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“A work of art is an object that
necessitates contemplation”.
Latency of visual studies within
the Vienna School of Art History?

Abstract

This article investigates a research method of the so-called Vienna School of Art History, mainly its transformation by Max Dvořák around the First World War. The article suggests the possible influence of Georg Simmel's philosophy on Dvořák in this time, evident mainly in Dvořák's interpretation of Pieter Bruegel the Elder's art, written by Dvořák in 1920 and published posthumously in 1921. This another view on the Vienna School of Art History is then researched in writings on Pieter Bruegel the Elder by Dvořák's students Hans Sedlmayr and Charles de Tolnay when Tolnay extended Dvořák's thinking and Sedlmayr challenged its premises – both Tolnay and Sedlmayr thus in the same time interpreted Bruegel's art differently, even though they were both Dvořák's students. The article then suggests a possible interpretative relationship of the Vienna School of Art History after its transformation by Max Dvořák with today's approaches to art (history), mainly with the so-called visual studies.

Keywords: Max Dvořák, Vienna School of Art History, Georg Simmel, Visual Studies, Charles de Tolnay, Hans Sedlmayr.

Introduction

In Max Dvořák's text on the art of Pieter Bruegel the Elder, written in 1920 and published posthumously in 1921,¹ a reference to Georg Simmel's interpretation of

1 M. Dvořák, *Pieter Bruegel der Ältere*, Wien, 1921. Max Dvořák was born in 1874 in Roudnice in Central Bohemia, he started to study history at Charles-Ferdinand University in Prague, then

Michelangelo from 1910 might be found,² which can indicate Simmel's influence on Dvořák's reading of Pieter Bruegel the Elder's art. This hypothesis can lead us to a different understanding of Dvořák's art-historical method emerging in the time of World War I,³ as a starting-point of an approach to art history rooted in the so-called Vienna School of Art History,⁴ but with indications similar to today's ways of interpreting visual arts, diverted from modern art history toward visual studies.⁵ Following and, so to speak, having in the peripheral vision recent Sjoerd van Tuinen's take on Mannerism as a concept related to art history as well as to philosophy after transformation of both disciplines mostly after the 1980s,⁶ thus when also Arthur Danto's and Hans Belting's seminal concepts of the end of art and art history were published,⁷ and when theories of Bildwissenschaft and visual studies started to appear,⁸ this study opens a possibility of another – and most importantly much earlier – concept of art history aimed at other than formal or iconographical concept of visual art.

Van Tuinen, in his aspiration to “reconnect ... systematic sense of mannerism with its art historical sense,” when, “mannerism is a concept of becoming specific to art, occurring in the 16th century qua historical “style”, it is not limited to art”,⁹ overlooks Mannerism as it was formulated by Max Dvořák, who was the first one who came up with this concept in the sense used in the modern history of art of

he transferred to Vienna University to the Institut für österreichische Geschichtsforschung in 1894. There he became interested in art history and attended the lectures of Franz Wickhoff. In 1905 Dvořák took over an assistant professorship after Alois Riegl, and in 1909, after Wickhoff's death, Dvořák became a full professor and he stayed at the Vienna University until 1921 when he collapsed during one of his lectures. In the first phase of his professional career as an art historian Dvořák built on Riegl's and Wickhoff's method by searching for evolutionary principles in art; however, in the face of the approach of World War I he altered his method to focus more on the inner-spirit of artworks. See P. Betthausen, P. H. Feist, C. Fork, eds., *Metzler Kunstshistoriker Lexikon*, 2. Auflage, Stuttgart – Weimar, 2007, pp. 68–71.

2 M. Dvořák, „Pieter Bruegel der Ältere“, in: Idem, *Kunstgeschichte als Geistesgeschichte. Studien zur abendländischen Kunstentwicklung*, Leipzig, 1924, pp. 217–257, cit., p. 220.

3 This thesis of Dvořák's reading of Bruegel's art through the notion of collapse of the the known world in the World War I, aimed at Dvořák's connection to Alois Riegl's art-historical method and its relation to early phenomenology, was elaborated by the author of this study in: T. Murár, „Je-li umělecká forma vtělením duchovního vztahu ke světu. Max Dvořák a umění Pietra Bruegela staršího“, *Umění LXVI*, 2018, pp. 458–465.

4 See: M. Rampley, *The Vienna School of Art History. Empire and the Politics of Scholarship, 1847–1918*, Pennsylvania, 2013.

5 See e. g. J. Elkins, *Visual Studies: A Skeptical Introduction*, New York, 2003.

6 Sjoerd van Tuinen, „The Late and the New: Mannerism and Style in Art History and Philosophy“, in: S. van Tuinen, S. Zepke, eds., *Art History after Deleuze and Guattari*, Belgium, 2017, pp. 145–163.

7 Arthur C. Danto, „The End of Art“, in: B. Lang, ed., *The Death of Art*. New York, 1984, pp. 5–35. – H. Belting, *Das Ende der Kunstgeschichte* München, 1984.

8 H. Bredekamp, „Bildwissenschaft“, in: U. Pfisterer, ed., *Metzler Lexikon Kunstwissenschaft*, 2. Auflage, Stuttgart, 2011, pp. 72–75.

9 van Tuinen (note 6), p. 146

the 20th century.¹⁰ I will not go into detail here how Dvořák’s concept of Mannerism was formulated, but I want to show the interconnection between early modern philosophy and art history on the example of Dvořák’s interpretation of Pieter Bruegel the Elder’s art. In my opinion, the main reason for leaving Dvořák’s thinking out of van Tuinen take on Mannerism as a broader intellectual concept is because Dvořák’s connection to philosophical thinking is not in general researched by the historiography of art history.¹¹

How I will show, Dvořák’s interpretation of Bruegel may have been influenced by Georg Simmel’s thinking, also apparent in thinking of Dvořák’s student Charles de Tolnay – therefore this art-historical method does not need to be limited only to Dvořák himself. At the end of the study, I will propose the possibility of how this half-forgotten legacy of the Vienna School of Art History, philosophically rooted, may come closer to today’s takes on visual arts.

Max Dvořák and Georg Simmel

Dvořák as the first scholar saw Bruegel as a European artist who was influenced by Italian painting¹² when he based his thesis on the thought of the artist as compression of spiritual and intellectual forces of the era: “There is never a leading, groundbreaking artist outside the intellectual wholeness of his time, and if there are threads that connect him with his time, which are not visible to us, it means that we are not sufficient enough in the conception of either his art or his age”.¹³ The Mannerism of the 16th century, of which representative Bruegel according to Dvořák was, brought back restrained “inner” feelings of the human spirit that were newly expressed in the human creativity,¹⁴ which Dvořák explained through his articulation of duality between “naturalism” and “idealism”.¹⁵

10 See: W. Bařus, „Max Dvořák betrachtet Tintoretto oder über den Manierismus“, *Ars* XLIV, 2011, pp. 26–43. – H. H. Aurenhammer, „Max Dvořák. Tintoretto und die Moderne“, *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* XLIX, 1996, pp. 9–39.

11 Attempts of course can be found, see e.g. J. Vojvodík, „A World of Purely Artistic Conception and a Universal Art of the Spirit: Max Dvořák and Karel Teige between Phenomenology and Surrealism“, *Word and Sense* 24, 2015, pp. 25–41. – M. Rampley, „Max Dvořák. Art history and the crisis of Modernity“, *Art History* XXVI, 2003, pp. 214–237. – H. H. Aurenhammer, “Inventing ‘Mannerist Expressionism’: Max Dvořák and the History of Art as History of the Spirit”, in: K. A. Smith, ed., *The Expressionist Turn in Art History. A Critical Anthology*, Burlington, 2014, pp. 187–208.

