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SEDLMAYR AND SCHAPIRO CORRESPOND, 1930–1935

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SEDLMAYR AND SCHAPIRO CORRESPOND, 1930–1935

EVONNE LEVY

In the past decade German and Austrian scholars have taken part in a concerted effort to write the history of art history under National Socialism. Hans Sedlmayr, who was *Ordinarius* at the University of Vienna from 1936–1945, is a central character in this narrative for he was, as is well known, an early member of the Nazi party (1930–1932 and 1938–1945) and one of the few art historians who was not allowed to return to the *cathedra* after 1945 because of his party affiliation. When he was appointed to the

University of Munich in 1951 he was and remained an extremely controversial figure.¹ Hans Aurenhammer, Albert Ottenbacher, Peter Haiko (and others) have researched Sedlmayr's political biography and drawn substantial connections between Sedlmayr's publications from the mid-1930s through the post-war period and National Socialist tenets.² It has been demonstrated that Sedlmayr virtually exemplifies the "continuity problem," since two of his key post-war books were well under way even before the outbreak of

I would like to thank Hans Aurenhammer for his careful reading of this essay, and for many shared insights; Farris Wahbeh of the Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library where the Sedlmayr letters are preserved offered much assistance in locating the Sedlmayr letters and bringing them to publication; Richard Woodfield provided an occasion to present this paper at a conference in Glasgow in October 2009 on the Vienna School. I would also like to thank the colleagues who took the time to read this essay and share their thoughts: Robert Levit, Peter Parshall, Walter Cahn, Christopher Wood, Andrew Hopkins and the participants in the Glasgow Conference. To Elizabeth Cropper and Julian Saenz my thanks for much sage advice. Above all I would like to thank Susanne Sedlmayr-Guéri-taud for her kind permission to publish her father's letters. Schapiro's letters to Sedlmayr have not survived. Research for this article was supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

- 1 W. SAUERLÄNDER, Der Münchner Protest gegen die Berufung Hans Sedlmayrs im Frühjahr 1951, in: C. DRUDE/H. KOHLE (eds), 200 Jahre Kunstgeschichte in München: Positionen, Perspektiven, Polemik, Munich 2003, pp. 182–198. See also H. DILLY, Deutsche Kunsthistoriker 1933–1945, Munich 1988, esp. pp. 82–83, pp. 86–87; M. WARNKE, Apologet der Mitte: Hans Sedlmayr, in: Künstler, Kunsthistoriker, Museen: Beiträge zu einer kritischen Kunstgeschichte, Luzern 1979, pp. 74–76.
- 2 H. H. AURENHAMMER, Hans Sedlmayr und die Kunstgeschichte an der Universität Wien 1938–1945, in: J. HELD/M. PAPENBROCK (eds), Kunstgeschichte an den Universitäten im Nationalsozialismus, Göttingen 2003, pp. 161–194; H. H. AURENHAMMER, Zäsur oder Kontinuität. Das Wiener Kunsthistorische Institut im Ständestaat und im Nationalsozialismus, in: Wiener Schule. Erinnerungen und Perspektiven (= Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte, 53, 2004), pp. 11–54; J. HELD, Hans Sedlmayr in München, in: M. PAPENBROCK (ed.), Kunstgeschichte an den Universitäten in der Nachkriegszeit, Göttingen 2006, pp. 121–169. P. HAIKO, 'Verlust der Mitte' von Hans Sedlmayr als kritische Form im Sinne der Theorie von Hans Sedlmayr, in: G. HEISS/S. MATTL/S. MEISSL/E. SAURER/K. STUHLPFARRER (eds), Willfähige Wissenschaft, Vienna 1989, pp. 77–83; N. SCHNEIDER, Hans Sedlmayr (1896–1984), in: H. DILLY (ed.), Altmeister moderner Kunstgeschichte, Berlin 1999, pp. 267–288; W. SCHLINK, The Gothic Cathedral as Heavenly Jerusalem. A fiction in Germany Art History, in: B. KÜHNEL (ed.), The real and ideal Jerusalem in Jewish, Christian and Islamic Art: Studies in honour of Bezalel Narkiss on the occasion of his seventieth birthday, Jerusalem 1998, pp. 275–285. H. JUSTIN, 'Tanz mir den Hitler': Kunstgeschichte und faschistische Herrschaft, Münster 1982, pp. 68–69. For evidence of Sedlmayr's membership in the Nazi party see HAIKO, Hans Sedlmayr (cit. in this n.), p.

war and openly display an ongoing engagement with authors and ideas that reached prominence under National Socialism.³

The interest of these authors has been, if I can generalize, in the demonstration of the close relationship between Sedlmayr's politics and his art history. And although the question as to whether ideas can be rehabilitated (as a corollary of the post-war rehabilitation of people) is only rarely directly addressed (most notably in Benjamin Binstock's provocatively titled "Springtime for Sedlmayr? The Future of Nazi Art History"⁴), it is implicit in every analysis of the work that to put Sedlmayr's concepts and categories to new use after such a demonstration is to perpetuate the goals of their original use (especially given Sedlmayr's methodological ambitions).⁵ In looking closely here at new evidence of Sedlmayr's political beliefs, my point is that these documents will beg the question of whether Sedlmayr's work can be used (rather than discussed) now, whether we believe in such prohibitions or not.

