Interlude

Theoretical Setting

Introduction

THAT I FIND IT NECESSARY to introduce my metahistorical credo at this early stage rather than at the conclusion is due to two reasons. Firstly, the present text is in very many ways an interdisciplinary experiment which brings together empirical material and methodological instruments from quite different subject areas: besides art history, also the history of religion, history of science, philosophy, psychology, sociology and anthropology. In order to make a functional unity of these often heterogeneous traditions, I think it necessary to equip the reader with consumer guidelines. This Interlude is an attempt to formulate such guidelines, by defining terminology, outlining premises and (possibly the weakest link) declaring reservations. Secondly, the text has been written at a time – the 1990s and first decade of the 21st century – in which the academic climate, at least in the various branches of the humanities, is still characterised by diverse forms of fervent cultural relativism: post-structuralism, postmodernism, postcolonialism, politicising feminism. Even though the current text is actually inconceivable without a dimension of cultural relativism – a notion that cognition, interpretation and description cannot be absolutely objective, but are always inscribed in given cultural circumstances – it departs radically from the widespread dogma of 'the death of the grand narratives': the impossibility in devising transverse, long-term effective patterns in history. As I thus acknowledge that, especially from this angle, the underlying concept of the text cannot be said to be 'generally' approved, the Interlude can also be read as the defence on the attack.

Were I to attach a methodological label to this book, it would be, in a more general sense, syncretism, in a narrower sense, evolutionism. Syncretism is here understood as methodological pluralism, acknowledgement that, in principle, not enough methodologies can be employed to describe the diversity of the world, *in*

casu cultural history. But, unlike fervent cultural relativism, this does not mean that there are just as many atomistic separate 'worlds' as there are points of view, but rather – by a displacement of the fulcrum from the perceiving subject and its social context to the communal space between subject, sociality and world – that the world reveals itself in a multifaceted basic structure, which accordingly exacts different angles of approach in order to be decoded. By this means it is undoubtedly possible to develop unlimited quantities of points of view, each with its particular and so in its way unique cognition, but nevertheless between these points of view, or at least a certain number of them, there will be enough connectors, what I will call structural similarities, justifying talk of the same world. The world constitutes a terrain we can collide with, a mosaic with myriads of tesserae which are components of a multipart pattern – multipart associating to both 'split' and 'shared'.

Syncretism thus means neither confusion of style nor struggle between incompatible standpoints, but rather that the world, precisely because it cannot be contained in a single beam of light revealing a complete pattern, must be approached via the interaction of many searchlights. My endeavour here will be to select a little set of these searchlights – the landscape image and the comparative areas of analysis: self-consciousness, socially-determined perception of nature and world picture – and investigate the profiles of cultural history which thereby become visible.

Evolutionism now enters the picture because the body of cultural history not only adds new layers to itself in the course of time, but also – through couplings with the appropriate methodological instruments – reveals new aspects of its genesis. In my opinion, the philosophy, psychology, social and human sciences of the last two centuries in particular have seen the advance of instruments to record a broader developmental sequence in cultural history: an evolution that covers the period from the origin of culture to a maturation phase, modernity, which, the more forcefully it is acknowledged as this pattern's concluding phase, the more it becomes the connecting link to a new evolutionary phase, postmodernity after the year 1900. This evolution thus covers the development of sets of cultural domains which at the same time as interacting horizontally – on a synchronic level – can also be said to have a correlated process of genesis on a vertical – diachronic – plane. Precisely which methodological instruments can be devised to throw light on this two-pronged correlation will be discussed below. In musical terms this strategy might seem like introducing an orchestral work by playing the individual instrumental parts one by one. The risk is, of course, that the work will fall apart by concentrating on its components, but I hope to provide so many samples of ensemble playing along the way that the reader will not wander off the track.

1. Diachronic aspects

The concept of evolution and its function in a model of culture

What are we meant to understand by cultural evolution at all? Before I tune in to the specialist disciplines from which I have assembled the parts for my orchestration of the term, I will outline some of the essential qualities of the soundscape in order to provide a general overview. For a system to be claimed as behaving in an evolutionary manner, I would first argue that it has to be characterised by a certain combination of stasis and change. It must, on the one hand, not be at a complete standstill – stasis alone is not evolutionary – and on the other hand it must not change character so abruptly that we question whether it is the same system. In other words, it has to contain phenomena that are in transformation – and this might very well be to a major degree, possibly in discontinuous leaps – but which after this transformation can still be recognised as 'itself' in an altered guise.

Secondly, it is crucial that the changes to the system, within one or more interpretative frameworks, can be said to be directional. By direction I will not only understand irreversibility – that something once occurred cannot be repeated – but moreover that one or more parameters of the system are in expansion. It is therefore not enough for something to occur that has not been seen before if it does not also continue a tendency that was earlier in the process of genesis. The limit of an evolutionary process is thus reached when it, or the parameters that have been followed, reach their maximum and thereafter phase out and disintegrate. This breaking up can give the final phase of the process a cyclic character that is not a case of actual reversibility – a symmetric return to the starting point – rather, the whole sequence could be likened to a spiral movement which, on one level, is a case of return and, on the other level, of continuous progression.

My contention is that human culture, from its origin in pre-historic times and up to the present, is characterised by just such an overarching evolutionary sequence, and that the development of the landscape image and, on the whole, pictorial space – the growing, deepening, culminating and, from the 1900s, eventually decreasing depth of field – can be used as an amazingly stable and objective instrument for a reading of this process. Thus, certain other parameters in cultural evolution must also be assumed to be growing from pre-historic times to the end of the 19th century, whereas the 20th and 21st centuries represent the spiral-like conclusion to the sequence, during which they phase out and disintegrate. Among the potential manifold parameters in the overall cultural evolution, of which the expansion of depth of field can be regarded as expressing a structural equivalent, I then focus

on three evolutionary sequences: self-consciousness, socially-determined perception of nature and world picture. As regards the first and last of these, they enter into a type of contrapuntal relationship, in which the expansion of self-consciousness occurs in tandem with the opening of the cosmos and is based on a distinction between spirit and matter: a process which corresponds structurally to the escalating contrast between viewpoint and distance in the pictorial space.

To give an introductory impression of scholarly traditions which can be used to substantiate these circumstances, I will begin by turning to the Hegelian, for, besides evidently considering the genesis of self-consciousness to be the result of a historical process, the growing emancipation of spirit from matter, it demonstrates, through its chronological arrangement of art forms – a hierarchy towards increasing subjectivity – an incipient disposition to see this genesis reflected in the development of pictorial space. A reformulation of this type of thinking, which connects the genesis of self-consciousness more specifically with the increasing perspectivism of pictorial space, is found in the Swiss child psychologist and evolutionary theorist Jean Piaget's study of the child's ontogenetic development. For as is demonstrated, with increasing success, by Suzi Gablik, Sidney J. Blatt and Lars Marcussen, Piaget's observations can be applied advantageously to the phylogenetic system, the overall development of culture. The Piagetian framework provides, moreover, an opportunity to place considerations of the evolution of spirit and image in a more materialistic context, as Piaget's observation of the individual's development is a cornerstone in Habermas' sociological model of cultural phylogenesis – a model which re-connects to Hegel via Marx and the idealistically-oriented evolutionary sociologist Talcott Parsons.

The cosmological points of contact in the landscape image are elaborated upon if we go to what can be seen as the supplementary counterpole to the Hegel tradition: Jungian history of religion, in which the initial development of self-consciousness is linked to the heavens' masculinisation and command of a chaotic, feminine matter from which it is itself detached. In this framework, the first background that the depth of field of the image encounters in the course of its expansion – post-Egyptian rocks and mountains – is accounted for as a visualisation of the feminine matter, just as the second depth of field distance – the symbolic celestial ground of antiquity and the Middle Ages – appears as metaphor for the supra-sensuous masculine beyond. In order to throw light on the third depth of field distance – the non-dualistic infinity of modernity – it is, however, necessary to supplement the framework of history of religion with a framework of history of science: the narrative of how the Copernican cosmos exploded the geocentric world picture.

If, in conclusion, we turn to the third comparative strand in cultural evolution – the socially-conditioned perception of nature – we will be able to connect

it, in particular, with the landscape image sequence of terrains: the pattern by means of which post-Egyptian pre-modern rocky grounds are emblematic of non-cultivation, whereas landscape images in the flanking eras - Neolithic-Egypt and modernity - represent potential space for cultural cultivation of the earth: fields, paths, canals, mines, etc. Inasmuch as the basic sequence of the Golden Age and the paradise myths - the sequence from, *inter alia*, work-free and ideal to work-marked and mortal - appears structurally equivalent to the development of the landscape image from antique-medieval to modern, it is possible to connect with various models of the work ethic during the epochs in question, among these, not least, Hegelian theories relating to the motive power of spiritual evolution, humankind's struggle for recognition. As clarified by Alexandre Kojève, ancient civilisations could here be seen as characterised by a master-slave division, in which the slave shows the master his recognition by recreating a paradisiacal condition for that master (a parallel to the non-work terrains of the image), whereas post-antique, particularly modern recognition, is based on the universal prevalence of work (a parallel to the cultivated terrains of the image). Through this lens, cultural evolution would seem to show its concluding cyclical tendencies earlier than in the other parameters, as here modernity's work ethic - through a 'mirroring axis' in antiquity - is seen as symmetrical with the work ethic in the Neolithic period and Egypt.

Sociological and anthropological theories on the evolution of societies

Even though the various forms of cultural evolutionary thinking - Hegelian philosophy of consciousness, Jungian history of religion, Piagetian history of mind and space representation, diverse forms of sociological and anthropological development models - function as independent domains and are each endowed with an internal perception framework, one of them - the set of models applied by sociology and anthropology - could be said to aspire to a more general representation, which, to a greater or lesser degree, might allocate the others as sub-domains. In terms of origin, these models all have roots in the Age of Enlightenment and its belief in the advance of civilisation. In the work of philosophers such as Vico, Turgot and Condorcet we encounter the beginnings of a united, secularised theory of evolution, which combines antiquity's cyclical ideas of a cultural movement going from hunter-gatherers and herdsmen through agricultural civilisation and on to decadence and potential revitalisation, with the Christian concept of an irreversible movement going from paganism through Christianity and on to the Day of Judgement. Based on the idea of Western modernity as culture's provisional *telos* and non-Western cultures as representatives of earlier stages in cultural evolution,

the outlines of this theory are consolidated in the 19th century by philosophers such as Hegel, Marx and Spencer and anthropologists such as Lewis Henry Morgan and Edward Burnett Tylor.[2]

The furtherance of the theory in the 20th century has, however, met with a lot of resistance. At the end of the 1800s it had thrived in a fertile give-and-take with its parallel and forerunner in biology, Darwin's theory of the origin of species (1859), but after the turn of the century a form of iron curtain was set up between physical and cultural anthropology. The idea of evolution could still be sanctioned until man became farmer, but subsequently *homo sapiens* presumably resigned – in the name of humanism – from the evolutionary project. To describe cultures on the basis of ideas of common stages of development was now to do violence to their diversity and distinctive characteristics. While the biological species were related and could be arranged in the branches of a family tree, cultures were merely *different*. Even though the iron curtain was re-buttressed by Robert Nisbet's 1969 attack on the sociological theory of evolution and is maintained in the social constructivist climate of the humanities to this very day, evolutionary social science is, however, far from dismantled. For the scholars who have continued to work with it since the 1930s – especially, at first, Americans such as V. Gordon Childe, Leslie White, Talcott Parsons and Gerhard Lenski – the 19th-century schema has proven to be amazingly durable, and after Jürgen Harbermas elaborated its systems- and action-theoretical aspects, we have since the 1970s been in possession of a very nuanced theory for the evolution of societies.[3]

For a detailed consideration it is perhaps still a little too simple to talk of *one single* theory of evolution, as in a reading of many aspects there are considerable disagreements. Is the evolution of society played out on one or a number of strings? Is its progress determined by local circumstances, or is there a more overarching control? Does it proceed mostly through self-development or via the spread of cultural concepts? Is it mainly controlled by environmental pressure, new forms of energy, technological innovations, class struggle, cognitive understanding or ideology, or is it actually all these and many other factors in an emerging interplay, which creates the instrumental incentive for an otherwise more profound drive towards increased complexity?

I will lean towards the latter possibility and thereby an assumption of a fundamentally one-stemmed social evolution, which, to be sure, in its actual progress is split into many diversified branches, but which nonetheless is governed by the same overarching tendencies: tendencies which are only strengthened by the fact that the interaction of the branches intensifies with time. By investigating different frameworks of clarification for cultural evolution, it will also be seen that whether the fulcrum has been placed in exterior, material factors (the Marxist tradition: White,

Lenski) or in interior, conceptual factors (the Hegelian tradition: Parsons), there has usually been consensus on a certain correspondence between domains within each individual culture.[4] A particular social structure must thus be expected according to a certain level of technology (e.g. stone tools/tribal society), just as a particular form of government belongs to a corresponding world picture (e.g. democracy/Copernican system). Such stages do not mean that all cultures must necessarily tread the same narrow path; rather, they signify tendencies, spaces of possibility, to which there are limits as to how far they can be stretched.[5] An ontogenetic parallel that, as we will see, has more than metaphorical validity, is to be found in the development experienced by the individual human being. Even though personality can be developed in many directions, all are subject to a physiological framework – namely the body and its biologically-determined progress from childhood through youth and on to old age.

This comparison, however, only holds good on a macro-evolutionary scale because, unlike the individual person, the individual cultures do not have to pass through precisely the same phases, just as they do not all develop to the same extent.[6] Many cultures have thus, at least until the 19th century, retained a way of life which in outline stretches back to the Late Stone Age (e.g. sub-Saharan Africa) and, conversely, the diffusion enables some cultures to jump directly to more complex stages of development without having to go through the preceding links to the same extent (e.g. the Northern peoples in encountering the culture of antiquity). It is nevertheless the case that *somewhere or other* there is always a culture on the way to a stage of hitherto unseen complexity, and that this stage cannot be very far from this culture's current situation.

Once the provisos have been taken on board, the evolution model is therefore a highly fruitful tool. Albeit with somewhat culturally chauvinist terms, the first three stages have been specifically denoted by Morgan and Tylor: *savagery* (hunter-gatherers; Parsons' *primitive*), *barbarism* (slash-and-burn method; Parsons' *advanced primitive*) and *civilisation* (use of plough and writing). Within the third, rather broad category, Marx made a distinction between a further four stages: the *Asiatic* (clan-based despotism; Parsons' *archaic intermediate*), the *antique* (citizenry and slaves, subset of Parsons' *advanced intermediate*), the *feudal* (landowners and serfs) and, eventually, the last stage – a Western speciality – *capitalism* (democratic market economy; Parsons' *modern*).[7]

If every theory of cultural evolution, even the most materialistic, proposes that a given social structure brings about a certain individual perception of the surrounding environment, the question still remains as to how, more explicitly, this perception is formed. Is the individual at liberty to 'choose' a perception of the environment that fits the social situation, or is the perception of the environment

actually something one is irreversibly brought up with during socialisation in the community? That many evolutionary-oriented scholars still, to this very day, refuse to tighten the net is not simply due to insufficient research tools, but also to a reluctance to end up in the Marxist-Hegelian dilemma: either humankind is made a puppet of history (reductionist materialism) or else history becomes a question of the development of human spirit (reductionist idealism).

A convincing synthesis is, however, underway from Jürgen Habermas (b. 1929), a late representative of the Marxist-influenced Frankfurt School. Habermas works his way forward towards his sought-after middle ground, the so-called *communicative action*, from two flanks: partly from outside – and phylogenetically – from the evolutionary social theory in its most versatile aspects, partly from inside – and ontogenetically – from Jean Piaget's theory of the child's cognitive stages of development.[8] According to Piaget, the child builds up its perception of the surrounding environment and self in a quite specific sequence of stages, a sequence that involves a development towards increasing cognitive insight and autonomous sense of self. As Habermas now assumes that there are universal laws for the process through which a system absorbs new experience, he believes in a correspondence of *developmental logic* between the child's ontogenetic sequence and the phylogenetic sequence, which the culture itself has undergone in its evolution from the Palaeolithic period to the present day. It is indeed in the individual encounter with the material, social and practical circumstances that the child's cognitive identity takes shape, but conversely this process of formation has also been undertaken earlier by the culture as a whole. Habermas sums it up thus:

> The history of technology is probably connected with the great evolutionary advances of society through the *evolution of world views;* and this development might, in return, be explicable through formal structures of thought for which cognitive psychology has provided a well-examined ontogenetic model, a model that enables us to place these structures in a developmental-logical order.[9] [Habermas' italics]

Even though I cannot here discuss the very complex sociological theory that accompanies Habermas' observations regarding correspondence between cultural phylogenesis and ontogenesis, these same observations constitute an essential legitimatisation of the current project. Corresponding to the child's first speech-characterised phase, Piaget's preoperational period with its barely developed self-consciousness, Habermas assumes that the world pictures of the first societies are characterised by absent boundaries between the conceptual world and nature, and between sociality and world. These boundaries are first stabilised with the formation of the later states in ancient cultures where, in a parallel to the child's so-called

concrete operational stage, the populace was subject to laws that were set outside and above nature: a form of monotheistic principle. If, however, a society of actual autonomous individuals is to come into being, these laws have to be internalised in the social sphere where they can be used as the object of reflection and discussion. This universalistic stage, which corresponds to the formal operational stage of puberty, is only realised in the democracies of Western modernity.[10] As we will see, Piaget's ontogenetic developmental sequence can also be observed in a cultural domain that Habermas passes over – the phylogenetic development of pictorial space – so Habermas' theory provides a good recipe for how this aspect of cultural evolution can be seen in a sociological context.

To take provisional stock of the way in which my project might involve sociological evolutionary thinking at all – especially Parsons' and Habermas' variants – we can single out the following key features: partly a division into periods which correspond to the stages in the development of pictorial space, and partly a clear indication of how social structure can be aligned with the three evolutionary sequences of pictorial space, self-consciousness and world picture (see FIG. 0.1). In the roaming hunter-gatherer cultures of the Palaeolithic period (Parsons' primitive stage), society is clan-ruled, has flexible social roles and no concept of the distinction culture/nature, which corresponds structurally to a barely developed self-consciousness and thereby a pictorial space without depth, frame and vantage point. In the Neolithic period (Parsons' advanced primitive culture), when communities become settled and start to provide food by the slash-and-burn method (*horticulture*), self-consciousness is heightened through an incipient social stratification and separation from nature: an equivalent to a pictorial space that is still additive and without frame, but in which narration and stationary natural elements are incorporated. At the same time, this stage is matched cosmologically by a world picture where the heavens are separated from the feminine-conceived ground, which in the Palaeolithic period constituted the cosmic totality. But population growth and intensified cultivation of the soil – use of the plough – sharpened social stratification to a hierarchy in which a working rural population is governed by an urban upper class invoking privileged access to the divine (Marx's *Asiatic* stage; the later phases of Parsons' archaic intermediate). From the socially inflexible viewpoint of this upper class, figures are placed against a background of the wilderness land formations in images (later Mesopotamia; the Minoan culture); and it is also here – likewise in correspondence to the social chasm – that a divine heaven has cleaved off from a material earth, which it controls and fertilises.