12 Dvořák (note 2), pp. 219–220.

13 Ibid., p. 220: „Nie steht ein führender, bahnbrechender Künstler jenseits der geistigen Gesamtlage seiner Zeit, und wenn uns die Fäden, die ihn mit ihr verbinden, nicht sichtbar sind, so besagt dies, daß wir in der Auffassung entweder seiner Kunst oder des Zeitalters nicht tief genug gedungen sind.“ Whether it is not stated otherwise, the translations are by the author of this study.

14 Ibid., pp. 221–223.

15 J. Bakoř, „Max Dvořák – a neglected re-visionist“, *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 53, Wien, 2004, pp. 55–72, cit. pp. 61–63.

This concept has been developed by him since 1914¹⁶, Dvořák at first observed in work of the late 13th and late 14th century artists, how it is possible to read in his university lectures at the Institute of Art History in Vienna from 1915.¹⁷ Later Dvořák articulated this duality as traceable already since the beginning of the 13th century:

The inner development of medieval art resulted in a division, not necessarily between naturalism and antinaturalism, but rather a dissension between what is known by means of concepts and what is experienced by means of subjective observation. This discord was based upon a fundamental question of philosophic position which occupied the entire Middle Ages in every sphere of intellectual and spiritual endeavor and which was given formal expression in the “conflict of universals”.¹⁸

Dvořák thus since 1914 constituted a method of art history as a research based on an inner-formation of an artwork as a unique reality, which is created upon the two-fold relationship between the artistic reality as an inner-transformation of the experienced world (principal is the spiritual re-formulation of the world through the contact with nature) and the artistic reality as the widely common intellectual conceptualization of the world (principal is the idea through which the world is constituted).¹⁹ It is this methodological transformation of Dvořák’s art-historical thinking that Josef Vojvodík connects to Edmund Husserl’s notion of inner-subjectivity as the possibility to re-construct the (European) pre-war consciousness: “The trust in a “hidden force” of the cognitive subjectivity is inherent to Husserl’s transcendental idealism (Husserl likes to use the notion of “subjectivity of experience/experiencing” [Erlebnissubjektivität]), as well as to Dvořák’s spiritually-historical mode of art history with its subjectivization of art”.²⁰

16 Ibid., p. 63.

17 „Im Quattrocento wurde auch sehen an Stelle des gotischen Idealtypus ein weltlicher Typus geschaffen; aber damals war es nur ein einzelner Typus. Hier wurde ein allgemein menschlicher, poetischer Typus geschaffen, das auf die Phantasie eingewirkt hat. [...] Giotto eine realistische Szene ins Uebernatürliche übertragen hat, Lionardo dagegen eine übernatürliche Begebenheit in eine künstlerisch poetische Realität verwandelt hat.“ Archive of the Institute of Art History, University of Vienna, The Estate of Max Dvořák, Box 6, Notes to Lecture on *Idealismus und Realismus in der Kunst der Neuzeit*, Winter Semeste/1916.

18 M. Dvořák, *Idealism and Naturalism in Gothic Art*, trans. by Randolph J. Klawiter, Indiana, 1967, p. 105. Dvořák through this art understanding articulated an art-historical approach separated from Riegl’s method, when he emphasized the role of the man in the art (historical) creation, Ibid., p. 123: “Only on the basis of a clear knowledge of the historical particularities of the underlying principles in various times and places, individualities conditioned by these circumstances, can the way to a historical understanding of the artistic phenomena of by-gone periods be found.” The original text was published in 1918, see: M. Dvořák, „Idealismus und Naturalismus in der gotischen Skulptur und Malerei“, *Historische Zeitschrift* 119, 1918, pp. 1–62, 185–246.

19 Ibid., pp. 15–76.

20 J. Vojvodík, „‘Fading, Fading...’: Ztráta, vzkříšení a dějiny umění jako palingeneze: K umělecko-historickému myšlení Maxe Dvořáka na pozadí fenomenologie jeho doby, in: K. Svatoňová, K. Krtilová, eds., *Mizení. Fenomény, mediální praktiky a techniky na prahu zjevného*, Praha, 2017,

In continuity to this methodological transformation, Dvořák in his text on Bruegel from 1920 diagnosed a collapse of the certainty in the objectively comprehended truths and he emphasized an inward force of the human as the possibility how to overcome this uncertainty and which is, from the art historical point of view, expressed in particular works of art.²¹ Dvořák showed that in Bruegel's art a turn from religious dogmas and metaphysical truths toward the human as the creator of the meaning of one's being is evident. It means that, according to Dvořák, in Bruegel's art the change of the spiritual life from the idea of the God in heaven to the God in the human is traceable – therefore, the concept of the upper truth is traded for the inner life of the individual.

This moment of overcoming God toward the human being in Bruegel's art Dvořák stated as follows:

Bruegel was the first one to whom realistic scenes of ordinary people were not only an external staging apparatus but rather the measure of the human and as a source for study and knowledge of the drives, infirmities, passions, customs, habits, thoughts and feelings that dominate man. Not as self-sufficient individuals who have taken the place of ecclesiastical and profane ideals, rather the figures who can be regarded as representatives of this plurality. [...] The depiction of the human mass belonged to the essential features of Christian art; while crowd was in it either merely an echo of higher-level events which cause was beyond the common life or a means of an increase of the external truthfulness and realism of the presentation, Bruegel introduced into art what modern writers call the folk-soul: the psychical life itself in its peculiarity and autonomy, in its anthropological conditionality and cultural-historical factuality and thus a quite new concept of the inner truth of the human description.²²

With such reading of the (historical) role of the human, Dvořák stands close to thoughts not only of early phenomenology but also of Georg Simmel. In his last

pp. 155–202, cit. p. 179: „Důvěra ve ‚skrytou moc‘ poznávající subjektivitu je vlastní stejně tak Husserlovu transcendentálnímu idealismu (Husserl užívá s oblibou pojem ‚subjektivita prožitku/prožívání‘ [Erlebnissubjektivität]), jako i Dvořákovu duchovně-dějinnému modelu dějin umění s jeho subjektivizací umění.“

21 Ibid., p. 180

22 „Bruegel war der erste, dem realistische Volksszenen nicht nur ein äußerer Inszenierungsapparat waren, sondern dem das Leben selbst als Maßstab des Menschlichen und als Quelle des Studiums und der Erkenntnis der die Menschen beherrschenden Triebe, Gebrechen, Leidenschaften, Sitten, Gewohnheiten, Gedanken und Empfindungen galt. Nicht um einzelne Individuen, die als Ganzes an Stelle der kirchlichen und profanen Idealgestalten getreten ist, oder um Gestalten, die als Vertreter dieser Vielheit angesehen werden können. [...] Die Darstellung der Menschenmasse gehörte zu den wesentlichen Zügen der christlichen Kunst; während sie jedoch bis dahin entweder nur ein Echo von Begebenheiten höheren Grades war, deren Ursache über ihr normales Leben hinausging, oder ein Mittel die äußere Wahrscheinlichkeit und Wirklichkeitswirkung der Darstellung zu erhöhen, führte Bruegel in die Kunst ein, was von neueren Schriftstellern als Volksseele bezeichnet wurde: das psychische Eigenleben einer breiten Volksschicht in seiner Eigenart und Autonomie, in seiner anthropologischen Bedingtheit und kulturgeschichtlichen Tatsächlichkeit und damit einen ganz neuen Begriff der inneren Wahrheit der Menschenschilderung.“ Dvořák (note 2), pp. 219–220.