The work that Sedlmayr published between 1925 and 1933 occupies more of a grey area than the post-*Anschluss* publications and just in the past decade this early work has been vigorously discussed in light of Sedlmayr's National Socialism and its value for art history today openly de-

bated. Christopher Wood's 'The Vienna School Reader' (2000), which published the first English translations of two of Sedlmayr's essays, was, on the one hand, driven by a return to art history of what he calls a "taste" for "the alchemy of formalism" and, on the other hand provoked by the already twenty-year old debates over the political dimension of the work of Martin Heidegger and early Paul De Man. If Wood appears to give us permission to read Sedlmayr (not again but in North America really for the first time), his thoughtful and challenging introduction leaves the reader little room to redeploy Sedlmayr's ideas, at least not without circumspection. For while Wood has helped to draw the line between Riegl and the 2nd Vienna school he foregrounds the fact that Sedlmayr's work has been "repeatedly invoked as a cautionary tale about the perils of ungrounded interpretation" and agrees with Joseph Leo Koerner that, "In the end, it is impossible to normalize Sedlmayr."⁶

But Wood also appreciates early Sedlmayr's complexity, using a positive remark by Walter Benjamin as an authoritative support for a rethinking of Sedlmayr and Pächt's formalism and invoking Adorno's partial agreement with Sedlmayr's critique of modernity in 'Verlust der Mitte' (1948) in 1951 to allow us to consider the value of Sedlmayr the unveiler.⁷ If at important

87; A. OTTENBACHER, *Kunstgeschichte in ihrer Zeit. Zu Hans Sedlmayrs 'abendländischer Sendung'*, in: *Kritische Berichte*, 29, 2001, p. 74. For a more sympathetic take on Sedlmayr see the biographical essay by his former student from 1935 to 1939, E. FRODL-KRAFT, *Hans Sedlmayr (1896-1984)*, in: *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte*, 44, 1991, pp. 7-46.

3 The opening epigraph in 'Verlust der Mitte', for example, is an ideologically neutral quote of Wilhelm Pinder. H. SEDLMAYR, *Verlust der Mitte. Die bildende Kunst des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts als Symbol der Zeit*, Salzburg 1948, p. 7. Previously noted by JUSTIN, 'Tanz mir den Hitler' (cit. n. 2), p. 62. It is also troubling that Sedlmayr never addressed his wartime activities.

4 B. BINSTOCK, *Springtime for Sedlmayr? The Future of Nazi Art History*, in: *Wiener Schule. Erinnerungen und Perspektiven* (= *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte*, 53, 2004), pp. 73-86.

5 Nonetheless, Sedlmayr was included in Heinrich Dilly's small selection of figures in his anthology of *Altmeister moderner Kunstgeschichte*, Berlin 1999.

6 C. WOOD, "Introduction," *The Vienna School Reader. Politics and Art Historical Method in the 1930s*, New York 2000, p. 15. For a brilliant and devastating reading of both Sedlmayr's Brueghel essay of 1934 and Pächt's reading of Fouquet see J. L. KOERNER, *Albrecht Dürer's Pleasures of the World*, in: W. HAUG WARNING (ed.), *Das Fest*, Munich 1989, pp. 193-197.

points he follows or agrees with Meyer Schapiro's critique of Sedlmayr in 1936, Wood is not the communist and Jewish Schapiro who would try unsuccessfully to fish Benjamin out of Europe and later learn of his suicide; and because Wood wrote in 2000 and not in 1936 he could afford to find Sedlmayr's pessimism more alive than Panofsky's idealism (This in spite of his statement that "A normalization of Sedlmayr would entail a painful, even obscene 'reading through' of his Nazism"⁸).

