism. Or, rather, it would be wrong to think that the choice of adopting any one such element was, at the moment of adoption, the same kind of choice as for all the others. For example, once David began to paint with a feature such as a planar composition (derived, perhaps, from the bas reliefs on antique sarcophagi and on Trajan's Column which he drew in Rome), that compositional device forced him to simplify the background to better emphasize (what Baroque diagonals once served to do) the main actors

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of his tableaux. This, in turn, focused the viewer's attention more on the individual bodily expression of each figure or group of figures, and less on the frenetic impression created by decorative surfaces and drapery folds. The planar composition also forced a reduction of figures, or at least a reduction of intertwined groups of figures, as the space of the composition became open from side to side, with little room left in its shallow depth to be populated with figures from back to front. Finally, with a more planar composition, the sources and effects of light had to be rendered more coherent. In rococo works the lack of an ordered space or ground plan allowed for a commensurate, but not distracting, lack of coherence in the sources of flickering highlights that ranged over elements of the scene. In a planar composition, the flickering highlights would have seemed arbitrary or ad hoc, and thus there was a requirement for a more stable, even source of illumination.

So an artist has a certain set of representations about what he wants out of his work. He picks up or discards techniques according to how well they respond to those representations. Each technique or way of working that is picked up is adjusted by, and adjusts in turn, the whole to which it is added. But at some point the changes from work to work are modifications not in the basic structure of the style, but rather in what the style expresses, in the uses toward which the style is put. At some point, that is, the style becomes constant and shapes the other, nonstylistic elements of the painter's art, which *do* change from work to work.

A general style emerges parallel to the way an individual style does. A number of artists want the same result from painting, develop techniques that respond to what they want, and use those techniques—with that style—over time. But at some point, and at points along the way, the limits to that way of realizing those ends begin to emerge.

A successful explanation of a style and how it came about must establish the right explanatory priority or hierarchy among a movement's stylistic features and those features which, while possessed by the works of the movement, are not stylistic. Was, for example, the impressionist brushstroke or *tache* developed to connote an immediacy in the painter's representation of nature, where immediacy itself was paramount, or was that brushstroke just a means developed to represent the landscape under quickly changing conditions that one would not encounter in the studio? Or was the brushstroke first developed just as a technical means of representation but then later used in a thematic way to express immediacy and an unstudied form of realistic depiction? Perhaps the impressionist brushstroke was developed for ends independent of its use in representing the landscape, such as to reject the smooth, overly finished surface of much academic painting and the

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rigid conventions by which it was achieved. Or, finally, perhaps the brushstroke was developed for reasons not yet considered by present-day writers, who, nonetheless, continue to identify its role in representing the landscape, expressing immediacy, or rejecting the academic form of painting.

Whatever the answers to the above questions, these are not, in contrast to some art-historical treatments, questions concerning a *definition* or *essence* of impressionism or any such style. There is no more essence to the styles of cubism or impressionism than there is to a particular physical object, conversation, or war. That is, in describing the style of impressionism, we are describing a constituent of an event, the historical event of the impressionist movement. After the movement is over, a person cannot, say, by painting with the same techniques as belonged to those who were part of the movement, produce work that expresses the movement's style. At best one could paint "in the style of" the movement, learning the techniques and principles the movement employed. An artist who forms his style through being part of a movement expresses himself through that style in relation to what his work displays. An artist who appropriates an earlier style, however, does not thereby express himself in relation to what he depicts. Rather, such an artist expresses himself in relation to that appropriated style. An artist who decides to paint like an abstract expressionist, even after the ambitions of that movement have been deflated by pop art, expresses himself *in adopting* that style, not in what in that style he chooses to depict. What is expressed, perhaps needless to say, may not be what the artist hoped for by taking on that style. Critics of the built-up surfaces and momentous scale of paintings in the 1980s, such as those by Julian Schnabel in what came briefly to be called "neo-expressionism," stressed the insincerity of the work, how it only "quoted" the powerful expression it pretended to display but, given the work's historical and social context, had no right to claim. A style is a historical particular, a thing that exists over a certain period of time, but not a *type* of thing of which there can be instances.[29]

[29] This description of a style as an *individual* parallels those accounts in the philosophy of biology where theorists no longer see a particular species as a class of entities of which there can be members, but, rather, as a group of which there are parts. So a particular dog does not belong to its species because it has certain essential properties defining that species; rather it belongs to that species because it shares certain causal connections with other dogs—causal connections required for the species to maintain its identity as an individual through time. In this way, once a particular species dies out, even if an animal evolved that had precisely its physical properties, the new animal would belong to a new species. See David L. Hull, "A Matter of Individuality" in *Conceptual Issues in Evolutionary Biology,* ed. Elliott Sober, 2d ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1994), pp. 193–215.

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The preceding ontological point concerning style explains why the kind of organic teleology so widely appealed to in early attempts at understanding the historical shape of art history cannot be sustained. Of course there is no shortage of historical evidence to frustrate any attempt to model art-historical developments on the development of an organism. But what I want to offer is a conceptual reason why the appeal to organic development is illicit. When we say a natural organism has an organic development, we mean that the growth of the organism occurs in a specific way toward realizing a particular state of completed development and that the process is explained by the organism being of the kind—the kind of species, for example—to which it belongs.[50] It is legitimate to say teleologically of, for example, a particular oak tree that it develops toward a certain end state, because that end state is what oak trees usually reach, given the kind of organism they are. This structure of explanation cannot account for the specific development of the history of art, because there is no *kind* to which the history of art belongs, thus no state it can be said to develop toward in virtue of belonging to that kind. An explanation of how the history of art has exhibited an organic development must appeal to those features of its *actual* historical development that determined the particular trajectory it has had.

Just as an internalized style explains what an artist does without the artist's necessarily being aware of that explanatory connection, so a movement with a particular style can reach a limit in its development without its members' realizing they have reached the limit—that there is a limit at which they have arrived. Unaware of the nature of the style they are working in, artists of a movement that has reached its limits could continue to try to carry the movement further, pressing against the style's limits to which they and others remain blind. That, retrospectively, one can delineate the precise contours of a style, the kinds of assumptions, attitudes, and desires it embodied, does not entail that artists contemporary with or working in the style could have recognized those limits, and thus recognized that no further development would have been possible. Henry James's historian suggests as much in *The Sense of the Past:* it was only when "life was framed in death that the picture was really hung up."

Now if the ending to a movement's development occurs when that development reaches its internal limits, limits derived from the movement's style, then the beginning to that development must be no earlier than the point at which the style is formed in a substantial enough man-

[50] "Action for an end is present in things which come to be and are by nature." Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1041a32–33.

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ner to impose those limits, to prevent any attempt to go past them. Given the visual similarity between works of one movement and the next, we might not be able to easily identify at what point this moment occurs—the moment when the style is formed such that it imposes its limits. It might require seeing the movement reach those limits to know just which properties of its works were responsible for them, hence which properties defined the movement's style. It was, analogously, only at the point at which the development of perspective was carried to its limits, exemplified in Leonardo's *Last Supper*, that a natural feature of the system of perspective was revealed: the system results in foreshortening and distortion if the image in which it is used extends substantially outward perpendicular to the spectator's line of vision. Equipped with this knowledge, one could go back and see that this feature of the system was in place in the earlier uses to which the system was put, even if in those uses the feature was concealed.

So one can ask of the ending of a movement, which of its features prevented the movement's development from going any further. Then one can identify the beginning as that point at which those features became integrated into the identity of the movement, that is, its style, such that they could have this limiting effect.

It follows that a new movement emerges out of an older one if at some point the choices about what change to effect and the means to do so result in an entity whose subsequent development has internal limits *different* from the limits of the development the beginning events emerged out of. The new movement, because it may differ only in terms of its brief from what came before, may end up using material resources no different from those available to the earlier movement. As long as it has a different brief (expressed in its style), a new movement will have different limits than will the one from which it was born.

How do we know when this moment occurs? In any particular case, the answer may be difficult to ascertain, as many rival explanations may be offered for how to characterize a movement's style, hence its limits, hence when those limits were put in place. And the evidence may underdetermine the decision about the point at which a fully formed style begins to explain the work. But if the explanatory structure I have proposed is correct, it should not so much counter the claims art historians make about beginnings as provide an understanding of just what the identification of one sort of beginning (an internal one) entails.[51] Let us quickly survey, in this regard, some claims about the beginning of cubism.

[51] To summarize: (1) A style, once fully formed, remains constant, even if the works of an artist or movement expressing that style change over time. (2) As the

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In 1915 D. H. Kahnweiler, Picasso's dealer, identified the artist's *Demoiselles d'Avignon* (1906–7) as the beginning of cubism, a claim he amended in 1933 when saying it was specifically Picasso's second period of work on that painting that began cubism, and again in 1946 by specifying that it was particularly the "right-hand part" of the work that "constitute[d] the beginning of Cubism." Alfred Barr agreed, in *Picasso: Forty Years of His Art*, that the *Demoiselles* "may be called the first Cubist picture"—a passage repeated in *Picasso: Fifty Years of His Art.* In his history of the movement, John Golding writes that although the painting is "the logical point to begin the history of Cubism," it is "not strictly speaking, a Cubist painting." (But in another essay he writes, "It is hard to build precise boundaries around periods in art history, but in the case of Cubism it is possible to say that the movement was ushered in, cataclysmically, by *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*, conceived by Picasso towards the end of 1906 and abandoned in its present state during the course of the succeeding year." Golding adds: "the year 1925 is the one that truly marks the end of the Cubist epoch.") Douglas Cooper in *The Cubist Epoch* (1970) writes that the *Demoiselles* is "the logical picture to take as the starting point for Cubism," but it is "not yet Cubist." Gertrude Stein offers a different view of cubism's beginning, which she identifies in her *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* as Picasso's Horta landscapes done in the summer of 1909. William Rubin distinguishes his view from that of all these writers, finding cubism's beginning not in Picasso's paintings but in Braque's landscapes at L'Estaque from the summer of 1908: "it is impossible to designate a precise moment when the pictures cease to be primarily Cézannist and pass into what we would call Cubism. But it is clear that by the end of July 1908 Braque was painting such pictures as *Trees and Viaduct*, which are generally recognized . . . as examples of 'Cubism proper.' " And, finally, Yve-Alain Bois argues that the work of Picasso and Braque in what the above writers take to be the early years of cubism was too much a part of what was being created by contemporary artists who were not cubists for the movement to have been a unique enterprise, until, that is, it adopted a form of signification different from what those other artists deployed: "what I envision as the absolute specificity of Cubism, that which it

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practical expression of the conceptions artists have of the means and ends of their activity, a style imposes limits or parameters on how far and in what direction artists working with those conceptions can go. (3) Because the style is part of the natural constitution of the movement or individual artistic development, the ending it imposes is internal. (4) The beginning of an artistic development is not so much caused by the style as made possible by it. That is, the beginning is the point at which the style is formed fully enough to have its limiting effect.