book, *The View of Life: Four Metaphysical Essays*, published in 1918, he reflected on the dynamics and statics of life, thereby followed up on his previous texts, including the one on Friedrich Nietzsche and Arthur Schopenhauer from 1907.²³ For Simmel, life was as an “unlimited continuity” that requires (illusionary) constant “forms” to exist – forms such as social institutions, ethics, or religion. However, according to Simmel, the moment any such “forms” are created, the dynamics of their inner life tends to erode them:²⁴ Simmel discovered the need for “life more than life”, meaning life as creativity beyond the “forms” that we create, which is a sharper version of Nietzsche’s concept of “amor fati”: “Just as Schopenhauer recognizes only the negation of life as an absolute value, so Nietzsche acknowledges only one thing: Life”.²⁵

According to Simmel, the principal manifestation of this occurs in art, which, because it cannot be circumscribed by any “form”, tends to move beyond its principles using its inner-subjectivity and never-ending creative “force”. Simmel thus highlighted Nietzsche’s attempt to re-evaluate the historically given concepts (forms) that Nietzsche tried to amplify by accelerating individual self-expression through one’s personal experience of the world: “Nietzsche’s concept of life reveals such subsumption of inner processes under a single general purpose that coordinates every individual. Thus, Nietzsche regards life as an absolute value, the essentially important thing in the manifestation of existence”.²⁶

Simmel thus took up Nietzsche’s endeavor to move beyond objectively constituted reality and he believed the evolutionary explanation for aspects of life to have been forced upon the inner life of individuals²⁷; he regarded the “forms” of life, which tend to explain themselves in the terms of their systems (the economy, erotica, aesthetics, etc.) as being too narrow to grasp the complexity of life.²⁸ Based on Schopenhauer’s understanding of art as bypassing and eroding the individual “will” that determines life, Simmel also understood a work of art to be a unique experience, because every work of art creates its own (inner) space and it exists independently in (linear) time: “The momentary character of aesthetic imagination does not prohibit it from being basically beyond time, because the temporal relation, which fixes each moment between preceding and succeeding moments, is alien to pure content. Aesthetic elevation is independent of now or then, and of a here or a there”.²⁹ This aspect of spatial and momentary aesthetic contemplation of an artwork that creates its terms of existence led Simmel to believe that, “a work of art is an object that necessitates contemplation, and an artistic genius is a man

23 G. Simmel, *Schopenhauer und Nietzsche. Ein Vortragszyklus*, Leipzig, 1907.

24 G. Simmel, *Lebensanschauung. Vier metaphysische Kapitel.*, München – Leipzig, 1922, pp. 20–23.

25 G. Simmel, *Schopenhauer and Nietzsche*, trans. by H. Loiskandl, D. Weinstein, M. Weinstein, Chicago, 1991, p. 136.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 76.

27 *Ibid.*, p. 75.

28 *Ibid.*.

29 *Ibid.*, pp. 77, 78.

who is more perfectly and inclusively able to free himself from domination by the will than are others”.³⁰

To free oneself, according to Simmel, there is a need to go “beyond” oneself (to erode the given “forms”), in the meaning to comprehend the self’s inner spirit to understand its true force to create. In this concept, the “reality” does not lay in the “representation” of it, rather in the “creation” of it. Therefore, there is more to life than it might be seen by the “common” sense. Simmel was thus convinced that true artists should create art based on experience with reality, not duplicate the reality by representing it. By this notion Simmel took on Nietzsche’s task to surpass the objectively constituted reality and considered the evolutionary model for explanation of spheres of life as forced upon the inner life of an individual,³¹ and emphasized Nietzsche’s attempt to re-evaluate the historically given concepts (forms) that he tried to wide by the acceleration of the individual self-expression through his or her experience with the world:

Whereas Schopenhauer formulates a division between the singular, accidental, and individual occurrence of historical material, and the value-laden and extratemporal general idea, Nietzsche transcends this division by transposing values – which have been developed at the culmination of historic life in the evolution of our species – into the sphere of the absolute and into the regions of the ought.³²

This understanding of an inner-experience that is split as well as intertwined by the passing of the happened and awaiting of the upcoming is on one side close to the retention and protention of the internal time consciousness developed by Husserl,³³ and it can also be evident in the art-historical thinking of Hans Tietze,³⁴ whose methodological thinking was deeply influenced by Dvořák. In 1925 Tietze stated:

What is past, what is present? Each work of art is somehow forged at the moment that gave birth to it, and only in this moment of becoming is work of art fully swelled by

30 Ibid., p. 77.

31 Ibid., p. 75.

32 Ibid., p. 137.

33 M. Petříček, *Filosofie en noir*, Praha, 2018, pp. 206–233. – E. Husserl, *Phenomenology of Internal Time Consciousness*, trans. by J. Churchill, Indiana, 1964.

34 Tietze was at the Vienna University a student of Franz Wickhoff, Alois Riegl, and Julius von Schlosser and he wrote his dissertation in 1903 under Wickhoff on the topic of developmental problems of the Middle Ages painting. He thus started his art historical research under the view of Wickhoff and Riegl, in the way that in history is possible to trace an immanent progression of art without any lapses. However, then Tietze moved his articulation in another way, mostly under the influence of Dvořák’s new approach, in which the main focus started to be given to the work of art as a vehicle of its meaning. U. Wendland, *Biographisches Handbuch deutschsprachiger Kunsthistoriker im Exil. Leben und Werk der unter dem Nationalsozialismus verfolgten und vertriebenen Wissenschaftler*, Teil 2, L–Z, München, 1999, pp. 689–690. – E. Lachnit, *Die Wiener Schule der Kunstgeschichte und die Kunst ihrer Zeit: zum Verhältnis von Methode und Forschungsgegenstand am Beginn der Moderne*, Wien, 2005, p. 99.

the breath of its time, filled by the spirit of its creator; however, the work of art also in the moment of its birth begins to die. ... Old and new art are one, the fundamental difference does not lie in the matter, ... but lies in the constitutive feature demanded by different attitudes of the beholder: the one is old, the other is new.³⁵

Tietze asked after the role of the artist in the process of the creation of the artwork, which is being trans-temporally communicated from the time of its origin to the present of its research, rather than after the transformations of the art “will” in the course of history.³⁶ In this sense, Tietze comprehended “art” as a trans-temporal phenomenon which is being individualized through the work of art in the artists’ creation force, toward its perception by (timeless as well as time-determined) spectator. Tietze thus in his method researched art as the process of the human inner-feeling and as its expression on one side, on the other side as a concept of “historized” process to be able to understand the art’s trans-temporal and creative “forces”.³⁷

Tietze in this manner, between the early phenomenology and expression of the unity of life in artwork eroding the self-explaining system of (formal) art history, formulated Dvořák’s approach when he reviewed Dvořák’s papers collected by Johannes Wilde and Karl Maria Swoboda in 1924:

Dvořák has overcome this accepted conception [of Wickhoff’s and Riegl’s art-historical method, note by TM], and has derived art from its eternal determination as an ongoing, inexhaustible, never-ending guarantee of the creative force of humanity, as an irrepla-

35 „Was ist Vergangenheit, was ist Gegenwart? Jedes Kunstwerk ist irgendwie an dem Moment geschmiedet, der es gebar, nur in diesem Augenblick des Werdens ist es voll geschwellt vom Atem seiner Zeit, ganz erfüllt vom Geiste seines Schöpfers, in seiner Geburtsstunde beginnt es zu sterben. [...] Alte und neue Kunst sind eines, der fundamentale Unterschied liegt nicht in der Materie, [...] er liegt vielmehr in der konstitutiven Merkmal jeder der beiden Arten von Kunst geforderten Verschiedenheit der Einstellung des Beschauers: die eine ist alt, die andere ist neu.“ H. Tietze, *Lebendige Kunstwissenschaft*, Wien, 1925, pp. 9, 14.