Perhaps because Wood had already rehearsed the reasons why a "normalization" of Sedlmayr would be "obscene," Frederick Schwartz is emboldened to cast Sedlmayr's work in a very sympathetic intellectual context.⁹ After all, how many times shall we rehearse the same facts of Sedlmayr's history? His project focuses on "incursions into enemy territory" by the Frankfurt school and thus he is fascinated by "uncanny proximity" of the concerns of Sedlmayr and Benjamin, asking why the brilliant promise of Sedlmayr's clear vision of art history's problems lapsed into "nonsense," or "falls into farce"? He is interested in Sedlmayr as a "fascinating failure" because he finds him so well informed of the art historical debates of the time; because he believes in the rigor Sedlmayr intended to infuse into art history. He is more sympathetic to his work than he knows he should be for the principal reason that he finds Sedlmayr modern. Schwartz does not provide a response to his own question, "Is there anything – anything at all – that can be recouped from Sedlmayr's project?" while deciding that Sedlmayr was a naïve in interdisciplinary work.¹⁰ Between Schwartz and Wood, Aurenhammer and Binstock, there is, in other words, a discussion of Sedlmayr's early work

which takes full measure of the complexities of reading it in the light of his politics.

Although there is no dispute over Sedlmayr's party loyalties, until now there has emerged no explicit statement of his political views that would help us draw the line from his politics to his pre-*Anschluss* work in no uncertain terms. A cache of letters written by Sedlmayr to the American art historian Meyer Schapiro in the period 1930-1935 now allows us to do so. The letters predate Schapiro's largely critical review published in 'The Art Bulletin' in 1936 of the second volume of the 'Kunstwissenschaftliche Forschungen' (henceforth 'KWF') that has become an important document in the reception of the work of Sedlmayr and his circle although scholars have not known of Schapiro's direct contact with Sedlmayr.¹¹ In what follows I will summarize these rich letters and offer some initial thoughts about the significance of this rare epistolary exchange between a communist Jewish American (Lithuanian by birth) and an anti-Semitic Austrian Catholic member of the Nazi party.

The papers of Meyer Schapiro, which were gifted to Columbia University's Rare Book and Manuscript Library after the death of Lillian Schapiro, have just been catalogued and are now accessible to scholars. The Sedlmayr correspondence is comprised by 21 letters written by Sedlmayr and one draft of a letter by Schapiro, about 50 manuscript pages in all. All but one letter written by Sedlmayr are in German and they are all typed. The correspondence, which begins 13 January 1930, is likely to have been stimulated by their meeting for Schapiro was in Vienna in 1930 (and again in 1931 and 1933). There are references in the letters to other Viennese scholars who Meyer Schapiro seems to have met (like

7 WOOD, Vienna School Reader (cit. n. 6), pp. 16–17.

8 WOOD, Vienna School Reader (cit. n. 6), p. 46.

9 F. SCHWARTZ, Blind Spots. Critical Theory and the History of Art in Twentieth-Century Germany, London 2005, p. 153.

10 SCHWARTZ, Blind Spots (cit. n. 9), p. 162, pp. 168–169, pp. 176–177, p. 194.

11 M. SCHAPIRO, The New Viennese School, in: The Art Bulletin, 18, 1936, pp. 258–266.

Swoboda).¹² All of the letters bear a day and month but in few did Sedlmayr indicate the year. I have dated them based on the flow of their discussion and, with one exception, I am confident of the chronology.

The letters show Sedlmayr's keenness in the early 1930s to be in contact with foreign scholars,¹³ to exchange ideas and opinions of the work of people in his circle, and to promote it. Sedlmayr shows an openness to Schapiro's suggestions of readings, mostly by scholars outside art history, and across the political spectrum. There is virtually nothing personal in Sedlmayr's letters and the events of the outside world are also kept for the most part, or until late in the correspondence, at bay. Starting in 1934, likely following further personal contact in 1933, Sedlmayr and Schapiro begin to clash on their diametrically opposed political positions, including Sedlmayr's anti-Semitism. For one year they continued the correspondence, trying to keep their art historical discussion apart from their political beliefs until they were no longer able to sustain it. In this, although Sedlmayr feigned agreement, Schapiro seems to have had the upper hand. For Sedlmayr is always trying to continue

the dialogue. In what follows I will summarize the correspondence with a minimum of commentary which I will reserve for the end. The most heated letters are quoted in full.¹⁴

The first letter of the correspondence is dated to **13 January 1930**. Schapiro has sent Sedlmayr an unidentified essay which Sedlmayr says he is *prepared to translate* but it is up to Swoboda if it is published and in which language.¹⁵ From early on Sedlmayr expresses his interest in contact with foreign colleagues. Almost a year later, **11 March 1931**, the two men are now engaged in a more substantive discussion of art history, likely because they had met when Schapiro was in Vienna in winter 1931 (February) and they seem to refer to an ongoing discussion between them.¹⁶ In this letter Sedlmayr responds with interest to Schapiro's comments on the North Italian Baroque and the importance of the Spanish architecture of Mexico for the Baroque.