As Parsons has pointed out, in the middle of the last millennium BC there are a number of philosophical breakthroughs which are felt all the way from Europe across India to China.[11] These breakthroughs can be seen as a symptom of the upper

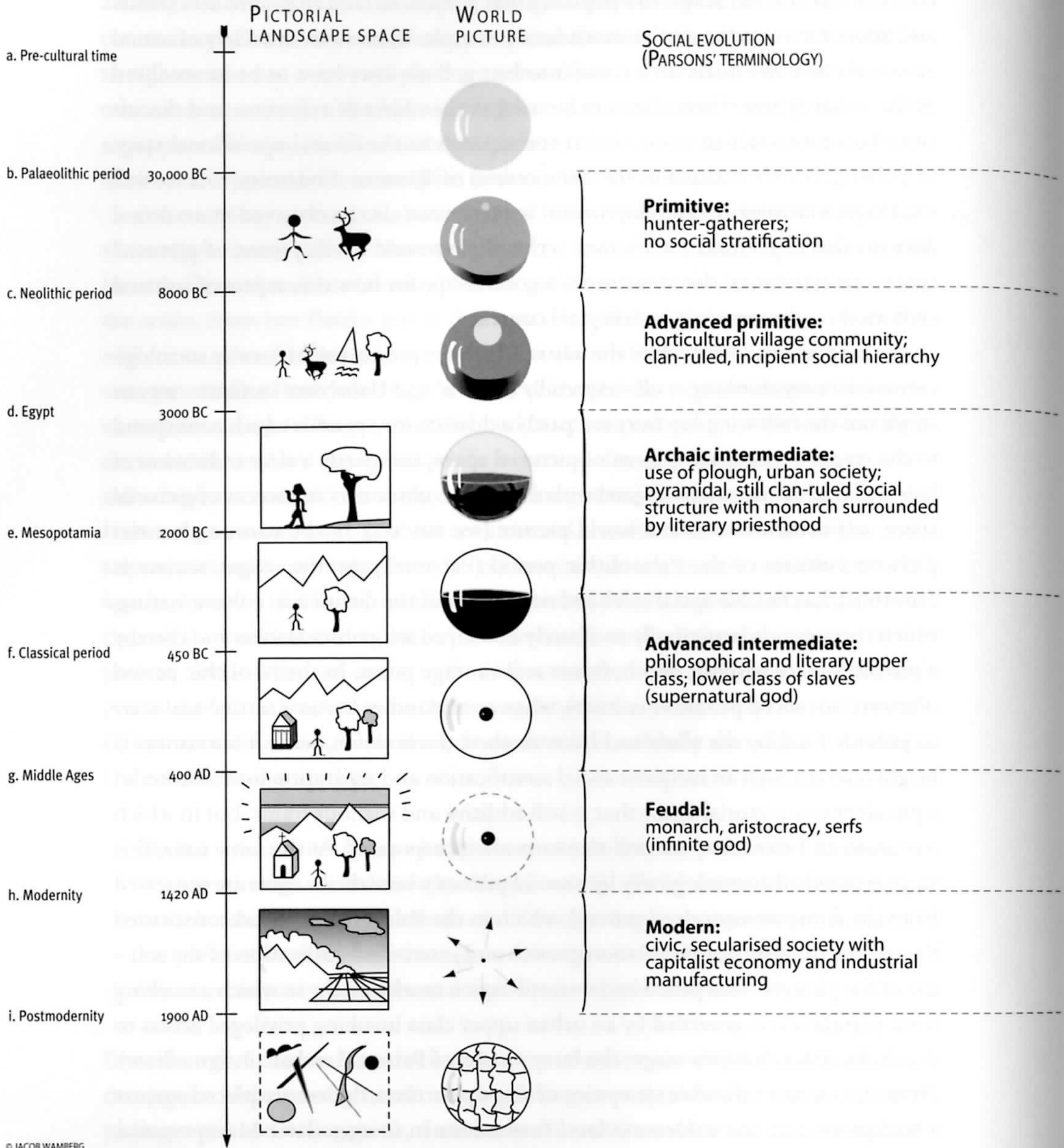


Fig. 0.1. Evolutions of pictorial landscape space, world picture and society.

classes no longer limiting themselves to a religious caste of priesthood, warriors and rulers, but taking on an autonomous character that provides the dynamism necessary for innovations such as literature and religious-philosophical reflections (Parsons' advanced intermediate stage). In the Greco-Roman culture this occurs in the new elitist democracy, which asserts itself at the expense of a slave class (Marx's *antique* stage). To this quasi-autonomous culture we can add the observations that in terms of consciousness it is characterised by a semi-developed subjectivity, in pictorial terms by a dawning view-oriented perspective and cosmologically by the more three-dimensional geocentric system (with a spherical, rather than flat, earth at the centre).

In order to get from this point to evolution's provisionally latest social configuration - capitalism and, at least in principle, universal democracy - requires a further levelling of the former upper class's position, by means of which the evolution of society assumes a cyclical character. The seeds are found in the feudal system of the Middle Ages, which tempers the slave status of land workers and makes everyone equal before God. The route to modernity can thus be regarded as a secularisation of this relationship to the deity: equality before God becomes equality before fellow human beings. If one accepts that equality deals with relative circumstances, and that relative circumstances imply an infinite, homogenous space, then this development can also be connected to parallel phases in self-consciousness, world picture and pictorial space: from an individual posted before the infinite God (cosmology's infinite deity sphere; the gold ground), we move to an individual able to contemplate the infinite environment (the Copernican universe; perspective space).

Evolution of the landscape image in a tripartite context

Among the many strands which develop in parallel and constitute cultural evolution, I have, as stated, singled out three in particular to serve as comparative domains for the fourth and central strand in my study: evolution of the landscape image and, in extension, of the pictorial space. As mentioned in the Introduction, these three strands, like the representative terrain of the landscape image, are spread across a space stretching from the very near to the far distance: a) the pole of vantage point: *self-consciousness*; b) the middle distance: the *socially-determined perception of nature*; and c) the pole of remoteness: the *world picture of cosmology*.

In order to assess the connection between a) and c), the poles of nearness and distance, I will first turn to one of the methodological mainstays of this study, Oswald Spengler's *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (1923). Although this comparative study of

"the morphology of world history" chiefly focuses on the modus operandi and progression of individual cultures, rather than an overall evolutionary whole, Spengler nonetheless had an eye for a common denominator which, in terms of cultural development, dealt with the dialectical relationship between near and far:

> Here, then, we shall not be concerned with what a world "is", but with what it signifies to the being that it envelops. When we wake up, at once something extends itself between a "here" and a "there". We live the "here" as something proper, we experience the "there" as something alien. There is a dualizing of soul and world as poles of actuality [...]. Actuality – the world *in relation to* a soul – is for every individual the projection of the Directed upon the domain of the Extended – the Proper mirroring itself on the Alien; one's *actuality then signifies oneself.*[12] [Spengler's italics]

In this quote the self and the world, the near here and the distant there, are perceived as two complementary quantities, which reciprocally – and inextricably linked by the mediating concept of reality – illuminate and constitute one another.

As regards the more detailed triadic classification – here-sociality-there – distinct interfaces can be found with one of Habermas' general strategies: with ultimate derivation from Kant's triad of aesthetic judgement, practical reason and pure reason, Habermas structures the communicative perpetrator's world picture according to three basic concepts – [1] the *subjective* (expressive, aesthetic), [2] the *social* (normative, moral-practical) and [3] the *objective* (cognitive, empirical-theoretical).[13] In relation to this, my triad could be seen as a subset with emphasis on the nature-oriented: the pole of vantage point – self-consciousness – corresponds approximately to the expressive and aesthetic domain of subjectivity; the middle distance – the socially-determined perception of nature – is part of sociality's normative and moral-practical territory; and the pole of remoteness – the world picture of cosmology – belongs to objectivity with its cognitive and empirical-theoretical issues. It should be noted, however, that, influenced by Piaget, I have put some of the latter domain under the pole of vantage point, self-consciousness, as cognitive development – objective dealings with the surrounding environment – can also be seen as a component in the formation of the self. At the same time, my concept of world picture should not be read as Habermas' more general perception of the world, the triad's assembled concept, but as being more specifically focused on cosmology, which in turn is somewhat absent in Habermas.

Even though the three comparative areas and their implications for the interpretation of the landscape image are closely interweaved, often even indistinguishable from one another, I will in the following endeavour to pinpoint each individually and outline some of their theoretical specifications. To facilitate the logic of exposition, I will present them in a slightly changed order:

[1] *The pole of vantage point*

– Pictorial space and self-consciousness: aesthetic and psychological perspectives

That the Western pictorial space goes through an evolution from none to full depth of field and that this evolution can be coupled with a cognitive development from an unspoken to an autonomous self-consciousness, has seemingly not been described in these particular terms before. Nevertheless, various traditions of scholarship – philosophy of aesthetics, art history, child psychology – demonstrate analyses which with relatively straightforward modification could be expanded to cover this thesis.[14]

The oldest is without doubt the ambitious model of cultural history which Hegel presents in his *Aesthetics* (1820-29, edited posthumously by H.G. Hotho 1835). As Hegel sees the course of history as being determined by an evolution towards the emancipation of the human spirit, he can make a distinction between three key stages in art: [1] the *symbolic*, [2] the *classical* and [3] the *romantic*. The spirit is already being sought after in the Egyptians' symbolic art, *architecture*, but is, so to speak, trapped in the mass, such as happens in the closed pyramid. In the redemption of Greek art, *sculpture*, on the other hand, the spirit has found its first freedom, inasmuch as in the ideal human body we encounter an unsurpassed synthesis between the form of the mass and the content of the spirit.[15] The synthesis is, however, broken up again in *romantic* art – a term applied to Christian art in general, but particularly appropriate to modernity. Inasmuch as the spirit has now reached its definitive emancipation, it can no longer be expressed in the bodily, the perennially beautiful sculpture, but has to settle for mirroring itself in the outer world – which in the case of the visual media means in *painting* with its subjective viewpoints, particularities and traces of time. In paintings, including landscapes, the subject finds expression for its innermost moods and feelings.[16]

Even though Hegel does not pursue the same medium, painting, through history, but changes focus according to the most characteristic mode of expression of each period, the basic features of my thesis – the proportionality of depth of image with degree of development of self-consciousness – are already to be found embodied in his schema. The liberation of the spirit as expressed in the sequence architecture-sculpture-painting, thus constitutes a movement from matter to openness: having been *inside* the encircling totality, the movement is directed *over to* the single-form sculpture which is closed within itself, finally to end *out in* painting's fragmented view from a distance. Within the image itself this transformation thus corresponds with that increase in depth of field – the expansion of view from the body to its surroundings – which follows when the vantage-point position, the expression of self-consciousness, withdraws towards a single point and thereby converts the image from an inscription in nature's own material (cave painting) to an artificial space surgically cut off from the environment (autonomous, perspective image).

Unfortunately, 20th-century art history has broken with Hegel's ideas and has instead profited from their optically more fine-grained, but philosophically more limited descendants in Riegl, Wölfflin and Panofsky. Riegl, of these scholars the one most inclined to create an overarching view, also regards art history, now more view-specific, as determined by a movement from matter to openness, from Egypt's predominantly haptic vision (near sight) via antiquity's mixed haptic-optic vision (normal sight) to late antiquity's – and in intensification thereof: modernity's – purely optical vision (distant sight).[17] Riegl's only explication for these shifts of perspective in art is, however, the consciously context-less term *Kunstwollen*; so seemingly one has to go right up to Suzi Gablik's *Progress in Art* (1976) and its more detailed successor Sidney J. Blatt's *Change and Continuity in Art: The Development of Modes of Representation* (1984) before an evolutionary art history is again presented in a perspective pertaining specifically to the philosophy of mind – albeit still without specific reference to Hegel.[18]

Like Habermas, but independently, both Gablik and Blatt illuminate the phylogenetic evolution from the basis of Piaget's theory of the child's cognitive stages of development. Piaget's multi-faceted concept of cognition also covers the child's perception of space, including its representation in children's drawings. In the initial preoperational stage, in which the child has yet to distinguish imagination from outside world, the child's spatial representation is controlled by the so-called *topological* space characterised by tactile values, relations of proximity and absence of an overall system of reference – a space indicated in the child's drawing by lack of depth relationships. As cognitive insight deepens, and consciousness assumes subjective form in the concrete and formal operational stages, a more abstract and projective sense of space emerges, which in terms of the image is matched by perspective with its specification of vantage points, the mark of autonomous consciousness.[19] From the phylogenetic parallel development of pictorial space, Gablik and Blatt thus read a corresponding cognitive progress. Whereas Gablik is rather coarse-grained in relation to the pre-modern periods – everything from Egypt to Byzantium is put in the same box – Blatt offers a nuanced exposition, even an elaboration of Piagetian terminology, depicting the entire spectrum from Palaeolithic and Neolithic additive pictorial space via Egypt's baselines and on to antiquity and modernity with perspectives ever more controlled by vantage point. Independent of this, a similar elaboration has recently been presented in the work of Danish architect and historian of architecture, Lars Marcussen, in which he also demonstrates the phylo- and ontogenetical correspondence via a detailed study of the development of children's drawings.[20] Habermas, as mentioned, does not involve the pictorial space in his evolutionary theory, and therefore the observations made by Gablik, Blatt, Marcussen and myself could be taken together and used as a kind

of litmus test for his ideas – just as Habermas' theory could conversely contribute to give a sociological substantiation of our observations.

[2] *The pole of remoteness*
– Pictorial space and world picture: perspectives pertaining to the histories of religion and science

If we now want to shed light on the evolution of pictorial space in relation to the otherness of the 'I' – the cosmological world picture – proportionality can, as mentioned, be made out between the pictorial depth of field and the effective radius of the world picture. In step with the expansion of depth of field, we move from a closed, feminine cosmos, via a cosmos split between celestial spirit and earthly material, finally arriving at, in modernity, an infinite and orientation-less universe.

In practice, it can however be difficult to see this continuity, as scholarship pertaining to the history of cosmology is divided into two factions, each with its own invested interest: one, coming from the history of religion, has its central point in the pre-modern, especially pre-classical world pictures; the other, pertaining to the history of science and philosophy, has its focus on the Greek and modern systems. For the early period, in which earth cults are central, I have found particular backup in the Jungian, structuralist history of religion: Mircea Eliade, Erich Neumann and their feminist successors Anne Baring and Jules Cashford.[21] Neumann not only clarifies how an increasingly spiritual, energising and masculine heaven detaches itself from the feminine earth, of which it was originally born, but also demonstrates the link between this detachment and the formation of self-consciousness – a synthesis with the abovementioned Hegelian-Piagetian track thus being an obvious inference. Hence the interior formation of self-consciousness can be seen as a reflection of the heavens' exterior breakaway from the earth. Moreover, with reference to the earth cults, observations made by these and other scholars allow for a movement from the *how* of the pictorial space to its *what*, as the rocky ground of pre-modern images now – apparently for the first time – can be seen to have more significance than mere 'background scenery'. More precisely, they represent the bodily depth from which the spirit must liberate itself in order to be able to see spatially in images at all, i.e. let depth of field stretch out to the land formations (see chapter 2). The cosmologically oriented religious history, besides pinpointing the rocks' relationship to matter and the subterranean, also proposes an interpretation of the next zone to be incorporated into the depth of field of the image: the heavens. As a counterpole to the rocks, the medieval gold ground and colour surfaces can be linked to the very heavens in whose outermost sphere the divine spirit is concentrated.

As far as the cosmological dimension of the more rationally-based Greek and modern developments of pictorial space is concerned, its philosophical consequences

in particular are put into relief by historians of science and philosophy such as Duhem, Cassirer, Koyré, Kuhn and Spengler.[22] Promoted by the interdisciplinary milieu around the Warburg-Institute in Hamburg where, among others, Cassirer worked, this development is linked specifically to pictorial space in the short treatise Panofsky wrote as a young man, "Die Perspektive als 'symbolische Form'" (1924-25).[23] This work describes modern perspective as an expression of the individual's comprehension of the world, as it connects with the Copernican, infinite universe and also with the subjective or objective relationship – the autonomous subject's complementary engagements with the environment – which the mind can enter into with this universe.

If the frameworks conditioned by cosmology and the philosophy of nature still appear to be somewhat implied in Panofsky's work, they are profiled far more keenly by Spengler who, by involving mathematics, physics and astronomy, is able to clarify the profound difference between the *Apollinian* (classical) and the *Faustian* (modern) perception of the world.[24] Observations made by Hegel and Riegl as regards the plastic qualities of antique art find resonance here, partly in a cosmos limited by an outer heavenly sphere (the geocentric), and partly in a mathematics, the Euclidian, which is only concerned with closed bodies. In striking contrast to this, Faustian culture is founded in infinity, a primeval symbol in which it is steeped from infinitesimal calculation through the unlimited Newtonian void to polyphonic music, Gothic church space reaching up to the heavens, and perspectival pictorial space.

Finally, it should be mentioned that the relationship between world picture and pictorial space has been discussed by Franzsepp Würtenberger in a short and strangely neglected monograph, *Weltbild und Bilderwelt von der Spätantike bis zur Moderne* (1958), which might actually have been a first draft for the present study. He writes, for example: "Art works are small 'world picture machineries' made by humans whose function depend on quite certain hypotheses of word picture positions."[25] Before modernity, claims Würtenberger, images are put into a vertical field of suspense in which polarisation between divine and earthly powers prevents a view towards distant expanses and the pathway to an actual temporal setting (FIG. 0.2). The emergence of modernity does away with this field of suspense in favour of a horizontality determined by spatial and temporal coordinators: "Such earthly fields with their own value, with earthly concepts for time and place, we term landscape." The process takes place, however, in interaction with the simultaneously developing natural sciences and can therefore first be wholly realised in the early 19th century, at the same time as the map of the world has been fully explored and world time has been coordinated.[26]

If we acknowledge that the cosmological world picture must also be included in the stages of cultural evolutionary thinking, we are suddenly faced with a greatly

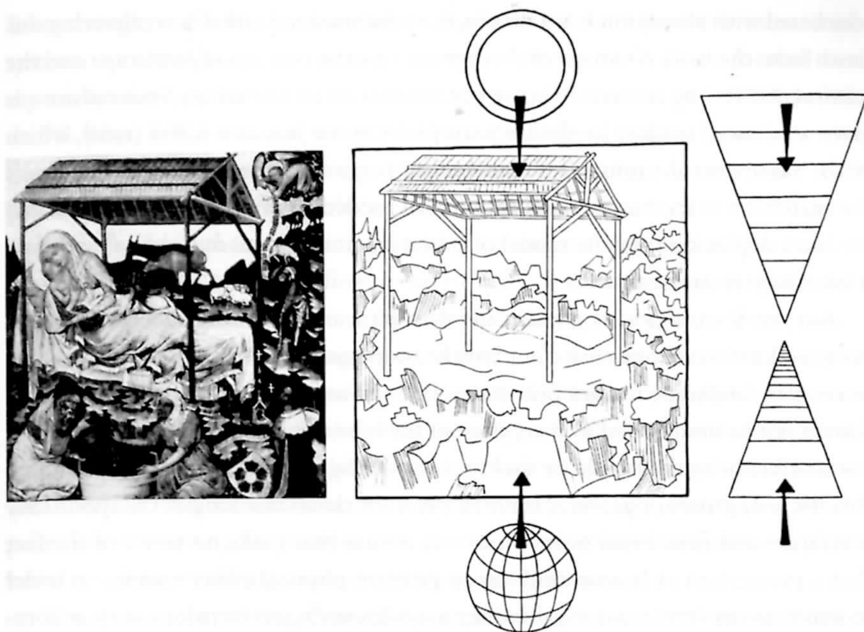


Fig. 0.2. Juxtaposition of 1) Master of Hohenfurth, *Nativity* (c. 1400), Hohenfurth, Stiftsgalerie, and 2) diagrammatic outline of the impact of divine and earthly powers on this event. From Franzsepp Würtenberger, *Weltbild und Bilderwelt von der Spätantike bis zur Moderne* (1958).

expanded effective radius for sociological models of society. The world picture appears not as an isolated 'image', but as a combined physical-metaphysical terrain, the contours of which are amalgamated both with accessible nature and the anatomy of culture generally. The universe is here incorporated into culture in the same way as a nest of Chinese boxes opened from within and outwards. Each new box that is opened up by a culture signifies not only a new world picture, but also a set of new conditions for how that culture should be organised (what I will call an *epistemic field*, see below).

