

Aisthesis



Citation: Jenewein, M. (2024). Wölfflin and Wiesing: Style as a Principle of Anthropological Thinking. *Aisthesis* 17(1): 301-316. doi: 10.7413/2035-8466020

Copyright: © 2024 – The Author(s). This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC-BY-4.0).

Wölfflin and Wiesing: Style as a Principle of Anthropological Thinking

MICHAEL JENEWEIN

Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena
jenewein.michael@gmail.com

Abstract. The question of this paper is: Does the concept of style represent a principle of anthropological thinking? The first step is to establish a typology of traditional theories of style that assert a connection between man and style. The purpose is to identify a common paradigm to stand out from it in a second step. The thesis is namely that in the traditional approaches, no primary interest is taken in the question *What is man?* but rather the question *What is style?* Instead, following Heinrich Wölfflin and Lambert Wiesing, a formal aesthetic concept of style will be discussed. In his work, Wiesing adapts the stylistic concepts of *Painterly* and *Linear* (Wölfflin) to be able to phenomenologically describe the plurality of human-world relations. This approach should be made explicit as a systematic contribution to the discussions at the crossroads of aesthetic and anthropological questions.

Keywords. Phenomenology, philosophical anthropology, style, formal aesthetics, Heinrich Wölfflin.

Introduction

«Le Style est l’homme même / The Style is the man himself»¹. No other aphorism will be found more often in publications on the subject of style than this one. The phrase goes back to the French naturalist, enlightener, and

philosopher Georges-Louis Leclerc de Buffon. In 1753, he delivered his inaugural address *Discours sur le style* at the Académie Française, where he developed his important theory of style. Numerous writers and philosophers repeatedly referred to the quotation, worked it into their works or placed their artistic identity in Buffon's tradition. The history of Buffon's reception has been studied above all by Wolfgang G. Müller in his elaborate study, titled: *Topik des Stilbegriffs. Zur Geschichte des Stilverständnisses von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart* (1981). In addition to a comprehensive history of the various interpretations of Buffon's dictate however, he also pointed out that similar formulations can be found in 19th and 20th-century authors as well as in antiquity, the Renaissance and the Baroque. For Müller, Buffon's speech represents a «specifically modern manifestation of an old *topos*» (Müller [1981]: 42), the recurring concept of an «equation of man and style» (Ibid.: 9).

The term “style” is also widely used in everyday life to describe human behaviour: Zlatan Ibrahimovic has a different style of play than Lionel Messi, Angela Merkel has a different style of government than Donald Trump, and actor Charlie Sheen's public appearance has long been regarded as lacking style, while Sean Connery was said to have style. But all these examples will not tell us anything about the strict meaning of the concept of style: what can we learn about the human condition by using this term?

The following paper is therefore dedicated to the question of the value added by the concept of style within anthropological discussions. The main question this paper addresses is: is there an anthropological phenomenon, i.e. a characteristic of being human, whose sufficient clarification requires a turn to the concept of style? Or, to put it another way: does “style” represent a principle of philosophical anthropology? To answer this question, the first step is to draw up a typology of already traditional theories of style. To this end, I refer primarily to a body of research that has become canonical, which I would like to organise in the first part. My thesis, however, is that these traditional style theories have limited anthropological significance.

In contrast to traditional theories of style, I would then like to discuss Heinrich Wölfflin's formal aesthetic concept of style and its adaptation in Lambert Wiesing's phenomenology. According to this understanding “style” describes the human relationship to the world. On the one hand, this understanding is intended to systematically expand the traditional typology of anthropological concepts of style and, at the same time, it is intended to elaborate the thesis on the question raised above: namely, the formal-aesthetic concept of style used by Wölfflin and Wiesing represents a principle of anthropological thinking, since it succeeds in adequately describing a specific characteristic of being human: the plurality of being-in-the-world.

1. *The traditional paradigm – style as a relata*

Within the field of style research, one specific differentiation on the relation between man and style has established itself, which is a kind of commonplace within every treatise on the theory of style: the distinction between an *individual* and a *collective style*. Regarding the dictate «the style is the man himself» (Buffon), «man» means either the single, individual human being or the human being as a plural, as a collective, as a genus. This distinction can be found in specialized lexicons (Rosenberg [2003]), in discourse-shaping publications (Müller [1981]) and also in recent treatises, like the anthology *Style/Stil* from 2014 (Brevern, Imorde [2014]). One of the main focuses in these researches is the historical question: whether if style was understood as a product of individual artists or collective movements or even historic epochs. «Was style an expression of material circumstances or of idealistic concepts of the world? Did it emerge from the work of a collective or was it created by singular individuals? Was style determined locally, nationally or even internationally? Was it time-bound or timeless?» (Ibid.: 3). The questions that arise from this distinction usually involve a clearer delimitation of what is to be understood by the term individual or collective: the psychophysical identity of a person, the emotional world or thoughts of a concrete consciousness, or a community that is characterized by its historical, social or national circumstances, and so on.