Sedlmayr is preoccupied with his journal, the 'KWF', and wishes to enlist Schapiro in contributing to it and circulating it abroad. He asks him to collaborate in what he hopes will be the *das Organ der jungen Garde*. For the 2nd volume he expects contributions from Alpatoff,

12 *Swoboda lässt Sie oftmals grüssen [...] Sedlmayr to Schapiro 13 November 1931. He does not appear to have met Pächt. I suspect that he met Ernst Kris, who would become a colleague at the New School of Social Research in New York from 1940 but there is no correspondence with Kris in the Schapiro papers before the 1940s and the 1st letter from Schapiro to Kris preserved in the Kris papers dates to 31 December 1940 (Library of Congress, Washington D.C.).*

13 *Aufrichtigen Dank für Ihren Brief, an dem mich alles interessierte. Ich nehme ihn als gute Vorzeichen dafür, dass Sie mir manchmal auch aus Amerika berichten werden. Besonders angenehm ist es mir, dass ich durch ihre Angaben Gelegenheit bekomme, mit ausländischen Fachgenossen in Verbindung zu kommen. Sedlmayr to Schapiro, 11 March 1931. Ich habe mit grösstem Interesse den Bericht über Ihre Arbeit gelesen. Ihre Ergebnisse werden für uns sehr wichtig sein. Darüber hinaus, aber bleibt es für uns von grosser Bedeutung, daß wir durch Sie einen Kontakt mit der amerikanischen Kunstwissenschaft besitzen und hoffentlich behalten werden. Sedlmayr to Schapiro, 12 July 1931.*

14 All transcriptions here follow the original spelling, punctuation and underlining. To ensure a readable text "sic" has often been omitted. Sedlmayr often spelled words with an umlaut out with two vowels and the ß as ss.

15 It is unclear if it is this essay that is still being discussed in letters dating to 1934 and which eventually Sedlmayr sends back to Schapiro so that he can publish it elsewhere.

16 Linda Seidel quotes from a letter sent by Schapiro to Porter from Vienna, dated 1 February 1931. L. SEIDEL, "Introduction," in: L. SEIDEL (ed.), Meyer Schapiro, Romanesque Architectural Sculpture. The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures, Chicago 2006, p. xiii. In the letter dated 12 July 1931 Sedlmayr says: *Ich weiss nicht, ob ich Ihnen in Wien die Verhältnisse unter den die beiden [his colleagues in Russia, Alpatoff and Brunoff] arbeiten deutlich genug geschildert habe [...].*

Kaschnitz, Brunoff, Fürst, Wilde, Kris. This is the volume (with essays by Sedlmayr, Pächt, Kaschnitz, Hirsch, Alpatoff, and Kaufmann) which Schapiro would review in 1936.¹⁷ By fall (24 September 1931) the yearbook's future was uncertain and Sedlmayr asks Schapiro instead for a contribution to the 'Kritische Berichte', edited by Bruno Fürst.

The letters written in 1931–32, at times monthly, are full of recommendations of literature in art history and other disciplines, comments on those recommendations, on method, and on work in progress. 14 April 1931 Sedlmayr calls Schapiro's attention to the work on metaphor, structural laws, and empathy of Heinz Werner;¹⁸ and he has received a brief acknowledgment of the receipt of one of his essays from Sidney Hook (a close friend of Schapiro and future co-member of the anti-Stalinist leftist "New York intellectuals"¹⁹) who wrote him a few lines that show that *die bestehende Situation und ihr Mangel [können] überall in gleicher Weise empfunden werden. 'We have either pure-form platonists or bare material sociologists. The sense of the intimate connection between the two is lacking.' In diesem Satz kann man für das 'We' immer noch auch unsere deutsche Kunstwissenschaft einsetzen.*

Panofsky, who Sedlmayr notes is now teaching in the U.S.,²⁰ is both admired and criticized:

Ich glaube dass aus diesem grossen Reservoir, wenn es richtig erschlossen wird, sehr starke Kräfte für die kommende Kunstwissenschaft gewonnen werden könnten. [...] Bei aller Hochachtung für den wissenschaftlichen Ernst Panofskys, würde ich aber doch fürchten, dass er zu sehr von dem anschaulichen konkreten Kunstwerk auf eine 'Idea' hinlenkt – zumal für Anfänger. Der Platonismus ist eine entsetzliche Gefahr für die Kunstbetrachtung.

In a letter dated (insecurely) to 2 May [1931]²¹ Sedlmayr expresses his admiration for Michael Alpatoff's essay on a relief of St. Demetrios and a structural analysis of Poussin's self-portrait the same author is preparing for the next issue of the 'KWF'. At this point Schapiro has offered to review the volume (and he would agree with Sedlmayr's positive view of this essay). In this letter Sedlmayr mentions numerous projects of his own, including already some work on *Ein Bildprinzip des Bruegel*. Schapiro has recommended the work of Sidney Hook, and Sedlmayr says he will read an essay by him. He is excited about the work of his *Studienfreund* Otto Pächt on the types of illusion in post-Medieval painting and new discoveries of national constants.

