RESEARCH PAPERS

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Abstract:

The paper discusses some rather well-known, but rarely discussed origins of the current "immanentism" and "invitationalism" of the images by rooting them in the discussion that is itself rooted in the very matter of aesthetics – the matters of *taste*. The introductory remarks justify briefly the chosen historiographical approach, supported by few first-hand insights into the "momentum" of visual studies one decade ago. In the second chapter, a short paper appeared only in German in 2008, "W.J.T. Mitchell und der iconic turn" von Norbert Schneider (1945-2019) is recapitulated, in which the impression of the implied harmony between "like-minded" scholars – W.J.T. Mitchell and G. Boehm – has been deconstructed in a comparative analysis. Further on, Schneider´s arguments are followed up in the third chapter, where Boehm´s Ph.D.-supervisor Max Imdahl and doctorate-supervisor Gadamer (as well as their predecessors Fiedler, Croce and Vico) are discussed in some depth, with reference to what we have baptized as image-immanentism and the herme-

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neutic of pictures. In the fourth chapter, we criticize a more recent follower of Gadamer´s position, whose aim was to support Gadamer´s theory of aesthetic value as artistic value with the projected value of the "artistic image". Paul Crowther´s important point was to substantiate the claim of the artwork being a "symbolically significant artifact" and hence the extraordinary character of our experience of art and its value. Although Gadamer's understanding of representation as an ontological event brings with it a metaphysical, Neoplatonist implication, Crowther turned this implication of point to an ontological-existential one. The presented case in point is supposed to provide an argument for deep historiographic connections between the current immanentism of images and their roots in the continental thinking traditions.

Keywords: taste, value theory, axiology, aesthetic value, value judgment, immanentism, invitationalism, foundationalism

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1. Introductory remarks

This paper attempts to retrieve the origins of the "immanentism" and "invitationalism" of the "images" by rooting them in the discussion that is itself rooted in the very matter of aesthetics – the matters of Taste. Rather than a theoretical introduction into a weighty subject, this first chapter should loosely justify the chosen historiographical approach. It includes willy-nilly also my own first-hand insights into the contested field of visual studies that seem to have got out of hand some time ago. This insights begun with my first teaching-tenure in Osnabrück, where I overtook the physical office of the extraordinary figure of German art history Jutta Held (1933-2007) back in 2004. As editor of the progressive periodical *Kunst und Politik*, she asked me to write an article about Visual Studies and *Bildwissenschaft* for the 2006-issue, but it never came to realization because of her death. Her husband Norbert Schneider (1945-2019) finally edited and published the delayed tenth issue of *Kunst und Politik* in 2008 together with Andrew Hemingway. Later on, I invited Schneider to participate in a lecture series *Bildwissenschaft and Visual Culture* that took place at the Institute for Art and Cultural Studies in Copenhagen (2013-14). In Copenhagen, right in-between the Anglo-Saxon and continental influences and schools, it appeared then quite clear how contested and politically charged was the field of visual studies: While Schneider presented his brief critical text on Gottfried Boehm from *Kunst und Politik* (2008), I also invited Gottfried Boehm to provide his point of view; he replied positively already on January 29th 2013, but his definite confirmation came too late for our schedule, which forced us to pull back our invitation. However, we knew that Boehm was also scheduled to take a part in a quite alternative draft – a large international conference entitled *What Images Do* that took place in March 2014 at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen. The conference was organized by Henrik Oxvig, who also participated in our lecture series. This "momentum" continued at least until December of 2014, as the volume entitled *Bildwissenschaft und Visual Culture* was edited and published by Marius Rimmele, Klaus Sachs-Hombach and Bernd Stiegler.

What I wish to emphasize with these perhaps less known details and parallels is that Norbert Schneider's (and originally Jutta Held's) edited year-book entitled *Bildwissenschaft und Visual Culture Studies in der Disk-*

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ussion. Kunst und Politik (2008) appeared and was prepared long before the mentioned "momentum" and that it remained rather drawn in the undercurrents of the then current image disputes. Between ca. 2006 and 2016, the immanentism of image in both continental and analytic thinking traditions seem to have prevailed. Hence, this contribution is designed to provide and reiterate an argument for why we no longer need to believe in the power of "something" that is substantially based on believe and power – as a tentative answer to the editor's rhetoric questions of the current *New Theories*-issue. I shall close this "introduction" with the words of Hans Belting, who explained to me back then in an E-mail from December 23rd 2012 why he chose not to participate in our lecture series:

> [...] I was happy to receive your email and am therefore saddened not to answer positively. That's for a whole lot of reasons: I would just like to mention that I am currently not on good terms [*nicht auf gutem Fuß stehe*] with image science [*Bildwissenschaft*], although it is in a way in my new book about the almost refute history of the face (Belting 2013/2017). I have before retreated to an anthropology, that is today shared only by few. In addition, there is a heavy schedule in the spring. And my age. In short, I don't see how we can get together, but I wish you for this series great success [...]