Although the focus of classical research on the distinction between individual and collective style leads to a stronger differentiation within these two traditions, it also leads to a reduction in scope. I believe that, in view of the current state of research, it is useful to make a further distinction: the equation of «*style*» and «man» can analytically be read in two different ways: the proposition «*style* = man», when read as an identity proposition, is only true if «*style* → man» and «man → *style*» are both given. So, there are two propositions in the sentence «*style*, that is the man himself»: either that man is a result of the style, (*style* → man) or that the style is a result of man (man → *style*). This distinction has rarely, if ever, been made in works on style.

Conceptually, I would like to extend the common differentiation between individual and collective styles by adding the distinction between *expressive* and *constructive*. The thesis is that the relationship between man and style can be conceptualised in four different ways. The topos «the style is the man himself» can have the following meanings: either style can be understood as something by which an individual is expressed or constructed, or style can be understood as something by which something collective is expressed or constructed. The common theoretical arguments about the relation between the human being and style can thus be divided into the following four ideal types:

- a) Style is an expression of individuality.
- b) Style is a construction of individuality.
- c) Style is an expression of collectivity.
- d) Style is a construction of collectivity.

a) *Style is an expression of individuality*: the most common and well-known reading of the topos «the style is the man himself» consists in referring the formulation «man» to the concrete individual behind the activity or work: this means that the style reveals the particularity, the characteristic of the respective person. The terms «individualstil» (Rosenberg [2003]: 641) or «personal style» (Riggle [2015]: 711) have become established in the field of research. Within style research, the historical peak of this understanding of style is particularly associated with romantic literature's theories of art².

For a rough insight into the state of research on the Romantic period about the concept of style, the following can be stated: The Romantic view of humankind was characterised by individualism, and the idea of individual style was its theoretical correlate in terms of style. The associated cult of genius – art was the expression of a unique spirit and thus not learnable – grew more and more in the Romantic period into a quest for originality and authenticity. The individual style was understood as a kind of handprint of the artist's uniqueness. By now, not only in Romantic studies but also within stylistic studies, a long canon of Romantic authors, such as Karl Philipp Moritz, Johann Gottfried Herder, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Germaine de Staël, Victor Hugo or even Friedrich Schleiermacher and Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, has emerged in whom a theory of individual style has been identified. Gumbrecht has very appropriately called this reading of individual style theory an «aesthetics of expressivity» (Gumbrecht [1986]: 754), which again makes clear that this approach assumes an intrinsic, authentic core of the human being that becomes visible in style. With consideration to the typology of the parable of man and style proposed here, it therefore makes sense to speak of an expressive-individualistic reading of the sentence «the style, that is the man himself», or also of a *romanticist* understanding of style, in this tradition.

b) *Style is a construction of individuality*: this understanding of style developed primarily in the late 19th century, during aestheticist style traditions. Oscar Wilde and his teacher Walter Pater can be named as representatives of this concept of style. In the works of these two writers, style is not understood as the product of the artist's inner soul, but as a moment that constructs the artist's individuality in the first place. Pater even explicitly refers to Buffon's famous phrase: «if the style be the man, in all the colour and intensity of a veritable apprehension, it will be in a real sense “impersonal”» (Pater [1889]: 35). Central here is the phrase «impersonal»: in contrast to the romanticistic understanding, Pater

here completely abandons the category of expression: for Pater, style is «impersonal» because nothing personal, inner-soul – one could also say *real being* – is expressed. In the aestheticist concept of style, there is no longer any adherence to romanticistic authenticity. This does not mean, however, that Pater's concept of style suddenly stops describing a phenomenon of subjectivity; on the contrary: with the omission of inner personality, only an idea of authenticity falls away, i.e. a form of truthful expression, but not individuality as such. Only through masks, through art, that is style, can a person be an individual. In this sense, Wilde's credo «the first duty of life is to be as artificial as possible» and «one should either be a work of art or wear a work of art» (Wilde [1894]: 362, 366) should be understood: individuality is always «impersonal» for aestheticism; anything else would revert to expressive thinking: individuality only exists through art, that is, style, but entirely without an authentic personality. Style constructs the individuality of man in the first place. That is why I want to call this understanding of style *aestheticistic*³.

c) *Style is an expression of collectivity*: the third type, which I call collectivistic-expressionistic, is probably the most researched understanding of style, besides the romanticistic type. Within the research on the concept of style, the powerful influence of the archaeologist Johann Joachim Winckelmann and his classicist theory of art is mentioned across all disciplines. Jan von Brevern and Joseph Imorde even go so far as to speak of a «historical line, beginning with Winckelmann [...] which does not want style to be understood as an expression of individuality, but on the contrary of community» (Brevern, Imorde [2014]: 6).