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does not share with previous artistic movements, begins much later than the Cubism of other scholars—as late, in fact, as the fall of 1912."[32]

Bois is right to suggest that such a variety of claims about the beginning of cubism "underlines the polemical nature of interpretation: that there are as many possible points of origin of Cubism as there are interpretations of its enterprise."[33] But there is a distinction such an observation threatens to elide: that is, while there may be an indefinite number of interpretations of the cubist enterprise, not all interpretations are grounded in genuine *explanations* of the movement. Barr and Cooper see cubism as committed to a form of realism, corresponding to a commonplace but unfounded notion that cubist painting reveals more about an object than a view from just one side would represent. Golding sees cubism as committed to a kind of pictorial formalism, where the content of the works is less relevant to understanding what motivates them than the formal and compositional inventions they display. And Bois's own account sees Picasso as exploring the nature of pictorial signification: the icon, symbol, and index.[34] Thus, each of these writers, knowingly or not, commits to certain constraints on an explanation of the movement: not just what factors are responsible for its formation but also what factors explain, once the movement is formed, its development or change. These writers may have seen the same works and differed over which of those works was the beginning of cubism (where the difference was not a matter simply of constructing a

[32] Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, *The Rise of Cubism*, trans. Henry Aronson (New York: Wittenborn, Schulz, 1949), p. 7, "Interview with Picasso," *Le Point* 42 (October 1952): 24, and *Juan Gris: sa vie, son oeuvre, ses écrits* (Paris: Gallimard, 1946), p. 145; Alfred H. Barr, Jr., *Picasso: Forty Years of His Art* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1939), p. 7, and *Picasso: Fifty Years of His Art* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1946), p. 56; John Golding, *Cubism: A History and Analysis, 1907–1914*, 3d ed. (1959; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988), p. 47, "Cubism," in *Concepts of Modern Art: From Fauvism to Postmodernism*, ed. Nikos Stangos (New York: Thomas and Hudson, 1994), pp. 50, 75; Douglas Cooper, *The Cubist Epoch* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art; New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1970), p. 24; Gertrude Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1934; reprinted, New York: Vintage Books, 1961) p. 64; William Rubin, "Cézannisme and the Beginnings of Cubism" in *Cézanne: The Late Work*, ed. Rubin (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1977), pp. 195, 152; and Yve-Alain Bois, "The Semiology of Cubism" in *Picasso and Braque: A Symposium*, ed. William Rubin and Lynn Zelevansky (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1992), p. 169.

[33] Bois, "Semiology of Cubism," p. 169.

[34] "For five years, from 1907 to 1912, Picasso has been exploring the elasticity of iconicity and the referentiality of the pictorial sign. . . . But the artist arrived at the conclusion, in the fall of 1912, that the signified (meaning) of a sign is not entirely subsumed by its referentiality, hence his departure from a strictly iconic system to a symbolic one (in Peircian terminology) or to a semiological one (in Saussurian terms)." Bois, "Semiology of Cubism," p. 177.

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proper chronology) because they differed over which causes explain those works, and hence which of those works was the first caused by, hence expressive of, the cubist style.

Although these explanatory causes—what I attribute to the movement's brief and style—are not easy to uncover and may, in some cases, be unrecoverable, they do not change with different interpretations in any way that would imply that the beginning of the movement may change through being represented in different sorts of historical accounts. The works that mark the beginning of a movement are those that first express—because they are the first to be explained by—the fully formed style with its attendant limits.

If an event can be a beginning of the sort I have argued for, it will be such a beginning independent of any narrative that happens to represent it. Still, within narratives that represent an event that is a beginning, not every kind of description will *reveal* it as a beginning, that is, make its status as a beginning perspicuous. The following are three constraints on narrative representations of an event as a beginning:

1. In the context of a historical narrative, the identification of a beginning will take the form of what I have described in the first chapter as Danto's notion of a *narrative sentence*: a sentence in which an event is identified with reference to events subsequent to it, in the occurrence of which subsequent events it has an explanatory role. The identification, for example, of a certain event that occurred in 1715 as "the birth of the author of *Rameau's Nephew*" refers with knowledge available only after the fact to a subsequent event in which that earlier event played a casual role.[35]

2. An event identified as a beginning in art history must be described with reference to a contemporary art-historical context. This is because of all the true descriptions that can identify an event, only some will refer to contexts in which the event represents a change, and only some of *those* contexts will be art-historical ones (such as art-historical practices, traditions, or institutions) in which the event is a change in art history.

3. Of all those events that represent changes in art-historical contexts, the changes that we are principally interested in are those brought about by human actions. That is, while large-scale social, economic, even environmental events enter into the explanation of changes within art history—in its artifacts, institutions, and practices—it is through affecting individual human actions that such changes come about. The enactment of Haussmann's urban plan for Paris beginning in 1852, in

[35] Arthur Danto, *Narration and Knowledge* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), p. 12.

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which the city was rebuilt with new sewer systems, boulevards, parks, and residential sectors may have changed the way the forms of certain paintings represented the displacements and associations of different social classes, but this would have been through at some point having affected those who painted such paintings, however unaware the painters were of that effect. So a further feature of a beginning is that it must be described in a way that identifies or reveals what human actions are constituents of it. This, however, does not require that those actions be intentionally described. For some changes affect individuals without their realizing it, by, for example, modifying or providing the background for the intentions they do form. One's actions may express influence of a prior event without, of course, one's being aware of that influence. And while some movements begin with an explicit intention to found a new beginning—as in movements with manifestos—not all beginnings are like this. For artists may see themselves as continuing a previous development or maintaining the status quo, but, because of their own talents, limitations, misperceptions, or changed circumstances, they may develop, despite intending to continue an old style, an entirely new one. Although Edouard Manet worked with Monet and Renoir at Argenteuil in the summer of 1874 and was referred to in the early and mid-1870s as a leader of the impressionists by influential writers such as Castagnary and Mallarmé, he refused to participate in any of the seven impressionist group shows held during his lifetime and had only a limited interest in plein air painting. His intentions and activity imply a dissension from impressionism, but the movement's avid supporters, and members of the movement itself, referred to him as its founder. Any sketch of the structure of a movement's beginning should thus not necessarily look to an awareness or desire for a beginning in the contents of the intentions of those involved.

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CHAPTER 4
Stylistic Change, Emergence, and the End of Art

IN THE previous chapter I offered a way of understanding how the shape or structure of the *history* of a style can be explained by the nature of the style itself. Here, my concern is how that internal manner of change should be distinguished from the kind of external change that consists in moving from from one style to another. What is the difference, for example, between the kind of change exemplified in Jackson Pollock's move from his ritual- or myth-inspired paintings to his poured or dripped paintings, and the kind of change that occurred *within* the borders of each of those styles? Or, what is the difference between the change that consisted in the supplanting of abstract expressionism by pop, and the change from beginning to end each of those styles displayed? Only the latter kind of change—change within a style—exhibits a development. But what manner of development is this, and how does it compare with those changes from one style to another in which no development is displayed?

One view characterizes the development of a style as the realization of an intention, quantified over a large number of events in time. There, the history of a style is attributed a developmental shape because that history has the structure of an intentionally driven process—where a person forms an intention to bring about some result and thereby initiates a process that consists in achieving that result. In this view, just what was the goal, intention, point, or aim generating the process might not be clear to observers or historians until very late in the development, but that is because they need more *evidence*—among which are the various deeds of the actor—to confirm or disconfirm their hypotheses about what was going on, what was the intention implicit in the behavior. In this theory, understanding a style's development is analogous to understanding a speech act, where sometimes only at the end of the act, once, say, the last word is uttered, can one know what was being said or done.[1] This conception of a style's development rests

[1] See Jerrold Levinson, "Work and *Oeuvre*," in *The Pleasures of Aesthetics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), pp. 242–73.

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on the premise that there is an underdetermination in the products or artifacts (actions, paintings, things not done) of a style's development in relation to an account of the style itself.[2]

My view is somewhat different. In my understanding, there is a sense in which, when a style's development reaches its limits, it shows us just what the style was and was not capable of, and thus reveals to us its nature. And, in this sense, I share the above view's recognition that very little can be known about the identity of a style on the basis of its first manifestation in a work, and this ignorance is relieved the more works in that style there are available over time to consider. But, contrary to the above view, I do not see this development of a style as coincident with, or supervenient on, an intentionally driven process. Nor do I see its ending as the realization of an intention formed in the beginning. This is not only because if a style reaches built-in limits—as I argue a style does—it thereby fails to realize the intentions with which it was formed but because whatever intentions may enter into the formation of a style, the style that is ultimately *formed* need not be what is intended. Of all those representations that enter into the formation of a style, only some will be available upon reflection to the person who has them. The responses a painter has to past and contemporary styles, and to the discoveries she makes, may be explicable given our retrospective understanding of the context in which the painter has those responses, but this does not mean that the painter is *conscious* of her responses to, or representations about, the world at the time they motivate her behavior. It does not require any heavy-duty theories of the mind to recognize that many of the beliefs, attitudes, feelings, and desires with which one acts and reacts toward one's surroundings are representations about which one has no greater conscious awareness than anyone else. As one lives, however, one discovers to a certain extent what those representations are. So, as I see it, the formation and development of an artist's style do not follow from conscious reflection on what her representations about art require. For only in the development of her style does she discover what those representations that explain the style are.