[3] *The middle distance*

– Pictorial space and perception of nature: sociological perspectives

If, finally, we turn back towards the middle domain – the socially-determined perception of nature – we can begin by placing the evolution of self-consciousness, and thereby also of depth of field, in a sociological framework: retraction to the subjective 'I' shell and the image's concomitant larger range of vision are inextricably

connected with alienation from nature, the urbanised individual's accelerating distance from the land. A variant of this argument – the concept of landscape and the sentimental feeling for nature being conditional on an alienation from nature – is given a nuanced reading by the German philosopher Joachim Ritter (1962), which at the same time demonstrates its romantic origin (Schiller).[27] That Ritter limits the argument to its mature manifestation in modernity will, however, not prevent me from deploying it in the model of evolution and, *mutatis mutandis*, extrapolate it back to prehistoric time.

But the sociological angle also involves a focus on dealings between human being and nature: the extensive but largely unexamined issue of the extent to which terrains in landscape images bear traces of cultivation. 'Cultivation' in this sense should not be understood as every trace of the human hand on nature, particularly not interventions that could be said to involve religious or leisure-time activities – shrines, holy groves or gardens, for example. I am rather thinking of the specifically utilitarian and functional interventions in nature that make no secret of the fact that a proportion of humankind has to perform physical effort – *work* – in order to make nature fertile and inhabitable; in other words, interventions such as cornfields, fences, hedges, canals, bridges, roads and mines, which I here, in contrast to the untouched *terra* of the rocks, will call *territory*.[28] As regards these kinds of work-marked phenomena, the history of the image seems, as indicated, to offer a tripartite structure: [1] the Neolithic period and Egypt *with* utility-marked landscape images; [2] the period of the Golden Age *field without*; [3] modernity after 1420 *again with*. On the understanding that images handed down through history are primarily testimony to lives of the well-to-do, a sociological explanatory model will have to focus on *the status of physical work* among the elites.[29]

During phase [1], when society is still clan-based, and when heavens and earth form part of an evenly balanced sexual cycle (Neolithic period and Egypt), the anthropologist Marvin Harris, for example, has substantiated, via studies of contemporary tribal societies, that work enjoys tolerable respect,[30] and accordingly traces of work are permissible in images. But gradually, as the heavens become detached to their own sovereign sphere, and society is correspondingly polarised into an urban-based upper class and a rural-based lower class (phase [2]: Mesopotamia, Greece-Rome, Middle Ages), work becomes an inferior phenomenon, whereby traces of work are accordingly ousted from landscape images. At the focal point of this study is, as already stated, my thesis that here cultural evolution takes a primitivistic turn for the first time and that the overall anatomy of culture – the epistemic *field* – plus sub-domains such as that of image culture, are therefore structured according to the forces of the paradise myth: a yearning out towards and back to conditions before the institution of grain culture, felling, mine-work and trade.

Even though, not least, grain culture's displacement from power is in need of a systematic investigation, I have been able to find significant evidence for this thesis especially among scholars specialising in the Greco-Roman culture: A.O. Lovejoy and G. Boas, E.W. Heitland, Jean-Pierre Vernant, Barbette Stanley Spaeth.[31]

A more specifically macrohistorical backup for the observations made under phase [2] – which also re-establishes the link to the track of self-consciousness – could be found in the work of Hegel and his successor Alexandre Kojève.[32] Seeing that Hegel and Kojève also define the spirit, self-consciousness, as the desire for a desire – the desire for recognition by a second party – they take as their point of departure an initial cultural stage in which recognition is won by risking one's life in battle, a test that is stabilised in the master's forcible subjugation of the slave. Even though it would seem unlikely that the early, still collectively-based agricultural cultures (my phase [1]) would be founded in such dynamics, Hegel's and Kojève's idea dovetails with the advanced city-states of ancient history (phase [2]), in which a primitivistic yearning for paradise and a corresponding warrior ethos are explicitly based on an elite's subjugation of a rural-based slave class.

The applicability of Hegel's and Kojève's thinking becomes further visible when we turn towards phase [3] in the evolutionary sequence of the landscape image: the post-1420 general marking of the terrain by work and, in continuation of this, its specific iconographic forerunners in the Middle Ages. In their explanation of the sequence from the medieval feudal system to modernity's democracy, Hegel and Kojève suppose that it is now no longer the master's violence but, on the contrary, the slave's own ability – work – that takes over the route to recognition. As this involves the slave class gradually assuming power, and thereby the formation of a work ethic, we can understand why traces of work can also assume a position in the landscape image. In a more detailed and more specifically sociological fashion this logic is apparent from Max Weber's model and its elaboration by Habermas. Here the work ethic of the Late Middle Ages appears as a secularisation of work's incipient penitential value in medieval monasteries, a process that is backed up by a combined growth of capitalism, Protestantism, promotion of rationality and de-sacralisation of nature.[33]

Based on Weber's observations, we also find a well-substantiated interpretative framework for an idea from the Italian *Risorgimento*, which, in other respects, with spatial-aesthetic arguments finds most support in the work of Spengler:[34] namely, that the Renaissance is a conservative countercurrent in modernity which, for its part, chiefly has roots in the Christian culture of the Middle Ages. Since modernity's Protestant-capitalist culture develops north of the Alps, it would seem logical that it is also here that the most progressive experiments in pictorial art are to be found – including a pictorial space dominated by landscapes which are

panoramic, temporally-determined and work-marked, or radically devoid of humankind – whereas Italy, the home of Catholicism and an autocratic culture, rekindles a style of the past, the Renaissance, with its focus on the idealised human body against the background of a pastoral and work-free landscape.

II. Synchronic aspects

In the above I have chiefly focused on evolutionary *sequences* and their mutual correspondences. But how is it at all possible to compare across the evolutionary current in this way? The comparisons not only presuppose that the cultural domains interact, but also that their flow can be frozen in definable *stages*. This strategy presupposes a synchronic rather than a diachronic approach, and among the fundamental assumptions I am working with, two in particular should be highlighted: [1] that interactions between different cultural domains can be read as morphological correspondences, in other words that cultural domains at every stage are controlled by a common structural principle; [2] that the stages, despite constant change, are effective for such a length of time that they do not merely appear as arbitrary sections of a continuous current, but rather as links in a chain, where one stage succeeds another with a certain sense of continuity. These assumptions alone make it possible to avoid the quarrel that so often divides historically- and structurally-oriented thinkers – think of, for example, Lévi-Strauss and French post-war thinking in general with its scepticism as regards the concept of evolution – for whereas the instruments of structuralism work irreproachably *within* each stage, it is necessary to zoom out to a historic – i.e. evolutionary – vantage point if the *dynamics of succession* of the stages and their *internal development from genesis through maturation to dissolution* are to be comprehended.[35]

The landscape image and Panofsky's model

If this two-sided assumption is here formulated from the outside, through a consideration of evolution's modus operandi, it can also be illustrated from inside, by focusing on my object of analysis, the landscape image, and the interpretative frameworks which this subject seems to offer. What, in essence, does interpretation of the landscape of an image mean? Which form, or forms, of meaning – convention-determined symbolism, connotations, iconology, indexicality, etc. – can one expect to ascribe a landscape image?

If by 'meaning' we only understand convention-determined symbolism, i.e. *iconography* in a Panofskyian sense, we could undoubtedly identify certain clusters

of sense, areas of particularly dense meaning, but in other respects we are left to hand over the greater part of the landscape image to areas empty of meaning. Thus it will often be possible to make out isolated landscape elements – for example, the Nativity cave or the Tree of Life – that can be submitted to a simple iconographical analysis just like any other symbol-laden object. But as soon as we move to areas that lie beyond the stories or allegories of tradition – to skies, clouds, mountains, fields, forests – the effective radius of the iconography thins out, so the meaning must be conceived in a different way.

Actually, Panofsky was well aware of this not insignificant blind spot in his master schema: the three-step ladder from *pre-iconography* (sense-determined identification of motifs) through *iconography* (interpretation of these in the form of images, stories and allegories) to *iconology* (synthesis pertaining to history of culture and *geist*):

> [...] as the correct identification of motifs is the prerequisite of their correct iconographical analysis, so is the correct analysis of images, stories and allegories the prerequisite of their correct iconographical interpretation – unless we deal with works of art in which the whole sphere of secondary or conventional subject matter is eliminated and a direct transition from motifs to content is effected, as is the case with European landscape painting, still life and genre, not to mention "non-objective" art.[36]

With Panofsky we must ideally move across the iconography – the coupling: motif/ conventional content – in order to reach harbour safely in the final synthesis, the iconological interpretation; and yet there is a series of genres which avoid this connecting link, so we are catapulted out into the more indefinable space between sense-determined description and reflective interpretation. These genres are all characterised by the absence of motifs which, like some kind of bodily containers, can record those images, stories and allegories of the iconography that are determined by tradition. Rather, these genres are determined, in terms of content as well as spatially, by a centrifugal movement away from such motifs and out towards their spatial environment, whether these surroundings are made up of the anthropomorphic everyday space of genre, the reified micro-space of still life or the panoramic macro-space of landscape. To maintain that the landscape belongs to the domain of depth of field – that which we do not actually look at – is thus not merely a spatial but also an interpretative statement.

Panofsky's blindness to the interpretation of such genres would not seem to be accidental as, however universally he aimed with his concept of iconography, it seems to be based in one of art history's more incriminating prejudices: the notion of the Renaissance as being protypical for modernity's image culture. Not only is the

iconography concept presented in an introduction to a study of the Renaissance, but it fits hand in glove with this movement's ideal of *history painting*: beautiful human bodies as containers for narrative meaning. Conversely, the blind spot in Panofsky's schema is made up of exactly the types of motif that the art academies, the institutionalised heirs of the Renaissance, allowed to be relegated to inferior positions in their genre hierarchy and which first gained ground in the mature modernity of the 17-1800s – a period which Panofsky himself typically passed by in silence. But what can still, from the Renaissance's Neoplatonic point of view, be reduced to a kind of inferior exception – the fall from intelligible narration to sensuous pluralism of meaning – is transformed in modernity's open pictorial space to, in effect, *the rule*. Surrounded by infinity's anti-hierarchy, the closed body explodes as if it were a carcass that is placed, with no protection, in a vacuum.

That the body-bound narration must almost inevitably be brought into crisis in the pictorial space of modernity had actually already been recognised by Spengler, who also inscribes the crisis in the tension between the restrictedly body-bound and the infinite; in his terminology: between the Apollinian and the Faustian:

> Outlines define the material, while colour-tones interpret space. But the picture of the first order belongs to directly sensible nature – it *narrates*. Space, on the contrary, is by its very essence transcendent and addresses itself to our imaginative powers, and in an art that is under its suzerainty, the narrative element enfeebles and obscures the more profound tendency. Hence it is that the theorist, able to feel the secret disharmony but misunderstanding it, clings to the superficial opposition of content and form.[37] [Spengler's italics]

For Spengler then, the narration finds protection in the fixed-contoured husk of the body, whereas it remains a stranger in modernity's open pictorial space – a space which rather, through the projection of colour tones, appeals to the subjective-bound imagination. However, should the form expressed through colour and space hereby break away from narrative content, there will be no loss of content as such, but rather the content will shift in the direction of the means by which it is expressed: accordingly, considering the style's modern conception as the imprint of genius, a move towards the subjective.

If we turn specifically towards that part of the spatial expanses that is made up of the landscape, the following brief case study will illustrate its seemingly meagre dealings with the iconography and its corresponding fuller affiliation to the iconology. In Piero della Francesca's *Resurrection*, painted in the 1450s for Palazzo Comunale in Sansepolcro (PLATE 10), a few of the landscape ingredients can be interpreted in the usual iconographic way based on the narrative theme and its requirements. If

we ask, for example, why the two trees in the left background are dead and bare in contrast to the leafy trees on the right, an obvious answer would be that they symbolise death vanquished by the resurrected Christ. In similar fashion we can explain the delicate gathering of grey clouds: they allude to the rising sun on Easter Sunday. But what about a detail such as the hedgerow running along the hillside in the right-hand background? If we assume that it is not part of a topographical portrait of the rural environs of Sansepolcro, then we already find ourselves in an area beyond the demands of narrative and allegory.

That there might be, however, another level of meaning in this landscape - a level which, moreover, also includes the aforementioned elements - becomes apparent if we turn to an earlier image of the same motif: Niccolò di Pietro Gerini's fresco from circa 1371 in the Florentine Santa Croce's sacristy (PLATE 11). What is worthy of note here is not so much the absence of withered trees, daybreak clouds and hedgerow, but rather that these elements would be inconceivable - even if Gerini had wanted to use them. Withered trees and daybreak clouds belong to the domain of *time* and *change*, a domain that was still largely absent in the art of Gerini's day. Similarly, the hedgerow indicates a context of *cultivated land*, and this phenomenon had not been introduced in the Western depiction of landscape either, except for themes dealing specifically with agriculture such as Ambrogio Lorenzetti's *The Effects of Good Government in the Countryside* (1337-40; PLATE 13).

So, that Piero was in a position to deploy these landscape elements in his painting not only presupposed a certain set of iconographic requirements, occasioned by the commission; it was equally determined by a historical process that had made landscape elements part of a normal and widespread pictorial language. And, as suggested in the Introduction, atmospheric skies and cultivation had actually become common ingredients in landscape images post-1420, just as perspectival infinity had. What Piero did was simply to articulate a far-reaching tradition. To the interpretative question as to why his trees are withered, it is therefore, by way of introduction, just as meaningful to answer: because the contemporaneous landscape images afforded the opportunity to depict temporal traces, as it is to give the narrower - and iconographically-determined - answer: because they symbolise death.

Iconology, structuralism – and iconography

The context, the common tradition, which thus determines what it is possible to depict in images (or other media) at a given point in time, I will here - despite the word's recent overuse - call the *paradigm* (from the Greek *paradeigma* = pattern). In 1962, however, the initiator of the term, science historian Thomas Kuhn, defined the paradigm meticulously as the tradition of theory, laws and practice that at a

given time prescribe how a particular science should be conducted (e.g. Ptolemaic astronomy or Newtonian optics).[38] Kuhn observed – and I can concur from my experiences of the visual arts – that a paradigm is an extremely conservative phenomenon that will be influenced only after considerable pressure, but which, on the other hand, can also be replaced with a new and just as conservative paradigm.

If we now translate this paradigmatic – and moreover supra-iconographical – level to Panofskyian terminology, it could quite appropriately be called iconological, or better still: the necessary prerequisite for the iconology, which the iconography cannot fulfil. Even though an iconographical level can very well exist (e.g. the connection of Piero's withered trees with the Resurrection theme), this level is not a *necessary* prerequisite for the supra-iconographical level: the iconological (Piero's hedgerow is only evoked by a paradigm that favours traces of work in images). What I identify is, in complete agreement with Panofsky's aforementioned 'exception', an iconology without requisite underpinning in iconography.

More specifically, the paradigmatic level could be called *structural*. For if we turn to the domain of origin of humanist structuralism – Saussurian linguistics – we could say that, rather than dealing with the vocabulary of the landscape image and its use of specific ingredients (exactly these clouds in preference to another type of cloud), the level refers to its syntax (what kind of elements are included at all, and the way in which these elements relate to one another). And, unlike the iconography, this level is not distinguished by first treating the images in isolation (pre-iconographical motif identification) and then relating them to a context (coupling with iconography's images, stories and allegories); rather the context – by way of introduction, a quantity of other images with which the image is compared – is included from the outset and only transpires in the relationship between several components. Even though evidence of the existence of the paradigm is naturally more compelling the greater the number of images involved, its outline will more often than not emerge very quickly anyway, for as Lévi-Strauss remarks in *The Raw and the Cooked* (1964) with reference to structure in South American myths: "Syntax does not become evident only after a (theoretically limitless) series of events has been recorded and examined, because it is itself the body of rules governing their production."[39]

The further and seriously interesting part of the image's context first appears, however, if we can make a link from the interior paradigms of the landscape image to homologous, structurally kindred paradigms in other cultural domains; in other words, establish common structural principles among cultural domains. This is exactly the kind of isomorphism I had in mind earlier when discussing connections within the evolutionary stages. The paradigm which in the modern perspectival pictorial space contrasts vantage point with the infinitely distant line of the horizon must, for example, be considered as isomorphic with the paradigms which, on the

one hand, separate the individual soul from the infinite Copernican universe and, on the other hand, position the modern urban individual in an alienated relationship to nature.

This procedure continues, in a slightly revised version, the track that Panofsky himself plotted in so exemplary a fashion in *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism* (1951): the demonstration of the structural similarity between Gothic architecture and scholastic *summae*.[40] Panofsky considered the similarity to be the result of a common way of thinking in the period, what he called a *mental habit*, and even though he did not explicitly take the final iconological step to couple it with the *symbolic forms* – the central concept from Cassirer's neo-Kantian philosophy, which Panofsky had himself introduced into art history in his perspective dissertation of 1924-25 – it comes extremely close. For the symbolic forms can be perceived as interpretative contexts which, albeit bound to sensuous signs, disclose something deeper about the spiritual disposition of a culture. By so doing they point towards the final objective of iconology: "those underlying principles which reveal the basic attitude of a nation, a period, a class, a religious or philosophical persuasion [...]."[41] In keeping with my observation that Piero's hedgerow was determined by a paradigm that favours traces of work in landscape images, rather than a conscious iconography, Panofsky was aware that the symbolic forms are often "unknown to the artist himself and may even emphatically differ from what he consciously intended to express".

But does this mean, then, that the iconography in the case of the landscape image is actually superfluous to the identification and understanding of the iconology – that iconography and iconology each thrive on their individual and always non-comparable levels? This is without doubt taking the point a step too far, because best of all would be to regard the space of meaning as a blend of continuous and discontinuous, a heterogeneous field in which meaning is found in various degrees of saturation and category. Thus the interpretative level of paradigm and iconology can be said to be aimed at areas where the meaning is thin and dispersed, whereas iconography aims at nodes of significance – places where the meaning is so substantial that it is crystallised into recurrent stories and allegories that have also made a literary impression. Sometimes these iconographical nodes appear as a concentration of tendencies that already thrive in the paradigm albeit in a flimsier form, at other times they appear more as independent pockets in the paradigm. If, for example, we look at the iconographic landscape motif *Hell*, a rocky terrain with caves and labyrinthine passages, it will appear in the medieval image as a condensation of a paradigm which dictates, in advance, that every occurrence, regardless of its more specified character, should take place on rocky ground; a terrain whose iconological significance, diffusely but persistently, embraces everything from the wilderness to the element of *terra* to the superstructure of the underworld. Conversely, Ambrogio

Lorenzetti's cultivated terrain with its network of cornfields, roads and bridges will appear as an iconographically-determined pocket in a paradigm which otherwise, without this kind of local thematic pressure, consistently prescribes the landscape as being wild and free from evidence of civilisation dividing up and cultivating the terrain.

A metaphor for these two conditions – condensation and pocket – could be the climate of the day compared to that of the season. A hot August day thus reinforces a tendency that is already latent in late summer's overarching potential for how days at this time of year behave (cf. iconography as condensation of the paradigm), whereas a cold and rainy August day is on the periphery of this potential (cf. iconography as pocket in the paradigm). On the other hand, the cold August day can give notice of the propensities of autumn and winter within which, provided it had occurred here, it would have functioned as condensation – just as the thematically motivated cultural terrain shifts status from pocket in the 14th-century landscape paradigm to condensation in its 15th-century successor.