Summer of 1931 (12 July 1931) Sedlmayr asks Schapiro (who is in Europe) to help his colleagues in Russia, Alpatoff and Brunoff, to send

17 Volume II of the 'KWF' had the following articles: Guido Kaschnitz von Weinberg, Bemerkungen zur Struktur der ägyptischen Plastik; Hans Sedlmayr, Das erste mittelalterliche Architektursystem; Otto Pächt, Gestaltungsprinzipien der westlichen Malerei des 15. Jahrhunderts; Maria Hirsch, Das Figurenalphabet des Meisters E. S., Michail Vladimirovic Alpatov, Das Selbstbildnis Poussins im Louvre, Emil Kaufmann, Die Stadt des Architekten Ledoux.

18 Werner is considered one of the foundation developmental psychologists. See J. VALSINER, Heinz Werner and developmental science, New York 2005.

19 A. HEMINGWAY, Meyer Schapiro and Marxism in the 1930s, in: Oxford Art Journal, 17, 1994, p. 13.

20 Panofsky first came to New York in 1931.

21 The year does not appear on the letter. I have dated it tentatively to 1931 based on the publication dates of essays mentioned in the letter and the address (Sedlmayr moved from the Weimarerstrasse in 1931 to the Landhausgasse) but they are not consistent. A reference to M. ALPATOFF, Eine byzantinische Relieffikone des hlg. Demetrios in Moskau, in: Belvedere, 1933 appears alongside the "recent" publication of the dissertation of B. FÜRST, Beiträge zu einer Geschichte der österreichischen Plastik in der 1. Hälfte des 15. Jahrhunderts, Leipzig 1931. He also says *Ich sehe in der neuen philosophischen Zeitschrift 'Erkenntnis'* an essay by Sidney Hook. He refers to the reprint of an essay by S. HOOK Ein persönlicher Eindruck von zeitgenössischer deutscher Philosophie, that originally appeared in *Journal of Philosophy*, 1930 in the *Rundschau* in the first issue of *Erkenntnis*, 1, 1930/1931, pp. 83–88. He also notes that one of his essays will probably appear in the *Preussischen Jahrbuch* which would be published as H. SELDMAYR, Die Area Capitolina des Michelangelo, in: *Jahrbuch der Preussischen Kunstsammlungen*, 52, 1931, pp. 176–180.

literature they are not able to access. He asks that Schapiro invite them to America (short term). There is a letter dated **24 September [1931]** forwarding the summer letter; the next letter of substance is dated **13 November 1931**. Here there is more talk about the journals and work. Sedlmayr clarifies that *Gestalt* theory is not a psychological theory, and that its usefulness ends where meaning is to be deciphered:

*Ich arbeite, in dem Sinn, wie Sie es sich wünschen, an einer Verbreiterung des theoretischen Unterbaus durch Erfahrungen aus anderen und möglichst vielen Kreisen. Das wird der scheinbaren einseitigen Orientierung an der 'Gestalttheorie' ihr Uebergewicht nehmen. Trotzdem – und deshalb kann ich Ihnen in diesem Punkt nicht ganz zustimmen – wird die Gestalttheorie auch dann eine besondere Stellung behaupten, denn 'Kunst ist eben, wo man auch theoretisch stehen mag, Gestaltung. Die Wichtigkeit der Gestalttheorie hört sofort auf, wo man statt der Gestaltung zum Beispiel die Probleme der 'Bedeutung' untersucht. (Abgesehen davon, daß der terminus Gestaltpsychologie irreführt, den es handelt sich nicht um psychologische Sachverhalte im engeren Sinn, sondern um solche, die auch im geistigen (wie anderseits im physischen Bereich) wiederkehren.**

**Nebenbei: ich mache Sie aufmerksam auf die höchst wichtige Korrektur der Husserleschen Phänomenologie durch gestalttheoretische Aspekte von Gurwitsch im letzten Band der Ps. Forschung.*

Schapiro must have described the effects of the financial collapse in the U.S. in his letter to Sedlmayr and asked whether one can carry on with art history under such circumstances. Sedlmayr responds:

Sehr gut verstehe ich die Gedanken, welche die

Forderungen der neuen Situation in Ihnen und Ihren Gleichgesinnten auslösen. Aber ich muss offen sagen, dass sie für uns keine Aktualität besitzen – denn im wesentlichen hat sich für uns nichts geändert. Nichts seit unserer Krise 1922, nichts seit 1918 oder wenn Sie wollen 1914. Für die Entscheidung, ob man Kunstgeschichte betreiben kann, betreiben darf, lagen alle Argumente damals schon genau wie heute; wir haben uns entschieden und die quantitative Mehrung des Elends kann eine prinzipielle Revision der Entscheidung nicht begründen, sondern stellt nur gewisse Einzelentscheidungen neu. Aber ich verkenne nicht, daß die Situation bei Ihnen eine ganz andere ist.