36 R. Marchi, „Hans Tietze and art history as Geisteswissenschaft in early twentieth-century Vienna“, *Journal of Art Historiography* 5, 2011, <https://arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2011/12/marchi.pdf>, p. viii, 9. 4. 2018.

37 Tietze (note 35), pp. 14–17. The aspect of understanding to art as the self-expression of the artist, who is being temporally determined as well as is at the same time driven by the artistic “forces” (to create inner-formulation of the artistic reality), can be also obvious in Tietze’s later remarks, when he was searching for the meaning and importance of the modern art. He understood modern art as a part of certain developmental laws of art in history, as the method of the Vienna School of Art History since Riegl suggested, however, he modified this concept by the idea of the individuality of artist as the force of art-making, impinged by intellectual and felt circumstances. „Der Sinn der Kunst ist heute derselbe, den sie zu allen Zeiten hatte: durch stete Verfolgung und Weiterbildung ihrer besonderen künstlerischen Probleme die Allgemeinheit durch persönliche und sachliche Werte zu bereichern ... Der Künstler schafft aus seiner lebendigen Ganzheit heraus, seine zentrale Kraft ist für alle peripheren Äußerungen entscheidend; Erlebensfähigkeit und Erleben sind für seine schöpferische Tätigkeit die Grundlagen, die keine noch so gesteigerte und geschulte Geschicklichkeit zu ersetzen vermag.“ H. Tietze, *Die Kunst in unserer Zeit*, Wien, 1930, pp. 22–26.

ceable piece of their general spirituality. ... Therefore, art may be considered to grant particularly fruitful information while regarding an intellectual history; it blends the external and the inner that stimulates and moves people, into a unique synthesis. ... Art, before it was researched by Dvořák, was for him an experience.³⁸

According to Tietze, Dvořák was interested in the artwork beyond its representation by going inward its “spiritual” meaning, because those artworks led the art history – and in Dvořák’s late art-historical thinking that means also humanity – “upwards”. In this view we can read Dvořák’s interpretation of Bruegel in a way that Bruegel in his art overcame the idealization of art as well as the human beyond any pre-given “truths” and he connected both of these aspects in his art thanks to the comprehension of the world (nature) as the primary source, and thus, according to Dvořák, Bruegel enabled to see life as an artistic articulation.³⁹

Dvořák thus stressed a “spiritual” force of art-making, the force to create art beyond the commonality of the time through the primary experience of the artist with the reality. How Dvořák remarked: “by Bruegel ... [the] purpose consisted in the artistic and poetic processing of experiences, beyond the immediate entry of the facts, toward the truth and uplifting significance of a higher order of the image of reality, of nature and the real life”.⁴⁰

We might think thus Dvořák extended the concept of art history beyond the systematic approach and interpreted art as the spiritual conditions that were made manifest in the work of art as an integral whole and as an expression of the artist’s inner experience. Bruegel, as Dvořák suggested, was, therefore, an artist who took the human individuality from its formal representation and directed his attention not outwardly to reveal the individual’s time-space surroundings, but, on the contrary, towards the inner-formulation of the separated world; rather than copy reality, the artist created a new reality out of his own experience of the world and creative force. In other words, in Dvořák’s reading, Bruegel expressed in his art the inner spiritualization of his experience of the world in the work of art, in the same way that Simmel understood “life forms” as the manifestation of existence.

38 „Dvorak [hat] diese übernommene Auffassung überwunden und die Kunst aus ihrer ewigen Bestimmung als einer fortlaufender, unerschöpflichen, nie endenden Gewährleistung der schöpferischen Kraft der Menschheit, als ein unersetzliches Stück ihrer allgemeinen Geistigkeit. [...] Deshalb darf die Kunst beanspruchen, einer geistesgeschichtlichen Fragestellung besonders ergiebige Aufschlüsse zu gewähren; sie verschmilzt das Äußerlichste und das Innerlichste, was Menschen anregt und bewegt, zu einer einzigartigen Synthese. [...] Kunst war ihm, ehe es sie erforschen galt, ein Erlebnis.“ H. Tietze, M. Dvořák, *Der Piperbote für Kunst und Literatur*, 1924, pp. 4–8, cit. pp. 5–6.

39 Dvořák (note 2), pp. 232–233.

40 Ibid., p. 257: „bei Bruegel ... [der] Zweck bestand in einem durch künstlerische und poetische Verarbeitung der Erfahrungen, über die unmittelbare Buchung der Tatsachen hinaus zur Wahrheit und zu erhebender Bedeutung höherer Ordnung verwandelten Abbild der Wirklichkeit, der Natur, des realen Lebens.“

Charles de Tolnay and Hans Sedlmayr

Dvořák's approach to understanding Bruegel's art continued after World War I in the work of his student Charles de Tolnay (also Karl Tolnai or Karoly Edler von Tolnay).⁴¹ In his art-historical approach, Tolnay combined elements of Dvořák's late method of possibility to see in the work of art the (inner) expression of the researched epoch, with the notion of iconographical reading of the artwork. Tolnay thus in his method tried to reconstruct the intellectual surroundings of the artist, but not only through the work of art and its (self) interpretation, but rather with help of the historical documents which corresponded and supported findings that he was able to see in artworks. Tolnay's work could be therefore viewed as the connection point between the Vienna School of Dvořák's tradition with Erwin Panofsky's and other iconographical textual researches.⁴²

Tolnay was, in his book from 1925, interested in Bruegel's transformation of the Italian experience into a Netherlandish view of the world and he stressed Bruegel's ability to re-model nature into the artistic creation in the middle of the 16th-century manner. In this way, Tolnay examined the substance of Bruegel's art:

Bruegel was the only one who perceived in the formations of nature a unified life, to which the very basis of the origin, the secret of the essentiality of nature and the Alps became apparent. [...] The conditions for this world experience were still missing at the time of Dürer. They were apparent before Bruegel, but none of them had the force to shape the new reality from their original experience. [...] Bruegel is, therefore, the genius of the mid-century: his substrate is not borrowed, rather it is the given reality itself, and

41 Tolnay was born in Budapest in Hungary and he started his studies at the Vienna University under Dvořák in 1918. He wrote his dissertation under Julius von Schlosser in 1925 on the topic of the art of Hieronymus Bosch. Early in his career he was thus already examining 16th-century Flemish painting and he soon became one of the main researchers specializing in the art of Pieter Bruegel the Elder. See Wendland (note 34), p. 704.