More generally the relationship between paradigm and iconography could be elucidated on a linguistic plane – by a comparison with language and the utterances language can express. Language – the apparatus of words and the rules that decide how the words can be connected – is here equivalent to the paradigm, the unwritten set of rules that in given periods dictates which ingredients make up the images. Accordingly, the utterance can be compared with the iconography, as both deal with a thematic node in the medium – the language or the paradigm – in which they float around. If we look at everyday language utterances, they will often be aimed solely at the theme they are attempting to express, by which the language seems transparent and non-interfering – in the same way as when an iconographical occurrence in an image simply has the landscape as non-interfering background. But now and then the utterances might interact with the very language through which they are expressed – for example, in play on words or poetry – and here we are approaching the aforementioned situations where the iconography appears as condensation or pocket in the paradigm. An illustrative example of this could be the cartoon in FIG. 0.3, where the utterance "Oh no, it's the cruel hair-splitter!" (in Danish literally 'word-splitter') has had its own words split, so it is actually referring to the very language of which it is made. Transferred to the context of images, this corresponds to a condensation in which the iconography lays bare properties of the overarching paradigm through which it is expressed (for example, *Hell* in the medieval paradigm, which in itself requires wild rocks). Had the cartoon's sentence instead expressed itself across the chopped-up words of which it was made – for example, "Ho w n i ce connect e d w o rds ar e!" – we would have a parallel to the paradigm's pocket (for example, Ambrogio Lorenzetti's cultural landscape in the medieval rock paradigm).

Fig. 0.3. Cartoon from the *TÅGEKAMMERET* students' association (2002). University of Aarhus, Faculty of Science.

In the actual interpretative situation, we can therefore approach the iconological level not only by means of the paradigm's bird's-eye perspective – via the homologies to paradigms in other cultural domains – but in fact also, with the necessary provisos, by means of the iconography's worm's-eye view. Here, then, we analyse as many iconographical situations relating to the characteristics of the paradigm – and which can be regarded as condensations of this – as possible, and induce from these situations back to the paradigm, which thereby, through mixture and dilution of the individual iconographies, becomes encircled by a cloud of meaning from which, conversely, each iconographical situation can be condensed as raindrops. An endeavour, for example, to identify the Golden Age paradigm's iconological properties – that is, those properties whose visible result is, among other things, that all landscape grounds in post-Egyptian pre-modern time are rocks bearing no trace of divisions or scoring made by the plough, mining and roadwork – can be conducted through an iconographical study of those rural activities that do not cause scoring and division of the earth surface, such as pastoralism, fruit-picking, hunting, fishing (see chapters 4-6). The graceful, leisurely and/or heroic properties attached to every single one of these iconographical situations, and which through the case of a specific theme make visible something which otherwise, in the average landscape background – the paradigm's level – is invisible, are then all projected

out on this paradigmatic plane where they all in all, in more dispersed and discreet form together with other properties which reflect other iconographies, can be said to comprise an iconology.

It must, however, be emphasised again that the distance between the iconography's condensation and the diffusion of the paradigm is not always as absolute and quantum-leap-like as described here; on the contrary, it can be filled with a continuum of various degrees of saturation of meaning in which the type of meaning we are dealing with can be quite indefinable. Examples of this kind of indefinableness, which moreover seems to be teasingly brought into play by many artists, will be discussed in relation to 15th-century rock images in chapter 12.

Whether the iconography is separate from or flows more continuously over into the paradigm, the very fact that the two parts are coordinated confirms, in its own way, Panofsky's dogma of the iconography as indispensable basis for the iconology, the paradigm in its cultural context. But when, as here, we are dealing with landscape images and related genres, it is still with the essential difference that [1] *not every iconologically meaningful image possesses an iconography that is significant for the iconology* and [2] *when that kind of iconography is actually present, the step from iconography to iconology is still not taken within the individual image,* but *within large groups of images of which smaller sets, those with significant iconography for the group's paradigm, are selected to then shed light on the paradigm's iconology.* Within the individual landscape image it is thus still only in special cases that the iconography can be said to be the basis for the iconology – and this in the roundabout way that the iconography does not directly determine the iconology of the image, but rather concentrates a general iconology, of which this image merely constitutes one of many examples. Taking this differentiation into consideration, Panofsky's 'exception' still applies to the landscape image and other modern categories such as still life and genre: their iconology is not underpinned in iconography.

But because for Panofsky iconology was never founded beyond precisely the conscious intentionality – the iconography – it was, when it lost this basis in these genres, played into the hands of something so diffuse as the beholder's "synthetic intuition", qualified by his "psychology" and "Weltanschauung". It comes therefore as no surprise that Panofsky himself feared its degeneration into a kind of art-historical answer to astrology.[42] However, it would seem to be equally obvious that my sought-after objective – a reformed iconology – will not be satisfied by the pitfalls of such intuitionism. It will more appropriately profit by the movement that comes to maturation at much the same time as Panofsky's Gothic/scholasticism comparison, but to which he himself never built a bridge: structuralism. From the more orthodox structuralist experience between the 1940s and 1960s, the current study can deduce, firstly, that certain cultural domains – for example, myths or

clan relationships of tribal cultures, as cited by Lévi-Strauss - can be regulated by relatively stable structures, which shine through across all singularities.[43] Secondly, as demonstrated by Foucault, cutting across the cultural domains it is possible to make out a structure, a so-called *episteme*, that influences a culture in its entirety until, in a discontinuous leap, it is replaced by another.[44] For my purposes, however, the structuralist experience cannot stand alone, partly because the structures of structuralism appeared as strangely static and partly because they were never brought satisfactorily into play with the hermeneutic tradition, which structuralism now and then actually renounced, leading the structures to drift in a degree of independence from the historical context.[45] In contrast to this, I call for a dynamised structuralism that can describe both how the structures manifest themselves in different contexts - in terms of consciousness, world picture, social sphere - and how they transpire, mature and dismantle.

The paradigm in a sociological context: Bourdieu's concept of field

As regards the socially-determined aspect of the structures, I have found a useful conceptual guideline in the idea of *field* introduced by the French sociologist and anthropologist Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002).[46] Partly in defiance of his structuralist training - and in dialogue with Panofsky's theses on perspective and Gothic - Bourdieu wished to place the concept of structure within a social dynamics - i.e. describe it in a way that takes into consideration the agents through which it operates and also the social system by which it is surrounded. The *field* thus signifies the system of forces - rules, practices, traditions - which influence every culturally-determined action. Even though the *field* could at first perhaps seem indistinguishable from the paradigm, there is a difference in the depth of meaning and thus the iconology. The *field* includes all the transactions, the living whole in its turbulence of contexts; the paradigm is more concerned with indicating its surface, the set of decipherable rules.[47]

In addition to manifesting an exterior space of forces in which the individual agents act, the *field* also leaves its traces on the interior of the agents, an enfolding of forces described by Bourdieu as *habitus*. *Habitus* can be understood as

> systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them.[48]

While Bourdieu, like structuralism, recognises the existence of certain governing principles beyond the subject's control and consciousness, he nonetheless insists that these principles are rooted in the social practice and as such are in constant motion. Without approximation to an actual Piagetian systematism, Bourdieu can, on the one hand, maintain that habitus is absorbed since earliest infancy and therefore becomes an "embodied history, internalized as a second nature and so forgotten as history".[49] On the other hand, habitus is also "an infinite capacity for generating products - thoughts, perceptions, expressions and actions - whose limits are set by the historically and socially situated conditions [...]."[50]

The space which frames these limits is thus made up of the *field*, a *space of possibles* that determines what can be realised at a specific time in a specific social context. In Wittgensteinian terminology, the *field* constitutes a kind of game, the rules of which one is born into rather than having to learn.[51] Where art works are concerned, a form of expression to which Bourdieu devotes much of his later production, it is therefore not enough to observe isolated relationships such as the art-historical tradition and the patron; the whole institutional apparatus has to be involved: critics, dealers, museums, education, viewers. In Bourdieu's words it is a matter of "understanding works of art as a manifestation of the field as a whole, in which all the powers of the field, and all the determinisms inherent in its structure and functioning, are concentrated."[52] This way of thinking can also prevent short-circuiting of the Marxist variety in which works of art are, for example, deciphered as the direct result of economic conditions, as it is only once the interior modus operandi of the individual *fields* has been understood that it becomes possible to begin to set out hypotheses as regards their interaction.[53]

Taking these provisos into consideration, Bourdieu does not however sidestep what must be regarded as the key reason his thinking is relevant to the current project: to trace homologies between cultural domains. In fact, Panofsky's transverse *mental habits* from his Gothic study was a main source of inspiration in the formulation of the *habitus* concept, and in very general terms Bourdieu finds that comparative analyses of habitus or *field* reveal structural affinities between different cultural domains.[54]

Even though Bourdieu does not pursue actual macrohistorical considerations, and in particular dissociates himself from evolutionary concepts,[55] I shall venture the following - possibly brutal - fusion of his ideas and this very evolutionism. As it is possible to decipher homologies between different *fields* in a given epoch, I will envisage that the *fields* submit to a transverse evolutionary process which, despite conflicts, co-ordinates them in diachronic as well as synchronic respects. At each synchronic stage, then, there thrives a series of *fields* that might indeed function according to local sets of rules, but which have such major structural similarities

that through a kind of constructive interference they create a coherent morphology. They thereby form part of an overarching condition, a hyper-*field*, which, with a nod to Foucault, I will call the *epistemic field*. So historical epochs – antiquity, the Middle Ages, modernity – can be read as such epistemic *fields* which span larger sets of sub-*fields*, and in so doing prevent cultures from disintegrating in chaos.

If it is thus possible, all in all, to describe cultural evolution as a development in which older *fields* are overlaid by new, it does not mean that the older *fields* are completely supplanted. In the perimeter areas of the culture – countryside, forest, mountains – the old *field* can carry on undiminished, and in its urban centre it will at least exist as memory. Once a *field* has been constructed, it can thus be handed down unchanged through generations, indeed through millennia – a cultural long-term effect that could be described according to the French *Annales* school historian Fernand Braudel's notion of *la longue durée*.

The dynamic field: Spengler's concept of culture

Apart from the overarching evolutionary perspective, this diachronic-synchronic method could actually be said already to have been displayed in abundant variety by Spengler. Even though Spengler in the main reserves his philosophical "method of comparative morphology in world-history"[56] for the diachronic courses of the cultures, his chief practical concern, the comparison between broad sets of a culture's synchronic domains – visual art, music, literature, natural science, philosophy, economics – could resemble a multi-faceted structuralist investigation. For, consistent with one of structuralism's fundamental assumptions, he demonstrates how each of the "great cultures" is controlled by a so-called *prime symbol*, a basic interpretation of the extent of space which, like Panofsky's *mental habit* or Foucault's *episteme*, regulates its most diverse products: "it is operative through the form-sense of every man, every community, age and epoch and dictates the style of every life-expression."[57] In this way, for example, the perspective of oil painting, the art of printing, the credit system, long-distance missiles and contrapuntal music appear as an expression of "one and the same spiritual principle", as they form part of world history's "great *groups of morphological relations*".[58] [Spengler's italics] Considering that Spengler does not limit his prime symbols to an immaculate abstract sphere, but sees them displayed in a turbulent historical reality, it would not seem unreasonable to perceive his individual cultural domains as a type of Bourdieuian *fields* and thereby his overall culture as an epistemic *field*.

However, where Spengler breaks definitively with a Bourdieuian and a structuralist horizon in general is on the issue of the development of cultures. Rather than appraising their progress as the result of unpredictable social power struggles, Spengler

compares them to organisms which can each be ascribed a destiny, a cyclical course, that – to switch to a season imagery – takes them from the summery unconscious *culture* to the wintry and experienced *civilisation*.[59] Even though Spengler's imagery is rather pathos-laden, and even though he goes rather far in his effort to pinpoint this fundamental progress in a succession of essentially different cultures – besides the antique and the Western, also the Arab (medieval), Indian and Egyptian – my own experience of the empirical material leads me to endorse the following basic model: that each culture, i.e. each epistemic *field*, actually bears a resemblance to an organism, by means of which its development can be equated with an evolutionary progress from creation through maturity and on to dissolution. This model has the advantage that at the same time as recognising the synchronic dimension of structuralism, i.e. that each culture is characterised by a certain *episteme*, this *episteme* is by no means seen as stationary but, on the contrary, in cyclical or, more precisely, spiral development. Every culture thus possesses a certain potential for change, and when that is fulfilled, i.e. when the culture has reached the maturity of civilisation, Elman Service's so-called "law of evolutionary potential" (1960) takes effect: "the more specialized and adapted a form in a given evolutionary stage, the smaller is its potential for passing to the next stage."[60] Decadence and dissolution, the final and cycle-like stage of an evolutionary sequence, therefore appears as a prerequisite for a restructuring and incipient regeneration.

In combination with the overarching evolutionary model, this is where we detect a chain-like structure – the sequence of continuously new cyclical, epistemic *fields* – at the same time as other and recurrent parameters (and here we, by and large, leave Spengler) can be seen to increasing effect *along the length* of the chain. These parameters, then, survive the individual cycle (spiral twisting) and carry on, reinforced, in a bigger, incessantly evolutionary progress with new cycles (spiral movements).

Summing up

Considered synchronically, my analysis model employs two basic kinds of tool: an analytic-descriptive (structuralist) and an iconological (hermeneutic). The analytic-descriptive tool is, firstly, that which identifies the paradigms of the landscape image: those sets of rules that over a given epoch determine the appearance of the landscape in images. Secondly, this tool is extended by means of connecting the paradigms of pictorial art with structurally related paradigms in other areas of the culture, paradigms which – as proffered by the evolutionary simultaneity in combination with Spengler's organismic ideas – emerge, culminate and die out at the same time as their companions in the image.

However, the interpretation first becomes iconological when the paradigms

are supplied with a dimension of significance, which can occur in two ways: via a worm's-eye view and via a bird's-eye view. The worm's-eye view identifies the iconographies that can be regarded as concentrations of the paradigms of pictorial art, and which through a comparative 'mixing' can generate a cloud of meaning around the paradigms. From the bird's-eye view the paradigms are seen as Cassirerian symbolic forms - that is, as imprints of *fields*. The *fields* are those structures of forces with which the various domains of the culture are arranged, and a description of them depends on an understanding of their dynamics, i.e. of the institutions, traditions, attitudes, socio-political tensions, etc. which contribute to their maintenance. Even though every evolutionary stage is composed of a large number of *fields* - spanned by the overarching epistemic *field* - I permit myself to single out a small selection as comparative material for the iconological interpretation of the landscape image: the *fields* of cosmology, socially-determined perception of nature and self-consciousness.

III. Towards a fusion of diachronic and synchronic

General systems theory

The above attempt at mediation between the diachronic and the synchronic lines of approach - which, particularly since the 1960s, have been kept apart - could perhaps seem rather postulated. Fortunately, albeit here only in brief outline, better arguments are to be found in a framework that the Austro-American biologist Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1901-72) has labelled *general systems theory*.[61] This concept, which also goes under names such as *complex systems theory* or simply *systems theory*, aims at an interdisciplinary science investigating and identifying laws for complex systems of every kind: cosmological, chemical, meteorological, biological, economic, technological, cognitive - and then also sociological and historical.

The prerequisite for such a science is the phenomenon of *emergence*: in large accumulations of elements, properties emerge that cannot be analysed on the basis of isolated sub-elements, but develop exclusively in interaction between them. The organism-like forms encircling a flock of birds are, for example, emergent in relation to the individual bird. Not unlike the way in which structuralism finds the same syntax in diverse vocabularies, it is thereby possible to observe patterns and developmental mechanisms which are common to otherwise widely different contexts - be it whirling patterns in the galaxy and shellfish or feedback mechanisms in organisms and thermostats. In the context of this study, I can specifically point out that the evolutionary concept becomes an ordinary developmental parameter

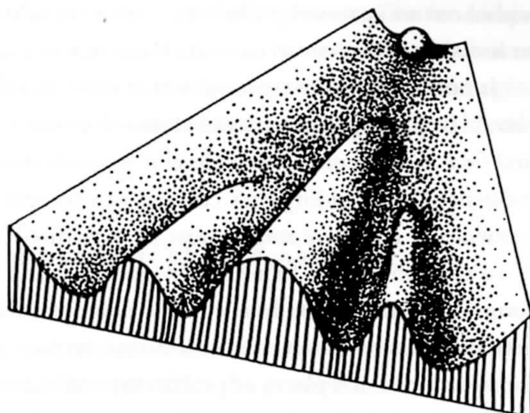
with just as much significance for socio-cultural systems as for the biological species' system.[62]

Even though the general systems theory's objectives were clarified as early as the 1930s, and in the post-war period acquired effective tools for formalisation in areas such as information theory, chaos mathematics and computer simulations, in practice it has to be accepted that there is still a long way to go to its general implementation – particularly in the humanities. This is not only because the science of systems is still incomplete, eclectic and in a number of respects directly speculative, but also, as we will soon see, more routinely because of the general divide between the experiences of the natural sciences and those of the humanities. Even though most of the problems around the landscape image could probably be presented at a 'sober' distance from this issue, it would still be a kind of hypocrisy to conceal the extent to which it has influenced my thinking in practice. As I see it, this is where we really begin to *understand* the nature of the mechanisms we are dealing with – on certain points an intuitive insight, which I think deserves presentation, even though the price is a probing draft that mainly indicates future areas of study.

My reason for regarding the general systems theory as a fusion between the diachronic and the synchronic is that it deals with systems in their dynamic activity. In the terminology of thermodynamics, it is a matter of *open* systems, i.e. systems in which energy and matter interact with their surroundings. Through this turbulent flow, the systems can counteract the universe's general tendency to entropy, chaos-characterised equilibrium, and instead develop towards dynamic non-equilibrium states of more complex order: forms of order which the chemist Ilya Prigogine describes as *dissipative structures*.[63] Unlike closed systems, the open systems' displacement away from equilibrium is, moreover, irreversible, which thus means that time and its direction play a crucial role in the understanding.

It is here quite tempting to see an incipient formalisation of Spengler's cultural philosophy, given that what Spengler called for was precisely an approach describing the phenomena in a more overall temporal sequence, a *destiny*, as opposed to the classic modern natural science which, based on the idea of reversible cause and effect, lets genesis fossilise in isolated phenomena: "Day is not the cause of night, nor youth of age, nor blossom of fruit."[64] If a statement such as this seems 'metaphorical', i.e. poetic rather than scientific, it gains credence in systems theory where one of the points is exactly that genuine morphological kinships can be encountered among widely differing systems, and thereby organism-like structures and developmental sequences are also found in systems other than the 'actual' organisms of biology. In terms of cultural history it is also significant that *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* was one of Bertalanffy's sources of inspiration in the formulation of the general systems theory.[65]

Fig. 0.4. *The Epigenetic Landscape*, diagram based on Conrad Hall Waddington's ideas (after Ward, *The Strategy of the Genes* (1957)).