In this tradition of thought, style is interpreted as the expression of a national spirit, but at the same time this understanding of style can also be found in sociological theories of the late 19th and early 20th centuries: style is there interpreted as the expression of a social class or the habitus of a milieu. Ernst. H. Gombrich already noted this in 1965 with a derogatory view of the sociologist Karl Mannheim. The «poverty of historicism» (Gombrich [1965]: 60), as Gombrich suspects in Karl Mannheim's studies on the sociology of art and style, consists in interpreting «all manifestations of style as the expression of the innermost essence of the "age" – ours, or another» (Ibid.: 62). Following Gombrich, I would therefore like to call this understanding *historicist*: this type of style assumes that a «collectively unconscious» (Mannheim [1929]: 36) is expressed in style – which is then no longer explicitly only art, but also, for example, the style of everyday behaviour, taste or fashion⁴.

d) *Style is a construction of collectivity*: the early sociologist Georg Simmel's theory of fashion can serve as an example of the final understanding of style. In his essays on fashion style, Simmel distinguishes between art (*Kunst*) and decorative art (*Kunstgewerbe*) – the latter can also be translated as design objects. Fashion also falls into this category, whose central aesthetic criteria is not

individuality but style: «instead of the character of individuality, applied art is supposed to have the character of style, of broad generality [...] and thus it represents in the aesthetic sphere a different principle of life than actual art, but not an inferior one» (Simmel [1908]: 67). Style can thus be learned and reproduced, style is decidedly not an individual but a collective phenomenon.

Through his reflections on style and fashion, however, Simmel does not want to describe an exclusively aesthetic phenomenon, but a much more general, human disposition. Simmel's thesis is that in the modern society of the late 19th and early 20th century, a stylisation of everyday life is taking place: common objects of daily use, first and foremost the furnishings of one's home and one's clothes, are not only supposed to fulfil a function but also to have style. The carpet matches the curtains, the wall colour stands out against the cupboards and the shape of the table creates a final overall picture with the chairs. According to Simmel, the «stylisation of this environment» creates an «organic and harmonious overall feeling» (Ibid.: 68) that can allow people to participate in something general: style has an *unburdening function*. Simmel's aesthetic description leads here to a social-psychological thesis: «what drives modern man so strongly to style is the unburdening and concealment of the personal, which is the essence of style» (Ibid.: 69). Style – paradigmatic in fashion and interiors – unburdens man of the responsibility of his individuality and creates a sense of belonging to a group, to something general. Due to this unburdening social function, style fulfils, I want to call this type a *functionalistic style theory*⁵.

This typology is first of all of systematic importance. Based on the presentation, one might think that a historical progression in the understanding of style can be identified, moving from a Romanticist to a functionalist one. However, it can be quickly demonstrated that, for example, the individualistic-expressive understanding of the Romanticist concept of style was also still concise in the 20th century, especially in style theories that stand close to mysticism and existentialism (see Müller [1981]: 171 f.) It would therefore be wrong to speak of a historical progression – rather, these four types represent archetypical readings of the *topos* «the style is the man himself». To summarize: if we look at the traditional theories of style and their reception over the last 40 years, the conventional thinking on the relation between man and style can be assigned to one of these four types. But what does this mean for the role of the concept of style in an anthropological sense?

2. Plea for a paradigm shift – from *relata* to *relation*

As different as these four approaches may be at first glance, I believe that there is a common characteristic that can be identified in all these four types:

they are bound to a common paradigm that excludes an anthropological interest in the narrow, philosophical sense. Before I go into this, however, let me add the following: my aim with the approaches I have just outlined (romanticism, aestheticism, historicism, functionalism) is not to offer a complete list of all existing theories of style, but to create a typology of ideal types; of course, there are also theories of style that overlap and cannot be assigned exclusively to one of the four types. However, this does not contradict the thesis, but rather shows that there is a commonality of thinking about style that takes place within the four coordinates of expression-construction-individuality-collectivity.

As I wanted to show, the concept of style is used in very different ways; it is either about individual and group psychological phenomena of expression (*romanticism* and *historicism*) or about questions of the formation and construction of an individual or group identity (*aestheticism* and *functionalism*). That the concept of style has different meanings in different theories is hardly surprising; however, depending on the theory, it not only fulfils different functions but is also not aimed at describing – in old-fashioned terms – the essence of man itself. None of the man-style-theories claims to be able to capture the characteristics of being human through the concept of style, but only to be able to identify different functions of style. The so-called «parable of man and style» (Müller) is an anthropological bluff: in the exemplary positions shown, *man* is understood as an empirical category that corresponds to sociological or ethnological questions. The question of whether there is something genuine about being human for which one should necessarily resort to the concept of style makes little sense about the traditions of style developed here. In none of the presented approaches is an explicit interest in the question *what is the human being?* but rather a focus on the question *what is style?* Style, depending on the approach, is understood as something that constructs the individual human being or a particular group, or in which the individual human being or a group expresses itself. To summarise the common paradigm and of the four different style traditions: style and person are thought of as *two separate relata of a relation*. Thus, through the classical approaches, one learns something about the different functions of the concept of style, but little or nothing about the man itself – this remains unaddressed.