2. Imagining immanentism
Norbert Schneider's criticism of Gottfried Boehm's "iconic"

In a short paper entitled *W.J.T. Mitchell und der iconic turn* (Schneider 2008, 29-38), Norbert Schneider (1945-2019) made an attempt to deconstruct the stage-managed diplomacy of the Vienna-held conference *Iconic Turn – Pictorial Turn?* in 2005. Schneider chose to subject W.J.T. Mitchell's "Pictorial Turn" and Gottfried Boehm's "Iconic Turn" to a comparative analysis, but the main target remained in fact the depoliticized immanentism of image by Gottfried Boehm. In what follows, I shall first retell Schneider's German text along general lines and to take it as a point of departure for some extended observations.

Schneider begins his article with the reference to a photograph surfaced on the Internet in 2005, showing W.J.T. Mitchell and Gottfried Boehm

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on the occasion of the mentioned conference, bonding with each other harmoniously. The same photograph reappeared in the publication *Bilderfragen. Der Bildwissenschaften im Aufbruch* edited by Hans Belting (Belting 2007, 26) and this book showcased a correspondence between Boehm and Mitchell, in which the former tried to persuade the latter to join his iconic turn program. The unbiased reader got probably the impression that the implied harmony is the one existing between like-minded scholars who've been working on a mutual project. However, Schneider underlined right away that those even slightly familiar with the academic socialization of Mitchell and Boehm could be only skeptic about the suggestive message of such mass-media presentations. Schneider's comparative analysis went as follows: A substantial *tertium comparationis* of both protagonists is that they were supposed to trigger a paradigm shift in the humanities. In the 1992 March issue of the *Artforum* magazine, Mitchell published an article with the programmatic title *Pictoral Turn*, while two years later Boehm's edited publication *Was ist ein Bild?* followed with the proclamation of an *iconic turn.* At first glance a coincidence of interests was suggested, at best just a minimal gradual shift. By choosing an Americanized logo, Boehm could hope – so Schneider's estimation – for an international influence that stretched beyond the central European state borders, not least because of the link with Mitchell's meanwhile successful motto. Schneider tells us that the German formula "Iconic turn" would have probably died away fast because of its other semantic connotations. Especially delicate is that Boehm reverts to a term from Peirce's semiotics ("icon") in his usage of "iconic" that he radically rejects (Pierce 1894, §3; Eco 1972, 197-201). The term, penetrating into the American terminology, turned subtly but promotionally effectively the concept of the "Iconic" of his Bochum habilitation (doctorate) treatise adviser Max Imdahl. The latter led a rather "insular existence" in a model with hegemonial claim to universality in the German art history for a long time (with centers in Bochum and Gießen as well as an epicenter in Constance); at the same time, many of the previously critical art historians in the 80s and 90s retrieved or were depoliticized, while the marginal, now "turned" Iconic could penetrate into a vacuum and hence into the front ranks. In his correspondence with Mitchell, Boehm attempted in fact to obfuscate his actual dependence on Imdahl by stylizing himself and Mitchell as "rangers" who "roam the same, barely known continent of visual phenomena and

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visuality" independently from each other (Boehm 2007, 27). Quite irrespective of his display of a particular arcane knowledge in the area of image perception, all of his references to Rorty, Wittgenstein etc. were to be found already in Mitchell's chapter "What is an Image" (Mitchell 1986, 7f.). This "played ignorance for the sake of the protection of his own alleged originality" seemed to Schneider's opinion barely credible (Schneider 2008, 38, note 3).

In what follows, we will skip Schneider's references on W.J.T. Mitchell, because his leftist or more progressive approach was not the actual target, in contrast to Boehm. The latter, originally a philosopher, was tutored by Gadamer for his Ph.D.-thesis and he managed this according to Schneider by linking Imdahl's immanentistic analysis with intellectual discourses that had never played a role before for its rationale. At best, Imdahl's research method of syntactic structures and form relations, in which the analysis of the composition of religious connotations (the pictorial arrangement was for Imdahl occasionally a sign for the presence of God's "eternity") had a temporary affinity towards individual aspects of the structuralism and Max Bense's information-theoretical foundation for aesthetics (Imdahl 1979, 38; Schneider and Held 2007, 333; Bense 1964, 1-3).

Boehm made this approach compatible with the theories of the late Merleau-Ponty or Lacan, calling Kant (Scheider set a "*sic*!" here with a very good reason regarding Gadamer's and Boehm's own anti-Kantianism), Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Freud, Wittgenstein, Husserl and Heidegger as other key witnesses for the "new legitimacy of the picture". Seconded by this impressive series of great thinkers, Boehm advocated a thesis that could slip under the wing of a tendency that was critical of enlightenment or at least skeptical towards it, that has been propagated since the early 80s, namely, the logocentrism verdict. Boehm acted according to Schneider less on emotions and diffuse sensations than on eidetic circumstances taking Konrad Fiedler as his early role model, whose work he published in the beginning of the 70s (Boehm 1971). Fiedler's central category is the clarity [*Anschaulichkeit*] of paintings with the methodical requirements that the observation of an artwork is limited to pure visuality with exclusion of all referential connotations. However, Boehm agreed with Didi-Huberman (Didi-Huberman 1990), that pictures have both a historical and a cognitive priority over language. Boehm's "historical" reasoning was based on obsolete rests of prehistorical cave

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art that offer us, after all, in Schneider's opinion, not imperative evidence for understanding (as there are very contrary hypotheses about it) "that images have their own power and their own meaning" (Boehm 2004, 29). The fact that visuality always precedes the faculty of speech served also as a triumphal argument that the visual culture / visual studies [*Bildwissenschaft*] corresponds ultimately to the status of a leading discipline in the humanities.