42 Ernst Hans Gombrich, himself a disciple of the Vienna School of Art History, questioned Tolnay's method in connection to Dvořák's in the review of Tolnay's book on Hieronymus Bosch from 1966: "For his allegiance is to that type of Geistesgeschichte which regards the work of art as a symptom of the evolution of the human spirit; the artist expresses the age, a collective situation rather than a personal one. Applying the method, so persuasively championed by Max Dvorak, of interpreting style as a metaphor for a philosophy of life, a Weltanschauung, Professor de Tolnay sets about to explain Bosch's pictorial technique as a direct manifestation of the 'world view' of that period. [...] All this may make poetic reading, but is it true? Much as we owe to the pioneers of Geistesgeschichte, among whom Professor de Tolnay will always occupy an honoured place, it must be said that the last thirty years have made many of us impatient with its frequently circular argument and with its portentous tone." E. Gombrich, "Bosch of Hertogenbosch", Review of *Hieronymus Bosch* by Charles de Tolnay, *The New York Review of Books*, February 23rd, 1967, pp. 3-4. For the relationship of Tolnay and Panofsky see K. Balázs, C. Markója, "A Tolnay-Panofsky Affér", *Enigma*, no. 65, 2010, pp. 111-124.

its great will is apparent beyond of the given conditions, which grew into a meaningful unity. The world’s meaning became observable to him.⁴³

Tolnay thus adopted Dvořák’s view that in the artworks of the artists initiating the art-historical shifts are expressed the epoch tensions by artists’ inner-experience embedded into works of art and therefore they can be interpreted through art. That is also why Fritz Grossmann noted that Tolnay did not completely concentrate on the form of the artwork, unlike Hans Sedlmayr.⁴⁴ This discrepancy, indicated by Grossmann, between two different approaches to Bruegel’s art within Viennese art history of the 1930s and influenced by Dvořák’s thinking,⁴⁵ thus between the formal (structural) approach to art through the method in which art form was comprehended as the sub-meaning of the particular artwork, represented mostly by Sedlmayr,⁴⁶ and Tolnay’s continuation and application of Dvořák’s thinking in which an artwork was researched as a culmination of the period artists’ inner (art) “force”, is especially evident in 1934 issued *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien*.

43 „Bruegel war der Einzige, der in den Bildungen der Natur ein einheitliches Leben empfand, dem der Urgrund des Entstehens, das Geheimnis der Naturzeugung und den Alpen offenbar wurde. [...] Die Bedingungen zu diesem Welterlebnis fehlten noch zur Zeit Dürers. Sie waren aber schon da, bevor Bruegel erscheinen, nur hatte keiner von ihm die Kraft, aus ursprünglichem Erlebnis heraus die neue Wirklichkeit zu gestalten. [...] Bruegel ist da Genie der Mitte des Jahrhunderts: Sein Substrat ist kein entliehenes, sondern die gegebene Wirklichkeit selbst, und seine Größe macht es aus, daß ihm aus den gegebenen Bedingungen heraus eine sinnvolle Einheit zusammenwuchs. Der Weltsinn wurde ihm sichtbar.“ K. Tolnai, *Die Zeichnungen Pieter Bruegels*, München, 1925, p. 1.

44 F. Grossmann, *Pieter Bruegel. Completed Edition of the Paintings*, London, 1973, pp. 48–49. Grossmann studied at the Vienna University from 1924 to 1927 art history and German philology, after he studied law in the years 1920–1924. He, therefore, attended the art history at the Vienna University when Julius von Schlosser and Josef Strzygowski led the two departments of art history, and Grossmann wrote his dissertation under Strzygowski; he centered on late gothic Austrian painting. In 1938, after the annexation of Austria by Nazi Germany, Grossmann had to leave and he emigrated from Vienna to London, where he started to work as an assistant to Rubens scholar Ludwig Burchard. After emigration Grossmann did not continue in the interest of his dissertation, but due to his assistantship to Buchard, he started to research Flemish painting of the 16th century, among his interests, belonged especially the art of Pieter Bruegel the Elder. See: H. Cuvelier, “Empathy and deep understanding’: Fritz Grossmann (1902–84) and his Bruegel Archive at the Rubenianum”, in: K. Bulkens et al., eds., *Picturing Ludwig Burchard, 1886–1960: A Rubens Scholar in Art-Historiographical Perspective*, New York, 2015, pp. 133–150.

45 Sedlmayr and Tolnay were both students of Max Dvořák. See Wendland (note 34), p. 704. – Betthausen – Feist – Fork (note 1), p. 401.

46 Hans Sedlmayr studied art history at the Vienna University under Dvořák, and after his death, he graduated under Julius von Schlosser’s supervision with an interpretation of the architecture of Johann Bernard Fischer von Erlach. In the 1930s he became the leading person in formulating a new approach to art history that he called “strengen Kunstwissenschaft”, later known mostly as structural analysis. This method was alongside Sedlmayr developed by his friend Otto Pächt, who parted ways with Sedlmayr after Sedlmayr collaborated with the Austrian Nazi Party in the late 1930s and early 1940. See: Betthausen – Feist – Fork (note 1), pp. 401–404.

Tolnay's interpretation of Bruegel's paintings, called *Studien zu den Gemälden P. Bruegels der Ältere*,⁴⁷ in this issue was overshadowed by the now well-known paper *Die "macchia" Bruegels* by Hans Sedlmayr.⁴⁸ Sedlmayr conducted a "structural analysis" of Bruegel's painting and tried thereby to interpret the content of the artwork on the basis of its form,⁴⁹ which, according to him, was closely connected to its meaning: "In Bruegel, as with all great artists, there is an inner correspondence of form and content; the one is created for the other".⁵⁰ Sedlmayr used the term "macchia" to refer to the fragmented representation of humanity in Bruegel's paintings, where every edge is separated from the others. In Sedlmayr's view, this was intended to show the disintegration of the unity of humankind in the middle of the 16th century.

Sedlmayr then examined individual formal elements of Bruegel's paintings and interpreted them as indicators of an intentional discontinuity that was meant to be felt by the viewer and therefore cause him to revise his comprehension of the painting and of the world as a whole (of which the painting is a re-articulation). This artistic approach, according to Sedlmayr, had the effect of disconnecting the figures from their surroundings, which Sedlmayr saw to be one of the main purposes of Bruegel's art:

Without any activity on our part, simply through steady, passive viewing and extended attention (and for some viewers immediately), the human figures of typical pictures by Bruegel begin to disintegrate, to fall into pieces and thus to lose their meaning in the usual sense. When this process has reached its peak, one sees instead of figures a multitude of flat, vivid patches with firmly enclosed contours and unified coloration that all seem to lie unconnected and unordered, beside and above each other in a plane at the front of the picture.⁵¹

Sedlmayr was drawing on Dvořák's research in linking Bruegel's art to Italian Mannerism, but his interpretation of Mannerism was much more like that of Wilhelm Pinder.⁵² In his reading of Bruegel's art, therefore, Sedlmayr partly followed Dvořák's interpretation;⁵³ however, he incorporated Dvořák's conclusions into his

47 Karl von Tolnai, „Studien zu den Gemälden Pieter Bruegels d. Ä.“, *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien VIII*, 1934, pp. 105–135.

48 H. Sedlmayr, „Die Macchia Bruegels“, *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien VIII*, 1934, pp. 137–159. See also C. S. Wood, *The Vienna School Reader. Politics and Art Historical Method in the 1930s*, New York, 2000, pp. 43–53. – M. Männig, *Hans Sedlmayrs Kunstgeschichte*, Wien – Köln – Weimar, 2017, pp. 97–109.