It seems that both men were deeply touched by the political crises of their times – Schapiro, who was a socialist from his youth, was “radicalized” by the great depression and by 1932, had become “an active supporter” of the Communist party.²² And although Sedlmayr’s answer to Schapiro’s question is elliptical it also seems that both decided that to be an art historian was not to turn one’s back on one’s times.

2 February 1932 Sedlmayr is working on a cache of unpublished drawings by Fischer von Erlach, noting that *die Detailfragen der 'ersten' Kunstwissenschaft [which he defined in his "Towards a Rigorous Study of Art" the previous year] sind, wie Sie selbst wissen, zeitraubend aber disziplinierend*. He reports on a lecture series in Vienna which focuses on individual works of art in Viennese collections, including his own talk on Bruegel’s *Kinderspiele*. (This series well reflects his call for focused studies of this kind.) He is also giving lectures on *das kaiserliche Wien von 1700* as a model of a late Baroque feudal city (a subject he would first publish on in 1933 on the occasion of the Katholikentag²³), and one

22 HEMINGWAY, Meyer Schapiro (cit. n. 19), p. 14.

23 H. SEDLMAYR, Das Werden des Wiener Stadtbildes, in: Festführer zum Allgemeinen Deutschen Katholikentag in Wien 7. bis 12. September 1933, Vienna 1933, pp. 37–44.

on the beginnings of Medieval architecture under Justinian.²⁴ Sedlmayr is pleased that Schapiro agrees with his essay on Michelangelo, on which he has had agreement [...] *von Schlosser bis Köhler*.²⁵ (In a later letter the list of people who have praised the article has grown.)

About Schapiro's projects Sedlmayr expresses a great deal of interest. Schapiro seems to be pushing him on the *problem of constants* and Sedlmayr asks Schapiro to be in contact with Pächt directly on the question. (Schapiro's direct correspondence with Pächt, however, would begin only in October 1934.)²⁶ Sedlmayr asks for Schapiro's essays on Matisse (written on the occasion of an exhibition in New York and the catalogue by Alfred Barr)²⁷ and on Modern architecture [...] *von dem wir in Wien sprachen*.

In his letter of **19 April 1932** Sedlmayr underscores two points of agreement with Schapiro's assessment of Brunoff's essay on Islamic architecture (referred to in letter of **2 February 1932**): *äusserliche Uebertragung von Begriffen auf ein Gebiet, dem sie unadäquat sind, und falsche Supposition einer ästhetischen Einheit, die faktisch nur im Religiösen besteht*. Sedlmayr is thrilled with the proximity of Schapiro's line of thinking (as in his essay on Matisse) with "their" own. He elaborates: *Wenige Tage bevor Ihr Brief kam hatte ich mit Pächt über das Unzureichende der Unterscheidung 'sukzessiver' und 'simultaner' Darstellung, besonders auch der sogenannten 'Kontinuierenden,' besprochen und darüber hinaus betont, daß*

*mir eine Analyse der verschiedenen Tatbestände, die der Begriff der 'Darstellung' deckt und verdeckt unumgänglich notwendig scheint.*²⁸

In this letter Sedlmayr also tells Schapiro that his friends are urging him to develop his theoretical ideas on the 'Grundlegung der Kunstwissenschaft' as sketched in the introduction to the 'KWF'. He asks Schapiro's opinion of the idea of publishing a book in the English-language series of C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards, along with their *Meaning of Meaning* and *Principles of Literary criticism*. He agrees with Richards that the work of art is a reaction in the subject to the *Kunstding* but clarifies his position: *Am wesentlichsten: bei Richards wird das Kunstwerk eine Reaktion im Subjekt auf das Kunstding. Nach meiner Auffassung ist aber das Kunstwerk, obwohl vom 'Subjekt' erzeugt etwas Objektives, ausser uns Erlebtes*. He thinks to call it 'Principles of Art Investigation (oder Art Research) – aber kann man das sagen?' ('Art Science' ist selbstverständlich ein Monstrum und 'Art History' deckt sich nicht mit dem, was ich meine). (1 **June 1932** Sedlmayr would tell Schapiro that he was not interested in an English publication per se but that he was looking for a context in which his ideas would not be distorted. *Daß ich z.B. gegen Richards sehr wesentliche Einwände habe, habe ich Ihnen schon angedeutet; aber die Einwände liegen noch auf einer diskutierbaren Fläche; bei uns balancieren sie im leersten Raum.*)

Sedlmayr reported, still in the letter of **19 April**, that in his lecture on Justinian architecture

24 H. SEDLMAYR, Das erste mittelalterliche Architektursystem, in: *Kunstwissenschaftliche Forschungen*, 2, 1933, pp. 25–62.