I would like to take this situation as an opportunity to argue for a kind of paradigm shift: if the question of the relation between man and style is to be linked to a primary interest in the human being, i.e. if it is a question of whether there is a genuine characteristic of being human, the concept of style must have a clear and distinct intention, which is to be able to describe this characteristic sufficiently and to distinguish it from other phenomena. It must not be assumed that there is a plurality of different concepts of style that stand side by side on an equal footing and describe different aspects of human life; rather, it is necessary to introduce a very specific concept of style as a principle of anthropological thinking. What

can this particular concept of style do for the question *what is man?* that other concepts cannot? In short, is there a phenomenon of being human for whose sufficient clarification one should necessarily refer back to the concept of style, and if so, what anthropological phenomenon does it describe? The paradigm shifts in thinking about the relation between man and style, according to my thesis, which I would like to defend, consists of the following: style must not be thought of as a single relata but as the relation of two relata itself.

Regarding an understanding of style not as a relata, but as the relation itself, Andrea Pinotti has already made an important discovery in his entry on «Style» in the *Handbook for Phenomenological Aesthetics* (Pinotti [2010]: 326 f.) While the concept of style is often used in many art-historical discourses simply as a synonym for ways, forms or types, the term is used as a *terminus technicus* by the representatives of the so-called formal aesthetics (Alois Riegl, Heinrich Wölfflin) as well as in phenomenology (Edmund Husserl, Maurice Merleau-Ponty): by the former to describe the relation between individual parts of a picture, by the latter to describe the relation between man and the world. I would like to follow Pinotti's insight by discussing a contemporary phenomenological position that explicitly adapts a formal-aesthetic concept of style, or to be more precise: Heinrich Wölfflin's concept of style from *Principles of Art History* (1915) and Lambert Wiesing's phenomenological adoption of it from *I for Me. Phenomenology of Self-Consciousness (Ich für Mich. Phänomenologie des Selbstbewusstseins, 2020)*. Starting from a phenomenology of self-consciousness, Wiesing wants to describe the conceivably possible ways of being in the world without distinguishing anything like a proper mode of being from an improper one. His systematic thesis: there is no genuine, original world-relationship of the human being, but plural, equal «styles of being-in-the-world» (Wiesing [2020]: 102). The a priori conceivable variants of the human-world-relation, Wiesing argues, can be systematically determined by Wölfflin's formalist concept of style.

In contrast to the traditional approaches I have already presented and concerning Wiesing's adaption of Wölfflin, I defend the following thesis: style is a fundamental anthropological concept precisely when style is not a relata of a relation, but when style describes the quality of the relation itself. To put it even more clearly: the relation of human beings to the world.

3. *Style as the experienced relation between man and world*

Wiesing's interest is not in the question *what is style?* but in the question *what is it like to be a human being?* – to answer this question, however, he refers to Wölfflin's concept of style. Before introducing this concept of style, it is necessary to provide a brief overview of Wiesing's anthropological position, which he

develops in the context of his phenomenology of the body. Wiesing's argument begins as follows: «to answer the question, *what is it like to be a human being?* it is necessary to go into the consequence of the reality of my *Leibkörper*: what impositions cannot be avoided when one is in the world with a *Leibkörper*. How does my *Leibkörper* allow me to be in the world?» (Wiesing [2020]: 123). With the formulation «*Leibkörper*», he refers to the body-philosophical distinction between *having a body (Körper)* and *being a body (Leib)*. Due to translation difficulties, in the following, I will speak of the *Körper* as body and of the *Leib* as lived-body. Wiesing's thesis is: «to be in the world with a body (*Körper*) is a different kind of imposition than with a lived-body (*Leib*)» (Wiesing [2020]: 122). In the traditional philosophy of the body, having a body (*Körper*) stands for the objective and thing-like observer perspective and being a body (*Leib*) stands for the subjective experience perspective. The body (*Körper*) is that which can be objectively grasped, that which can be recognised from the outside, that which the doctor examines when an injured person comes to them. The lived-body (*Leib*), on the other hand, is what the injured person experiences when he goes to the doctor. The lived-body (*Leib*) is the subjective, experienced perspective of the sick person, which the doctor's perspective cannot perceive.

In a certain sense, however, Wiesing turns away from this traditional view: it would be wrong to think that, for Wiesing, lived-body (*Leib*) and body (*Körper*) simply represent the first-and third-personal interpretation of the same thing. For Wiesing, lived-body (*Leib*) and body (*Körper*) are both first-personal, i.e. phenomenally experienceable ways of experiencing one's own *Leibkörperlichkeit* – but they are different. So, I can also experience my own body (*Körper*) in the same way as the doctor does when she examines me for wounds: as a recognisable object, a foreign object or also as an instrument that I use. When I look at the dirt under my fingernails or when I use my fingers to read Braille, *I have a body (Körper)*. However, when I suddenly scrape over a sharp edge while groping Braille and suffer pain, when one enjoys the warmth of a bathtub or is seized by a chill – *I am my lived-body (Leib)*. According to Wiesing, these two different states of *Leibkörperlichkeit* also correlate with different forms of being in the world:

Being-in-the-world receives regular qualia through the *Leibkörper*; my *Leibkörper* inevitably gives a specific quality of imposition to what is in my being-in-the-world. But a lived-body (*Leib*) colours the pre-reflexive self-consciousness of in-being phenomenally differently from a body (*Körper*). [...] The imposition that my *Leibkörper* is for me is not always the same. My *Leibkörper* is an imposition for me that varies between the extreme form of being a lived-body (*Leiblichkeit*) and the extreme form of having a body (*Körperlichkeit*). (Wiesing [2020]: 123-124)

Or to put it in other words, a person feels differently when he is lived-bodily (*leiblich*) in the world than when he is bodily (*körperlich*) in the world. To not only claim this plurality of being-in-the-world, but to be able to describe it

systematically as phenomenally experienceable «plurality of styles of *Dasein*» (Ibid.: 148), Wiesing now introduces the concept of style.

The anthropological phenomenon that Wiesing turns to from here is the human world relation, or more precisely world relations: Wiesing argues for an ontological plurality of human world relations, which he calls «styles of being-in-the-world». He refers to the style theory of the Swiss art historian and philosopher Heinrich Wölfflin (1864-1945), who introduced the style categories *painterly* and *linear* in his work, which was particularly influential for art history. In analogy to Wölfflin, Wiesing now wants to think of «body (*Körper*) and lived-body (*Leib*) as principles of the history of *Dasein*» (Wiesing [2020]: 124): if one is lived-bodily (*leiblich*) in the world, according to Wiesing, one leads a «painterly form of existence»; if one is bodily (*körperlich*) in the world, then this corresponds to a «linear form of existence» (Ibid.: 134, 131). In the conceptual pair *painterly-linear*, Wiesing sees the potential to phenomenologically justify the thesis of a plurality of styles of existence: Wölfflin's aesthetic stylistic categories should represent the conceptual tool to be able to adequately describe the qualitatively experienceable structures of human being-in-the-world.

4. «*Painterly*» and «*linear*» as style principles of *dasein*

Wölfflin's methodological approach in *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (1915) is, as Andrea Pinotti accurately describes it in his essay *Formalism and the History of Style*, «inspired by the formalistic paradigm of the so-called pure-visibility (*reine Sichtbarkeit*)» (Pinotti [2012]: 96). We speak of pure visibility here because Wölfflin – and formal aesthetics in general – is not interested in examining art for representational content or psychological background phenomena – that is, something that can only be revealed through interpretation; rather, style is understood as a phenomenon that becomes evident in perception itself and that obeys its laws, which for Wölfflin, as well as for the other representatives of this tradition, need to be described in more detail. With this approach, Wölfflin has already implicitly criticized the traditional paradigm of style theory, especially with regard to the types that I have tried to describe with the titles *romanticism* and *historicism*: «one tends to interpret a style primarily in terms of expression. In the formal systems that we call styles, people and times are expressed for us. [...] And likewise the strong individual artist has his own style, in which his personal essence comes to light» (Wölfflin [1912]: 572). Wölfflin does not believe that these approaches are entirely wrong, but that they only address a surface phenomenon, i.e. not the phenomenon of style itself, but something behind it, such as the mind of an individual or a collective *zeitgeist*. He opposes this with his formal-aesthetic understanding of style as a principle: «the founda-

tion of vision must first be established before one can begin to speak about the expressive values of an era» (Ibid.: 578).

When describing pictures, the formal aesthetic paradigm is thus interested exclusively in the visible form. Whether it is an imposing church painting with angels and saints or an expressionist depiction of the war events of the First World War is irrelevant to a formal aesthetic approach. The separation of form and content as the core of this aesthetic theory has been traced back several times in research to the formalism of Johan Friedrich Herbart (1776-1841) with one central note: strictly separating form and content is not an invention of formal aesthetics⁶. However, with Herbart – and also with Wölfflin – form is understood in a very specific sense. Wiesing writes about this in *The Visibility of the Image. History and Perspectives of Formal Aesthetics*: «these visible forms on the surface of the image are the exclusive theme of formal aesthetics» (Wiesing [1997]: 6). How has this been understood?

Form does not mean the entire shape of the object, i.e. not the holistic figure of Michelangelo's *David*, but rather the relation of the individual parts within an object to each other. Form is thus a relational phenomenon, or to put it more precisely: an object-internal relational phenomenon in the realm of the visible. If, for example, the bathing season is approaching and, after a calorie-rich Christmas season, one talks about wanting to get one's beach body back into shape, one would miss the concept of form in *Formal aesthetics*. Phrases such as *well-formed* or *out of shape* are aimed at phenomena of shape and harmonious proportions, but not at internal relations. If one had to describe the concern of formal aesthetics in one sentence: it is about describing the visible relations of the individual parts of a picture to each other. In short: the transitions between the parts of the picture.