49 J. Bakoš, *Discourses and Strategies: the role of the Vienna School in shaping Central European approaches to art history and related discourses*, Frankfurt am Main, 2013, pp. 20–21. See also, W. Hofmann, „Fragen nach Strukturanalyse“, in: Idem, *Bruchlinien. Aufsätze zur Kunst des 19. Jahrhunderts*, München, 1979, pp. 70–89.

50 H. Sedlmayr, „Bruegel's Macchia (1934)“, in: Wood (note 48), pp. 323–376, cit. p. 327.

51 Ibid., p. 325.

52 See: W. Pinder, „Zur Physiognomik des Mannierismus“, in: H. Prinzhorn, ed., *Die Wissenschaft am Scheideweg von Leben und Geist. Festschrift Klages zum 60. Geburtstag*, Leipzig, 1932, pp. 148–156.

53 Sedlmayr called Dvořák „Bruegel's savior“. Sedlmayr (note 50), p. 363

conception of Bruegel’s art, rather than building directly on Dvořák’s thoughts.⁵⁴ Sedlmayr’s conclusion about Bruegel’s art is that it is about the decline of humanity in Bruegel’s time, which is a different viewpoint than the idea of the liberation of an inner-spirit that we can read in both Dvořák’s⁵⁵ and Tolnay’s texts.

In his text from 1934, published with Sedlmayr’s “macchia”, Tolnay developed the interpretation of Bruegel’s drawings he gave in 1925 further, and he described his method of interpretation as influenced by Dvořák: “Uncovering the intellectual content in Bruegel’s paintings is the prerequisite for understanding his artistic style. [...] Dvořák was the first to reveal the general intellectual conditions of Bruegel’s art and he opened the way to a deeper understanding of Bruegel’s paintings as a whole”.⁵⁶ Among other paintings discussed as examples, Tolnay highlighted *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus*, in which he identified the view on the city by the sea in the background of the painting as an Italian-influenced motif.⁵⁷ But he pointed to the sun as the central “event” in the painting, whereby it acquired a new meaning, distinct from the Italian artistic tradition, and Tolnay accordingly interpreted the painting as a creative artist expressing his inner experience of lived reality: “For a moment everything is silent, only the air, saturated with mist, fills the space with a quietly incomprehensible tension. This magic of the sun is the actual ‘event’ of the picture [...] The classical myth [...] is overshadowed in Bruegel’s Fall of Icarus by a view of the dawn of the ascendancy of a sun-centered cosmos”.⁵⁸

Tolnay thus understood Bruegel’s painting as, on the one hand, a new iconographic treatment of a widely used motif,⁵⁹ but on the other hand also as the crea-

54 Ibid., p. 354.

55 „Bruegel war der erste, dem realistische Volksszenen nicht nur ein äußerer Inszenierungsapparat waren, sondern dem das Leben selbst als Maßstab des Menschlichen und als Quelle des Studiums und der Erkenntnis der die Menschen beherrschenden Triebe, Gebrechen, Leidenschaften, Sitten, Gewohnheiten, Gedanken und Empfindungen galt. Nicht um einzelne Individuen, die als Ganzes an Stelle der kirchlichen und profanen Idealgestalten getreten ist, oder um Gestalten, die als Vertreter dieser Vielheit angesehen werden können.“ Dvořák (note 2), p. 227.

56 „Die Aufdecken des gedanklichen Gehaltes in Bruegels Bildern ist die Voraussetzung zum Verständnis seines bildnerischen Stils. [...] Erst Dvořák, der die allgemeinen-geistigen Voraussetzungen von Bruegels Kunst aufdeckte, hat den Weg zu einem tieferen Verständnis der das Ganze der Bruegelschen Bilder bestimmenden Gesinnung eröffnet.“ Tolnay (note 47), p. 105.

57 Ibid., p. 107.

58 Ibid., p. 109: „einen Augenblick liegt alles stumm da, nur die dunstschwängere Luft erfüllt den Raum mit einer leise bebenden unbegreiflichen Spannung. Diese Sonnenmagie ist das eigentliche ‚Geschehnis‘ des Bildes. [...] Der klassische Mythos [...] wird in Bruegels Ikarussturz durch die neu durchbrechende Anschauung von der Allherrschaft des sonnendurchwalteten Kosmos verdrängt.“

59 Ibid.: “die Art, wie Bruegel den ovidischen Text selbst behandelt, bereits ein positiver Beweis für seine bewußt kosmozentrische Einstellung. Zweifellos griff er auf Ovid unmittelbar zurück, hat er doch als erster Motive des pflügenden Bauern, des auf den Stab gestützten Hirten und des angelnden Fischer im Bilde festgehalten.” Tolnay stressed these lines as direct representation of the Ovid’s text in Bruegel’s painting, Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. by A. D. Melville and E. J. Kenney, New York, 1987, p. 282: “An angler fishing with his quivering rod, / A lonely shepherd propped upon his crook, / A ploughman leaning on his plough, looked up / And gaze

tion of a new artistic reality expressed through the artist's inner experience of the time-and-space he lives in. Tolnay stated that:

[Bruegel] is no longer interested in Italian nature [...] nor is he interested in the world of ancient knowledge as it relates to human significance, he rather goes beyond that by realizing the insignificance of everything human in the face of nature newly understood. Finally, Bruegel reforms – and this is a consequence of the new conception – the conventional romantic pictorial form: instead of adding the space of the landscape as a backdrop, he has for the first time created an autonomous cosmos with its internal dynamics.⁶⁰

An important source of information for comparison of the above-mentioned discrepancy of elaboration of Dvořák's interpretation of Bruegel by his students in the 1930s is an appendix to Sedlmayr's study (which is not found in the English translation published by Christopher Wood in 2000), called "Criticism of Interpretations of Bruegel's Art".⁶¹ In it, Sedlmayr commented on Tolnay's and Dvořák's texts on Bruegel.⁶² We could view this critical reading of Dvořák's and Tolnay's texts by Sedlmayr as the point where the later Vienna School's approach to art history splits into two directions – *Strukturwissenschaft* and *Geistesgeschichte*, as Ernst Hans Gombrich was still referring to them in the early 1960s.⁶³

In his commentary on Tolnay's interpretation of Bruegel, Sedlmayr stated that he did not know the Tolnay's study of Bruegel's paintings published in the *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien*.⁶⁴ He primarily interpreted Tolnay's

in awe, and thought the must be gods / That they could fly. [...] / when the boy, / Began to enjoy his thrilling flight and left, / His guide to roam the rangers of the heavens, / And soared too high. The scorching sun so close / Softened the fragrant wax that bound his wings; / The wax melted; his waving arms were bare; [...] / And calling to his father as he fell, / The boy was swallowed in the blue sea's swell, / The blue sea that for ever bears his name."

60 Ibid., p. 110–111: „Die italienische Natur interessiert ihn [Bruegel] nicht mehr, [...] Zugleich interessiert ihn die Antike Bildungswelt nicht mehr in ihrer humanen Bedeutung, sondern er überwindet sie in der Erkenntnis der Nichtigkeit alles Menschlichen angesichts der neu erschlossenen Natur. Schließlich reformiert Bruegel – und dies ist eine Folge der neuen Auffassung – die konventionelle romantische Bildform: an Stelle des aus Kulissen addierten Landschaftsraumes setzt er erstmalig einen Einheitsraum als in sich abgeschlossenen, von eigengesetzlicher Dynamik durchwirkten Kosmos."