When Boehm speaks of *Bildwissenschaft* or even of "return of the pictures", this general term of the picture suggested that all only imaginable visual phenomena can be bundled under it neutrally i.e. indifferently to norm. Boehm expanded indeed somewhat the catalog of potentially addressable pictures ten years after his programmatic essay in 1995 granting concessions to the expansion of picture types, which has occurred meanwhile at other authors', that can range from the so-called imaging techniques over epistemic images in service of the illustration of scientific visualisations to the imaginary pictures or metaphors. As is well-known, this spectrum is almost endless. Yet it strikes one that his interest, in addition to the anthropologic reference to prehistorical "archetypes", was still focused on the paintings of the classic Modernism, starting with Paul Cézanne over Henri Matisse, Josef Albers and Yves Klein to the American Color Field painters. This "laboratory of the Modernism", as he called it, becomes the demonstration field for the method of the "Iconic", whose contra-Iconology credo was that pictures should not be regarded as place holders of a completely different logic, when, in fact, they have their own logic. According to this model, the meaning of pictures would not emerge from certain motives, aesthetic historical and socio-cultural contexts, but it was a completely self-referential process of an oscillating perception of contrasts or the exchange of pictorial grounds. This could be best "demonstrated" on pictures tending to abstraction. They were assigned the potency of self-reflection in a hypostasized manner, in the confusion of author and work, as if they were subjects themselves. Imdahl and Boehm's so-called "iconic difference", can be according to Schneider ultimately traced back to the *Gestalt*-theoretical model of the figure-ground relationship i.e. to Ingarden's phenomenological differentiation of layers of meaning. Their observation raises indubitably the sensibility for immanent structures. However, it was only a methodical aspect in the preliminary phase of the analysis. If it

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becomes independent, as is the case with Imdahl, a spiral circularity of thought arises from it reaching a *cul-de-sac* and hence resembling a glass bead game.

Norbert Schneider regarded Boehm as basically narrowing down the subject of the Visual Studies [*Bildwissenschaft*] to the field of the classic avant-garde and its recent derivatives, while remaining conspicuously in the horizon of an institutionally selected high art, whose leading role was (and still is, quite often) justified retrospectively with the criterion of "iconic [in]difference" (cf. a critical review in Conte 2021). An essentialist determination of images, like they sound in Boehm's ontologically expressed question "what is an image?" showed according to Schneider that Boehm contained his image term to a large extent to his already earlier preferable terrain of the classic Modernism and that he preferred a quietistic method of approach. The latter can be understood in the ascertainment of the "iconic difference" in the self-reflexivity as "processual" (which is solely a cerebral process of the interleaving of the thematization levels) but it finally remained before the "thick silence" and the "innate foreignness" of the images like before something numinous, ineffable (Boehm 2004, p.43). This way, so Schneider, Boehm "predicates qualities of the absolute to the images in compliance with the negative theology and the mysticism too" (Schneider 2008, 37).

3. Picturing Taste
On Gadamer's hermeneutic of pictures

Our brief excursus on "Turning iconic" in the context of recent (image-)immanentism submitted in the previous chapter was conceived to provide us with a couple of historiographical, but also systematic junctions; the letter were inspired by the idea of aesthetic experience that eventually introduced it as a quasi-indispensable agency of aesthetic value. We shall take Gadamer as case in point, because he obviously influenced both the synthetical-continental tradition (cf. Boehm in the previous chapter 2) as well as the analytical- and postanalytical one (cf. Crowther in the subsequent chapter 4).

Although the phenomenon of Taste was in Gadamer's view defined as "an intellectual faculty of differentiation" (Gadamer 1999 [1960], 33) operating in a community, aesthetic and hermeneutic consequences were

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envisioned in what he called the "ontological valence of the pictures" (ibid., 130). The "picture" appeared to Gadamer to "confirm the immediacy of aesthetic consciousness and its claim to universality" (ibid.)., so approaching a stance close to that of immanent values, as derived from Fiedler and Croce, and passing it to disciples like Imdahl or Boehm. Gadamer's "picturing Taste" could be explained, at least in part, as stemming from sources similar to Benedetto Croce's and related to "active seeing", expression and the mental environment of German Romanticism: As Gottfried Boehm expressed, "since Romanticism's critique of reason, the fantasy and imagination, the intuition [*Anschauung*] and image have regained their old rights" (Boehm 2006, 7). Therefore, seeing was also supposed to be reconstructed as an active force that is inherent to the subject both in a historical and aesthetic way. The goal was to liberate seeing "from its passive role within the philosophical insight" (Boehm 2006 [1994], 17) in the tradition of another forerunner of Benedetto Croce, Konrad Fiedler (1841-1895). To reach this goal and hence to avoid the problem of the contingency and relativity of Taste, Fiedler founded the so-called "visibilism", a rather elitist theory relying on an internal and in a way intrinsic value of an artwork, manifested in its "pure visibility" and guaranteed by the "clarity of spirit".[1] On this ground Benedetto Croce, Fiedler's friend and colleague as well as a rediscoverer of Giambattista Vico, selected intuition as a key term of his aesthetics. From this lookout it became quite feasible to bridge the distance to the conception of seeing as consciousness (Kacunko 2010, 449f. and 782f.). After the symbolic language of "pure thinking" from Frege, Russell, Wittgenstein and other logical atomists seemed to have failed (at least on the continent, because actually it become the foundation for the Analytic philosophy), the emerging goal seemed to become the rediscovery of "pure seeing". Konrad Fiedler's answer to the question "how can one overcome the relativity of Taste?" made this art historian the founder of the "science of