Consider, as an analogy, how we might see a person's character slowly emerge throughout his life, whatever aims, plans, or long-term intentions he forms. He wants, say, to be bold, to take risks, to live on the edge. He makes plans and sets goals to realize these desires. But in living out those plans, he consistently makes choices that express a nat-

[2] This view relies on the assumption of those theorists discussed in chapter 1 who propose that for historical events to exhibit a narrative structure, there must be such an ongoing intention or goal toward which the activity of those involved is directed.

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urally timid, conservative character. However far he goes toward putting himself in situations matching the kind of life he imagines for himself, his behavior in those situations expresses a character at odds with what they require. His character as a timid person *emerges* or is revealed to him and others throughout experiences in which he intended to be bold. So the emergence of at least one aspect of his character is a development logically independent of—in this case, contrary to—the realization of his goals, an emergence he need not have intended or known about, even if he is fortunate to come to know his character as it emerges.[3] It is in this sense that Schopenhauer stresses that the character of a person is empirical, known only through experience, and, again, that Sartre speaks of how one's fundamental project, although determining who one is, may be known only through the actions one performs, the intentions one tries to carry through.[4] The plot of the *Bildungsroman*—in which the hero's development consists in his coming to self-awareness—thus reflects a narrative structure that can inhere in human life. Just as a person's character emerges over time as it is expressed through what the person does, so an artist's style, once formed, emerges in the course of the artist's career. The development of a style here is not the progressive fulfillment of a given plan or intention, even if that plan or intention is one of the causes of the style's development. Rather, the development is the style's progressive emergence, whatever plan or intention that development involves.[5]

Jacques-Louis David achieved a fully formed style around the time of his *Oath of the Horatii* (fig. 23), but his style really emerged only in the works that followed. The *Oath* expresses David's style, but the nature of that style is occluded by nonstylistic features of the work he is able to dispense with later on. So, for example, the forced, demonstrative rhetoric of the gestural poses in the *Oath* is diminished in later paint-

[3] Psychologists and philosophers who have studied the formation of personal identity speak of how many aspects of identity—even though they are expressed to others—never come into view for the person expressing them. On this point see J. Kagan, *Unstable Ideas: Temperament, Cognition, and Self* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989); and Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989).

[4] Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, trans. E. F. J. Payne, 2 vols. (Indian Hills, Colo., 1958); and Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1966), pt. 4, passim.

[5] The concept of "coming into perspicuity," or what I refer to as emergence, as characterizing a style's development is introduced in Arthur Danto, "Narrative and Style," in *Beyond the Brillo Box: The Visual Arts in Post-Historical Perspective* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1992).

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ings, even if the stylistic imperative for the expressive but frozen pose (as in *The Death of Socrates* [fig. 22]) is retained. Likewise, the stylistic demand that the drama of the image be supplied through the carefully restrained gesture and stance of each of its figures—not through the overall story told through the actions and reactions among figures in the composition—is better revealed in the later paintings, such as *The Lictors Returning to Brutus the Bodies of His Sons.* There David no longer needed to physically separate the figures in order to emphasize each figure's tightly self-enclosed psychic space. That is, in his *Oath of the Horatii* David sought to create a kind of powerful but restrained emotional drama individually expressed through each isolated figure or group. That is, he did not want the drama and tension of his work to depend on an overall theatrical interaction of figures, a quality emblematic of late Baroque and rococo works, including his own *Death of Seneca* (fig. 21), a rococo pastiche created before his style was formed.[6]

But once David found the techniques by which to allow his painting's drama to issue from the concentrated expression of the forms of the individual figures—not from the story told in their interactions—he could let his figures freely interact and could dispense with the exaggerated means he used to *compositionally unify* the *physically separate* actors of his earlier work. David's later work achieves its unity through enclosing his figures within simple geometric shapes, lacing together different figures' gestures, and subtly repeating pictorial forms and postures. These sorts of tactics replace the anxious rigid means of imposing unity that one finds in the *Oath.* The stark, schematic unity of that painting, a feature taken up in the work of some of David's followers, such as Drouais, turns out not to be a feature of David's style at all, but only the contingent result of a short-lived technical inadequacy—perhaps what David meant to allude to when he later called the Horatii painting "mean."

David achieved his sort of neoclassicism through being exposed, like others who formed a neoclassical style, to the discoveries at Ostia and Hadrian's villa and at Herculaneum and Pompeii, and through Winck-

[6] Etienne-Jean Delécluze, a critic and biographer of David, said the artist "had the idea of . . . involving the spectator by drawing his attention to each figure in turn because it is so perfectly painted, rather than by sacrificing everything to dramatic effect as painters have been doing since the seventeenth century. . . . It was not by assaulting the emotions in a dramatically structured scene that Raphael created masterpieces, but by making each of his figures, set almost in isolation and linked with the others by a feeling rather than a stance or an expression, gradually enter one's vision and then one's soul, instead of appealing to one's passion." Cited in Antoine Schnapper, *David, témoin de son temps*, trans. Helga Harrison (New York: Alpine Fine Arts Collection, 1982), p. 194.

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elmann's and Anton Raphael Mengs's treatises on those antique works.[7] But some measure of confirmation for the unconscious or unintended nature of a style's formation is seen in the way many artists who tried to take on the classical form the artists of antiquity possessed were able only to incorporate certain discrete classical elements into their already existing, decidedly unclassical styles.

Before the formation of neoclassicism there was already widespread interest among academic and rococo painters in subjects taken from classical antiquity, and many such painters responded to the antique elements of the contemporary *goût grecque,* which found its place in interior decoration and costume balls.[8] So some historians distinguish between the two styles—rococo and neoclassicism—by saying that while classical antiquity enters into the works of rococo artists as subject matter only, it becomes part of both the subject and *form* of neoclassicism. The assumption is that when artists in Rome began to study and draw antique sculpture, they learned to give the subject matter of antiquity already available to them the solidity, clarity, and firm contours they associated with classical form and the classicism of artists such as Poussin.

The problem with that explanation is that there were artists such as Joseph-Marie Vien who consciously adopted both the form and subject matter of classical antiquity, but instead of thereby working in the style of neoclassicism, succeeded only in integrating those features into their already existing, albeit classicizing, style of the rococo. In Vien's case, this occurred despite the fact that his aim appears very much to have been to repudiate the rococo in order to found a new style, and after the fact he even claimed neoclassicism originated with him. In the painting that textbook surveys often illustrate as the beginning of neoclassicism, *La marchande d'amours* of 1763 (fig. 24), Vien adopted features of antique paintings discovered at Pompeii and Herculaneum, such as their shallow spaces, subdued colors, and figures in profile. However, it was not the noble or tragic antique themes that interested him but those of sweetness, intimacy, and eroticism—themes consistent with the rococo

[7] Winckelmann's *Unknown Antique Building Examined and Illustrated* (1767) and Piranesi's *Vasi, Candelabri, Cippi, Sarcofagi* . . . (compiled in 1779) were two such influential publications. Winckelmann's *Reflections on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture* appeared in 1755 and reached artists through his friend Mengs whose *Reflections on Beauty* appeared in 1762.

[8] As early as 1740 Lady Mary Wortley Montagu could complain that the Greek style was passé: "Sick of Grecian elegance and symmetry, or of Gothic grandeur and magnificence, we must all seek the barbarous gaudy *goût* of the Chinese." Cited in Michael Sullivan, *The Meeting of Eastern and Western Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), p. 272.

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Fig. 24. J.-M. Vien, *La marchande d'Amours*, 1763. Musée National du Château, Fontainebleau. © Photo RMN.

style of Boucher or Fragonard.[9] In the paintings of Vien's later career the same style remains: not a neoclassical style that could have incorporated the achievements of those neoclassical artists whom the artist claimed to have spawned, but a rococo style with antique subject matter (fig. 25), little different from his early painting of the *Amours*. His much later 1788 *Sacrifice to Minerva* exhibits a highly polished painting technique, a porcelain-like surface, and, despite the theme the title suggests, the luxuriant softness of flesh, lightness, elegance and grace, costume, coiffure, and cloying sentiment of the earliest paintings in his oeuvre—that is, those that issued from the style of the rococo. David, who was Vien's student, exhibited similar principles of rococo drawing and composition in his *Death of Seneca*, where the drapery, armor, helmets, and hair are rendered in serpentine curves, which, while conveying a sense of movement, leave the figures too supple for the austere

[9] From Robert Rosenblum, *The International Style of 1800: A Study in Linear Abstraction* (New York: Garland, 1976), p. 22.

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Fig. 25. J.-M. Vien, *Jeunes grecques parant des fleurs l'Amour endormi*, 1767. Musée du Louvre, Paris. © Photo RMN—Arnaudet.

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ideas of virtue they are meant to evoke. But David, unlike Vien, *formed* his style in relation to the antique models he studied, and so, even though he asserted before going to Rome, "the antique will not seduce me," he formed a new style in adopting those features Vein only integrated into his already existing one.[10]

When a style's limits are not reached, we may think of it as having only partly emerged. Russian Constructivism, once formed as a style, emerged to greater perspicuity during its development. The development was halted, however, not because it reached some internal limit, but because of the political misfortune—Stalinist repression and increasingly centralized control of art—the style suffered. The nature of the style never fully emerged because its limits were never reached. Even if a style is not completely exposed when its development stops, what *is* revealed says something about the style in its earlier manifestations, the way Marx thought that later stages of a society understand the earlier stages better than those earlier stages understood themselves—a thought he analogized as "the anatomy of man is the key to the anatomy of apes."[11] No doubt Marx's reference to evolution was somewhat misplaced, for unlike the development toward the socialist state that he conceived stages of society exhibit, biological evolution proceeds without, in principle, some final form it will reach. Environments change, and naturally selected features of a species change, but the species after the change does not embody in any more realized form the kind of species it is. The emergence of a style is closer to what is expressed in the etymology of the term evolution—the unwinding of a scroll—where a development discloses something already there in the beginning, even if it is not until late in the development, or after, that what was there can be known.