25 This likely refers to SEDLMAYR, *Area Capitolina* (cit. n. 21).

26 The first letter known letter from Pächt to Schapiro is dated Vienna, 4 October 1934. J. J. G. ALEXANDER, *Otto Pächt 1902–1988. Ein Nachruf*, in: M. PÄCHT/A. ROSENAUER (eds), 'Am Anfang war das Auge'. Otto Pächt. Symposium anlässlich seines 100. Geburtstages, Munich 2006, pp. 117–18. Pächt's letters to Schapiro have also turned up in the Schapiro papers at Columbia.

27 M. SCHAPIRO, *Matisse and Impressionism*, in: *Androcles*, 1, 1932, pp. 21–36. The journal was a publication of Columbia University. See HEMINGWAY, *Meyer Schapiro* (cit. n. 19), p. 17.

28 The reference is to Franz WICKOFF's outline of narrative styles in his *Die Wiener Genesis*, Vienna 1895, which was the subject of Pächt's dissertation, O. PÄCHT, *Das Verhältnis von Bild und Vorwurf in der mittelalterlichen Entwicklung der Historiendarstellung*, Ms., Vienna, 1925. My thanks to Hans Aurenhammer for pointing me in this direction.

(*Swoboda war so freundlich, ihn als die Sensation dieses Winters zu bezeichnen*) he has managed, he says, to have found one or more constants in Medieval architecture *die nicht formal ist*. But he is not yet ready to lay it out in a letter. Finally, in this letter we first hear of Sedlmayr's interest in the work of Emil Kaufmann on Ledoux.²⁹ Kaufmann was to publish an essay in the *KWF* on Chauv. In a postscript Sedlmayr recommends *a non-art historical text*, Robert Musil's *Mann ohne Eigenschaften* (the first two books of the novel, left unfinished at his death in 1942, were published in 1930), as a *Gegenstück* to Joyce that he considers *wichtig* and also a basis for discussion. In a subsequent letter he promises to return to the subject but never does. (Musil was a friend of Otto Pächt and Bruno Fürst, who were devoted to him.³⁰)

1 June 1932 Sedlmayr writes to Schapiro of a 4-week trip to France³¹ about which he makes four observations. His subjects of study were the structure of Gothic architecture and the architecture of the French Revolution, to which Emil Kaufmann had drawn his attention. He saw drawings by Ledoux at the Carnavalet for the Paris 'Barrieren' and wants to pursue the subject. He was also occupied with *the problem of the 19th century* and with the *problem of quality* in its fusion with 'Struktur'.³² He is struck by

the insubstantiality of architecture he has seen in France compared to the ancient architecture he saw in Nîmes. He says these are not impressions, but 'Fermenten'. In a postscript Sedlmayr passes on the thanks to Schapiro of Bruno Fürst for agreeing to review Baltrusaitis for the 'Kritische Berichte', an essay which appeared in the 1932/33 number of the journal.³³

The single letter from Schapiro to Sedlmayr is a draft dated **October 1932**. In this letter, composed in German but likely ultimately written in English (for Sedlmayr quotes Schapiro back in English in his reply of **19 December 1932**), he praises the 1st volume of the 'KWF' whose form and emphasis on critical writing he finds *sehr schön*. He confesses to having had difficulty with Pächt's essay and found the Andreades *particularly interesting* (because closer to his own work) though he found that he said too little about the technical and structural aspects of the form for a correct formulation of the stylistic principle.³⁴ He objects to Andreades' characterization of the wall as *irrational* since he had not noted the *höhere Elastizität solcher Ordnungen*, and *die innere Koordination statische Momente in diesem Wand*. Around this particular essay a more critical dialogue opens up: *Auch unannehmbar sind Andreades [sic] liturgische-theologische Spekulationen die rein deduktiv sind und imagi-*

29 HAIKO, Hans Sedlmayr (cit. n. 2), p. 77, notes Sedlmayr's own statement in 'Verlust der Mitte' that parts of the post-war book were conceived "shortly after 1930" triggered by Kaufmann's research on French architecture of the revolutionary period.