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1 Even Heinrich Wölfflin named the actual Taste, which he also used explicitly, as a "decorative feeling" and a basis or his five concept pairs from his *Principles*: "The last decision always belongs to the decorative principles, to the taste's convictions" – was the last sentence in his book *Classic Art*. – Within the iconographic debate of the ending twentieth century, Lambert Wiesing advocated a resumption of the term of the "pure visibility" and its application to the new production conditions of media images too. This would give the images precisely that subjectivity which should not fall victim to from the perspective of visual studies. Cf. Wiesing 2000.

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art" [*Kunstwissenschaft*], the so-called "visibilism" and the theory of the fine arts. His answer prompted Fiedler to separate aesthetics from art theory, the root of this effort being his understanding of Taste. For this author, Taste was an aesthetic feeling that we refer to when evaluating works of art. Since aesthetic feeling is different among people, and since it is also present as such before viewing a concrete work of art, the role of art, seen from the standpoint of a raw, uneducated Taste, would be reduced to the mere illustration of aesthetic theories. In order to avoid this, Fiedler particularly emphasized the need to shape Taste in contact with the works of art, because this alone apparently led to security in valuation and judgment. According to Fiedler, the following elements cannot be used as yardsticks for the Taste valuation: (1) Beauty, because it corresponds to untrained Taste or the aesthetic feeling; (2) content (concept), because the interest in art begins where the interest in the rational content of the work of art ends; (3) form, because, according to Fiedler, there is also a contradiction between "diving into" the depth of the work of art and understanding its historical context (Fiedler 1965, 11-13); (4) feeling, related to the argumentation for the first point; and (5) the level of imitation, because the artistic activity is a free creation. One part of Konrad Fiedler's argumentation, which may appear self-contained and particularly convincing, shows parallels with Benedetto Croce's aesthetics formulated some fifteen years later. (1) It applies above all to an activist understanding of art: "The spiritual life of an artist consists in the constant production of this artistic consciousness This is the actual artistic activity, the actual artistic creation, of which the production of the works of art is only an external result [...] Technique has no independent right in artistic activity, it serves the spiritual process exclusively" (Fiedler 1913, 55, 60). (2) The second point was Fiedler's interesting explanation of the relationship between perception and feeling, in which the need for a certain "phenomenological *epohé*" in Husserl's sense was emphasized (Husserl 1975). It should be applied to feeling, so that one can penetrate to the perception. Although this happens in an unclear way – with the "clarity of the mind" – it remains valid in that it is precisely with this "phenomenological" method (conditionally, because it was not yet "invented" in 1887) that Fiedler succeeded with his "pure visibility" (Fiedler 1913, 316; Zimmermann 2009, 111-116).

Seen in this historiographic perspective, we encounter the position of Hans-Georg Gadamer as one of the prominent proponents of herme-

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neutics understood as a value theory par excellence – and indirectly of Boehm and other contemporary image-immanentists. Gadamer found Taste to be one of the "guiding concepts of humanism" (Gadamer 1999 [1960], 8) and his "critique of aesthetic consciousness" was aimed at defending "the experience of truth that comes to us through the work of art against the aesthetic theory that lets itself be restricted to a scientific conception of truth" (ibid, XXII). Gadamer's focus on "hermeneutic experience" with its departure point in the post-Kantian experience of art and historical tradition showed affinity to the synthetic (continental) tendencies and the concern to overcome the reduction of understanding to the modernist and scientific concept of cognition. Gadamer's concept of "aesthetic non-differentiation" (ibid, XXVIII) came quite close to Croce's intuitionism by exhibiting a kind of "existential preferentialism", as it were, expressed among others in the conviction that "understanding belongs to the being of that which is understood" (ibid). The key systematic role of experience and "phenomenological immanence" (ibid, XXXII) made Gadamer's hermeneutic less of a proper methodology and more akin to Heidegger's interpretation of thinking experience, referring to more than the consciousness of the thinker.

Further cross-referencing regarding "picturing Taste" into the "immanent value" of the picture could continue with Roman Ingarden as an ancestor of the modern reader-response criticism or "reception-aesthetics." Wolfgang Iser (1926 – 2007) and Hans Robert Jauss (1921 – 1997) could be accounted to the cofounders of the "reception-aesthetics" as well. Although being mostly focused on texts, their line of thought could be safely equated to a search for immanent values. In his *Small Apology for the Aesthetic Experience* (1972), Jauss called for "aesthetic experience", relying on Imdahl by distancing from some early art historical appeals to separate Taste and art history:

> I rather consider the classic demand that scientific reflection on art should be completely separated from its mere enjoyment as an argument of guilty conscience [...] I defend the thesis [that] the enjoyable behaviour that art triggers and enables is the primal aesthetic experience; it cannot be excluded, but must again become the object of theoretical reflection if we are concerned today with justifying the social function of art and the science that

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serves it against the educated as well as against the uneducated between their despisers [...] Anyone who uses the word "enjoyment" today in the sense of the well-known quote from Faust: "and what is allocated to all of humanity / I want to enjoy in my inner self" (Jauss 1972, 7-8).