Another forerunner of systems theory is embryology, where one of the mysteries has been how a fertilised egg follows the route to a full-grown organism, and often from widely different starting points at that (an egg, a half egg). At the turn of the 19th-20th century, the biologist Hans Driesch tried to introduce the term *entelechy* (from Greek *en*=in + *telos*=end), a vitalistic force that influenced the development of the embryo. Even though today we are still far from an understanding of this dynamics, it does not seem to require the intervention of special exterior forces, but can presumably be explained by the internal interaction of cell components; in other words, within the framework of the general systems theory. However, the phenomenon that complex systems may reach the same state of completion via different routes and from divergent points of departure has certainly become one of the prime features of systems theory and is now designated *equifinality*.[66]

In physics, theoretical biology and more recent mathematical disciplines such as chaos and catastrophe theory, the force that thus compels quantities of a system's single elements to move towards the same state of completion goes by the name of *attractor* (alternatively: *strange attractor*).[67] In order to be treated exactly, attractors require a multi-dimensional phase space, but to make them more decipherable several scholars have compared them with undulations in a terrain. For example, the embryologist Conrad Hall Waddington (1905-75) lets his system, the embryo, develop in a terrain which supplements and influences the internal genetic information: *the epigenetic landscape* (from Greek *epi*=next to).[68] The terrain is sloping and traversed by a network of channels, so-called *chreodes*, of various breadths and depths, and the embryo's development of new cells is thus compared with balls rolling through continuously new chreodes (FIG. 0.4). Even though nothing definite can be said about the more precise route of the balls, the anatomy of the terrain keeps them

within certain spaces of probability – attractors alias chreodes – and only high speed or low sides to a channel can take them out of a chreode.

It now seems quite reasonable that these insights from general systems theory should be put together with our earlier observations concerning cultural evolution and *fields*. On the ontogenetic level it is worth noting that Piaget, in later life, was influenced by Waddington's concept of chreodes and presumed that the child's sequence of cognitive stages must be structured by similar evolutionary forces.[69] If we then widen the focus to phylogenesis, and compare human societies with complex systems in the course of development towards states of higher order, the *fields* become comparable with attractors, terrains of structuring forces that determine within which places of probability individual elements are to be found. The comparison has the advantage that it comprehensively pulls the concept of *field* away from the timelessness of structuralism and into the dynamic genesis, where it exists solely by virtue of history's turbulence and drive towards new states. *Qua* attractor, the *field* is carried by the currents of cultural evolution, at the same time as it 'attracts' and transforms the individual elements of culture. In this framework of understanding, the concept of *field* itself also comes into its own as it – not unlike the general theory of relativity – can be connected with space. As Alastair M. Taylor has written in his evolutionist analysis of socio-cultural systems, space hereby becomes a *plenum*: "an ordering constituent of a macrocosmic system in which field forces are omnipresent and omnioperative, acting upon all material phenomena and maintaining a dynamic, energizing, as well as balancing, *field*."[70]

The concept of attractor can also be useful when we want to shed light on history's dynamics of succession, the change of *fields*. In my analysis we observed that the change often had a certain discontinuous character, and in comparison with Waddington's epigenetic landscape we could then equate this with a change of chreode: the ball's abrupt movement from one channel into another. This form of 'catastrophic' change of state is actually so widespread in systems theory that it has in itself been the subject of exhaustive research, be it in the form of biology's and sociology's *punctuated equilibrium* or René Thom's catastrophe theory with its *cusp* (the catastrophic pinnacle between two attractors).[71] In my evolutionary cultural context I cannot, however, count on pure catastrophic changes, but rather on new *fields* which gradually overlay older *fields*, so that the changes take shape as a mixture of abruptness and continuous transformation.

The problem with cultural history's *fields* in relation to simpler complex systems is, of course, that they are exceedingly difficult to pin down in a more formalistic manner. What kind of space are we actually dealing with? Since attractors can be visualised through a terrain imagery, the landscape image could, however, constitute a potential – perhaps even privileged – medium, by means of which

history's space can be made visible in a more concrete manner. The landscape image thus becomes a kind of attractor imprint, an imaginary terrain that freezes the structuring forces of cultural evolution. Just as diverse cultural homologies become the key to the landscape image, so the landscape image itself acts as the recorder of the anatomy of culture.

Evolution as universal phenomenon

Because open systems can move away from equilibrium and thereby achieve a higher degree of complexity, the concept of evolution appears as a common parameter in general systems theory. In particular, this offers the possibility to rehabilitate the 19th-century united theory of evolution: the theory that considers cultural development to be a furtherance of biological evolution. Even though I cannot give a detailed account here, the biologist Richard Dawkins and his successor Susan Blackmore have recently set out a theory formalising this kind of bridge-building between biology and culture, whilst also demarcating the differences between the two: the so-called *meme theory*.[72] This theory notes that in both biology and culture we encounter hordes of individuals brought together, through a certain uniformity, in systems – biology's *species* and culture's *societies* – and, at the same time, that these individuals develop via evolution, changes which influence systems in their totality.[73] The two sides are decisively separated, however, by the ways in which their distinctive characteristics are stored, passed on and developed. Whereas the species' distinctive characteristics are stored in *genes*, which are passed on by *reproduction* and developed by *mutation* and *selection*, societies' ditto are rather stored in what Dawkins calls *memes*, symbol systems which are passed on by *imitation* and developed through *innovation* (whose direct motive power can be everything from religion to social and practical-inquisitive considerations).

Even though the similarities should not be exaggerated, both the gene and the meme are replicators that spread through host organisms: the one through the bodies of the species, the other through the brains of the people of a society and their outer manifestations in diverse forms of practice. That meme replication is capable of overlaying its genetic forerunner is due, as Blackmore emphasises, to a property that separates people from animals: the ability to imitate behaviour and procedures that are not transmitted in the genes, but which have to be learnt from scratch in every new individual.[74]

That I have found it fruitful to bring in the meme theory as an explanatory tool at this juncture is because, through their replication by gemmation, memes assume their own life, which functions independently of their individual hosts' intentions, and thereby makes them compatible with my structuralist line of thought. The

more recently coined term *memeplex* – a complex of memes reproduced simultaneously[75] – would seem particularly comparable with Kuhn's concept of paradigm. By this means it is also possible to build bridges from biology to culture, for just as the experience of a specific phenotype has no direct bearing on the genotype, nor are the paradigms, the memeplexes, directly influenced by the myriads of individual occurrences experienced by a culture and the meme exchanges thus generated. For example, it had no effect on the epistemic *field* and its paradigms when, in the first century BC, Hellenistic Heron from Alexandria invented the *aeolipile*, a forerunner of the steam engine. As numerous *field* forces supported the general work paradigm, slave-power, the new meme merely meant that the machine was used to open and close heavy temple doors.[76]

Conversely, the memes' agent of reproduction – imitation and learning rather than procreation – means that under sufficient pressure for renewal their paradigmatic superstructure can change faster and more flexibly than the genes can (at least until the age of genetic manipulation). Where genetic development is an internal matter for a species, the mere encounter between different cultures can thus lead to exchange and transmission of memes and memeplexes. As Blackmore points out, the escalation of mass communications has meant that cultural evolution actually makes increasing use of this flexibility, and it thus shifts from a vertical branched structure, which extends the biological lines of heredity, to a horizontal network structure, which is transmitted independently of family and immediate social environment.[77] The 20th-century break with the branch-like cultural evolution of the preceding millennia can presumably be accounted for on the basis of a critical satiety for this new type of horizontal meme-dispersal.

This increased speed of cultural evolution also takes on significance if we turn to a comparison with its biological forerunner. Thus, it is well known that the evolution of species has not progressed at a steady tempo, but has if anything accelerated: the first cells with DNA-nucleus, the eukaryotes, appeared in the primordial ocean 1.2 billion years ago, more than half-way into the evolutionary sequence; marine animals crawled ashore 300 million years ago, 90 per cent into the sequence; and *homo sapiens* emerged just 250,000 years ago, a tenth per mille before the present day. On the understanding that culture's superstructure, the memes, continue this acceleration – and that, in accordance with the assumptions of general systems theory, we are thus dealing with a further development of the same complex system – it would seem but logical that around twenty thousand years could pass before the Upper Palaeolithic period was succeeded by the Neolithic period, but only a tenth of that time span before the antique form of culture was succeeded by the modern. If we acknowledge the existence of the acceleration, it constitutes a significant argument against the objection that human culture unfolds on a completely different

time scale from biological evolution, and that an alignment of the two is therefore 'scientistic'.

The notion that cultural and biological evolution are two sides of basically the same historical development project could also explain the seemingly slightly odd assumption we saw expounded by Habermas, Gablik, Blatt and Marcussen above: that cultural ontogenesis has structural similarities with phylogenesis. For precisely this is a property of biological evolution: in its ontogenetic genesis, the embryo re-runs the entire gamut of phylogenetic evolution, from one-celled organism through fish and saurian to mammal. Thus the child's acquisition of its culture's memeplexes is a superstructure to this genesis, as the culture's previous evolution – from, for example, topological to Faustian conception of space – is connected up and lived through.

Finally, we could also elaborate the strict sense of the concept of evolution I am working with here: that evolution is not merely a case of irreversibility but of *directional* irreversibility, and that this determined direction may be demonstrated through the pursuit of one or more parameters that are increased over the course of history. If we look at that part of evolution which is occupied by cultural history up to the 20th century, the primary observation of my thesis – that pictorial space, over the course of history, is transformed from no depth of field to full depth of field – must be interpreted as an empirically tangible indication that *something* changes – increases – over the course of cultural history. Elaborated by means of some of the aforementioned cultural tracks, we venture all in all to follow the progress – and the conclusion – of a quite specific process: the development of a self-dependent individual, whose growing freedom, cognitive awareness and experience involves a corresponding isolation from the surrounding natural world.

In so doing we have identified if not as precise a teleology as the embryo's development from one-celled organism to fully-developed individual then at least a sequence of chreodes, the potential alternatives to which are to be found in nearby river valleys. Mapping these is obviously complicated by the fact that in practice we are dealing with a single sequence (extraterrestrial civilisations remain, as of yet, unknown!), albeit comparative analyses between various cultural sequences – Western, American, Asian – will already take us far in distinguishing between the chance-individual and necessary, the heuristic and nomothetic. Even though spot views of non-Western cultures would in fact seem to confirm the overarching pattern – the direction of the pictorial evolution towards increasing depth of field and accompanying socio-cultural properties – I must here, however, limit myself to mere indications (see chapter 1).

The discussion becomes more inflamed when it gets to the question of the extent to which this direction also involves *progression*, a transformation from less to more developed. Among scholars of biology and sociology alike, a massive taboo has built

up around this previously so recognised idea, whether it concerns the biological or cultural domain. In its biological version, progress, for example, is given the following emotionally-charged words along the way by the contingently-oriented evolutionary scientist Stephen Jay Gould: "[It] is a noxious, culturally embedded, untestable, nonoperational, intractable idea that must be replaced."[78]

Unfortunately, in the present context I cannot go into the counterarguments that this scepticism deserves. I will merely repeat that a number of branches of general systems theory are specifically rooted in the observation that open systems can move towards decreasing entropy: that is, towards higher degrees of complexity. This is especially the case in the most recent theoretical biology, where scholars such as Stuart Kauffman develop formalisable models for evolution's *fitness landscapes*, attractor terrains, where the highest peaks (in a reversal of the chreode imagery) represent the most complex stages of development. The consequences for cultural evolution go without saying.[79]

Acceptance that cultural evolution actually involves a development towards higher complexity, and that this development reached an interim extremum in the West, should not, however, prompt Western self-righteousness because, like nature's ecosystems, the process would be inconceivable were it not for interaction with the rest of the cultures in the world. More importantly yet, as already mentioned, we should not regard the coupling of an independent individual and an infinite universe to be evolution's ultimate *telos*, as the 20th and 21st centuries seem to entail a memetic melting pot where all cultures' memeplexes are blended and re-combined, in conjunction with the deconstruction of the idea of the self-dependent human individual; where the barriers between technology and nature are erased; and where the universe becomes evolutionary and limited. This development, again, seems to be reflected in the Western pictorial space, as perspectival space and landscape image have been in permanent crisis since Picasso and Duchamp. A discussion as to how this most recent, partly neo-primitive and cyclically recurrent cultural phase can be interpreted in an evolutionistic light, I must, however, postpone until a later occasion.[80]

IV. Theory of science reflections and critical dialogue with anti-evolutionism

A project like this one, dealing with such temporally and geographically wide-reaching areas and building bridges between apparently separate specialist disciplines, is obviously going to have dealings with the theory of science. On what exactly does its scientific legitimacy rest, and which criteria of validity can be advanced to take its theses from postulate to plausibility?

Notwithstanding the many differences that characterise methodological groupings in the humanities today, two dogmas usually recur: [1] the subject area of the humanities is made up of *singular* phenomena, i.e. phenomena which might well be described as reflecting local laws, but yet to no greater degree than that their potential representation of broader historical periods and patterns of development is seen as, at most, hypothetical and beyond the actually scientific dimension; [2] as a result of this very singularity, there is no limit to how *exhaustively and closely* the historical phenomena should be analysed and their *differences* highlighted. As we will soon see, the routes that lead to these dogmas are extremely different in themselves, and yet they all seem to be based on variants of nominalism – the epistemological line of thought that presupposes an uncrossable boundary between the phenomena of the world and the concepts, theories and methods we use to deal with these phenomena. One methodological pole, the traditional, which carries forward variants of 19th-century positivism, strives toward coming as close to the diffuse documentable facts as is possible: the higher the level of analytical resolution, the more precise and thereby scientific the exposition of historical phenomena, whereas the broader and synthesising focus is written off to, at best, the domain of essayism. Another methodological pole, that of radical relativism, which covers new theoretical departures since the 1970s, from post-structuralism to feminism to postcolonialism, stresses the always ideology-determined discourse which frames the world's infinitely varied and, in terms of meaning, open cultural phenomena: the greater the degree to which the ideology can be fragmented and repressed differences exposed, the more politically supportable and thereby ethically correct the exposition, whereas the broader and synthesising focus is written off to the domain of patriarchal control and totalitarian ideologies.

Even though I, in many ways, share views with both positivism and relativism – respectively: in the request that a thesis should not be contradicted by documentable fact; and in the awareness that a view is never without a context – this project nevertheless breaks crucially with the two ultra-nominalistic dogmas of these methodological groupings: that history is fundamentally singular and that it therefore always requires meticulously detailed analyses. Firstly, the project's empirical observations have led to the assumption that a quantity of historical phenomena are actually not fundamentally singular but, on the contrary and as already adduced by Spengler, on a certain organisational level are subject to broader analysable laws in both a synchronic and diachronic direction. Secondly, this assumption has occasioned a necessary shift of focus, which does not confine the scientific legitimacy of historical analysis to the minor temporal and geographic scale, but finds patterns of regularity displayed in macrohistorical dimensions.

Three criteria for scientific legitimacy: analytical level, morphological correspondence, predictive power

That this break with dogma involves neither an essayist nor totalitarian slant, but in certain respects can rather be seen as a claim for an intensified and anti-totalitarian scientific legitimacy – one that aims at more universal and basically natural laws – can be demonstrated if we draw in some of the fundamental assumptions of natural science. Unlike the humanities, the objects of natural science do not comprise singular phenomena, but classes of objects whose behaviour can be described and predicted by means of models: universally applicable law structures. Thereby, the aim and criteria of science are not to carry out a detailed investigation of every imaginable object within a class – for example, all the iron atoms in the universe – but to isolate an appropriate selection of these based on a well-defined framework, a level for analysis, and then from this draw up a model which in part displays morphological correspondence with the little group of observed iron atoms, in part predicts that all iron atoms in this framework will behave in accordance with the model. The criterion for whether a scientific model can be recognised as 'true' is thus tripartite: it must [1] be able to account for its *level of analysis*; [2] demonstrate a *morphological correspondence* between an analysed *selection of objects* on this level and a *model*; [3] *predict* that this pattern also applies to *all other objects* in the given class. If there are objects that behave differently than predicted, i.e. do not correspond with the structure of the model, the model does not work. This possibility of contradiction – essential for testing scientific theses – was that which Karl Popper named *falsification*.[81]

Even though historical phenomena belong by definition to the past, and therefore cannot be subject to proper repeatable control tests, there is still a quantity of phenomena in history with the potential to be included in classes and thereby to assume properties beyond the purely singular. This book's subjects, the landscape images and their evolution, are just such phenomena, and the structuralist approach proposed to analyse them seems to be as close to the aforementioned scientific method and its tripartite criterion of truth as is possible using the contemporary humanist methodological repertoire. The proposed structural patterns – the paradigms and *fields* – and their evolutionary sequence should thus be seen as models of a scientific disposition, and their viability rests accordingly on how accurately they cover their empirical matter on the level at which they are presumed to be effective.

If we focus more closely on the issue of level [1], the conditioned humanist reflex is that the models are too 'rough' and therefore at best overlook a quantity of cultural differences (essayism), at worst damage the singular character of the

historical phenomena (totalitarian control). But to this it has to be countered that the identification of larger structures in history is not seen as being comprehensive downwards in the historical material; rather it is a question of emergent patterns that surface on an analytical level above the myriad of incidents that create them. A parallel scientific example might be a model for the behaviour of gasses which deals with macroscopic parameters such as temperature, volume and pressure without mentioning the molecules' microscopic, singular movements. Conversely, the macrohistorical level is not merely possible, but *essential* if the iconology of the landscape images is to be analysed in a qualified fashion, as without it the looked-for patterns drown in details irrelevant for this iconology – more or less as in Lewis Carroll's *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded* (1893), in which there is an attempt to bring the art of cartography to total perfection. Having by turns found maps on a scale of 1:100 and 1:10 too rough, one finds the optimally nuanced solution: a map to the scale 1:1. The farmers are, however, worried that this kind of map would keep the sunlight off the fields, so a more financially viable and, in its way, even more accurate solution is found: to use the country itself as its own map.[82] This story exposes the absurdity arising in certain situations when the humanities follow the widespread dogma of aiming, at any price, for a description that is detailed and reveals differences. In Carroll's story, respect for detail results in the loss of the idea of a map: precisely to shed so many details that it is possible to orient oneself. The jigsaw correspondence between South America and Africa, and the consequent thesis of continental drift, was unlikely to have been devised if cartography was subject to a dogma of maps on a maximum scale of 1:100. The more specified scale of a scientific model must therefore be independent of predetermined 'acceptable' scales – such as *in casu* the 'human' scale of the humanities – and be solely determined by the problem to be resolved.

On the macrohistorical level I think I can thus comply with criterion [2], the fundamental scientific principle of a *morphological correspondence* between a selected empirical corpus and a model. In the first place this applies to the basic evolutionary pattern, the extension of depth of field from the Palaeolithic period to the 19th century, which constitutes a relatively simple regularity, by means of which significant aspects of Western culture's presentation of space and landscape can be understood. The veracity of the model is immediately corroborated by its internal regular principle of development, which so patently matches images from reality that, having first acknowledged the principle, it is possible retrospectively to predict the course of image development right up until its saturation in 19th-century viewpoint-directed infinity – comparable to the way in which it is possible to predict that the number sequence 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21 must inevitably be followed by 34 and not 35 or 52. As this regularity in image development already contains an imperative

element of non-randomness, it seems seriously beyond the realm of fluke when it also proves to correspond structurally with a whole series of evolutionary models, which have often developed independently of one another within other specialist disciplines, and which as far as several are concerned even prove capable of direct collaboration with this regularity in terms of content. Besides being temporally equivalent to the development of depth of image, the assumptions in Hegel's and Habermas's models of the gradual autonomisation of consciousness can, as shown earlier, be correlated with the image's intensified vantage position – a collaboration already carried out by Piaget on the ontogenetic plane and coupled with phylogenesis by Gablik, Blatt and Marcussen. Similarly, the Jungian Neumann has combined the evolution of consciousness with the evolution of cosmology, a bridge-building I can further consolidate through my own analyses of the figurative visualisation of rocky ground, heavens and infinity. Furthermore, my structuralist comparison of the sequence of the Golden Age myth and the movement from post-Egyptian pre-modern to modern pictorial space, and this comparison's iconological interpretation vis-à-vis the development of the concept of work, demonstrates that the sociological evolutionary theories of Habermas, Parsons, Kojève and Weber can also be linked to the theoretical framework in terms of content.