Conceiving of a style's development as its *emergence* means that even if there happens to be some closure or unity supplied by an ongoing plan or intention involved in a stylistic development that plan is not responsible for the unity and closure of the development qua stylistic development. That is because if a style's emergence does not correspond to the development that would follow from whatever plan or intention

[10] Walter Friedlaender writes that while David achieved a certain kind of classicism, others, such as Greuze, realized only a classically inspired form of rococo, where the subject matter alone, heroically moralizing and taken from the antique, is in the *grand goût*. The paintings still remain "haunted by an effete and washed-out rococo." *David to Delacroix* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1952), p. 9.

[11] "The intimations of higher development among the subordinate animal species, however, can be understood only after the higher development is known. The bourgeois economy thus supplies the key to the ancient. . . ." Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), p. 105.

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is held by those whose style it is, then the realization of the intention or plan is a development logically independent of the emergence of a style that might occur *coincident* with that realization. What remains the same throughout a style's development or emergence must be something other than the intention or plan that those whose style it is may happen to possess. This is the place I have argued the brief occupies. The brief grounds the unity and closure of the style's development qua stylistic development.

There is no contradiction between a social history of art and the principles of style articulated above, or between understanding a work of art by reference to the artist's political or social context, on the one hand, and his or her own artistic character and aims, on the other. The difference lies in which features of a work a historian seeks to explain. Some historians aim to explain a work by reference to the artist's style or intentions. Others seek to explain those intentions themselves. In other words, whatever success is achieved in explaining a work of art as emerging out of the artist's response to a certain problem, we still want to know why that problem was recognized by the artist as worth solving, why it was a problem for her at all. An answer to that latter question would need to draw both on those factors outside the artist's own style that generate the problem, and on those internal to the artist's style that make the problem seem urgent, or even relevant to the artist's practice at all. But although I have proposed here a general explanatory model for understanding how an artist's or movement's style issues from a brief, I do not know of a plausible generally applicable theory by which to connect a brief to its ideological, materialist, and social sources of formation.

Thus a style may emerge as it is better and better expressed, less and less veiled by what does not belong to it, or by inadequacies of technique and form. But the emergence here is principally identified with the reaching of limits; it is thus not an event occurring in just the last work in the development but is quantified over all those works that are part of the style's development—that is, those that are created once the style is fully formed. It is through reaching its internal limits that a style emerges.

Emergence is not a relational property; it is not, so to speak relative to the observer, where, say, in relation to a keen observer a style has emerged, but to a more obtuse one it is still hidden. Since emergence is achieved through the reaching of limits, it is an objective feature of a style's history whether the style fully emerged or its development was stopped before that emergence was complete. It is as if the style were a piece of land, and seeing the limits to the style were like seeing the land's borders, there all along but not reached until now. Or think of how we understand a story completely only once we reach the end

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and can see of what whole the events of the story were part, to what they were contributing. Think, here, of how Augustine sees his life the way he reads Scripture, as exhibiting a divine plan: the significance of the events of which that life consists, even his stealing a pear, becomes clear to him—that is, revealed—at his story's ending. We learn more of what happens to him well after he reads Paul in the garden, but those events (his mother's death, his resigning his professorship) say nothing more about the nature of the story his reading of Paul was an ending to.

Or consider, as Frank Kermode describes, how when we reach the conclusion of *Anna Karenina*, the domestic beginning is recapitulated, but now more deeply understood:

> You remember the opening: "All happy families are alike but an unhappy family is unhappy after its own fashion. Everything had gone wrong in the Oblonsky household. . . ." A thousand pages later, in the Levin household, "everyone is in the most amiable frame of mind." Levin is listening to Koznyshev's theory about a new world epoch inaugurated by the Slavonic races when he is summoned to the nursery by his wife. On the way he thinks of other large arguments concerning God and providence, problems to which he has not formulated the answer. In the nursery his wife merely wants to tell him that the baby can now recognize them. . . . On the way back to his guests in the drawing room Levin again worries about God, and the salvation of the heathen. But the kind of truth he has just seen in the nursery is the only kind in his grasp. Now Kitty interrupts him, sends him on an errand. He does not tell her he has made a discovery, of the solidarity of the human plight; instead, happy as all families are happy, his will give him the same kind of life, full of contradictions, of words set against words, prayer and quarreling. . . .[12]

The retrospective light a style's end sheds on its history is not, I want to stress, transfigurative, such as one finds in T. S. Eliot's view that an artist's work changes over time with its interpreters, or in Jorge Luis Borges commentary on Kafka: "each writer *creates* his precursors. His work modifies our conception of the past, as it will modify the future."[13] Rather, the retrospective understanding lets one *discover* the nature of the style that was there in the earlier work, but took the development of the style to come into perspicuity. It was a matter of expositional expedi-

[12] Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 175.

[13] T. S. Eliot, *Points of View* (London: Faber and Faber, 1941), pp. 25–26; Jorge Luis Borges, "Kafka and His Precursors," in *Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings* (New York: New Directions Books, 1964), p. 201.

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ency to present artistic styles (and mathematical perspective) as reaching limits only, in each case along a single path. In truth, a style may reach different internal limits as individuals whose style it is venture out in different directions, pressing against different parts of the style's walls. Thus the style may emerge through reaching not only one limit in its development but also several by which it is defined.

Now if the ending to a style's development is when that development reaches an internal limit, and the beginning to that development is the point at which the style is formed in a substantial enough manner to have that limit, the difference between a change within a single development and a change from one development to another must be a matter of whether the same limits are preserved from before or after the change. Development within a style preserves the style and thus its internal limits. The style, in other words, is the *continuant* in its development; it does not change even if different features of it are revealed and it is expressed differently from work to work. Change to a new style is a change to a new set of limits. Hence, in deciding whether two apparently disparate stylistic phases belong to one development or two, we need to ask what it is that explains one development and then ask—at the same level of description—whether that explains the other development as well. If, at the same level of description, different explanations are required of the different developments, then they represent two developments, each of which has its own beginning and ending. It is a further question whether two distinct developments represent, at a higher level of description, a single continuous development throughout—a higher level of development with its own limits different from the limits by which the lower-level developments are defined. The limits to the style of modernism are not identical to the limits of the movements of which modernism consists.

Since a change from one style to another is a change to a different set of limits, what explains the change, with one qualification I explore below, may include causes *external* to any of those that are internal to the development of the styles. Such external causes do not emerge out of, and therefore are not explained by, any natural feature of the earlier style. There is no feature internal to the style of Pollock's early work, such as *Going West* (fig. 26), emerging out of a period of study with Thomas Hart Benton, that enters into the explanation of his later myth and ritual-based paintings, such as *The She-Wolf* (fig. 27). This is despite the fact that there is an order of visual continuity from the works of one period to the other. In fact, this visual continuity—in each of those paintings Pollock employs swirling rhythms and achieves an all-over unity through curvilinear forms—occurs despite the fact that the two works emerge from entirely different principles. The earlier

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Fig. 26. J. Pollock, *Going West*, 1934–38. National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. © 2000 Pollock-Krasner Foundation/ ARS, N.Y. Courtesy of the National Museum of American Art/Art Resource, N.Y.

Fig. 27. J. Pollock, *The She-Wolf*, 1943. Oil, gouache, and plaster on canvas. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. © 2000 Pollock-Krasner Foundation/ARS, N.Y. Courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art.

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rhythms and forms follow Benton's teaching on how to take objects that recede in an image's pictorial depth (such as rocks in the foreground and clouds over mountains in the background) and unify them in the two-dimensional field of the picture plane. However, the later rhythms and forms follow from Pollock's discoveries in surrealist painting, Native American art, and, later, Jungian psychotherapy. Pollock's early figurative paintings, on the one side, and his ritualized paintings, on the other, are occasioned by different briefs and, hence, belong to different developments.[14] Indeed, Pollock said it was one benefit of working with Benton that he served "as something against which to react very strongly," adding later, "I'm damn grateful to Tom. He drove his kind of realism at me so hard I bounced right into non-objective painting."[15]

The qualification I want to add here is that if two styles are, at a higher level of description, part of a single development of a more general style, then the causes that enter into the changes between the lower-level styles are not independent of those that define the motives of the style at the higher-level. At one level of description there was nothing in the nature of abstract expressionism that could have explained, except in provoking the reactions of, the developments of pop or minimalism that came later. However much the paint Rauschenberg applied to his 1955 *Bed* recalls the abstract expressionist brushstroke, the impulses for his art emerged from quarters radically different from and contrary to those that drove abstract expressionist painting forward. But while abstract expressionism and pop shared very little in common, they each belonged to a development, at a higher level of description, of the modernist style. And this higher-level style constrained what kinds of external causes could enter in the creation of the latter movement after or out of the former. The higher-level style sets the parameters for what kinds of causes can enter into the lower-level individual styles it contains. Referring to the distinction between the elements defining the styles of painting in the West and the East, Danto suggests that "to be an artist in the West has been to have internalized a narrative that determines the way we can be influenced by the past."[16] Applied here, this would be to say that when a single general style such

[14] For the contrary view that construes Pollock's whole oeuvre as rooted in Benton's style, see Stephen Polcari, "Jackson Pollock and Thomas Hart Benton," *Arts Magazine* 53 (March 1979): 120–24, and his *Abstract Expressionism and the Modern Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 253–62.

[15] From, respectively, "Jackson Pollock: A Questionnaire," *Arts and Architecture*, February 1944, p. 14, and "Unframed Space," *New Yorker*, August 5, 1950, p. 16.

[16] Arthur Danto, "The Shape of Artistic Pasts: East and West," in *Philosophical Imagination and Cultural Memory: Appropriating Historical Tradition*, ed. Patricia Cook (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), pp. 131–32.

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as modernism is formed through internalizing a certain narrative, that narrative determines what kinds of causes can enter into the creation of styles at a lower level of description—such as abstract expressionism and pop—that the more general style contains. The history of the modernist style is not just a story composed by stringing together the histories of individual movements occurring within the modernist period; rather, the modernist style has its own internal development in which each of those movements represents a stage, the way within the development of each of those movements an invention or discovery given artistic form represents a stage.