Wölfflin distinguishes between a painterly and a linear style by comparing Renaissance and Baroque paintings. For him, painterly and linear represent extremes of pictorial representation that lie apart:

[T]he graphic style sees in lines, the painterly in masses. [...] So the difference between these styles can be further defined by saying that linear seeing makes a clear distinction between one form and the other, whereas the painterly eye sets its sights upon the sort of movement that encompasses the entirety of things. On the one hand, consistently clear lines serve to divide things; on the other, unstressed borders favour fusion. (Wölfflin [1915]: 100-101)

If one wants to illustrate this distinction using examples, breaking away from Wölfflin's Renaissance-Baroque comparison, one could cite the famous woodblock print *The Great Wave off Kanagawa* (1831) by the Japanese artist Katsushika Hokusai. Here the style has a very linear effect, as the water in particular, which is usually depicted as something very indifferent and as a large mass,

is completely differentiated and broken down into visible individual parts. The spume of the upper layer of water is separated from the lower layer of waves by strict lines and even the individual drops stand out clearly without merging with the rest of the sea.

In a painterly style, exactly the opposite takes place; movement is at the centre. This means that there are precisely no clear demarcations between the individual parts of the picture, the elements visibly blur into one another, and the individual relations are unclearly recognisable as self-contained areas. The watercolour and oil paintings of William Turner are a particularly vivid example of this. In *Waves Breaking against the Wind* (1840), we find a counter-design to Hokusai's depiction of the sea. The sea is depicted as one large entity, neither can one see where one wave separates from the other, nor can one see where the other wave is. Even a clear place where the horizon begins, and the sea ends is hardly discernible. The individual parts of the picture blur into one another and merge fluidly, which leads to the fact that, as Wölfflin says, the eye «encompasses the entirety of things» (Wölfflin [1915]: 101). While one could cut out individual parts of the picture in Hokusai's work to use them sensibly for a collage, this would not be possible in Turner's work. One would then only have a cut-out patch of colour at hand.

Wölfflin describes these two styles as possibilities for the artist to relate the individual parts of the picture to each other. The relation itself, i.e. whether these parts merge into one another or appear strictly separated from one another, is what Wölfflin calls the phenomenon of style: «the great opposition between the linear and painterly styles corresponds to a fundamentally different interest in the world. In the former it is the fixed shape, in the latter the changing appearance; here it is the permanent form, measurable and bounded, there it is movement, form in action; here things in themselves, there things in context» (Ibid.: 109). The artist can therefore depict the same subject in completely different ways, depending on how, for example, the sea is to be seen. What becomes particularly clear in this quotation is, on the one hand, the idea of a painterly whole in which things are seen as a unity and, on the other, the idea of linearly separated individual aspects in which the parts of the picture are seen in their multiplicity.

At this point it should already be clear why Wölfflin's principles of art history are applied by Wiesing as the «principles of the history of *Dasein*»: Wiesing transfers the categories of the painterly and the linear to his descriptions of being-in-the-world. Wiesing, however, is explicitly not interested in a reception or interpretation of Wölfflin, but rather in adopting the categories of style for his own phenomenological descriptions. Nevertheless, this undertaking in no way conflicts with Wölfflin's project. It is not at all surprising to apply Wölfflin's terms for anthropological research concerning the relation of man and world;

after all, Wölfflin himself speaks of a «fundamentally different interest in the world» depending on whether the style is linear or painterly. Wölfflin even goes so far as to describe the two styles as opposing world views: «the linear style developed values that the painterly style no longer has and no longer wants. They are two world views, differently oriented in their tastes and interests, yet both quite capable of producing a comprehensive picture of the visible» (Wölfflin [1915]: 100). Whereas Wölfflin relates these concepts of style to perception and thus to the realm of the visible, Wiesing's understanding of style is phenomenological: to have a body is to be linear in the world; to be a body is to be painterly in the world:

Phenomenologically speaking, body (*Körper*) is a stylistic category, an existential that determines the basic possibilities of being – not for images, however, but for *Dasein*. The concept of the body (*Körper*) determines [...] experiential properties of internal relations, only in this case not the relation between visible parts in a work, but the properties of the relation of *Dasein* in the world or better: to the world. [...] The linear being-in-the-world is given when, as a consequence of the reality of self-consciousness, a differentiation imposition occurs for me: the world in which I am is imposed on me as the Other, as something that – ontically speaking – is not me and – ontologically speaking – I am not. [...] Being-in-a-world is a phenomenal property, an imposition. (Wiesing [2020]: 131)

For Wiesing, experiencing one's own body (*Körper*) is synonymous with a linear way of being. I experience myself as a subject facing the object of the world. My body (*Körper*) puts me at a distance from the world and I experience a clear separation from what is not me. For Wiesing, Descartes' philosophy of consciousness represents the outline of a linear mode of being in which the human being (*res cogitans*) faces the world (*res extensa*) and is separated from it. The world is the foreign, the other, and my body (*Körper*) is the boundary to this other. Anyone who inadvertently reaches their hand into a disgusting, slimy mass knows only too well what Wiesing means by having a linear bodily (*körperlich*) experience. My skin is the border to the slimy mass and the experience of disgust is involuntarily accompanied by an awareness to withdraw as far as possible from this slimy objectivity.