Such a conflux of quasi-social emancipatory claims with implicit, immanent and inherent values was at least in part the result of an early dispute with the formalist and allegedly elitist position of Theodor W. Adorno (1903 – 1969) from his posthumous *Aesthetic Theory* (1970). It was more than ten years before its English translation and its entry into British and American discussions that it induced both "New Aestheticism" and various different (anti-foundationalist, post-modernist) reactions. It is important to emphasize that there was no inherent contradiction between Imdahl's quasi-invitational seminars about the reception of modern art with the factory workers in the Bayer factory in Leverkusen (Imdahl 1982) and his immanentist explanation patterns. Hence Jauss's argumentation shall also be conceived in the same context. For him, "the sharpest criticism of all enjoyable experience of art can be found in the aesthetic theory left behind by Theodor W. Adorno [...] Whoever is unable to throw off the enjoyable taste in art leaves it in the vicinity of kitchen products or pornography" (Jauss 1972, 9). In response to Adorno's rhetoric claim that "the citizen wants art abundantly and life ascetically; it would be better the other way round" (ibid, quote from Adorno 1970, 26-27), Jauss asserted that "in this context, ascetic art and the aesthetics of negativity gain the lonely pathos of their legitimation from the contrast to consumer art of modern mass media" (Jauss 1972, 10).

Some immanentist presumptions around the "picturing Taste" of Max Imdahl can be followed in a direct line to his academic successor Richard Hoppe-Sailer, but also Christian Spies (Spies 2007) and others. Hoppe-Sailer (Hoppe-Sailer 1996; Hoppe-Sailer and Imdahl 1996) wrote about the "double look [sight, gaze]", which we found in Jauss and the related so-called response criticism of the Constance School, which Boehm transferred to his version of "image science" (*Bildwissenschaft*) and which, again, Wolfgang Kemp transferred to his version of art historical reception aesthetics (Kemp 1992, 20; Kemp 2015; Resch and Steinert 2003, 9).

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4. Imagining Taste
On Crowther's "post-analysis"

Gadamer's hermeneutic of pictures also attracted Paul Crowther, whose aim was to support his theory of aesthetic value as artistic value with the projected value of the "artistic image". A point of departure for Crowther was indeed the "projective" one, as expressed in his book on *Philosophy after Postmodernism* (2003), since a picture always "involves the projection of a three-dimensional item or state of affairs within a virtual two-dimensional plane. The means of projection is resemblance in terms of shape, texture and/or color, between the picture and that kind of thing which it is a picture of" (Crowther 2003a, 212). Crowther sought therewith to bridge the infinite number of pictures with a "finite number of logically distinct ways in which pictorial space can be structured" by combining a quasi-Kantian way of developing schematic categories that respected the development of "pictorial media" and other circumstances with a quasi-Hegelian way of diachronically structuring such assumed structures. However, it was not an update of Hegelian *Lectures on Aesthetics* that was the motivation, but rather a defense against the postmodernist (but also analytic-philosophical) denials of the "correspondence" theory or reducing the perspective to the culturally-dependent construct. Instead, the modes of the "picturing" of the "systematic spatiality of the physical world" are to be explored as tools for an objective and indeed normative understanding of art and value.

Four years later, in the book *Defining Art, Creating the Canon* (2007), Crowther presented a more elaborated sketch of what he termed "artistic image"; here we shall only clarify what was termed there as an "analytic appropriation of ideas from Gadamer" (Crowther 2007a, 89). In essence, the "structure of experience" has been connected to Gadamer's views on art and reconnected to the cognitive value of both, as seen through some features of the creative development of the used artistic media. For Crowther, there exists no established alternative to the term "image", when it comes to the clarification of the relations between aesthetic value, art and "what is to be an artifactual image" (ibid, 90). He adopted Gadamer's ontological founding of art on the structure of play and its mimetic and representational character and underlined two merits: (1) Gadamer's account of art as having a genuinely event character having the potential for the further development of Kant's account of the "aes-

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thetic idea" and (2) the potential of Gadamer's account to connect with what Crowther called "world projection". The latter term was described in the third chapter of the same book from 2007, in which Crowther presented his views of how Kant's aesthetics could be further developed by making decisive steps "from Beauty to Art" (Crowther 2007b). At the same time, the reused visual and also psychoanalytic metaphor of "projection" from the above-quoted book from 2003 served to conceptually strengthen the bonds between the "world", "subject" and the creative act as event. With Crowther's words, "whilst the ability to project beyond immediate perception in these terms, can be purely a process of thought, its more fundamental mode is the image […] The realm of imagery – be it exercised in memory or imagination – is the zone from which rationality emerges" (Crowther 2007a, 101).