Although I cannot investigate the empirical basis for the evolutionary models of consciousness, cosmology and concept of work as thoroughly as my own empirical material – the images – the mere morphological kinship between the models indicates that they must constitute different theoretical frameworks of *basically the same phenomenon*: the evolution of culture. It is these correspondences which mean that, for each evolutionary section of time, I have to assume the existence of a common organisational principle that influences culture's individual domains despite all differences, and which I term the epistemic *field*. The evolution of the image can hereby be seen as a particularly testable indication of the existence of cultural evolution, just as the other branches of this evolution can be used as iconological contexts for the interpretation of image evolution – the point is not to give the one part the monopoly as thesis and the other as proof; the thesis is rather to demonstrate how the various sequences of cultural evolution mutually confirm one another's morphology. In the eyes of humanistic sceptics, this attempt at interdisciplinary co-thought will perhaps be seen as a rampaging aspiration to make analogies between hardly compatible, i.e. again primarily dissimilar, subject areas – the word 'analogy' has a suitably harmless ring of merely a subjectively devised kinship of form, somewhat à la 'metaphor' – but as I hope to have indicated above, and will also account for throughout the entire book, the morphological equivalences are so striking that randomness is far less probable than valid connection. Again I will resort to parallels of natural science, for nor do we here ever achieve greater certainty

for connection than the 'mere' analogy between model and empirical material or groups of empirical material, and so the criterion therefore again – and alone – must be: are the structures of model and empirical material of sufficient complexity that the probability of their arbitrary similarity can be ruled out? Is it, for example, a coincidence that the pollen count changed 11,500 years ago simultaneously with the oxygen isotope level – such as precipitation samples excavated from the Greenland inland ice now demonstrate – and is it possible to set up other models explaining this synchrony, which coordinates otherwise essentially different domains than the general organising principle: the end of the Ice Age?

Another conditioned humanist reflex, which is closely related to the scepticism of the macrohistorical level, is the objection that I draw too broad conclusions on the basis of too slight a corpus and that a project such as this is impossible to carry out in a scientifically valid way in practice because more life sequences should be used to scour history's various image cultures and their contexts. This objection, however, again relies on the concept of all historical phenomena's fundamental singularity, whereas I presuppose the existence of classes of objects which are regulated by shared laws – what I call paradigms and *fields*. Therefore, in theory it is not necessary to compare more than ten-twenty temporally and geographically sufficiently scattered images from a given epoch before the contours of the paradigm will have emerged – the involvement of further material is more likely to add nuances than to shift the earlier tendency. In order to emphasise how central this point is, I repeat the previously quoted words of Lévi-Strauss: "Syntax does not become evident only after a (theoretically limitless) series of events has been recorded and examined, because it is itself the body of rules governing their production." Syntax is again that regularity, that structure, which is assumed as controlling a given class of objects and, as in natural science, its contours emerge following study of a smaller selection from this class. That I then in practice have actually studied and discuss a very large number of images can but enhance the plausibility of my thesis. The temporal and geographical range of paradigms and *fields* means, moreover, that their registration is robust vis-à-vis gaps in the surviving material. Even though I am indeed dependent on what the ravages of time have, more or less randomly, handed down – sometimes just archaeological fragments – the organising structures are outlined completely by the fragments. The possibility that certain types of image might nevertheless have evaded investigation – for functional reasons or because of my subconscious selection – will be discussed below.

Even though the events of history cannot evoke an impression of repetition to the extent that the objects of natural science can, a structuralist thesis ultimately fulfils the aforementioned criterion [3] of truth pertaining to natural science, the requirement for predictive power, in the sense that, based on a small selection of a

class's objects, the thesis makes claims on behalf of all the objects in the class. It is therefore particularly open to Popper's claim for the potential falsification of scientific theories, given that it is possible to carry out numerous other spot tests within the classes to which the thesis refers. Should an image diverging fundamentally from the alleged horizon of a paradigm one day make an appearance (a Palaeolithic cave painting with a perspectival landscape or merely a baseline; a medieval representation of sky with floating clouds; a Pompeian sacral-idyllic landscape image traversed by cornfields without demonstrable iconographic cause), the evolutionary thesis will thus collapse like a house of cards. It is on this factual-empirical, in a way positivistic, basis – not from predetermined, ideologically-conditioned opinions as to which methodologies humanistic science ought to employ – that my thesis should be tested and judged.

Protectors of the singular: social constructivism and positivism

The above reflections apropos the theory of science should really be enough to preclude criticism of my evolutionistic and structuralistic thesis, but my previous discussions – not exactly few in number – with sceptics, especially of a deconstructive bent, tell me that a more than usual legitimisation of methodology is required in order to gain a hearing. In an academic climate, now in its third decade, characterised by a relativistic and social constructivist atmosphere – in the art history discipline known as New Art History – I cannot sidestep a more specific dialogue with the prevailing trends. The dilemma is now this: should this dialogue be conducted humbly, half apologising for the seemingly untimely opinions I broach, or should it be outgoing, possibly even directly critical of my interlocutors? I have chosen the latter solution.

It should first be noted that scepticism of macrohistory is by no means exclusively the province of social constructivism. For large tracts of 20th-century art historiography, particularly its Anglo-American offshoots after the Second World War, a methodology directed at empirical material prospers which might indeed be open to various socio-historical contexts, but which is sceptical of *geistesgeschichtliche* constructions of every kind, especially the Hegelian version. A scholar such as Erwin Panofsky, who came from a Germanic *geistesgeschichtliche* tradition and who followed an evolutionistic line of thought in his earlier treatise on perspective,[83] was thus subject to a sharp theoretical leaning curve when, as a refugee from Nazism, he sought shelter in the US, where he had to tone down his overarching insight in favour of more microhistorical analyses or empirical accounts of tradition (the Gothic treatise being a hesitant exception). And although Ernst Gombrich, a pupil

of the culture-historical minded Viennese art historian Julius von Schlosser and also a refugee in the Anglo-American world (Britain), actually operates in a quite evolutionistic manner with a notion that mimesis increases over the course of art history, he refutes that this tendency is determined by the likes of culture-historical currents beyond the individual artist's control. By combining Schlosser's ideas of cultural stereotypes with Karl Popper's aforementioned concepts of the potential falsification of scientific theses, Gombrich assumes that approximation to optical perception takes place when the individual painter tests learnt schemata in relation to new visual impressions. Beyond the schemata, however, the artist moves in a cultural vacuum, and Riegl's *Kunstwollen* can therefore be dismissed as "a ghost in the machine", just like it is self-confidently concluded that "Evolutionism is dead".[84]

Perhaps the weightiest argument against a stance dealing with deeper drifts in history is the one identified by Gombrich in the totalitarian *geistesgeschichtliche* inclinations with which Popper had already settled accounts in *The Poverty of Historicism* (1957): "By inculcating the habit of talking in terms of collectives, of 'mankind', 'races', or 'ages', [this reliance of art history on mythological explanations] weakens resistance to totalitarian habits of mind" – of which the later Nazi sympathising Viennese art historian Hans Sedlmayr's reading of Riegl is highlighted as a particularly ominous example.[85] In this showdown with totalitarianism, Gombrich proves to be allied with New Art History and its social constructivist hinterland which, based on experiences with totalitarian genealogies, has expanded the attack to include all the grand narratives that various power categories – the bourgeoisie, capitalism, communism, patriarchy, rationality, Western culture – have used to legitimatise their subjugation of various forms of otherness.[86] It has therefore been necessary to free these narratives from any demand of connection to immanent tendencies in history and instead to reveal them as mere constructions stemming from culture's always active power games.

What, however, crucially separates social constructivism from Gombrich and much of post-war 'old art history' is the weighting of the social space. Where art history directed at empirical material purges itself of *geistige* inclinations by thinking in individualistic cause-effects – in artists who are influenced by specific exemplars, stereotypes, patrons' demands, books in an otherwise purged social vacuum, etc. – social constructivism carries out the same purge in reverse by saturating the social space with cool semiotic codes in which the artist is inextricably inscribed. In the first version of this space – 1950s and 1960s structuralism – these codes were, as we have seen, reasonably stable and could be analysed in an almost natural scientific manner, but from fear of once again ending up in essentialism's – and the accompanying totalitarianism's – iron grip, post-structuralism has since made the space fluid and indefinite. This indefiniteness spreads right out to the interpreter who,

to no lesser a degree than the object she or he puts into words, is inscribed in an unstable semiotic space where the interpretation becomes more a question of construction than of reconstruction.[87]And in any case – as is generally prescribed by French post-war thinking, which social constructivism draws on – the space of the past can only be analysed from a synchronic, i.e. contemporaneous, point of view, and is inaccessible from a diachronic, i.e. historical, reading. In Donald Preziosi's words: "Indeed, one would think that for a discipline so perennially obsessed with the ultimate apt phrase and the poignant and penetrating bon mot, there might be some Olympian perspective revealing an orderly, rational, and progressive evolution. There is no such perspective, despite what might be inferred from numerous primers."[88] This diachronic outlook is suspicious because it ostensibly frees itself of all codes and sees through the system from the stance of value-free notions of origin and directionality. The only option for the historiographer, in a diachronic respect, is therefore to *select* a genealogy and then, moreover, to bear in mind that this is a product of her or his own arbitrary standpoint and therefore remains one of an infinite number of possible, small narratives.

As far as I can see, this standpoint, which today is so widespread that it has almost become more 'naturalised' than the evolutionism it originally challenged, gets out of control in its otherwise legitimate critique of the older humanistic intellectual history and its ostensibly value-free judgements, belief in the West as culture's telos and lack of an eye for the dynamics and conflicts of history. Firstly, it would be tempting to turn the relativistic line of thought back on itself and ask if *its* standpoint is not just as dependent on a limited perspective as all other possible forms of thought, for example the evolutionistic variant? For what would an Olympian perspective actually mean other than a perspective that is directed towards an analytical level or two above the microhistorical with its obligatory cultivation of differences between man-made cultures? Bearing in mind the aforesaid reflections vis-à-vis the theory of science, the selection of level is not a predetermined fact, but something that is solely dependent on the extent to which morphological similarities between model and empirical corpus can be revealed. For a theoretical standpoint that calls itself anti-humanistic, it is actually strangely old-humanistic to cling to the microhistorical level as being the only permissible option, because it forces the lens into an 'everyday', 'immediately' comprehensible scale, and forgets the elementary relativistic fact that scale is in fact relative. What is, on conventional humanistic grounds, called microhistorical could thus from another point of view – for example, of microbiology or nuclear physics – just as well be called macrohistorical.

Old-humanism is also re-packaged in the post-structuralistic fondness for the singular event. Post-structuralism's point of attack here is otherwise the common human value base and free metaphysical aspiration, which should exist in every kind

of art work irrespective of its historical or geographical origin, and which is at the same time individually irreducible and therefore appropriated with corresponding individual emotional fullness, the herostratically notorious 'impressionistic' – i.e. ruleless – art criticism. In contrast to this, social constructivism attempts to de-subjectify the work of art and record its value in variable discourses qualified by political power, beyond which there is nothing that can feasibly be analysed. Taking into consideration that politics and power continue to be thought of as having originated from an exclusively man-made domain, and that here formation of meaning even shifts like quicksilver, we are left in the ironical situation that the social constructivist interpreter is just as human-referential and rulelessly imaginative as his impressionistic predecessor – merely with the small difference that now it is not a case of free metaphysical aspiration, but of free political aspiration: the exposure of man-made power structures, which can liberate diverse minorities from patriarchy, aristocracy, Western culture, etc. The endeavour might be to shift the subject to the collective, the aesthetics to the politics, but the ideals of liberty are still those of the French Revolution and, in their aesthetically-coloured rulelessness, unmistakeably humanistic.

Something similar can be noted in New Art History's scepticism of larger historical patterns – par excellence: evolutionism. Again, it is the human scale that steps in as explanatory framework: as there are no other patterns in history than the man-made, larger patterns inevitably become expressions of smaller groups' endeavours to cope with the heterogeneous majority. And, again, this microhistorically-based scepticism is also long since an attendant of positivism, which finds no truth beyond that which can be demonstrated in single documents. Compared with this, social constructivism can thus simply be said to seal the documents outwardly – to cut short their indexicality on 'wie es eigentlich gewesen' – and chiefly to read them as suitably fragmented *signifiants* for continually changing *signifiés* within the belljar of discourses. Considering how deeply rooted the empirico-centric micro-art history is in the Anglo-American world, it would therefore seem less dramatic that the French deconstruction has become such a success here as is the case. In addition to both traditions celebrating the small narratives, deconstruction can supply some intellectual ammunition to the civil rights battles that have been fought since the 1970s, as compensation for fading political activism, on academic paper.

Expressed polemically, the most extreme aspects of the social constructivistic humanities, including their offshoots in New Art History, could thus be seen as a (last?) attempt to maintain an autonomous aesthetic domain in culture – a domain in which the impressionistic experience of the singular work shifts to the semiotic-political concept of the open *signifiant*, and the aestheticistic historylessness is recirculated as the right to construct the context.

The body of history

In particular, social constructivist scepticism can be seen as a late offshoot of nominalism, the epistemology which sets up an impassable boundary between the things out in the world and the names (Latin: *nomina*) we attach to them. This high- rather than actually post-modern thinking has its roots in Late Middle Age scholasticism and comes to maturation in Kant's formulation of the isolation of the consciousness from *das Ding an sich*. As it finds it futile to ask the extent to which our representations fundamentally have anything to do with the organisation of reality, its concept of truth is basically pragmatic and limited to the issue of the extent to which these representations can *be used*. The constant issue is, then, the criteria for usefulness. The matter is at its most straightforward within the natural sciences, the representations of which, as mentioned, relate to repeatable experiments and can thereby be legitimised through their predictive power. However, the more history that goes into the undertaking, i.e. the more non-repeatable it becomes, the more complicated the matter. Biology is already at the soft end, and the picture becomes further tangled from sociology through history to – perhaps furthest out – aesthetics with its unique, ruleless sense impressions. In the humanistic domains it is therefore open to negotiation as to which representations are actually most useful and thereby closest to the truth (if this concept is allowed at all).

Even though this issue has long been tackled by operating with a strict gap between natural and human sciences – C.P. Snow's "two cultures"[89] – the late 1900s would seem, however, to be characterised by growing interdisciplinary bridge-buildings. These bridge-buildings have opened up for the export of paradigms across the disciplines as well as ensuing reactions preventing specialist loss of identity. Thus structuralism could be seen as a scientific formalism's entry in the humanities, whereas post-structuralism conversely, by disseminating the rulelessness of aesthetics to history, sociology and the history of science, defends the specific experience of the humanities via an export drive. The dissemination, which en route atomises the structuralistic semiotics and accumulates a universalised Marxist politics (all minorities and othernesses 'unite'!), creates the social constructivistic sphere, a hyper-nominalistic domain, that shifts the usefulness criterion of natural science from external prediction to internal ideology: inasmuch as aesthetics has dissolved every friction vis-à-vis a given empirical material, the friction is shifted inwards to an issue of power struggles between political fractions. The useful theory is exclusively that which wins, and as it is the minorities which, by definition, must win, this is the hegemony of the small narratives. Expressed polemically: if fascism is aesthetics transformed into politics, i.e. the dream of classical unity transformed

into totalitarian oppression, this could then resemble fascism in reverse: difference fetishism converted into the tyranny of minorities.

If one accuses social constructivism of spiriting away a real world beyond the primacy of signs, the reaction is, however, usually of a negative bent: reality, the factual, does indeed exist, it is just inaccessible without an ideologically-determined sign mediation, which therefore becomes the only thing science can relate to. But how can one both make it a virtue to problematise all borders, dichotomies and hierarchies that are brought about by logos, and then at the same time safeguard the politico-semiotic sphere as if it were a sacred threshold behind which one must politely stay for now and evermore? Why should something so relatively arbitrary as politics and semiosis be the black hole in which all cognition must implode, never again to escape? Here I cherish no ambitions of entering an epistemological refutation of the more extreme aspects of social constructivism; I would actually prefer to turn the critique into a constructive dialogue, partly endeavouring to re-introduce a dimension of reality into the historiography of art and partly synthesising it with what I perceive as fertile aspects of New Art History and the new humanities.

My desire is, in the first instance, to re-inject the historical material with resistance, weight or, if you like, body, which displaces it from a chimera in the grand cranium constituted by the discourses of the historians into a reality which existed in the past and survives perceptibly in the present, including, but by no means exclusively, our representations of it. Against this, the singularity of the historical material is often invoked, which, it is true, might allow for agreement on certain 'factual' circumstances (date and place of the first landing on the moon, Grauballe Man's cause of death, etc.), but which nevertheless involves an impenetrable indefiniteness as regards otherwise scientifically pertinent model areas such as cultural causes and effects, discursive *fields*, motives of historical persons, etc. Within this domain, which thus has to be separated from the indisputable facts by means of some kind of magic boundary, there is scope for free rein of discourse and power, which could reasonably be confirmed through the history profession's notorious feuds and jumble of changing explanatory models.

The bone of contention is now whether or not these fields are *ontologically* impenetrable – so social constructivism constitutes a kind of humanistic counterpart to quantum mechanics' indefiniteness models – or if they appear impenetrable partly as a consequence of hitherto inadequate analytical tools. I will here sign up to the latter possibility, in that I call for a both more rigorous and more 'woolly' historiographical thinking. The rigorousness aims at more thoroughly thought-out, elaborated and morphologically clear models, the 'woolliness' at a softening of and mediation between the usually far too polemic, polarised and fragmented *positions* which characterise the humanistic discussions. Put another way, opinions are usually

too rigid in relation to the limited standpoints and areas of interest they represent – such as social constructivism, if none other, has taught us is the case – rather than through a responsiveness to these standpoints being able to make comparative analyses between many standpoints. This would lead to the understanding that many – presumably most – disagreements are due to phenomena being looked at from differing standpoints, rather than to fundamentally different phenomena and to standpoints belonging each to their own hermetically sealed world. At the same time, it could actually be beneficial to transfer some of the indefiniteness thinking of quantum mechanics to history – not that historical phenomena should be open to delirious or politically tendentious constructs, but rather that formalisable spaces of possibilities should be established, within which given phenomena can be sought.

These means would both open to a more flexible awareness of standpoint and give the historical material the chance to offer resistance. A peculiarity pertaining to historical material, time-bound phenomena, is thus its combination of the irrecoverable and the unfinished – that it both has definitively taken place and yet continues to stretch its tentacles into the present, which thereby is formed by this very past, yet also forms this past as a consequence of subsequent layers of experience, which like a prism elicit new aspects of the past. Therefore, as the hermeneuticist Hans-Georg Gadamer has pointed out, there are always two parties, each with its experience, in historical analysis, the past and the present, and the ideal hermeneutic interpretation occurs when the two horizons of experience meet at an Archimedean point: the fusion of horizons.[90] Precisely this cognition is forfeited in social constructivism, which only recognises one horizon – that of the present – and thereby deprives past events their possibility of offering resistance, i.e. to supply the one, empirical part in the two-part structure characteristic of every analysis that leads to an advance in cognition.