61 "Zur Kritik der Deutungen der Kunst Bruegels." See: Sedlmayr (note 48), pp. 158–159.

62 Ibid., p. 158.

63 Even though Gombrich was skeptical about Tolnay's method originating in Dvořák's thoughts, he rejected the method advocated by Sedlmayr and his followers in general. "Riegl, in his turn, is hailed as the founder of the Strukturwissenschaft whose value is seen, in Sedlmayr's words, inter alia in the recognition that 'Reason is a variable that changes with history'. [...] If that is the case, it is unfortunately not possible by rational methods to decide from London in 1964 whether an essay written in Munich some years earlier is the product of reason or unreason." E. Gombrich, Review of *Kunstgeschichte und Kunsttheorie im 19. Jahrhundert (Probleme der Kunstwissenschaft, I)*, *The Burlington Magazine* 46, 1964, pp. 418–420, cit. p. 418.

64 Sedlmayr (note 48), p. 158.

thoughts on the basis of Tolnay’s book from 1925.⁶⁵ Sedlmayr generally criticized Tolnay’s approach as ignoring Bruegel’s actual “art” by foregrounding Bruegel’s “genius”, which according to Sedlmayr made it impossible for Tolnay to see the deeper “artistic” principles of Bruegel’s art.⁶⁶ Sedlmayr could not accept Tolnay’s interpretation because of his conviction that only in the structure of the art’s form can the meaning of the artwork be decoded. Sedlmayr thus rejected Tolnay’s interpretation as too shallow from the perspective of “strenge Kunstwissenschaft”⁶⁷ because it did not pay enough attention to the formal structure of Bruegel’s art and focused instead on Bruegel’s inner spirit as expressed in art:

Tolnay has a false notion of the nature of artistic form and artistic output. Bruegel is for him a genius with a deep conception of the world, but this conception of the world is not a vivid vision for him, but a philosophical thought expressed in painting. [...] Tolnay is blind to the actual artistic problem and the difference in artistic value. However, those who do not see these differences have also not yet seen Bruegel’s art.⁶⁸

After his criticism of Tolnay’s research, Sedlmayr likened Dvořák’s interpretation to his own and referred to Dvořák’s method as the basis from which Tolnay’s method also grew: “Without the knowledge gained by Dvořák, neither Tolnai’s interpretation nor that attempted here would be possible”.⁶⁹ However, Sedlmayr pointed out that Dvořák was the significant interpreter of Bruegel’s art opposite to Tolnay’s thinking, which Sedlmayr regarded as derived and poorer than Dvořák’s: “Dvořák’s interpretation [...] is much more faithful to the phenomenon that is Bruegel than Tolnai’s”.⁷⁰

One can sense in Sedlmayr’s rejection of Tolnay’s research findings his feeling of rivalry toward Tolnay; Sedlmayr may have seen in Tolnay a different art historian but one still strongly rooted in theory continuing along the same lines as Dvořák in his method, which Sedlmayr wanted to do away with to bring back Alois Riegl’s methodology.⁷¹ What we see, therefore, in the in the mid-1930s are two studies of

65 Sedlmayr also referred to Tolnay’s study from 1929. See: K. Tolnai, „Beiträge zu Bruegels Zeichnungen“, *Jahrbuch der Preußischen Kunstsammlungen*, 1929, pp. 195–216.

66 Sedlmayr (note 48), p. 158

67 See: H. Sedlmayr, „Zu einer strengen Kunstwissenschaft“, *Kunstwissenschaftliche Forschungen* I, Berlin, 1931, pp. 7–32. – Idem, *Toward a Rigorous Study of Art* (1931), in: Wood (note 48), pp. 133–179.

68 “Tolnai hat eine falsche Vorstellung von der Eigenart des künstlerischen Gestaltens und der künstlerischen Leistung. Bruegel ist für ihn ein Genie kraft der Tiefe seine Weltauffassung, diese Weltauffassung ist aber bei Tolnai nicht eine anschauliche Vision, sondern ein philosophischer Gedanke, der malend zum Ausdruck gebracht wird [...] Für das eigentlich künstlerische Problem und für die großen künstlerischen Wertunterschiede ist Tolnai blind. Wer aber diese Unterschiede nicht sieht, hat die Kunst Bruegels noch nicht gesehen.” Sedlmayr (note 48), p. 158.

69 *Ibid.*, p. 159: “Ohne die Erkenntnisse, die Dvořák gewonnen hat, wäre aber weder die Deutung Tolnais, noch die hier versuchte möglich geworden.”

70 *Ibid.*: “Die Deutung Dvořáks [...] kommt dem Phänomen Bruegel im ganzen viel näher als die Tolnais.”

71 Wood (note 48), pp. 43–53.

the art of Pieter Bruegel the Elder with different outcomes: Sedlmayr interpreted Bruegel's art according to its form, in the same way that Riegl understood art, while Tolnay, by contrast, tried to re-imagine the artist's cultural and intellectual context, just like Dvořák did.

Tolnay's approach also may have irritated Sedlmayr because it undermined his concept of "art as a rigorous science", based on the form as the origin of artistic creation and the object of art-historical research. In interpreting Bruegel as a "genius" Tolnay, according to Sedlmayr, may have shown another possible way of understanding art and its history – as the human condition in a specific historical experience, of which the form of the work of art is the outcome, but not its main purpose. In other words, it was not the structure of the form, but the spiritual influences embodied in the form that for Tolnay, like Dvořák, was the object of interest to art-historical research. For Sedlmayr, this notion may have been an inconsistent method of art history because it rested on the abilities and the subjectivity of the individual researcher, on how he experienced the art form to re-create the experience of the artist embodied in it. However, Tolnay, like Dvořák, based his interpretations on his deep historical knowledge of the period he was focusing on – and then he fleshed out this knowledge by interpreting the artwork as part of the "spiritual" history of art, which is the core of Dvořák's method of art history, how Johannes Wilde and Karl Maria Swoboda titled it.

The "spiritual" approach to art history, therefore, examined the position of the artist within his spiritual (intellectual) context and interpreted it as an individual experience, re-created in the form of an artwork, and thus as a unique exposition of a historical reality that could not be revealed on the basis of any other historical knowledge. What's more, in this type of interpretation the interpreter also "revealed" his position in the world, because the interpretation of the artwork reflected the art historian's inner experience, and – as a result – the work of art in between its origin and its interpretation lost its isolation from formal history and became an experience of the continual artistic-spiritual reality, hence in the moment of its interpretation the work of art became an extension of the artistic-spiritual reality of a certain period into the present.