So when explaining how one style is formed after another, where the imperatives of the first do not appear to enter into the second, we need to ask if at a higher level of description the imperatives of both earlier and later are consistent or even identical. We need to ask whether Pollock's works that incorporate symbols of ritual or myth and those composed with drips and poured paint belong to discrete developments of different styles, moments in the development of a single style, or discrete stylistic developments at a lower level of description and, altogether, a single stylistic development at a level that is higher.

Although continuing to use a brush to paint works displaying a motif, such as *Moon Woman Cuts the Circle* (fig. 28), Pollock experimented for the first time in 1942–43 with the technique of pouring paint on the canvas. After this breakthrough the figuratively rendered elements in his work were progressively diminished, whereas the features made possible by the dripped paint—such as the all-over field of activity, the interchange between positive and negative shapes, the swirling thick and thin lines of different velocities (as in *Composition with Pouring II* [fig. 29])—persisted and became more homogeneous, integrated, and unified. In Pollock's last painting to incorporate explicitly representational elements before his abstract works of the mid to late forties, *Eyes in the Heat* (fig. 30), the figurative ingredients—the eyes—seem to be gratuitous holdovers, integrated with the rest of the work only in terms unrelated to their figurative status.

The question that is difficult to answer here is whether with the breakthrough technique of pouring paint Pollock's style began a new development, where any features that happened to exist in earlier paintings were transfigured into ingredients in the new style. Or was the technique of pouring paint adopted so readily by Pollock because it answered to the needs of his style—a style already evident in those earlier figurative works such as *She-Wolf*? Perhaps the method of dripped and poured paint allowed Pollock to dispense with the figurative elements of his work, for now he had a better technique with which to express the forces of spirit, nature, and mind that he needed his art to embody.

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Fig. 28. J. Pollock, *Moon Woman Cuts the Circle*, ca. 1943. Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris. © 2000 Pollock-Krasner Foundation/ ARS, N.Y. Courtesy of Giraudon/Art Resource, N.Y.

How one answers this question is not a matter of what interpretations of these paintings one subscribes to, except insofar as those interpretations are grounded in explanations about how the works were generated. Was the move from the dense, contained, and clotted surfaces of works such as *She-Wolf* to the circulation in open space of poured and dripped lines in works such as *Autumn Rhythm* (fig. 31) a move toward a better response to the same demands? Or did those demands change? Whatever the answer, it may be suggested by, but will not be simply a matter of, how those works appear.

The different stylistic developments Pollock underwent may, at a

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Fig. 29. J. Pollock, *Composition with Pouring II*, 1943. Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Gift of Joseph H. Hirshhorn, 1966. Photography by Lee Stalsworth. © 2000 Pollock-Krasner Foundation/ARS, N.Y.

higher level of description, belong to a single development of his individual style, just as Picasso's individual stylistic developments—for example, his cubist and classicizing styles—might be explained as moments in the development of an individual style formed in a way that allows for these kinds of distinct stylistic developments to occur. And while there is often a dichotomy posed between the style of impressionism as an art of realism, and the style of symbolism as an art of

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Fig. 30. J. Pollock, *Eyes in the Heat*, 1946. Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice. © 2000 Pollock-Krasner Foundation/ARS, N.Y.

imagination, Richard Shiff argues that the motivations for the later movement were among those of the earlier, and existed in the identity of the earlier movement at its beginning: "Both Impressionist and Symbolist art exemplified ways of investigating the world, of discovering the real or the true, of experiencing life. The mode of perception, of vision, was of greater consequence to the Impressionist or Symbolist artist

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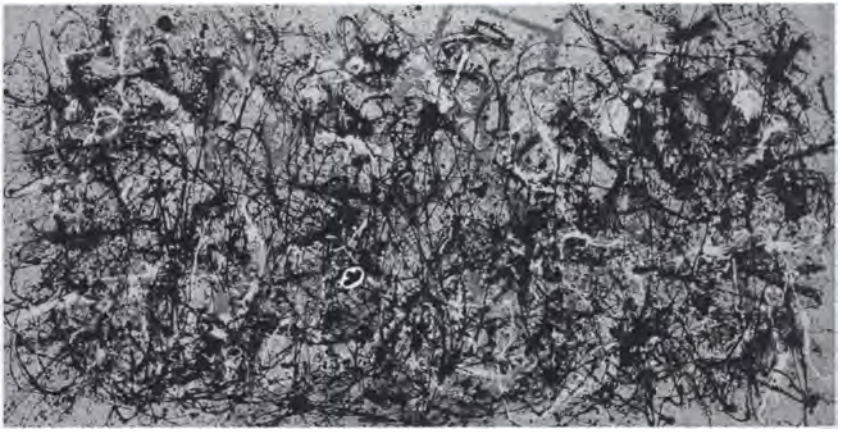

Fig. 31. J. Pollock, *Autumn Rhythm*, 1950. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. © 2000 Pollock-Krasner Foundation/ARS, N.Y. All rights reserved.

than the view seen or the image presented."[17] And while impressionism and symbolism can be described, at a higher level, as belonging to one development, that development, along with cubism and abstract expressionism, can be described, at an even higher level, as a moment in a more general style of modernism. Finally, for all the differences I propose between Vien's and David's individual styles, and the general styles of rococo and neoclassicism they belong to, some scholars have tried to show that their individual styles, or the general styles they are part of, should be understood as constituting a larger post-Baroque, premodernist, "eighteenth-century style." While individual, general, and (let us call it) period style are different things, arrived at through different levels of description, an artist's work may exhibit them all at the same time.

So two stages within the career of a single artist, movement, or period belong to the same development if they can be subsumed under a larger development whose intrinsic limits belong not to one stage or the other, but to both: whose intrinsic limits, that is, are there in the beginning of the earlier stage and are sustained throughout the stage that comes later.

But if two different developments at one level of description may be two stages in the same development at a higher level of description, this

[17] Richard Shiff, "The End of Impressionism," in *The New Painting: Impressionism 1874–1886*, ed. Charles S. Moffett, exhib. cat. (San Francisco: Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 1986), p. 66.

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does not mean that at every level of description there is a development with *internal limits*, such that the way the style is intrinsically composed prevents it from going on indefinitely.[18]

Whether it is possible to conceive of art as exhibiting a development at the highest level of description available—a level at which we speak of the development of the history of art as a whole—is a question I will not pursue here, except to suggest what manner of response might be proposed in terms of the theory of the preceding chapters.[19]

I offered, in this project's introduction, a form of diagnosis of what was wrong—aside from merely factual inaccuracy or nationalistic or critical bias—with the kinds of internal histories of art offered by theorists such as Wölfflin and Riegl: while they speak of causes or explanatory factors "internal" and "external" to an allegedly autonomous history or tradition of art, they do not provide any systematic account of just what internal features of art, or a tradition of art, explain its history. Such an account is required, however, if sense is to be made of the assertion that it is in reference to exclusively intrinsic features of the tradition that the development of art must be explained, that is, if sense is to be made of the view that art has its own history. The treatment of beginnings, endings, and style I have outlined offers an answer to this question. It is in terms of those features of artistic style that the internal development of art can, in some registers, be explained. Style, of course, is conceived here as not what changes in a development, but what remains in relevant ways the same, and what explains an order of change that the art undergoes.

It was open to Vasari to describe the history of art as an internal development, but that was because, as he says in the 1550 edition of his *Lives*, he felt that the work of Michelangelo embodied the "end and the perfection of art." Vasari could thereby organize the art of those who

[18] David Carrier does not, I think, recognize the distinction between these *kinds* of changes—internal and external—when he says, "everywhere in the history of painting from Giotto to DeKooning we have both continuity and discontinuity. Once we see that what is called 'tradition' involves both continuity and constant change, then questions about whether art continues the tradition will seem less interesting." Review essay of Hans Belting's *The End of the History of Art*, in *History and Theory* 27 (1988): 188–99; 192.

[19] Richard Wollheim writes, "The question why art has a history does not itself fall within the domain of art-history. Art-history, at any rate as traditionally conceived, is complete when it has recorded the changes that constitute the history of art, and, perhaps, gone some way towards offering an explanation why these changes occurred. If we now want to ask why there has been change at all, then we stand in need of some more general body of theory to which we can appeal. "Reflections on *Art and Illusion*," in *On Art and the Mind* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974), p. 263.

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came earlier as moments in a progressive sequence leading up to that perfection. If Vasari meant this progress to be one of mastering techniques of realistic representation, mathematical perspective among them, his narrative might have succeeded in capturing a genuinely internal development—of the sort Gombrich describes—leaving aside later refinements in realistic depiction such as the impressionists' research into the color in shadows. But Vasari was convinced that art ended in his time not because it reached a stage of perfect realism, but because it reached the perfection of *disegno* and *invenzione* (the means of representation and the theme that is rendered) in, respectively, Michelangelo and Raphael—as judged within the parameters of *regola, ordine, misura,* and *maniera.*[20] There can be progress toward each of these kinds of ends, but it is not clear that the development of art can consist in reaching *both.*

Vasari's difficulty in isolating just in what the development of art consists—what it is a development in terms of—is reflected in his trouble describing the development's beginning. It is not that he cannot explain why artists of the "First Age" began the development that culminates in Michelangelo, but that he is unsure about how that beginning should be described.[21] Vasari says, "the origin of these arts was nature herself, and the example or model, the most beautiful fabric of the world, and the master, that divine light infused by special grace in us . . . if it be not sin to say it, like to God."[22] So art begins with man responding with his *ingegno* to the beauty of nature by representing it. However, Vasari also says that "one helped another and taught and opened the way to *disegno*, to *colore*, and to *rilievo*, because I know that our art is all imitation of nature principally and then, because one by

[20] Vasari treats *disegno* and *invenzione* not as different sources of perfection, but as sources of different kinds of perfection. Only *disegno*, in his view, reaches a single unique perfection, for there are a great number and variety of perfect inventions. In the 1550 edition of the *Lives* the history of the perfection of art leads up to Michelangelo's perfection of *disegno*. In the second, 1568 edition, Vasari presents Raphael's *invenzione* as an alternative to Michelangelo's *disegno*: once the progress in means of representation (*disegno*) had reached its goal, the history of art could continue without a decline through the discovery of different kinds of *invenzione*. See Svetlana Alpers, "*Ekphrasis* and Aesthetic Attitudes in Vasari's *Lives*," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 23 (1960): 206–8.