What I am calling for in the humanities is thus a synthesis between, on the one hand, the specifically historical-aesthetic experience of these disciplines and, on the other, that formalism influenced by the natural sciences last heard of in structuralism, but since supplanted by post-structuralism's labile, ideology-infiltrated scepticism of patterns. If the thesis-antithesis-synthesis movement has any voice in history, we have to imagine a thinking that mediates between singularity and pattern, a dynamically infused structuralism, which revokes the ban under which diachronic thinking has so long laboured, and which ventures to re-test the issue of bigger patterns in history. This kind of thinking will involve a change of tone in the humanities: no longer the routine singing out of differences mixed with ironic distress over the aggravations of power, but a more soberly descriptive, perhaps even optimistic vision. For, as suggested, the idea of the small narratives lives almost

parasitically on the necessary counter-narrative of the totalitarian system, oppressive of individuals, and accordingly a critique of it will be fruitful and productive as long as this system can be ascribed some currency of reality, but will be tilting at windmills should the world have moved on. It could thus be the case that there were patterns in history which evaded this control by 'the constructed', and which it would therefore not be possible to criticise, politicise or deconstruct one's way out of – no more than a swimmer can break up an underwater current by means of 'critique'.

In an aforementioned alternative imagery, it could be a case of re-supplying history with body – a body that is not only, as today, a mirage projected from history's politico-semiotic consciousness, but which has weight and reality and has just as great an effect on this consciousness as vice versa. The necessary shift in thinking would thus be reminiscent of the anti-Cartesian movement away from the psyche as all-explanatory, autonomous cause found in current psychiatric sciences – which can, for example, regard a depressive predisposition not as a cause but as a consequent effect of gastric pains. The phenomenological and psychoanalytical sections of the humanities have, actually, already paid a lot of attention to the body, but still only in curiously schizophrenic isolation from its superstructure in the socialised psyche, whether this be regarded as individual or scattered in the collective societal cranium. Either the body speaks unproblematically through an unhistorical psyche (phenomenology) or else it acts as the historicised psyche's subversive otherness (psychoanalysis). If history is not obscured, it is removed to contending discourses, which again operate in nominalistic separation from the material.

What I am calling for, however, is that the by now hackneyed constellation of body-anarchy-emancipation and consciousness-pattern-oppression be refracted towards a third figure in which body and consciousness, anarchy and pattern, emancipation and oppression are considered together through the temporal, i.e. historical, collective figure of dynamics, so that our world is perceived in a process of genesis in which patterns appear just as much as the result of matter's non-conscious processes and their impregnation of consciousness, as the result of consciousness's subsequent influence on matter.[91] The body of history is thus here no longer to be perceived as an ontologically unattainable chaos of coincidences, above which the discourses' constructions hover in their Cartesian secluded balloon; if anything, it is a largely self-organisational process, which might indeed be influenced, even formed by voluntary impacts of consciousness, but which itself simultaneously forms and determines what this consciousness is at all capable of constructing. If we venture to take our bearings from historiographical formalisms that displace the focus from micro-events in chaos to larger patterns – which the individual might indeed interact with politically and semiotically, but does not create, let alone 'construct' – it

is worthwhile examining the structuralistic tradition in a wider sense, including its offshoots in the interdisciplinary field between the humanities and the natural sciences.

Even though recent humanities have hitherto left no room for a historiography bearing this kind of pattern impress, and especially not one that has a specific direction, it would seem a good starting point for debate that my historical building, conversely, actually gives recent humanities plenty of room in its most recent territory: the 20th and 21st centuries. Because, again: maturation of the autonomous consciousness and its associated autonomous perspectival art certainly does not constitute history's *telos*; on the contrary, cultural evolution would now seem to have turned into the final phase of a macrohistorical cycle, which occasions rejection, deconstruction and dismantling of all the values of high modernity – a showdown I completely acknowledge as an essential aspect of the art practice and historiography of the 1900s and 2000s. However, my narrative is still separated from postmodernism's mainstream-meltdown of the legacy of the past by my assumption that the current crisis in art historiography is due to *actual* forces in history rather than a contemporary coincidental-ideological need for the undermining of all historical constructions. Our thinking has become inadequate precisely because it has got out of step with the most recent, in a way post-evolutionary, phase – which will not, however, lead to a denial of the highly evolutionary process that led up to this phase, in other words: to a mix up of post-evolutionary (we are *actually* in evolution's slipstream) with post-evolutionistic (we can no longer *think* with the concept of evolution, neither in relation to the present nor to the past). This misreading would correspond to a menopausal woman experiencing the cessation of menstruation and suddenly, for that reason, declaring menstruation to be a biographical 'construction' and denying that it corresponds to an earlier reality.

If this mediation, which transforms post-evolutionistic to post-evolutionary, can be accepted, it will be seen that my project builds to the utmost extent upon experiences from recent humanistic theory of science: structuralism, *field* theory, sociology, feminism, psychoanalysis, theories of vision and representation. In keeping with them, I reject the concept of a transhistorical human subject and instead regard the subject as the product of various contexts, of which many can be rendered via these very theories. Where I and the prevailing variants of the theories part ways, however, is on the issue of the structure of time (universally chaotic or, at best, discontinuous vs. evolutionary until the 20th century); and if theory variants that are also influenced by post-structuralism are taken on board, we also diverge on the issue of the status of meaning (labile and solely constructed by interpreter vs. dynamic-stable and in part immanent in the historical material).

V. Cracks in the generalisations: reservations regarding function and iconicity

Function

Even though I have claimed that the paradigms of pictorial art are, as a result of their permeation of all the images of an epoch, vigorous in relation to the gaps in the extant material, the critic can still with a degree of justice ask: without specification of context, is there any sense in speaking about evolution of *the* pictorial space when images have served a myriad of different purposes over the course of history, and their manifestation is perhaps primarily dependent on these varying functions? To this the answer must be: certainly, the manifestation of an image is dependent on its function, but at the same time a given evolutionary stage implies a horizon of image functions which cannot be overstepped. An image could not, therefore, be assumed to look much different 'merely' because its function had been changed, because the image function itself interacts with the epistemic *field* just as much as the pictorial space does. How image functions have changed in the course of time, and how these changes have interacted with the manifestation of the pictorial space, and thereby of the landscape image, will thus be an extremely interesting subject to investigate – it is even possible to imagine a model that describes image and landscape space as a function of the function the image is intended to fulfil. The framework of this study, however, means that here I must limit myself to an incomplete and experimental draft.

Although the majority of the images to which I refer are today part of art history's domain of investigation and can accordingly be categorised as 'art' – that is, as relatively self-dependent objects with an aesthetic-metaphysic appeal – it is patent that most of them were assigned contemporaneous functions reaching beyond or outside the category of art (this would apply to all images before modernity, apart from certain forerunners in antiquity). If the autonomous art category is inscribed in [1] the *private* domain of a bourgeois culture, three further principal domains of image function can perhaps be singled out: [2] *religious*, in which the image is part of a cultic context (e.g. altarpieces, icons or votive offerings); [3] *political*, in which the image serves as propaganda for a human-based power or ideology (e.g. battle scenes, portraits of leaders or panoramas of possessions); and [4] *practical*, in which the images acts as an aid in applied contexts (as topographical maps, architectural sectional views or botanical illustrations).

A straightforward assessment of this outline will reveal that the development of the landscape image, at least in its most recent phase, occurs within the development of domain [1], a private bourgeois space, and thereby that the landscape image

reaches its ultimate autonomy in a type of image that would have to be called art for art's sake (FIGS. 8.1 and 8.13). As a consequence of the late crystallisation of the art category in cultural evolution, it is however just as patent that the landscape image must chiefly have antecedents in domains [2]-[4], which raises the question as to how these domains more specifically interact with its development. The answer becomes more obscure the further we travel back towards pre-historic time: in addition to the lack of elementary evidence as regards the function of the images, the function seems to become less and less differentiated. To make a distinction between a religious, a practical or a political function in a cave painting seems, for example, absurd.

If one was to venture a generalisation with reference to the more differentiated, pre-modern functions, it could be as follows: landscapes, and pictorial space with a wide depth of field in general, occur mainly in images with a certain religious and/or political monumentality, i.e. images commissioned by religious or political rulers to serve a purpose other than purely practical. Of image functions that will thus not have landscapes or will have landscapes with scant relevant depth of field for the time, we could mention: topographical maps (practical function; PLATE 12 and FIGS. 4.50-4.55), poor people's cult images (religious function beyond the ruling class), graffiti (political function beyond the ruling class), emblems (politically elitist, but non-monumental function).

In addition, it might be noted that my aforementioned observations concerning landscapes marked by cultivation could be coupled with the relationship between political and religious function. That the Golden Age *field* enjoys the freedom for landscape images marked by cultivation could thus also be said to be the result of a mainly religious, possibly semi-private function without intervention of an explicitly political dimension. In this phase, the landscape image's Golden Age vision is invoked precisely as a bulwark against a painful political reality in which an elite class's administrative, philosophical-religious or warlike conduct depends on the subjugation of the majority of the working population. This applies to Pompeian sacred idylls (a semi-private, secularised transformation of an originally religious function; FIG. 6.10), and it applies to the greater part of medieval images (where politics rarely transcends the religious aspect). In Egypt, on the other hand, the clan society is as of yet no more challenged by growing social polarisation than that the religious function of the images continues to be inseparable from their political function, leading to multitudes of agricultural depictions, images of a blessed collective life (FIGS. 1.11 and 4.4-4.8). And when, in Assyria and Roman late antiquity, we again meet these iconographical pockets in which the landscape image – now as an exception – is marked by cultivation (FIGS. 1.16, 4.18-4.19, 7.7, 7.21 and 7.26-7.27), the explanation here would also seem to be that the political power wishes to manifest

itself more tangibly in images (for further detail see chapters 4 and 6-7). In brief, before modernity the representation of *terra* belongs to the politically inexplicit and religious, the representation of the *territory* to the politically explicit and, in post-Egyptian times, downplayed religious.

If, finally, we consider the genesis of the modern landscape image - which involves, *inter alia*, the spread of the aforementioned iconographical pockets to the landscape image in its entirety - it involves the jettisoning of any kind of religious function, in other words *the complete secularisation of the image*. As is pre-eminently demonstrated by Ambrogio Lorenzetti's panorama of the Sienese hinterland (1337-40; **PLATE 13**), a political image function here plays a crucial role (everything from nationalism and military propaganda through party politics and on to ideology of work and trade can provide incentive), but also all sorts of practical image functions - e.g. topographical views (**FIG. 8.10**), maps (**FIGS. 8.8-8.9**), scientific illustrations (**FIGS. 10.14-10.15**) - contribute on the periphery of the monumentality to the final evolutionary maturation of the landscape image. That this development, conversely, is promoted by the withdrawal of religion from the image is borne out in the 16th-century Reformation, when scepticism of religious images was counterbalanced by new specialised and more private image types such as genre, still life and landscape. It is from this bourgeois private function, albeit always in close interaction with politics and practice (and even also: religion), that the utmost fruit of the landscape image, the 19th-century autonomous landscape image, grows.

The iconic

Despite my attempt to cover the various epochs' landscape images as extensively as possible, it is true that I have had an eye on a specific set of image features and therefore might well have been able to overlook certain other features and their crystallisation in separate image genres. My attention has been focused on the evolution of *mimesis* - reconstruction on a surface of the visual impression - while more abstract or ornamental image types are displaced to the periphery. If we involve Charles S. Peirce's useful category of sign, the *icon*, and two of its subdivisions, the *image* and the *diagram*,[92] it could also be said that I make more of the image than the diagrammatic aspect of the pictorial space. Unlike the linguistic sign, the *symbol*, which according to Peirce is characterised by an arbitrary, i.e. convention-determined, relationship between the sign (*representamen*) and the *object* to which this sign refers - the word 'table' has nothing in common with the physical object: a table - a fundamental feature of the image sign, the icon, is that something of the object actually gets through into its depiction. This 'something' is a structural relationship and it is most visually expressed in the subdivision of the image (a mimetic

representation of the table), whereas the diagram filters out certain aspects in favour of a more abstract manifestation (e.g. a table composed of thin lines).

My claim that a given epoch is characterised by a certain pictorial space should thus not necessarily be understood as *all* of the epoch's images being completely controlled by this, for a number of them will often be more diagrammatic – not just ornamental zones, but also genres such as the coat of arms, vignette, signpost, topographical map, diverse illustrations, graffiti, etc. The claim should rather be understood as asserting that in *certain* areas of a culture one finds a pictorial space with a, for its time, maximum width of depth of field and a maximum Peircean image aspect, and that this pictorial space indicates a horizon of potential.

Is it then the case that the image genres which are more diagrammatic in relation to the 'front pictorial space' are leftover forms from earlier evolutionary stages, a kind of continuous cultural digestion? Seen in relation to the depth of field yardstick, the diagrammatic images actually often seem to rehabilitate traits from past stages: think of the surface-bound line drawings of Pompeian graffiti, which do not display the depth-creating illusionism of contemporaneous frescoes; or take early modernity's coat of arms which makes use of simplified pictograms rather than the newly-developed perspective. On the other hand, it is also a fact that it is actually not so very rare for depth of field to reach a new evolutionary stage in precisely a diagrammatic imagery. For example, it is in images from late antiquity, which otherwise in many ways 'return to' the tribal culture imagery of the northern countries, that the heavens become a valid ingredient of the depth of field, at the same time as the surroundings, as Riegl demonstrated, are directed towards an abstract spatiality to a greater extent than was the case in the body-bound pictorial art of antiquity. And even if Mesolithic rock paintings look more diagrammatic than their strikingly optical forerunners in the Palaeolithic period, it is nonetheless here that we first meet rudimentary indications of landscape and space.

These observations imply the need for a more nuanced elaboration of the concept of mimesis – and a further augmentation of Peirce's concepts: image and diagram – than I can supply here. I must content myself with the following comments: that an image has an optical-mimetic appearance does not necessarily mean that it is directed towards *all* phenomena within a given viewpoint, or, in other words, that the depth of field is here displayed in full. Conversely, an image that is expressed mainly diagrammatically can contain more information about the spatial relationships of the environment than a mimetic image directed towards the same environment, merely with a more selective vision. This is precisely the case with the Mesolithic rock paintings, which although less optical-mimetic than their Palaeolithic forerunners, on the other hand diagrammatically allow the image gaze to widen from

individual animals to landscape surroundings. It is therefore possible to note that historically the diagram has often acted as a type of outpost for the more mimetic image, an introductory digestion where new types of image ingredients are taken in and processed before they are ready to be converted into a more mimetic form.

Beyond the spectrum of variously sign-mediated spatialities which a given epoch represents – from diagrams to optical-mimetic images – I will also distinguish between degrees of spatiality within the optical-mimetic spectrum itself: although all optical-mimetic images from the same epoch may well entail *potentially* the same depth of field, this does not have to be manifested *in actu*. For example, modern perspectival images can be set in dark interiors or have a wall or shrubbery as background (FIG. II.19), by means of which the perspective's infinite depth of field can be sensed as potential, but is not so fully perceptible as when effectively manifested in a landscape image with a distant horizon (FIG. II.18). This distinction between potential and actual depth of field is of significance for the question of whether or not landscape images call for the legitimisation of the figures, as figures can often be waived in images with potential, but not actual depth of field (see chapters 1 and 6; PLATES 5 and 14). The distinction is equally useful for the theme rock- contra vegetation-dominated landscape images in antiquity and the Middle Ages, as the latter only thrive in a potential depth of field (see chapters 2 and 5; PLATE 5 and FIG. 2.5).

Moreover, a separate argumentation is also called for to demonstrate that the more developed optical-mimetic painting at all events actually involves a spatiality giving the illusion of depth. Strictly speaking, two-dimensional representation of depth presupposes the presence of phenomena with a recognisable spatial scope, in the most graphic form geometrical shapes, which can be arranged according to laws of linear perspective relating to foreshortening. So, how does the perception of depth behave if the image zone is filled with amorphous, non-geometric phenomena such as clouds, mist, darkness, shrubbery, mud and rocks – phenomena which are actually recurrent ingredients in the image category of 'landscape'? Does the dominance of such phenomena mean that the sense of depth is suspended and we are consigned to a fundamentally indeterminate spatiality? In the work of some French post-war thinkers and art historians – Merleau-Ponty, Lacan, Hubert Damisch, Didi-Huberman[93] – a sharp polarisation has arisen between, on the one hand, a rationalist perception of space controlled solely by lineary principles: geometry and linear perspective; on the other hand, a body-based and instinctive perception of space directed at the non-geometric accumulations of light and colour in the surrounding environment. In their perception, linear perspective spatiality entails the surroundings being subordinated to the subject that is placed in the centre of the field of vision, whereas the amorphous traces left by colours and light entail

a more receptive relationship to the world and accordingly one less controlled by consciousness.

For my thesis it is, of course, crucial that the two visual regimes, linear perspective and the light-colour interplay, are not as totally incompatible as the Frenchmen would have it. A case in support of this, aimed specifically at modern painting, will follow in chapters 8-9, whereas here I will turn to the macrohistorical angle. An account of the expansion of depth of field over the course of time entails, as mentioned, not merely the observation that the pictorial space in a more abstract sense can be structured by perspectival foreshortenings, but also – and inextricably linked to this – that it gradually absorbs more and more distant surroundings: earth formations, expanse of sky and, finally, the infinite environment with linear perspectival vanishing points and amorphous atmospheric phenomena. These atmospheric phenomena, as well as the first two distances of depth of field – earth formations and expanse of sky – could in a way be categorised as 'amorphous' domains beyond linear-perspectival definition, and yet we see that they are absorbed into the pictorial space under influence from experience of them as, respectively, 'distant', 'more distant' and 'most distant', i.e. in relation to a certain overarching recognition of their spatial depths. Even though many of modernity's landscape phenomena defy a precise metric spatial assessment, I would therefore claim that they still assume an advanced evolutionary conception of infinity and depth and can thereby be perceived in *complementarity* to the linear perspective: where the light-colour interplay represents the geometrically immeasurable infinity, the linear perspective approaches the measurable. I say "approaches" because we should actually also be sceptical of the Frenchmen's implicit assumption that simply because images contain objects of a geometric appearance, such as fields, buildings and interiors, this necessarily means that the space is controlled by well-defined spatial relationships. It is only on condition that we actually know the geometric features of the objects – and, for example, know that a corner of a house that appears to be right-angled is not an optical illusion for an obtuse angle – that they can be assessed in three dimensions. In other words, the range of depth of field is only in special cases a question of exact geometric reconstruction of the individual pictorial space. It is, above all, more accurately a matter of the image paradigm having absorbed certain phenomena, which via experience are perceived as distant or connected with the concept of infinity, be they of a geometric or non-geometric nature; and in my use of the word, the term *perspective* therefore covers both extremities (with linear perspective as specification of the perspective's geometrically constructed part, intuitive perspective specifying its colour- and light-mediated part).

VI. Image and sight

The observation that in time the image extends its gaze towards wider and wider expanses provokes another and particularly pressing question: how does this process relate to the *anatomical sight*, our actual use of the eye? Is it symptomatic of culture also intervening in the perception itself and causing the brain's structuring of the sense impressions to change with time? Or is it a matter that is utterly independent of sight and has exclusively to do with the culture-made norms for visual representation in different eras? We are here dealing with an enormously complex issue in the no-man's land between, on the one side, diverse disciplines pertaining mainly to the natural sciences, such as biology, medicine and cognition research, and, on the other side, various human and social sciences such as cultural anthropology, sociology, psychology and history. However interesting it might be to find an answer to this question, it is not a matter for my research and I will therefore again limit myself to some relatively straightforward comments based on the fragments of knowledge, above all from the human and social sciences, that I have at my disposal at this juncture.

On the one hand, it would probably be reasonably uncontroversial to state that the evolution of the image cannot – at least not in any simple one-to-one relationship – turn on a registration of changes in the actual everyday use of the eye. That rivers, trees and clouds are conspicuous by their absence in cave paintings can surely not mean that the Palaeolithic hunter could only catch sight of game and was blind to the surrounding forest or the rain clouds that were drawing together above him. Similarly, it seems unlikely that we in the age of spectacles perceive the environment more acutely and completely than our Stone Age ancestors.