Crowther found hence in Gadamer's high appreciation of art an important potential for linking art's essence, structure and origins to the fundaments of self-consciousness and with this anthropological constant, a kind of quasi-iconic difference emerged in order to separate artistic from logical truths. Crowther saw the key point as the assumption that "art stems directly from the experience of shared subjectivity – from a mutual recognition of common forms of relatedness to the world" (ibid, 102). This was again the basis for reciprocity of a kind which we can encounter in Croce's reciprocity between the productive genius and receptive Taste. Although not referring to Croce explicitly, Crowther recognized there Hegel's understanding of the mode of knowledge which art provides as a midway between sensuality and abstract thinking, as well as Gadamer's redirecting of focus to provide the distinctive status of knowledge to art. Crowther then went on to adapt and further concretize these insights.[2] An important point was to substantiate the claim of the artwork being a "symbolically significant artifact" and hence the extraordinary character of our experience of art and its value.

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2 Crowther complained about Gadamer's "schematism" with respect to the "art's relation to self-consciousness and world-projection" similarly like to the schmatism of Kant. This complain could, however, be relativized with a speculation about the people who are not "art believers", "art preachers / teachers" and the like. – "A more serious worry concerns his [Gadamer's] claims about the artwork exemplifying the essence of experience. A claim of this sort is necessary; insofar as art transforms play into 'structure' i.e. it is a full realization of tendencies which are only hinted at in play and games. Only in art, in other words, does image mimesis attain the status of knowledge. But why is this so?" Crowther 2007a, 102.

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Although Gadamer's understanding of representation as an ontological event brings with it a metaphysical, Neoplatonist implication – "the subject of the picture is a 'one'from which the picture itself is an emanation of overflow" (Crowther 2007a, 103) – Crowther turned this implication of point to an ontological-existential one with the following result: "By treating the artist's experience of a subject matter (be it real or imaginary) as the original, then we might see the artwork which results from this as a kind of 'increase in being' for the original" (ibid, 103). This move from Taste and aesthetics to art and eventually to the visual (the artwork as "a made image") was then projected again onto the existential foil to interpret Gadamer's artwork as a continuation of a self-conscious artistic "world projection" and its ontological anchoring in an intersubjective world: "It is thus ontologically akin to the world-projection aspect of experience, whilst, at the same time, being physically autonomous from its creator. The significance of this, of course, is that in artifact form, the image endures. Indeed, it embodies an overt symbolic content which (in a way that a mundane artifact does not) invites interpretation from the audience" (ibid, 105). The hermeneutical circle is closed, as it were, while the art experience reemerged as enjoyment in life's intensity and an increase in being. Above all, however, stands the creator, whose style remains paramount. Their experience is an ontological one, bearing ontological, not logical truth.

To Crowther, the very fact of artwork's "being physically discontinuous from the artist gives it an ontological self-sufficiency and completeness which individual personal experiences do not have" (ibid, 109). Apart from this "first normative axis", as Crowther called it, he also presented a "second normative axis", stemming from the distinctions between high art and mass products. The main point here was a focus on the quasi-ultimate fact, on which Crowther's answer to the latter difficult question of emergence of "art in the sense of image per se" (ibid 110, 116, 123) relied. While considering the "general historical relations" of mediation "that the reflective significance of art – its distinctive power of experiential illumination fully emerges" – and hence implying at least some institutionalists' claims – Crowther regarded the key concept to be originality. Supported by two complementary fundaments – refinement and innovation – originality, which Crowther envisioned indeed to exhibit certain important "general" features of Taste, became here confined or quasi-limited to the agency of the artist. With respect to "imagining

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Taste", Crowther had the divisive conviction that such conceived originality "changes our relation to the image. Rather than see it as mere decoration or as an object of functional or escapist significance […] the world of otherness echoes our own being; its foreignness is overcome" (ibid, 116). The important question that remains here is whether this "overcoming" takes place as "resistance", "tolerance", "cohabitation", or some kind of combination of these *modi vivendi*.

Crowther seemed to have already made a step towards answering this question in a chapter from his book from 2003, entitled *The Cohesion of the Self: Moment, Image, and Narrative* (Crowther 2003b). The claim that the unity of the self is aesthetically based was supported by a reading of Kant's interplay of understanding and imagination as two basic and complementary aspects of aesthetic experience that exceed mere faculty psychology. The "narrative of the self" was conceived as a positive moment of what Crowther termed the "experiential sublime" (ibid, 89) to distinguish it from a Kantian focus on the "natural" sublime. It included, as Crowther explained, some moral and political aspects that imply the importance of a claim of intrinsic values: "In moral terms, they are worthy of respect; in political terms, they should be afforded basic human rights. What sustains these ascriptions is the fact that there is something special about free self-conscious beings" (ibid, 98). Crowther's holistic and intersubjective justification of the "experiential sublime" as intrinsically demanding respect, as it were, did however suggest a perhaps more optimistic invitation and promise than an individual or even collective "cohesion" could possibly hold: "Hence my description of the self as an aesthetic structure is not an aestheticization, it is a literal truth about the basis of the self's cohesion" (ibid, 99).