[21] While Vasari can explain the rebirth of architecture through the surviving ancient architecture that offered a place to start for the artists of the first age, there was no ancient painting that survived. Thus, he says, "[A]nd truly it was a miracle in those times that Giotto had so great loveliness in his painting, considering, above all, that he learnt the art in a certain measure without a master." Giorgio Vasari, *The Lives of the Artists,* 2d ed. of 1568, trans. Gaston du C. de Vere, 2 vols. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996), 1: 111.

[22] Vasari, *Lives of the Artists*, 1: 32.

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himself cannot climb so high, of the things made by those judged better masters than oneself."[23] Art begins, on the one hand, in imitating nature, but achieves its heights, on the other, only in imitating the ancients. The two developments—in imitating nature and in reaching Vasari's standard for the highest art—are uneasily conjoined.

The Vasarian paradigm continued to define major treatments of art history as a whole well into the nineteenth century, despite the evaluation it entailed for the art that came after Michelangelo, which may have succeeded in terms other than *disegno*, and despite the snub Vasari's narrative gave to Venetian art, an offense the Venetian Carlo Ridolfi tried to return by writing a history of his nation's art in the progressive Vasarian genre, but stressing the *colore*—the quality emblematic of Venetian painting—the role of which as one of the grounds of art Vasari tended to minimize.[24] Winckelmann adopted Vasari's model, but was able to sidestep the implications of that earlier account for the art of the eighteenth century by focusing only on the art of antiquity, despite the relevance he implied his account had for judging the art of his time. And while other historians confronted work that came after the apogee Vasari described, or work that deviated from the classical norm that high point exhibited, they tended to defend the work by pointing to some compensatory virtue. Thus Burckhardt vindicates Baroque art in *Cicerone* by saying that in spite of their "depraved manner of expression" the Baroque churches "move their beholder sometimes as a pure fiction."[25] And Riegl in his *Late Roman Art Industry* of 1901 tries to dissolve the "prejudice" against late Roman art by showing that, no matter how unappealing, it did not represent a decline, for it made possible later art that we hold in the highest regard. Finally, Ruskin in his *Stones of Venice* says that the medieval style might have been less beautiful than the Vitruvian norm demands but it was at least more devout, honest, and pious.[26]

[23] Vasair, *Lives of the Artists*, 1: 32. Panofsky describes the tension Vasari tries to reconcile in this account of a beginning: "the Renaissance theorists, writing in a period still capable or at least desirous of harmonizing these antithetical tendencies, considered verisimilitude as compatible, even synonymous, with devotion to the *maniera antica*. The theorists of the seventeenth century . . . could no longer blind themselves to the fact that imitation of the Antique and imitation of reality were contradictory principles." Erwin Panofsky, "Albrecht Dürer and Classical Antiquity," in *Meaning in the Visual Arts: Papers in and on Art History* (Garden City, 1955), p. 280.

[24] Carlo Ridolfi, *Delle maraviglie dell' arte, ovvero, Le vite degl' illustri pittori veneti e dello stato* . . . (Venice 1648).

[25] Jacob Burckhardt, *The Cicerone: An Art Guide to Painting in Italy*, trans. B. C. Clough, ed. J. A. Crowe (London: J. Murray, 1879.)

[26] John Ruskin, "On the Nature of Gothic," in *The Stones of Venice*. 3 vols. (New York: Merrill and Baker, 1851).

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These kinds of narratives cannot explain how art history develops internally; they each posit a particular evaluative norm toward which the history of art approaches, and away from which it recedes. But the norms they appeal to—whether they are our norms or not—play an explanatory role in only certain parts or moments of that history. A persuasive explanation of how the history of art as a whole develops internally must focus on explanatory features intrinsic to that tradition, regardless of how those features relate to the art one or one's time admires.[27]

In the postscript to the second edition of *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions.* Thomas Kuhn says one of his aims was to explain why the kind of progress the developed sciences have is different from that of other fields:

> Consider, for example, the reiterated emphasis . . . on the absence or, as I should now say, on the relative scarcity of competing schools in the developed sciences. Or remember my remarks about the extent to which members of a given scientific community provide the only audience and the only judges of that community's work. Or think again about the special nature of scientific education, about puzzle-solving as a goal, about the value system which the scientific group deploys in periods of crisis and decision. . . .[28]

Kuhn thus isolates features responsible for the structure of the history of science, construing it as a tradition whose character may be described independently of an account of the actual scientific discoveries it achieved. An account of art history as a whole developing internally must, likewise, discern the features responsible for the structure of that history, and the character of its overall development, independently of the particular kinds of individual movements or styles the history contained. Therefore, while I earlier disagreed with Gombrich's *answer* to the question, he is right to see his work as asking what the structure of art history is, not why this or that movement or style occurred: "why art

[27] In *Late Roman Art Industry,* Riegl confessed that "scholarship, in spite of its ostensible independence and objectivity, ultimately takes its direction from the intellectual inclinations of the day and the art historian, too, cannot really transcend the characteristic artistic proclivities of his contemporaries." Alois Riegl, *Late Roman Art Industry*, trans Rolf Winkes (Rome: Giorgio Bretschneider, 1985), introduction.

It should be clear that how I have proposed we understand the internal development of a style keeps the evaluation of art and its explanation distinct. Whether a style reaches its limits or stops before its emergence is complete is a matter independent of how the works in that style should be judged.

[28] Thomas Kuhn, "Postscript—1969," *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

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has a history, not why its history developed in one direction rather than another."[29]

Now, at what might turn out to be the other end of that history of art history's narratives Vasari initiates, there is the proposal that the history of art has reached a kind of closure. Of course there have always been assertions that art has ended: Pliny claimed that after the 121st Olympiad bronze art ceased (although it resurged after the 156th); Poussin complained that Caravaggio had come into the world to destroy painting; Paul Delaroche reportedly announced upon seeing a daguerrotype in 1839 that "from today painting is dead"; Malevich proclaimed that in Suprematism, "there can be no question of painting . . . ; painting was done for long ago, and the artist himself is a prejudice of the past"; and, finally, Walter Benjamin famously claimed a distinction between those works of art treated as endowed with an aura, because unique, and those that lend themselves to mechanical reproduction, and hence a more integrated place in collective experience—a theory prompting Douglas Crimp, speaking of contemporary art, to proclaim "painting's terminal condition."[30]

But whereas these individuals claimed that art of a certain sort had *stopped* (Pliny), was no longer *possible or required* (Poussin, Delaroche), or was in certain forms politically untenable (Malevich, Crimp), Arthur Danto understands art as having ended because its historical development has reached a kind of internal limit, a limit of the sort this study has tried to characterize. Danto's view is unabashedly Hegelian, but unlike Hegel's historical vision, in which the claim that art reached an end was drawn from a philosophical theory that required that the claim be true, Danto's is an empirical thesis. He sees the historical development of art in the West as characterized by two distinct episodes:

> What I call the Vasari episode and what I call the Greenberg episode. Both are progressive. Vasari, construing art as representational, sees

[29] E. H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 388.

[30] Pliny's comment, which may have connoted only a period of stagnation, was "*cessavit deinde ars*" (Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, Book 34, paragraph 52); André Félibien, *Entretiens sur la vie et les ouvrages de Nicholas Poussin* . . . (Geneva: P. Cailler, 1947); Delaroche's probably apocryphal quote is from Stephen Bann, *Paul Delaroche* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 264, 277; Kasimir Malevich, *Suprematism: Thirty-Four Drawings* (Vitebsk, 1920), English translation from Malevich, *Essays on Art*, trans. Xenia Glowacki-Prus and Arnold McMillin, ed. Troels Andersen (New York: G. Wittenborn, 1971), 1: 127; Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (London: Jonathan Cape, 1970), pp. 219–53; Douglas Crimp, *On the Museum's Ruins* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993), pp. 90–91.

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> it getting better and better over time at the "conquest of visual appearance." That narrative ended for painting when moving pictures proved far better able to depict reality than painting could. Modernism began by asking what painting should do in the light of that? And it began to probe its own identity. Greenberg defined a new narrative in terms of an ascent to the identifying conditions of the art. And he found this in the material conditions of the medium. Greenberg's narrative . . . comes to an end with Pop. . . . It came to an end when art came to an end, when art, as it were, recognized there was no special way a work of art had to be.[51]

So the first period of development stretching from around Giotto through the impressionists came to an end when the theory of art informing it, that art was essentially mimetic—the theory behind Delaroche's diagnosis—lost its force. Modernism began after this naturalistic development was over, and artists and theorists looked to forms of art from other traditions, such as in the postimpressionist exploration of Chinese and Japanese painting. What characterize the development of art from this time until as late as Warhol are the progressive attempts to offer, in place of the then nullified mandate toward naturalism, a new theory of what art is. Clement Greenberg's narrative of the period from impressionism through postpainterly abstraction is that art was progressively achieving "purity" through shedding whatever was not specific to its medium.[52] But Greenberg's description is apt, in Danto's theory, only because the quest to reduce painting to its materials—which, in truth, distorts most of the works to which the description was by Greenberg applied—was *one* form in which the endeavor to theorize the nature of art was carried out.

This development reaches an internal ending once the limit to the ability of artworks to serve as vehicles of theorizing about art is reached. Although this limit is marked by many different works in the art world, it is most vividly expressed for Danto in Warhol's *Brillo Box*. There the question "What is art?" is posed in its proper form: "What distinguishes a work of art from an ordinary object when the two are, to the senses, indiscernible?" Henceforward, there can be no more devel-

[51] Arthur Danto, *After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), p. 125.