On the other hand, it ought to be evident without too much accounting that the evolution of the image cannot be completely devoid of connection to sight perception. What the image can be said to approach over the course of time is a quite specific aspect of perception: the field of vision as experienced in an isolated moment. The eye's momentary field of focus is indeed extremely limited, but if this is compensated for by intermittent movements, the so-called *saccadic movements*, which piece together sight, the gaze from a specific position of the head can be said to cover a reasonably well-defined field, what the perceptual psychologist James J. Gibson has termed "the visual field".[94] Thus, the 19th-century fully-developed realistic images could be said to cover the visual field, as if it appeared sharply-delineated for the consciousness at a specific moment.

However, if the image in the course of time can be said to approach a freezing of this field, this is far from an approximation of the 'natural' way of seeing, as in its full function sight is stereometric rather than monocular, spherical rather than plane projected and, in addition, it occurs over time and in interaction with the

body, memory and the other senses. The amount of information to which sight potentially has access in its full function is termed by Gibson "the visual world", covering all phenomena in the spatial environment which interplay with light.

Exactly how consciousness becomes conversant with its sense impressions of this visual world is, however, a vexed question. Some scholars (e.g. Piaget) champion an interior arsenal of models, which consciousness builds up gradually based on its physical and social background knowledge, and which are tested experimentally in the specific situation. Adherents of the *Gestalt theory* (including Rudolf Arnheim and Gibson) picture, on the other hand, a more direct impact from the world to consciousness as the visual world stimulates notional images (*gestalts*), which are embedded in the brain from birth.

If we assume, as above, that sight, regardless of cultural background, occasions a spatial orientation with the same pragmatic essential qualities - distinction between near and far, assessment of the form and extent of bodies, impression of surface textural properties - it would seem to be reasonable, along with the Gestalt psychologists, to conceive of the existence of certain mainly biologically-determined gestalts, which translate quite directly from sense stimuli to images in consciousness. In this way all people - like the more complex mammals - are capable of sorting out a degree of invariance in mobile phenomena such as trees blown by the wind, animals in motion, water flowing in waves, by means of which the flow of the world is articulated in certain object units. At the same time it is, however, clear that humankind, unlike animals, also gestalt the environment in other and more ways than this pragmatic registration of surroundings, as this registration interacts with and is extended by more comprehensive and culturally-determined hypotheses as to how the world is organised.

It is the uncertain placing of the border between these two domains - the pragmatic registration of the surroundings and the culturally-determined hypotheses which overlie this registration - that makes it so difficult to give an opinion as to the extent to which the image refers to the procedure of *sight itself*, or if it rather tells us something about the culturally-determined *interpretation* of this procedure. Is cultural formation such an inextricable aspect of our consciousness that it influences perception right down at its very first encounter with the visual world? Or does it live a more discreet, secluded existence, which would make it meaningful to talk about a basic, phenomenological sight experience independent of culture?

The current study does not, as mentioned, cherish the ambition of clarifying this issue in depth, but simply assumes - while hopefully supplying empirical-theoretical evidence - that the evolution of pictorial space mirrors the evolution of consciousness, i.e. the culturally-determined interpretation of the sight process, however closely connected or separated these two domains might be. I will, however, cautiously present

the thought that the early phases of pictorial space – phases with low depth of field corresponding to an equivalent undeveloped self-consciousness – actually come close to certain aspects of sight's shaping of the environment, i.e. the more pragmatic and consciousness-independent spatial image. As the culturally formed self-consciousness and its expression, the depth of field of the image, develops, the image's attention is displaced if anything from the gestalt towards the visual field, i.e. towards consciousness's *momentary* visual impression of the environment. Paradoxically, it is in this fragmented approximation to the naked, non-shaped sensuality that the most alienated, abstracted and consciousness-reflective spatial image appears.

To be sure, the idea of pictorial realism has met with fierce opposition since the 1980s. Semiologist and post-structuralist art historians such as Norman Bryson and Mieke Bal have challenged the idea that the realistic style should in any objective sense get closer to the visual reality than any other style; for as realism, to the same extent as other styles, makes use of culturally-determined conventions, this closeness is allegedly illusionary.[95] Even though the attack on the idea of a natural realism, which without intermediary agency and symbolic significance merely 'stands for' reality, is, in itself, needed, I am of the opinion that in practice it misses its mark and in some cases ends in a dogmatic image scepticism, an iconophobia which is just as misleading as the contrasting 'naïve' realism.

In my opinion, it is completely correct that in the 19th century one finds images that are more realistic than any that had been seen previously, if by realism one understands a pictorial language which involves the fixing of momentary visual impressions seen from specific viewpoints. A consideration of the anatomy of the eye clearly shows that the momentary visual image appears as a projection on the retina of the rays of light that are refracted through the lens, and that this, in the Peircean sense, iconical transformation bears a striking similarity to the projection that underlies both the perspectival construction and its successor in the camera's photographic imprint (discussed in detail in chapter 9).

That Bryson and those who share his views have chosen to close their eyes to this fact is not least due to the derivation of their semiological terminology from French structuralism – i.e. Saussure's sign model – which, because it is based on studies of language and not images, is exclusively interested in the connection, determined by convention, between the carrier of meaning (*signifiant*) and the conceptual idea (*signifié*). Thereby, not only the potential structural similarity between these elements is excluded, but also – and disastrously when dealing with the mode of operation of sight and image – the correspondence between these elements and phenomena in the environment. This very lack is remedied, as mentioned, by Peirce, for in addition to his concept of sign having Saussure's as a subset (with *representamen=signifiant*; *interpretant=signifié*; and the *symbol* category as guarantor for meaning determined by

convention), his concept of sign also takes in the third part: the *object*, the imaginary or actual object to which the representamen refers. Furthermore, even though it is perfectly possible, the connection between these elements is not necessarily, as in Saussure, limited to a symbolic – convention-determined – connection; throughout the whole sign triad there may also run an *iconic*, including an *imagistic*, preservation of structure. It therefore approaches a worrying distortion of history when Bal and Bryson, in their eagerness to force through a cultural relativistic and solely socially constructed, i.e. convention-determined, art history, can claim: "First of all, any identification of icon and the entire domain of the visual is wrong."[96]

Instead of attacking the iconicity of realism, the opponents of 'naïve' realism ought rather to query the fundamental assumption that is etymologically mirrored by the term 'realism' itself: namely that reality, that which is real, can be universally said to consist of the environment to which we have access via the senses, and that an artistic fixing of this is 'objective', i.e. exempt from a semiotic or social dimension. As far as the reality concept, the real, is concerned, to a Plato, for example, it would be made up of precisely that which is found beyond the senses, and correspondingly the 20th century seems to take bearings from a reality concept that detaches the empirical concept from the modern nominalistic duality between the objective and the subjective in order to bring it into a common space with, on the one side, the body (phenomenology), on the other, the social and sign-controlled world (sociology, semiotics, etc.). To the best of my belief, this reality concept is not implemented by simply, as in the Saussurian tradition, sealing up the empirical material and turning it into a question purely of social construction – a move that is actually only the same as emphasising nominalism's subjective pole and expanding its subject to the entire social sphere. An alternative solution will, hopefully, be tendered in the current study, in which the symbolic dimension of an image is not limited to that determined by convention – as in derivatives from Saussurian semiotics or simply iconography – but, in addition, is manifested in the very character of iconicity, the time-bound and therefore historically-determined representation of the way in which the world is perceived.

VII. Image and word

The way in which the image binds meaning to itself, and how this process changes over the course of cultural evolution, could also be illustrated by a more searching comparison between image and word; between, in a Peircean sense, iconic and symbolic signs.

Regardless of how simple an image might be, it is *qua* icon given specificity, a stamp of identifiable circumstances, which the shortest sentence, the word, can

never possess. Take, for example, the concept 'bird'. As regards the word 'bird', its convention-determined link to the object prevents it possessing any information about the more explicit details of the bird. An image of a bird, on the other hand, will immediately make the creature more distinctive. We will know the shape of the bird's beak, to which side the beak is directed, the type of wings, etc. Nevertheless, the specificity of this image will never exist as an immaculate *what*, as it will always be dependent on semantic and stylistic conventions. If we look at the most extreme instance of the former dependence, the hieroglyph, we do not need, for example, to pay attention to the direction of the bird's beak or the type of wings, but can simply read the image as 'bird', in the same way as we ignore the shape of the letters in the word 'bird'. An increased problem of specificity arises, however, in connection with the style – the *how* by means of which the bird is shown. If the bird is covered with a stylised pattern of blue feathers, for example, does this mean that it should be perceived as a bird covered with feathers of a certain colour and shape; or, again, that the feathers merely allude to the generalised concept 'bird'? When is *what* replaced by *how*?

In my view, questions such as these cannot be answered without a well-developed image-evolutionistic model. Fortunately for the analysis, the degree of specificity of the images would appear to be closely connected with their depth of field: the intensification of depth of field from the Palaeolithic period to modernity quite simply involves a movement towards increased specificity. If we focus on the landscape image, its repertoire will therefore be restricted to fewer types in the premodern period. Does this restriction mean that a correspondingly lesser degree of meaning should be read from the specific characteristics, which despite everything are still found – that, for example, a background of rocks and trees should not be read as a concrete specification of place, but rather as a general hieroglyph meaning 'nature' or 'wilderness'? I would assume that we are indeed dealing with this kind of hieroglyphs, but that it nevertheless makes sense to interpret their specificity. Thus, interpretation does not relate to the individual landscape image, but to the paradigm of which it is a part, by which means it can be called iconological.

The development becomes more complicated in modernity, as the specificity must increasingly be taken literally, while it is more than ever before conditioned by style. On the one hand, the development denotes acceleration towards an almost unique specificity – Monet's haystacks in that particular morning light, enveloped in this particular mist. On the other hand, it is also revealed – through point of view, cropping, brushstrokes, etc. – *how* this very specific *what* has been captured; yes, *how* has quite simply become indistinguishable from *what*. In light of this unconditional accommodation of idiom to a never previously described empirical material, it is hardly surprising that image interpreters schooled in semiology have become

confused, but the dimension of meaning is still not salvaged by denying the extent to which the iconic sign formation has taken over in relation to the symbolic.

Considerations of the nature of the image medium in relation to the written word are therefore crucial to the question: how far, in a given period, do pictorial art and literature allow themselves to be contained by the same paradigm? Can we assume an *ut pictura poesis* or are the two media, if anything, conditioned by each their sub-paradigm? In the current context I will concentrate on the paradigms of pictorial art and can therefore only put forward vague ideas about the conduct of literature. From my scattered and unsystematic comparisons between images and literature of various periods, I have received the impression that the rules I observed in images were also to be found *in broad outline* in literature. There are no ardent, evocative descriptions of landscapes in the literature of antiquity, just as vertiginous impressions of the distance are absent. Nonetheless, one can come across a few specifications of place, which would be inconceivable in a contemporaneous landscape in pictorial art: for example, traces of time such as snow-clad mountains, or traces of cultivation such as ploughed fields.[97]

In order to explain these kinds of deviations in relation to the rules that I posit, one could indeed turn to the inbuilt specificity of the image. Because a painted ploughed field denotes a specific ploughed field placed in a specific location in the pictorial space, in antiquity it will claim an attention that will make it symbolically-loaded in a different way to when it is mentioned *en passant* in a literary description. As Lessing observed in *Laocoön* (1766), his still surprisingly valid paragone of poetry and painting, the claim for decorous beauty and exclusion of ugly and painful details is in fact much bigger in visual art than in its literary equivalents, precisely because the visual rendering makes the object graphically present, whereas the literary mention merely hints at it.[98] This is, of course, especially true in classical art, but even if we look at a juxtaposition of contemporary representations of still taboo subjects such as death, violence and sex, for example on film and in novels, we will see that our arts are still very much governed by this tendency.

The landscape variety of visual specificity has thus to be part of a well-developed paradigm in order to be relieved of its iconographical burden: a paradigm that does not emerge until modernity when the status of the ploughed field, as we have seen, is shifted from iconography to iconology. Since the modern landscape paradigm *as such* is concerned with the specific (specific places seen from specific viewpoints at specific times), the ploughed field slips to the periphery of attention, to the depth of field. But it should be stressed, however, that a satisfactory clarification of this issue will require a very different systematism than I can provide here – a systematism which, besides comprehensive historical literary material, will require a well-developed semiological and semiotic apparatus.

VIII. Concluding remarks: the landscape image in literature

As a consequence of the interdisciplinary character of this study, my landscape analyses will mainly be syntheses of observations from disciplines other than art history: especially history of religion, history of science, psychology, sociology, anthropology and philosophy. Despite a not insignificant body of literature dealing with landscape depiction from the various epochs, it is only in recent decades that art historians have started to reflect more systematically on the significance of the concept of landscape as such. The reason for this is not difficult to make out: as we have seen, interpretation of landscape requires the involvement of forms of meaning other than iconography, as well as reflections on culture's mode of operation; but this way of thinking has been disputed since scientifically valid iconology in the post-war period has been identified with microhistorical iconology. The development, of course, breaks up the foundation of the iconology concept – the idea of a broader history of thought – and, as Jan Białostocki noted in 1963, most iconologists were actually more occupied with iconography than with iconology.[99]

There is much to suggest that intellectuals at the culmination of modernity in the 18th and 19th centuries actually had a better understanding of the concept of landscape – an arch-modern symptom – than the majority of art historians in the 20th century. In the wake of Alexander Baumgarten's pinpointing of the aesthetic domain, Friedrich Schiller in "Über naïve und sentimentalische Dichtung" was surprised that "one finds so little trace among them [the Greek people] of the *sentimental* interest with which we moderns are attached to the scenes and characters of nature."[100] With the Greeks, unlike we "moderns", there is no sensitiveness, no sweet wistfulness, no fervour, and their descriptions of nature do not differ from other kinds of description, including mechanical. The reason for this, as stated by Schiller, is in principle the same as the thesis of the current study: modern humans have become distanced from nature, whereas the Greeks were still a part of it. Sentimentality presupposes such a reflective distance that "[o]ur feeling for nature is like the feeling of an invalid for health."[101] And yet Schiller has to value this distance as it is also the premise for our freedom.

While the insights gleaned from Schiller and his successor Hegel survive to a greater or lesser extent in the work of cultural analysts such as Carl Gustav Carus, Alexander von Humboldt and Ruskin in the 19th century, understanding among art historians dwindled in the 20th century. Riegl is already so late a representative that his *Kunstwollen*, as implied, would seem to be a somewhat autonomous specimen, an easy target for condescending characterisations such as Gombrich's "a ghost in the machine". As far as the subject of landscape interpretation was concerned, stimulus

from other disciplines was necessary before this reluctance to address an evolutionistic history of thought was challenged. One stimulus was Joachim Ritter's previously mentioned essay of 1962, in which the 18th-19th-century experience is taken up again and placed in a sociological framework. The first synthesis of Ritter's observations with art history as such occurs in Renate Fechner's *Natur als Landschaft* (1986); despite a somewhat paraphrasing presentation, Fechner can be said to provide probably the best analysis to date of the landscape's status in Western pictorial art from antiquity to the early modern era. Independently of the Schiller-Ritter line of evolutionistic thought, and instead informed by Marxist ideas of cultural development, Denis Cosgrove (1984) similarly considers landscape to be a way of viewing specifically linked to the emergence of capitalism between the 15th and 19th centuries.[102] Though omitting a more precise demonstration of how this linkage operates, Cosgrove's ideas are thoroughly compatible with the thesis pursued here.

Apart from these well-reflected studies, however, a shortage of serviceable theories has been a problem for otherwise impressive books such as the classic work on the subject, Kenneth Clark's charming *Landscape into Art* (1949). The book is, as always with Clark, bristling with sensitive observations, but the categories in which they are organised – "Landscape of Fact" versus "Landscape of Fantasy", for example – unfortunately seem a little home-made. To an even greater extent, Götz Pochat's monumental stocktaking of 1973 lacks theoretical awareness, indeed any kind of organisational thinking, and accordingly remains a mountain of detached – albeit often useful – information.[103] Although structuring his likewise sumptuously learned *Landscape and Memory* (1995) according to potentially apposite divisions – the exclusive wilderness categories of wood, water and rock – Simon Schama also seemingly fails, and strangely so, to crack the iconological code of landscape.[104]

More incisive on a reflective level, albeit still without an actual methodology, is an earlier work by Max J. Friedländer, *Essays über die Landschaftsmalerei und andere Bildgattungen* (1947). Friedländer points out that landscape is concerned with spatial context, and that both – landscape and space – are only realised at a relatively advanced degree of civilisation. Primitive peoples, like children, represent mountains, trees and rivers as isolated things, whereas the same phenomena in an actual landscape appear as elements of an indissoluble wickerwork.[105] In his more systematically reflected book (1993) on Albrecht Altdorfer's landscape images, the earliest autonomous examples in the West, Christopher Wood extends this line of thought, seeing in modern landscape painting a total collapse of a previously fundamental distinction: the distinction between *ergon* and *parergon*, work and by-work, figure and landscape.[106] With this tool in hand, it seems difficult to continue believing that the corpo-centric Renaissance could be identical with landscape-fixated modernity.

It is my intention here to synthesise and build upon all the aforementioned

sources. The possibly most groundbreaking areas I contribute in relation to the art literature to date are: [1] the systematic description of the space-representational evolution of the landscape image; [2] the interpretation of landscape paradigms pertaining to the evolution of cosmology and consciousness, particularly the reading of pre-historical images and of the rocky grounds and skies of pre-modern images; and finally [3] the sociological interpretation of landscape paradigms, based on the distinction between agriculturally cultivated and uncultivated landscapes and their relation to the Golden Age myth and social structure.

Innovative analyses are perhaps especially needed in the case of pre-modern landscape images. As regards both the 'impressionistic' and the theory-based art historians, there has long been a danger of making such analyses a blind spot in the zone of interpretation. The impressionist naïvely compares realism with feeling for nature, and as these landscapes are unrealistic they must consequently be scenery without content. Paradoxically, the theoretician reaches the same conclusion, as he or she assumes, conversely, that the pre-modern human had such an existential relationship to nature that this relationship came to expression everywhere else than in the landscape of the image. As I hope to show, however, the pre-modern landscape images – despite their often simple appearances – are packed with iconological meaning.

I would be the first to acknowledge the hazards of this study. Anyone who turns to 'foreign' disciplines for the answer to questions within his or her own discipline – what we call being interdisciplinary – will often end up in a no-man's land where the 'foreigners' will look upon you as an amateur, colleagues as a defector. In addition, the extensive chronological and geographical scale has meant that I have often had to take a lenient view of customary requirements of familiarity with the literature. As long as one moves in a familiar subject area, i.e. a subject area with boundaries sanctioned by tradition, it is possible to maintain the illusion of having an overall grasp of the relevant literature and being able to weigh up the tradition pertaining to the history of the discipline. As a consequence of the macrohistorical character of the project, however, my reading has of necessity been selective, and I have often had to pass by internal discussions within the specialist subjects.

That I nevertheless trust in the project's good purpose is due to the morphological consistency of the thesis: the evolutionary and paradigmatic patterns of the areas brought into the discussion, and their transverse structural agreement. It will without doubt be possible to nuance and elaborate most of my claims, and yet I am of the conviction that they will prove to be fundamentally viable.

Jacob Wamberg

Landscape as World Picture

Tracing Cultural Evolution in Images

VOLUME I

From the Palaeolithic Period to the Middle Ages

Translated by Gaye Kynoch

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