In contrast to the bodily (*körperlich*) linear being-in-the-world, the experience of one's own lived-body (*Leib*) corresponds to the painterly being-in-the-world:

Phenomenally, the imposition of being a lived-body (*Leib*) leads me to a painterly being-in-the-world. My lived-body (*Leib*) lets me be a part of the world, analogous to a baroque painting. The transition of the subject to the world blurs into a unity with the whole through the lived-body (*Leib*). The boundary where I end and where I begin is for me, through the imposition of my lived-body (*Leib*), painterly, fluid and ambiguous. [...] This is the meaning of the concept of the lived-body (*Leib*): it does not designate something that exists in the world but is a stylistic category of being-in-the-world. It designates the associative, dispersed, analogous style of being. (Ibid.: 134-135)

Wiesing describes the experience of the lived-body (*Leib*) as painterly because here the boundaries of one's lived-body (*Leib*) are extended to the environment. I no longer experience myself as a body as an alien part of my environment, but as a component that is integrated into the world and belongs to it. The experience of the body is accompanied by an ecological consciousness, that is, by the experience that the ontological boundaries between me and the world become blurred and one. Wiesing cites Maurice Merleau-Ponty's body phenomenology and also Martin Heidegger as examples that describe the human being as a painterly being-in-the-world. Merleau-Ponty's talk of the «body (*Leib*) that "reaches to the stars"» (Ibid.: 138) is a vivid example for Wiesing of what it means to assert a painterly style of being-in-the-world. Particularly ecstatic experiences can make all too clear what it means to experience oneself dispersed and thus painterly as part of the world.

Wölfflin's originality becomes even clearer when Wiesing's central thesis is brought into focus: «it is contingent whether the relation between man and the world is linear or painterly. But it is existentially necessary, for there to be any being-in-the-world at all, that the relation is experienced for me either as painterly or linear or something in between» (Ibid.: 145). Wiesing's main thesis is thus: human being-in-the-world is fundamentally plural, i.e. not fixable to a world-relation, but to be thought of as a spectrum; the a priori conceivably possible limits of this spectrum of styles, however, are supposed to be describable with Wölfflin. This includes overcoming dualistic thinking that only allows for a binary understanding.

According to Wiesing, the «phenomenal *conditio humana*» (Ibid.: 122) cannot be reduced to a single style. Rather, the «imposition of being a human being in the world», i.e. the experience that every human being is condemned to make, consists in a «fluctuating, situational In-between» (Ibid.: 123) of painterly body-being and linear body-having. Human beings, because they can be physically and bodily in the world, are differently disposed. This is explicitly not meant ontically or individually: «there are not only different people in the world in the ontic sense, but people can also be ontologically different in the world» (Ibid.: 124). Wiesing thus represents an anthropological pluralism in a certain sense: human beings do not have a predetermined essence in that they do not have a fixed and rigid way of being in the world, but rather there are plural ways of being in the world – but precisely on an ontological level. At the same time, however, it is not completely arbitrary, as Wiesing points out, but he is concerned with determining the «necessary, a priori limits of the possible» (Ibid.: 124): The styles of painterly and linear being-in-the-world describe a «broad spectrum of imposition or a space of possibility: between the imposition of having to be a body in the world and the imposition of having to have a body in the world, the condition of being of my being-in-the-world plays itself out» (Ibid.: 128).

Conclusion

My reflections aimed to identify two different paradigms of the «equation of man and style»: the traditional paradigm determines style as a relata of the relation between man and style and has a stronger interest in the question *what is style?* Even if four types are to be distinguished here, it is difficult to speak of an anthropological interest here; these approaches are only partially suitable for learning something about human beings. The formalistic paradigm of Wölfflin and Wiesing is different: style is not understood here as a relata, but as the relation itself; in Wölfflin's case as the visible relation between parts of the picture, in Wiesing's as the experienceable relation between human beings and the world. Wölfflin's concept of style serves Wiesing as a meta-theoretical tool to do justice to the phenomenal plurality of human world relations. This surplus potential of Wölfflin's categories must be taken into account: painterly and linear are not mutually exclusive poles of binarity, but a spectrum within which human being-in-the-world oscillates. In this sense, Wiesing's project also stands in the tradition of *Formal aesthetics*: the conceivable forms, the styles of being-in-the-world, are systematically described by him through the conceptual pairing of painterly-linear. This is why we can rightly speak of an anthropological appropriation of the concept of style, or, as Wiesing calls it, of «principles of the history of *Dasein*». To speak of painterly and linear as world relations is therefore not a metaphor, rather painterly and linear describe the conceivably necessary limits of phenomenal being-in-the-world as the basic structure of human existence. Wiesing's reception of Wölfflin can therefore also be described as a contribution to the logic of world relations, or more modernly formulated: as a prelude to a phenomenological anthropology.