[52] "Purity in art consists in the acceptance, willing acceptance, of the limitations of the medium of the specific art," and "the history of avant-garde painting is that of a progressive surrender to the resistance of its medium." Clement Greenberg, "Towards a Newer Laocoön," in *The Collected Essays and Criticism*, ed. J. O'Brian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986); orig. pub. in *Partisan Review* 7 (July–August, 1970): 296–310.

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opment of art history, because, now that the question of art is put in its proper form, art is not the proper sort of practice typified by theoretical and abstract reasoning that could provide an answer. But philosophical reflection is. Art made after this development reaches an ending is what Danto calls "posthistorical," for there cannot be any art-historical development—of the same order as that exhibited by naturalistic and self-reflexive art—that art after the ending could press forward.[33]

Commentaries on Danto's theory offer criticisms of three kinds. One is the view, discussed in the first chapter, that identifies all historical narratives as *constructions* and, a fortiori, sees a narrative of Danto's sort, in which art ends, as only a construction. I tried to show that, outside of one's being a global relativist about every human form of representation, there is no compelling reason to accept this general view of the compromised objectivity of historical narratives, for they need, rather, to be judged by their explanatory and factual claims on a case-by-case basis.

The second form of criticism maintains that Danto has failed to notice some feature about contemporary or past art that falsifies his overarching claim. As a thesis about the actual history of art, Danto's view risks being challenged by practices of art he may not have considered, specifically the contemporary art he consigns to the "posthistorical" period. Yet the only features of contemporary art these critics raise as potential counterexamples are works of art that counter a very different kind of thesis—that art has *stopped*. Mistakenly equating Danto's "end of art" with a thesis about the "death of art," these critics have pointed to significantly original, deeply critical, and otherwise powerful works of art to argue for a point inapposite to Danto's thesis, but to which he would agree: that, without rehearsing the styles of the past, art continues to be made.[34] No doubt *painting*, the art form for which a post-

[33] This outline of Danto's thesis is derived from *After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History*, where it is most recently articulated, and from earlier expressions to the extent they are consistent with its most recent formulation. These are: "The End of Art," in *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986); "Approaching the End of Art," in *The State of the Art* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1987); "Narratives and the End of Art," in *Encounters and Reflections: Art in the Historical Present* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1990); "Narrative and Style" and "Learning to Live with Pluralism," in *Beyond the Brillo Box;* "Responses and Replies," in *Danto and His Critics*, ed. Mark Rollins (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1993); "The Shape of Artistic Pasts: East and West"; and "Art after the End of Art," in *Embodied Meanings: Critical Essays and Aesthetic Meditations* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1994).

[34] See, for example, the volume of essays in Berel Lang, ed., *The Death of Art* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987); and essays by Daniel Herwitz and Richard Shusterman in *Danto and His Critics;* and Stephen Davies's article "End of Art" in *A Companion to Aesthetics*, ed. David Cooper (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1992).

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mortem is often proposed, no longer occupies the central arena of contemporary art, but it would be wholly consistent with Danto's thesis that painting should enjoy a resurgence, or never have been subordinated to the forms of photography, video, performance, and installation that shape art today.

A third category of criticism appreciates the difference between a stopping and an ending but uses Danto's own philosophy of history in an effort to refute him. In arguing against what he calls "substantive philosophy of history," the sort of which Vico's and Hegel's capacious narratives are representative, Danto says that such theorists try "to see events as having meaning in the context of an historical whole which resembles an artistic whole, but, in this case, the whole in question is the whole of history, compassing past, present, and future." But, unlike a reader who can see the significance of one event within a fictional story when he has the whole novel at hand, "the philosopher of history does not have before him the whole of history. He has at best a fragment—the whole past."[55]

The charge made by critics attuned to Danto's philosophy of history is that he seems, like those substantive philosophers of history he criticizes, to make a claim about the significance of certain near contemporary events, when all he has before him is the past, but not the future through which those events may be significant. Noël Carroll thus asserts that we cannot pronounce the end of the self-theorizing of art "until we have a better sense of its consequences." Specifically, we cannot know whether the end of art as Danto identifies it will result in generating a "new project for art."[56]

Carroll is right to suggest that we cannot know after only a few decades of the exhibition of Warhol's *Brillo Box* whether that event—in which art may have brought theorizing about itself as far as it could—will have a significance as yet un-imagined for later art. We cannot know, that is, whether that putative end of art may be revealed in the future as the beginning of something else. But Carroll's criticism elides the claim that art history has ended with the kind of claim about end-

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Davies writes, "The universality of art from the earliest times suggests that art answers to some deep human needs. . . . Given that we remain all too human, there is reason to doubt that art no longer could have anything 'new to say' " (p. 141).

[55] Arthur Danto, *Narration and Knowledge* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), pp. 8–9.

[56] Noël Carroll, "Danto, Art, and History," in *The End of Art and Beyond: Essays after Danto,* ed. Arto Haapala, Jerrold Levinson, and Veikko Rantala (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1997), pp. 40–41; and, in a less pointed form, his "Essence, Expression, and History: Arthur Danto's Philosophy of Art," in *Danto and His Critics.*

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ings found in the ordinary narrative redescription historians employ. For in a typical historical account, an event acquires a significance through being described with reference to a later event it makes possible, where that significance is something to which contemporaries of the earlier event are blind. Identifying Petrarch's ascent of Mont Ventoux as "the opening of the Renaissance" or Manet's painting of his *Olympia* as "the origin of modernism" redescribes those events as beginnings of what no contemporary of the events could know. Likewise, identifying Martin Luther's posting of his ninety-five theses as "the end to a unified church in the West" or the introduction of *glasnost* as "the end to Communism" describes those events in terms only a historian considering them retrospectively could employ. Such narrative sentences identify an event with reference to a later one that contemporaries of the earlier event could not have known about. It is these kinds of claims about the *present*, under descriptions that refer to an as-yet-unknown future, that Danto's philosophy of history contests.

Identifying an event in a historical development as an *internal* ending, by contrast, describes that event—that ending—in terms, not of what is made possible by it, but of *what made it possible*. To claim that an event is an internal ending is, implicitly, to describe it with reference, not to a later event, but to an earlier one, its internal beginning. For what makes the event an ending is not whatever effect it may have on the future but, rather, that it is explained by something in the past. If Danto's claim about the end of art is true, it is because that event is part of an internal development whose beginning requires that manner of ending, to the extent that an internal ending is reached at all. We might not, as is often the case, recognize the ending until well after it has occurred, but whether or not it is an ending is a question not of what in the future it causes but of what in the past it was caused by.

In my terms, if a style reaches an ending in an internal development, that is a consequence of limits built into the style at its inception. The ending is explained by the beginning, despite events the ending might make possible.

This, then, brings me to my own concern with the thesis of the end of art, namely, What historical development is it an end to? Danto recently described his essay "The End of Art" as meaning "to proclaim that a certain kind of closure had occurred in the historical development of art, that an era of astonishing creativity lasting perhaps six centuries in the West had come to an end. . . ." As stated above, he sees this time span as encompassing two narrative structures embedded in history, one defining naturalistic art from Giotto through the impressionists and the other defining modernist art from postimpressionism to pop art.

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But in the same volume Danto also writes, "the end of art consists in the coming to awareness of the true philosophical nature of art,"[57] which suggests that the ending is internal only to the development composed of modernist art, in which the impulse to define art was a motivating force. Or is it that Danto means for us to understand the tradition of naturalistic art as just one sort of very long-lived movement that proposed a certain definition of art, analogous to the way, for example, postimpressionists, cubists, and abstract expressionists proposed their definitions of art?[58] The question is whether the end of art is the end internal to the development that includes the discrete developments of both mimetic and self-defining art, or is it internal only to the latter development? It seems that for an end to be genuinely internal to the whole of the history of art, that end must be explained by the nature of what subsists throughout the whole of that history and is there in the beginning. For the end of art Danto speaks of to be the end of art history as a whole, it is not enough for there to be first an ending to the naturalist tradition and then an ending to the modernist one. There must be an ending to the development of something that existed through both of those periods, and whose nature led to that end. Speaking at the lower level of description of individual artistic oeuvres, movements, or periods, that *continuant*, I have argued, is an artistic style. But does Danto have a characterization of a style of this sort that can be what survives throughout—and explains the development of—the periods he describes? I think he does, but it is occluded by the close connection made between the assertions that modernist art engages in self-definition and that the end of art is the limit reached in the effort of self-definition. This is his notion of a "Western style," a style that is formed around the time of Giotto, defines the art of the West through Warhol, and is that through which the parameters of art's development are set. The end to this development occurs when the style's limits are reached in such a way that we can say the style has, in the work of artists in the West, come into perspicuity. Here the development along naturalistic lines was just one direction in which the limits to the style were probed and exposed, and the development toward self-definition reached another limit to the style. At this point the shape of the style can be discerned both because these limits—these borders—have been

[57] Danto, *After the End of Art*, pp. 21, 30.

[58] "[T]he end and fulfillment of the history of art is the philosophical understanding of what art is, an understanding that is achieved in the way that understanding in each of our lives is achieved, namely, from the mistakes we make.... the first false path was the close identification of art with picturing. The second false path was the materialist aesthetics of Greenberg...." Danto, *After the End of Art*, p. 107.

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reached and, just as important, because an essential feature of the style has been exposed: that it demanded art be part of a historical development, one defined by the notions of progress, of breaking down barriers, of carrying history forward. In short, the style incorporated a certain narrative of what art history was. Art reaches an ending, not because it reaches the limits to the naturalistic or modernist developments, but because the style of art that mandated those developments has emerged into view.[39] If contemporary art really is not part of the modernist paradigm, this is reflected in the fact that there no longer is a mandate in the style or styles of this art that it enact a narratively structured development. It is, as Thierry de Duve suggested to Danto on the occasion of a colloquium devoted to the work of Clement Greenberg, as if we have entered a new "symbolic form," where even if there should be a development of some sort involving art, it will not be through the underlying principles that made art and its defining narratives possible throughout the past six hundred years. As I see Danto's thesis, art ends not because it reaches self-consciousness about its nature, but because, through its developments toward naturalism and self-definition and its internalization and subsequent extrusion of the narratives that demanded these developments, its style has emerged.