In a paper entitled "What Makes One Work of Art Better Than Another – From Aesthetic Judgment to Canonicity" (Crowther, not dated), Paul Crowther provided a sketch of a theory of intrinsic aesthetic value in art, which maintained a number of relevant points that implied a concept of (aesthetic) experience and which in a way belongs to both analytic and synthetic thinking traditions. As a case in point, the following notes on Crowther's approach should help us to further support our argument about the use of (in-) divisibility of both traditions with respect to the ongoing reflections on matters of Taste in the contemporary (image) discourse. In this paper, Crowther provided what he conceived as "familiar features of the aesthetic judgment in general", followed by "objec-

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tive criteria" serving as evidences for supporting aesthetic judgments (ibid, 1). The idea of aesthetic features refers to the "distinctiveness of the aesthetic as a mode of pleasure (or displeasure) and value" (ibid, 2) and takes the writings of a wide range of authors (Kant, Hegel, Bergson, Dewey, Dufrenne, Beardsley, Adorno and Wollheim) as support for the "foundational sense of the aesthetic" (ibid). (1) The first feature of aesthetic judgment is its foundation on either a perceptual or imaginatively-intended experience of an item – a point defended throughout the paper. (2) The second feature is the non-reducibility of the "sensuous" character of the aesthetic item to the sensory qualities; quasi-sensory and feeling-related inputs are also optional to build together what Crowther names "sensuous meaning" – a constitutive feature of judgment, "that uniquely qualifies and is qualified by its place in the developing whole of personal and historical human experience" (ibid).

The objective valid criteria for supporting aesthetic engagement include several interesting implications: (1) Public accessibility contains "a shared cognitive stock of relevant concepts, norms, and expectations" assumed as necessary for communication between humans (ibid, 3). (2) The "comparative dimension" is another major "source of evidence" for aesthetic judgment, also referred to as "comparative qualification." Through the latter, "our particular experience of something can contribute to and modify the horizon of expectations through which we regard the world" (ibid, 7). Following the premises of the hermeneutical character of all the experience, Crowther concludes on the hermeneutical character of the aesthetic as well: The interpretation of the directly-experienced and -described item hence builds the "evidential basis for objectivity in aesthetic judgement" (ibid). (3) Crowther added, among others, also the criterion of "creative individual difference", an art difference, as it were, to be paralleled by aesthetic quality in aesthetics. This difference provides intrinsically pleasurable items with the required "descriptive evidence" (ibid, 14) to support the objectivity of judgment. An interesting parallel of this specific art difference could be drawn with Heidegger's "ontological difference", Boehm's "iconic difference" and with Crowther's attachment to Gadamer. Each of the three parallels also seems applicable to their persuasive power in the sense of "invitationalism". Crowther's "creative individual difference [...] makes the work pleasurable in its own right and invites us to explore not only the structure of how it appears to the senses or imagination, but also its aesthetic disclosure of how another

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person has seen or experienced the world's possibilities" (ibid). The decisive aspect of this descriptive evidence is the way of refining the artistic medium, which individual engagement achieves in its efforts both to aesthetically disclose the world and to sustain aesthetic disclosure (ibid, 17). Crowther lets this aspect of innovation and individual style converge if not coalesce with each other. This would be then

> the way in which creative individual difference that engages with features central to an artistic medium, opens up not only new ways of aesthetically disclosing the world, but also ones that, in so doing, change the terms of how that medium sustains aesthetic disclosure. This, in turn can assist other artists to achieve individual styles, and can even enable much more extensive refinements that far exceed the scope of the original innovation (ibid, 17-18).

At the same time, "individuality of vision" expands "the aesthetically disclosive possibilities of the medium itself" (ibid). In sum, the artists with the best achievements in all named (and some other) criteria are according to Crowther best qualified to be acknowledged as "meritorious in the most objective terms – namely canonic" (ibid, 18). The very last point probably appears as the most decisive both for creative individual difference and for all the mentioned objective valid criteria – the capacity of the creator to transform the semantic, syntactic and material nature of the used (or invented) medium. This is what Crowther reconnected with the "expressive qualities" discussed in the analytic tradition (Noël Carroll) as an important supplement to the synthetic (i.e. continental tradition's) interest in historicity. The medium mediates between "creative stylistic difference" and "cognitive exploration" to eventually converge in the trinity of *innovatio*, invention and creativity. When an artist "changes the scope of the medium", the opportunities for the other artists widen and "in this way aesthetic value becomes world-changing" (ibid, 20).

We can widen the context of Crowther's (re-) building of the objective canon for an aesthetic-as-artistic valuation. What we have previously referred to as the third criterion of "creative individual difference" (there are actually four in Crowther's account) appears as "authentic canon" and the normative definition of art, closely dependent on widening the "logical scope of art media", innovation and "refinement." In a text with

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the programmatic title *Defining Art, Defending the Canon, Contesting Culture* (Crowther 2004), Crowther presented *in ovo* what he would later elaborate in the book *Defining Art, Creating the Canon: Artistic Value in an Era of Doubt* (2007c). A decisive concept, apart from what we have discussed so far, was the concept of "making". It served not only to justify the move from the more general analytic interest in relations between epistemology and the aesthetic values to the ontology of art and the justification of artistic value; the move was important for defending a particular ecumenical attempt of merging (or stronger: "overcoming") elements from the analytic and synthetic traditions against contemporary anti-foundational attacks. Having Foucault and Stuart Hall's "signifying practices" as implicit targets, Crowther made an important point by taking the example of non-western art to show "the centrality of making" as a quasi-universal common denominator because of its equal importance also for western art. For, as he concluded,

> to develop the logical scope of a medium is – literally – to make new idioms of representation. If a work achieves something in terms of developing this scope – that is to say, if it innovates or refines in relation to it, then (over and above any broader social functions it may serve) the work has an objective value which representations that merely repeat established patterns and formulae of production do not (Crowther 2004, 372).