This notion of the art-historical method may refer back to Georg Simmel's thinking about the dynamics of the inner life, contesting any given "forms", in this case, the concept of (art) history as existing only in the past. Simmel in 1918 noted that:

Time is the – perhaps abstract – form in our consciousness of that which is life itself, as experienced in inexpressible, immediate concreteness. Time is life seen apart from its contents, because life alone transcends in both directions the atemporal present-point of every other reality and only thereby realizes, all by itself, the temporal dimension (i.e., time). If we retain the concept and fact of the present at all, as we are both justified and indeed compelled to do, then this essential structure of life signifies a continual reaching out beyond itself as something in the present. This reaching out by life into that which is not its actuality, but such that this reaching out nevertheless shapes its actuality – is,

therefore, not something that has merely been tagged onto life but rather, as it takes place in growth, procreation, and the spiritual processes, is the very essence of life itself.⁷²

This notion of Tolnay’s art historical method, influenced by Dvořák and his possible take on Simmel’s philosophy, may come closer to the at the beginning mentioned contemporary thinking of speculative art history, how van Tuinen represents it. He in his text on Mannerism from 2017 notes that Mannerism art, “seeks to legitimate the past precisely through the present. By giving the model a second existence in the copy, it makes the past return in the present (now-where) as a virtual participant in the construction of the future (no-where)”.⁷³ This concept, developed by van Tuinen on thinking of Gilles Deleuze, is evident already in the art-historical method influenced by Dvořák, how we have seen in his take on the art of Pieter Bruegel the Elder as disrupting the given forms by the inner-experience of the lived reality. By this notion, the “now-where” takes on the past and re-formulates it in a new way, therefore closer to the concept of dislocating the given forms to gain “life more than life”, how Simmel suggested. And this understanding of Bruegel’s art, when the art form elaborates the life as beyond the form, might be one of the main elements of Dvořák’s concept of Mannerism, which also comes close to the contemporary comprehension of it, as suggested by van Tuinen. This concept, besides van Tuinen’s recent writings, might be close to today’s understanding of art as visibility too, how I briefly indicate in the conclusion.

Conclusion

Besides the now well-known *Strukturanalyse* of Hans Sedlmayr and his circle, it seems thus that there may have existed “other” Vienna School of Art History, influenced by the late methodological thinking of Max Dvořák. And its methodological approach, indicated here by Dvořák’s and Tolnay’s reading of Pieter Bruegel’s art, may have found a latent continuation in the early 21st century understanding of art – the accent on life and its contemplation as the core of Bruegel’s painting can be for example traceable in Lars von Trier’s *Melancholia* from 2011, probably referencing to Andrej Tarkovsky’s “Solaris” from 1972. In the opening sequence, Bruegel’s painting *Hunters in the Snow* is visually de-composed by the decay and followed by the depiction of the end of the world.

Later in the film, the same painting is displayed in an office as a reproduction in an opened book, after Justine, one of the main protagonists, in anger replaces reproductions of supremacist abstract paintings by Kazimir Malevich with Bruegel’s, John Everett Millais’ and Caravaggio’s paintings. It seems that in those artworks,

72 G. Simmel, *The View of Life. Four Metaphysical Essays with Journal Aphorisms*, trans. by John A. Y. Andrews and Donald N. Levine, Chicago, 2010, p. 8.

73 van Tuinen (note 6), p. 148

interested in the position of the human and into one's role in the (by experience, therefore nature-influenced) world of distress, can comprehend life much better than (by natural sciences, therefore ideal-influenced) constructed in-human abstract paintings.

In Bruegel's art, how Dvořák indicated, we can see life as it is – without any restrictions as well as without any redemption. Life in its eternal flow is not affected by one's individuality, similarly, Nietzsche, as well as Simmel, comprehended life: without any transcendence and with emphasis on the human life within. Von Trier in his film might have connected the notion of this re-imagination of Bruegel's art occurring since the beginning of the 20th century, influenced by the crisis of the man from the end of the 19th century, caused by the self-revelation of one's desolation and freedom, without any possibility to redeem oneself. Also, the contemporary research comprehends Bruegel's art in this manner: as the transience of time through the (historical) painting that deals with (untimely) foundations of human conditions.

For example, Keith Moxey researched in this way Bruegel's art as a part of the visual studies, when according to him the "representation" in the painting turns into the "presentation" of the painting.⁷⁴ Moxey follows contemporary theorists of the image, like Hans Belting, Gottfried Boehm, or W. J. T. Mitchell, and conceives of the image as escaping history by its presence in the observer's current time-and-space.⁷⁵ Founding his reasoning on Mitchell's theory of intermediality, Moxey is convinced that an interpretation of a work of art is a clash between the work of art and the act of interpreting it:

If description can only be accomplished in retrospect and is, therefore, dependent on memory, every account of the work of art must necessarily be filtered through an individual consciousness and bear the traits of the radical specificity of its author. All the objectifying devices of the history of art, ideas of historical distance and social context, cannot expel the presence of the contemporary observer from an account of the past. [...] Authority lies neither with images nor with words, for both function to subvert the finality of interpretation.⁷⁶

In this manner Moxey shows that Bruegel's paintings can be observed as "contemporary"; they are viewed in the contemporary time, and thus the "power" of the paintings exercises authority over our imagination: Moxey refers to Belting's *Bildanthropologie* and speaks about Bruegel's painting as a separate event from the observer's imagination.⁷⁷ With this understanding of Bruegel's art, Moxey articulates the idea of painting as referencing the human mind to articulate the image-affected imagination. Like this affected imagination the painting is then transformed from its historical position and its two-dimensional representation into the presentation of the painting, which is "around and behind us as well".⁷⁸ The visuality

74 K. Moxey, *Visual Time. The Image in History*, Durham and London, 2013, pp. 77–78.

75 Ibid., p. 78.

76 Ibid., pp. 79–80.

77 Ibid., p. 86–87, 90.

78 Ibid., p. 96

of the artwork therefore affects the rooted-in-time viewing of the artwork. Moxey demonstrates this concept in Bruegel’s painting *Hunters in the Snow*, central also for von Trier’s *Melancholia*:

The tension between human beings and the circumstances in which they find themselves becomes one of the picture’s themes. The hunters both belong and do not belong to the landscape in which they find themselves, just as we do and do not belong in the painting’s presence. In this case, the bond between picture and viewer depends on the weight of phenomenological experience. [...] The two-dimensionality of the figures echoes the flatness of the picture plane in such a way as to send the imagination spinning. In the contrast between the presence of the painted surface and the illusionary space it represents lies the painting’s intimacy, its power to fascinate and elude, to engage, and to defy interpretation. The unmistakable evidence that the painting is an object, that its capacity for illusion is limited by our desire to believe in it, suggests that if the painting has a time, it lies not in its nonexistent narrative so much as in its capacity to provoke a response in the observer. In doing so it asserts that its presence belongs as much to the present as to the past.⁷⁹

In the early 20th century Dvořák and Tolnay similarly thought of the work of art as perceived in a given moment in a way that it transcends both time and space and in this were probably influenced by Simmel’s thoughts on art and life at the beginning of the century. Today’s visual studies disengage art history internally to extend its scope by revealing the subjectivity of interpretation; it shows art history as an obsolete way in which to research art. However, as the “other” Vienna School of Art History might suggest, art history in its modern beginnings in the early 20th century advocated a wider definition of the history of art as not only the historical reconstruction of what has factually happened but more so as the pursuit of an understanding of the human (historical) condition through the work of art. Thus, rather than discrediting the “history” of art by looking at art, which is what visual studies might seem to suggest, the method of the Vienna School of Art History after Max Dvořák transformed it, examined art as an indicator of historical changes occurring in the human mind and spirit and then embodied in a work of art. Therefore, this approach to art (history) may offer a methodology that is similar to the contemporary interest in art as an anthropological inner-force that in the face of a work of art reveals more about the viewer viewing it⁸⁰ but without the need to dissolve art history as a specialized scientific field.⁸¹

79 Ibid., p. 99.

80 See e.g. G. Didi-Hubermann, *Was wir sehen blickt uns an: Metapsychologie des Bildes*, München, 2001. – J. L. Marion, *The Crossing of the Visible*, Paolo Alto, 2004. – L. Wiesing, *Phänomene im Bild*, München, 2007. – Horst Bredekamp, *Der Bildakt*, Berlin, 2015.

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