Now, finding myself at the end of my exposition, I see the theory I have offered applies in a curious way to itself.[40] When I began to think about this project, I felt the urgent question was, What is the nature of an artistic movement or period? I then saw that this question was really only part of a larger question: What kind of structure does the history of art in whole or part exhibit? Thinking this was a question about historical representation, I tried to find an answer in—and thence ran up against the limits of—an approach from the perspective of philosophy of history and theory of narrative. Thus realizing this was a question not about art-historical narratives, but about art history, I tried to conceive of a way in which artistic developments might have not just any beginning or ending, but, rather, beginnings or endings which are internal, and thus subject to explanatory constraints. At this point the question was nearly fully formed, but only later did my answer—which I first thought to be a matter only of how a brief and its associated limits explain artistic developments—emerge as a theory of style. Only after I had articulated the notion of style I thought my view required did

[39] Danto writes, "art must have the history it does because it has the nature it does. . . ." "Approaching the End of Art," p. 209.

[40] "It is always a fair question to put, whether a theoretical work on history can apply its theories to itself, construed now as an historical entity in its own right, as a writing with a specific location in time and as part of the conversations and disputes that compose the history of theory." Danto, *Narration and Knowledge*, p. xiv.

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I realize that the case studies I appealed to were examples of styles reaching more than one limit. This called for some notion of development that characterizes the reaching of a style's limits, but is consistent with the style's arriving at different limits in different directions. This is when I arrived at the concept of emergence, which is what describes a style when it has reached its limits such that its contours have been revealed.

Now, thinking about Danto's view of the end of art, I realize that his theory set, in the beginning of my investigation, the parameters through which the development of my study unfolded. The question was, What kind of structure of beginning, development, and ending recognizes his thesis of the end of art? The thesis I offer about stylistic beginnings, developments, and endings has been not so much the planned result of my efforts as what emerged through them.

Perhaps every ending recapitulates a beginning. In his elegiac conclusion to *The History of Ancient Art*, Winckelmann says that although art's decline is, properly speaking, outside the parameters of a history of art, he could not

> refrain from searching into the fate of works of art as far as my eye could reach; just as a maiden, standing on the shore of the ocean, follows with tearful eyes her departing lover with no hope of ever seeing him again, and fancies that in the distant sail she sees the image of her beloved. Like that loving maiden we have too have, as it were, nothing but a shadowy outline left of the object of our wishes, but that very indistinctness awakens only a more earnest longing for what we have lost, and we study the copies of the originals more attentively than we should have done the originals themselves if we had been in full possession of them.[41]

In these comments on art and its ideal, whose highest moment for Winckelmann had passed, I find registered, like a palimpsest, the myth of art's origin: the "outline left of the object of our wishes" belongs to the drawing by Dibutades of the contours of her departing lover's shadow.

[41] Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *History of Ancient Art*, trans. G. Henry Lodge, 4 vols. (Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1872), 4: 292. See Whitney Davis's deep reading of this passage in "Winckelmann Divided," in *Replications: Archaeology, Art History, Psychoanalysis*, ed. Richard W. Quinn (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996).

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Index

Annales historiography, 23–24
Art historical development
  and causal chains, 14–16
  and evaluative norms, 132–33
  as external, 8, 112 (*see also* Pliny the Elder)
  not intentionally driven, 65–66, 111, 112–14, 116, 119
  as internal, 8–10, 112, 130, 138 (*see also* Giorgio Vasari)
  and naturalistic representation, 56–57 (*see also* Ernst Gombrich)
  and organic teleology, 8–10, 106
  and progress, 9, 56, 130–31
  as a style's emergence, 113–14, 119–22
  See also Beginnings; Emergence; Endings; Limits; Movements; Style
Augustine, 120–21

Barthes, Roland, 17
Baudelaire, Charles, 76–77
Baxandall, Michael, 47–49. *See also* Brief
Beginnings, 14–16
  endings inscribed in, 71–74
  constraints on identification of, 110–11
  as discovered retrospectively, 106–7
  and intentions, 65–66, 111, 116
  as internally related to endings, 38
  and inventions, 99–100
  and limits, 75
  See also Endings
Bidlo, Mike, 92–93
Bois, Yve-Alain, 108–9, 109n
Borges, Jorge Luis, 121
Brief
  of abstract expressionism, 83
  contents of, 77–78
  of cubism, 69–71
  and explanation, 80–81
  of fauvism, 70
  preliminary characterization of, 47
  and style, 81–82, 87–88
Brunelleschi, Filippo, 61–63
Burckhardt, Jacob, 91, 132
Buren, Daniel, 71

Carr, David, 28–30
Carrier, David, 18n, 32–34, 88, 130
Carroll, Nöel, 20, 137–38
Central subjects, 32–35
  as continuants, 122, 139
  continuity of, 37
  See also Style
Chatman, Seymour, 17
Crimp, Douglas, 71, 134
Crow, Thomas, 38
Cubism, 15
  beginnings of, 108–10
  and color, 53–55
  cubism after the end of, 38–47
  development of, 52–55
  limits of, 69–72
  story versus history of, 37

Danto, Arthur
  and properties of artworks, 87–88
  and style, 87, 124
  and whole of history of art, 139–40
  See also End of art
David, Jacques-Louis, 1, 101–4
  and neoclassicism, 114–16
Delaroche, Paul, 134
Dennett, Daniel, 29
Description versus explanation, 37, 126. *See also* Style: generative conception of
Dibutades. *See* Origin of painting
Dray, William, 14n, 15n

Emergence
  art historical ending as, 119–22, 141
  of character, 113–14
  of style, 119–20
  See also Limits
End of art, 134–39. *See also* Arthur Danto
Endings
  difference between internal and external, 122
  and emergence, 122–27
  external, 69, 73
  internal, 73–74, 138

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Endings (*continued*)
as limits, 66–72
See also Beginnings

Flanagan, Owen, 29

Gauguin, Paul, 79–80
Gombrich, Ernst, 32–33, 55–56, 133–34
Greenberg, Clement, 18n, 42–43, 43n, 101, 134–35

Hegelianism, 18, 75
Hempel, Carl, 14
Historical explanation
as grounding continuity, 37
and historical laws, 10
and individuation of events, 13–14, 19, 35
philosophical analysis of, 13–15
See also Organic development
Historical particulars, 34–35
species as, 105
styles as, 105–6

Impressionism, 78–80, 82, 104–5, 111

Kermode, Frank, 17, 121
Kuhn, Thomas, 97n, 133

Leonardo da Vinci, 63–65, 98
Levine, Sherrie, 92–93
Limits, internal
of artists, movements, and traditions, 71
as background conditions, 71
as conceptual constraints, 72
as essential properties, 66–67
evaluative irrelevance of, 135n
functional account of, 66–69
and intention based description, 82–83
of materials, 66–67
multiple, 122
natural, 11
potential invisibility of, 106
of theoretical entities, 67–68
Lyotard, Jean-François, 23

MacIntyre, Alasdair, 25–27
Manet, Edouard, 94–95, 111
Matisse, Henri, 48, 53–54, 99
Mink, Louis, 17, 22
Mondrian, Piet, 49–53
Movements
change between, 106–7, 121–22
change within, 107
definitions not appropriate to, 105
as historical particulars, 105
See also Beginnings; Endings; Style

Narrative
concepts of, 10
fictional, 13, 31, 36, 121
and human life, 24, 31–32 (*see also* Carr, David; MacIntyre, Alasdair)
limits to a theory of, 36
structures of, 10, 74
poetics of, 13, 36
See also Historical explanation
Narrative constructionism
and selectivity, 17–21
theories of, 11, 16–17, 22, 27
Narrative realism, 11, 24–32, 35
Narrative sentences, 22, 110, 138

Origin of painting, 2–7, 141

Panofsky, Erwin, 57–61
Perspective, mathematical
artificial versus natural, 66
and Chinese painting, 157
as culturally specific problem of representation, 58–61
development of, 61–63
ending of, 63
limits of, 64–65, 107
and symbolic forms, 57–60
as universal problem of representation, 57–58
Pliny the Elder, 2, 7–8, 134, 134n
Pollock, Jackson, 122–29
Practices, 75–78
Problem/solution model:
artificiality of, 48, 80–81
and concept of a brief, 48
of development of perspective, 65
in explanation of a movement, 52–55
in explanation of a series of works, 48–51
in explanation of a single work, 48

Raynal, Maurice, 44
Regnault, Jean-Baptiste, 1–2
Representations, mental, 81–82. *See also* Brief
Richardson, John, 15–16
Ricoeur, Paul, 20–21
Ridolfi, Carlo, 32
Riegl, Alois, 9, 37, 75, 130, 133
Ruskin, John, 132

Schapiro, Meyer, 35–36
Skinner, B. F., 68
Social history of art, 110–11, 120
Steinberg, Leo, 47n, 48–49

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Style
and artistic properties, 88–91
formation of, 99–100, 104
different at different descriptive levels, 124–30
general versus individual, 96
generative conception of, 84–85
integrative structure of, 100–101, 104 (*see also* David, Jacques-Louis)
as intermediary explanatory mechanism, 81
and limits, 82
versus non-style, 87–91
physical body as element in, 97–99
realist defense of, 87
relativist theory of, 85–87
Meyer Schapiro and, 35–36
unintentional generation of, 116–19
See also Emergence; Wollheim, Richard; *individual artists and movements*

Taylor, Charles, 24
Titian, 89

Van Gogh, Vincent, 94–96, 96n
Vasari, Giorgio, 8, 32, 130–32
reactions to, 132
Veyne, Paul, 18
Vien, Joseph-Marie, 116–19

White, Hayden, 16, 19–21, 27
Winckelmann, Johann Joachim, 8–9, 13, 132, 141
Wölfflin, Heinrich, 9, 37, 72, 90–91, 130
Wollheim, Richard, 84–86, 98, 130

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JONATHAN GILMORE is a Mellon Fellow in the Society of Fellows of Columbia University.

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