All the aforementioned canonical evaluation criteria are applied here. The "art" is then justified as a universal category qua distinctive representations qua extending the logical scope of a specific medium qua innovation or refinement. The cognitive elements of "Taste" seem transferred and appropriated by the "art." "Relativism's problems center with its "distorted consumerist mind-set […] on the exclusion or marginalization of making and its profound connections with aesthetic experience" (ibid, 377). The actual post-post-colonial point that Crowther was making was that the anti-foundationalist one-size-fits-all instrument of appropriation becomes a disguised "universal" – and hence tacitly racist (ibid, 367) – tool for degrading one kind of local truths into the relative values of the others (Western ones).

However, an interesting and perhaps decisive break with the postmodernist mainstream seems to have happened along the line of Heidegger's

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anti-technological position: While both Crowther and the postmodernists (or proponents of "supermodernity", connoting a continuity within modernity) drew a lot from Heidegger's ontology and existentialism, Crowther seemed unwilling to follow him all the way with postmodernists in their shared dystopian views on the techno-scientific changes in the early and later twentieth century, respectively. Although he identified the dangers of "cyber-babble" throughout, Crowther believed in the advantages of "a specific usage of information technology." He regarded a clue to this in the "popularity of web sites devoted to genealogy" and the potentials of efficiency, which would allow to "grow around a retrievable body of historical fact and imagery […] The Self achieves, thereby, *progressive articulation*." (Crowther 2003a, 215-16). This is also where Crowther envisioned a theory of civilization with the correlating theory of value attempting to "bridge the seemingly ever-widening divide between analytic philosophy and other traditions of philosophy and social theory" (ibid, 3). The analytic and synthetic traditions were hence supposed to converge in a self-conscious civilizing process bearing intrinsic value in itself. Such a "transhistorical" approach was supposed to counter the "fetishization of difference." Also "iconic difference" belongs, perhaps surprisingly and counter-intuitively, to this criticized context. In order to meet the often undifferentiated reflections upon the varieties of the latter, Crowther gave a necessary task to a candidate for the future critically autonomous cultural agent ("artist", "experiencer" etc.): They are supposed to be able to clarify the nature of their difference from a given cultural position, which required discerning between the five basic kinds of difference: (1) neutral, (2), normal, (3) effective, (4) paradigmatic and (5) pseudo-difference (ibid, 210).

Crowther's attempt certainly bears the positive aspects of a call for proper differentiation, "refinement" and "progressive articulation" (ibid, 23). What however remains a desideratum is a full-developed theory that would unite the Cassirer-Heidegger ideological dispute about Kant's first *Critique* of 1929 in Davos and hence fully overcome the dynamics between the analytic and synthetic approaches relying on either idealistic or phenomenological positions. Such an attempt seems more likely to be achieved qua description and ascription and less qua prescription ("canon"). Applied to the "urgency", "immediacy" and "inventiveness" of Taste, Crowther's descriptions are certainly that of a value-bearer, perhaps also of a true-bearer in some parts. He concludes that

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> The decisive factor here is the way in which symbolic transformations historically articulate cognitive categories and other necessary features of embodied subjectivity. This is a reciprocal relationship. The individually necessary elements mediate one other and their historically specific instantiations, and, at the same time are mediated by those instantiations. The means of this mediation is the transformation or invention of appropriate kinds of symbolic code (ibid, 136).

Crowther counted, as we have seen, with originality as being a crucial feature of (the artist's) Taste (their capacity to exhibit a distinctive "style"), a feature supported by the two other features of "refinement" and "innovation". The former feature, being one of the synonyms for "value", complements the latter one, but both of them seem somehow dependent on the permanent development of the "logical scope of the media" involved. This is where the objective – but intrinsic – value criterion in Crowther's account lies, and where perhaps the "extrinsic" innovative aspects may also be imagined. In addition, the question remains open as to whether the dichotomy of the canonic and the anti-canonic reaches so far as to encompass the entire range of the issue – not to mention the far-fetched, allegedly direct or even one-way-causalities from "image" to "artistic image" to "aesthetic value".

5. Concluding remarks

Our review of Crowther's position served as an example of an attempt to defend a particular ecumenical attempt of merging (or stronger: "overcoming") elements from the analytic and synthetic traditions against contemporary anti-foundational attacks. Crowther's specific attempt to justify the move from the more general analytic interest in relations between epistemology and the aesthetic values to the ontology of art and the justification of artistic value based on (artistic) images falls however – in our estimation – into the "immanentist pitfall" that was built-in already in his predecessor's foundationalisms based at least partially in "images" ("image-foundationalism" or even "fundamentalism of image"): Gadamer's, Heidegger's and also Fiedler's as well as Croce's positions remain in our view but the rather unsurprising roots of current continental image-foundationalism shared by Boehm and Crowther, among many others.

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Norbert Schneider's short paper, in contrast, is estimated as a reminder that we still have the self-imposed obligation to give reasons for matters of image(s) – just like we also must remain able to give reasons for matters of Taste and our aesthetic evaluations. Otherwise, there is a good chance that the only foundation for our estimations may rest in believe in the power of "something" that is substantially based on believe and power.

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