References

- Baldini, A., 2018: *Sprezzatura, Good Taste, and Socrates Dirty Toga*, "The Philosophers' Magazine" 80, pp. 42-47.
- Berger, P.A., Hradil, S. (eds.), 1990: *Lebenslagen, Lebensläufe, Lebensstile*, Otto Schwartz & Co., Göttingen.
- Breuer, U., 2009: *Stil und Individuum (Individualstil)*, in Fix, U., et al. (eds.), *Rhetorik und Stilistik / Rhetoric and Stylistics. Ein internationales Handbuch historischer und systematischer Forschung / An International Handbook of Historical and Systematical Research*, 2. Halbband / Volume 2, De Gruyter, Berlin-New York, pp. 1230-1244.
- Brevern, J.v., Imorde, J., 2014: *A word to avoid. Editorial*, in "Kritische Berichte. Zeitschrift für Kunst- und Kulturwissenschaften" 42, *Themenheft Stil/Style*, pp. 3-7.
- Gombrich, E.H., 1965: *The Logic of Vanity Fair. Alternatives to Historicism in the Study of Fashions, Style and Taste*, in Gombrich, E.H. (ed.), *Ideals and Idols. Essays on Values in History and in Art*, Phaidon Press, New York, 1979, pp. 60-92.

- Gumbrecht, H.U., 1986: *Schwindende Stabilität der Wirklichkeit*, in Gumbrecht, H.U., Pfeiffer, K.L. (eds.), *Stil. Geschichten und Funktionen eines kulturwissenschaftlichen Diskurselements*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a.M., pp. 726-788.
- Mannheim, K., 1929: *Ideology and Utopia. An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*, transl. by L. Wirth and E. Shils, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1936.
- Müller, W., 1981: *Topik des Stilbegriffs. Zur Geschichte des Stilverständnisses von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt 1981.
- Müller, M.R., 2009: *Stil und Individualität. Die Ästhetik gesellschaftlicher Selbstbehauptung*, Fink, München.
- Pater, W., 1889: *Appreciations with an Essay on Style*, Macmillan Publishers, London-New York.
- Pinotti, A., 2012: *Formalism and the History of Style*, in Rampley, M., et al. (eds.), *Art History and Visual Studies in Europe. Transnational Discourses and National Framework*, Brill Press, Leiden, pp. 75-90.
- Pinotti, A., 2010: *Style*, in Sepp, H.R., Embree, L. (eds.), *Handbook of Phenomenological Aesthetics*, Springer, Dordrecht-Heidelberg-London-New York, pp. 325-330.
- Por, P., Radnóti, S. (eds.), 1990: *Stilepoche, Theorie und Diskussion. Eine Interdisziplinäre Anthologie von Winckelmann bis heute*, Peter Lang Verlag, Frankfurt a.M.
- Riggle, N., 2015: *Personal Style and Artistic Style*, "Philosophical Quarterly" 65 (261), pp. 711-731.
- Rosenberg, R., 2003: *Stil (Einleitung)*, in Barck, K., et al. (eds.), *Ästhetische Grundbegriffe. Band 5: Postmoderne – Synästhesie*, Metzler Verlag, Stuttgart, pp. 641-703.
- Simmel, G., 1908: *The Problem of Style*, transl. by Mark Ritter, "Theory, Culture and Society" 8 (3), 1991, pp. 63-71.
- Wiesing, L., 2020: *Ich für Mich. Phänomenologie des Selbstbewusstseins*, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt a.M.
- Wiesing, L., 1997: *The Visibility of the Image. History and Perspectives of the Formal Aesthetics*, transl. by N.A. Roth, Bloomsbury Academic, London-Oxford-New York-Delhi-Sydney, 2016.
- Wilde, O., 1894: *Phrases and Philosophies for the Use of the Youth*, in *The Critical Writings of Oscar Wilde. An annotated Section*, ed. by N. Frankel, Harvard University Press, Cambridge-Massachusetts-London, 2022.
- Wölfflin, H., 1915: *Principles of Art History. The Problem of the Development of Style in Early Modern Art*, trans. by J. Blower, ed. by E. Levy and T. Weddigen, Getty Publications, Los Angeles, 2015.
- Wölfflin, H., 1912: *Das Problem des Stils in der bildenden Kunst*, "Sitzungsberichte der Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften" 31, pp. 572-578.

Notes

- 1 In the following, I will stick to the old meaning and translate «man» as «human being». The terms will be used synonymously.
- 2 For this romanticistic approach in detail see Müller (1981): 85-98, Gumbrecht (1986): 746-752, and Breuer (2009): 1233 f.
- 3 For this aestheticistic approach in detail see Müller (2009) and Baldini (2018).
- 4 For this historicistic approach in detail see Por, Radnóti (1990).
- 5 Further variations of this functionalistic type can be found in the so-called *Lebensstil-Forschung*, the sociological research on lifestyle; see f.e. Berger, Hradil (1990).
- 6 In addition to Wölfflin, Alois Riegl and Konrad Fiedler are named as one of the main representatives of *Formal aesthetics*. See Pinotti (2012) and Wiesing (1997).