30 KARL CORINO, Otto Pächt und Robert Musil, in: PÄCHT/ROSENAUER, Otto Pächt (cit. n. 26), pp. 19–38.

31 In the letter I date to 2 May 1931 Sedlmayr says a trip to France is urgent.

32 This thought is echoed in the postscript to the 4th edition of 'Verlust der Mitte' (1950): *Kunstwerke, die echte Schöpfungen sind, ausschliesslich als Symptome einer Störung zu werten, wäre allerdings ein Unrecht gegen sie, doch schwerlich ein grösseres als das, sie ausschliesslich als Exempel und Durchgangspunkte eines Stilverlaufs zu nehmen, wie das die Betrachtung der Kunst rein auf den Stil – nicht minder alle Unterschiede des Ranges und Wertes nivellierend als die symptomatische Betrachtung – seit langem tut*. H. SEDLMAYR, Verlust der Mitte. Die bildende Kunst des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts als Symptom und Symbol der Zeit, 4th rev. ed., Salzburg 1950, p. 254.

33 M. SCHAPIRO, Über den Schematismus in der romanische Kunst, in: Kritische Berichte zur kunstgeschichtlichen Literatur I, 1932–1933, pp. 1–21.

34 The first volume of the 'KWF' included four essays: Hans Sedlmayr, Zu einer strengen Kunstwissenschaft; G. A. Andreades, Die Sophienkathedrale von Konstantinopel; Otto Pächt, Die historische Aufgabe Michael Pachters; Carl Linfert, Die Grundlagen der Architekturzeichnung.

naere aesthetisch-pietistische Gestaltungen (Wenn Andreades nicht religioes ist, dann kann man diese Bemuehungen als aesthetische-Laien-Pietismus oder aesthetische religions-anschauung.) He finds his pseudotechnical concept of *Entmaterialisation* goes too far and is reduced to absurdity. One can only really speak of dematerialization when there is a striving for *Raum*.

In his letter of **19 November 1932** (sent before he has received Schapiro's of October 1932) Sedlmayr has read Schapiro's essay on the Moissac tympanum³⁵ and *für das 'Sehen' romanischer Reliefs mehr gelernt habe als aus Panofsky, Beenken und Jantzen zusammengenommen*. He reiterates his faith in his own conception of close study over universalizing art history: *Ich staune – obwohl es meine theoretische Ueberzeugung darstellt – immer wieder, um wieviel intensiver die Tiefschürfung am einzelnen Werk den 'Geist' einer Epoche vermittelt als die umfassendste 'universale' Zusammenschau*.

Sedlmayr responds to Schapiro's letter of October 1932 on **19 December 1932**, concurring with Schapiro's critique of Andreades's "dematerialization" noting that the author himself has now rejected the conclusion of the article.³⁶ He notes that Schapiro has grasped the excellence of Andreades's view of the side aisle and partition, though. Sedlmayr quotes Schapiro's phrase: *I am dissatisfied with stylistic analysis which describes the object admirably but terminates in a more or less mystical explanation of their history*. To which he responds: *Was ich einfach unterschreibe*. Sedlmayr goes on to comment on the place of history in a structuralist art history:

Ich stimme auch dem meisten zu, was Sie abschliessend sagen und fühle besonders scharf das

Bedürfnis ein 'Geschehen' zu finden, das keine Abstraktion kein 'double' ist, aus dem sich zu den analysierten Kunstphänomenen als seinen Resultaten übergehen lässt. Aber während es mir ganz klar ist, wie die technische Struktur (mit ihrer eigenen 'Aesthetik') mit der im unmittelbaren Eindruck gegebenen künstlerischen Struktur in Verbindung gebracht werden kann und muss, sind die mir bekannten Versuche aus der gegebenen Struktur einer gegebenen 'Gesellschaft' die künstlerischen Produkte abzuleiten ausserordentlich unbefriedigend und ich kann – obwohl ich die von Ihnen gestellte Aufgabe sehe – bisher zu einer besseren Lösung kaum einen Vorschlag machen (ich meine im prinzipiellen, den dass man im einzelnen – zum Beispiel gleich bei der Hagia Sofia – viel weiter gehen kann und weiter kommt, ist klar). Ich würde mich sehr freuen, wenn Sie auf diesem Feld sich versuchen wollten und erwarte mit Spannung Ihren Artikel über mozarabische und romanische Kunst (uebergang von zu). – Es gibt sicherlich historische Phänomene, von denen aus man besser daran herankommt, so wie Strukturanalysen von gewissen Werken her besonders gut in Angriff genommen werden können (in dieser Hinsicht ist mir Alpatoffs Beitrag über das Selbstportrait des Poussin im Louvre) besonders interessant.

At the beginning of the new year (**12 January 1933**) Sedlmayr is rethinking the workings of the 'Kritische Berichte' –he says in a letter to Schapiro of **30 March 1933** that his plan was not accepted – with a group of permanent collaborators who *ohne Pedanterie – annähernd die gleiche wissenschaftliche Gesinnung vertreten*. *Sechzehn ständige Mitarbeiter sollen uns jährlich (1-3) Beiträge*

35 M. SCHAPIRO, The Romanesque Sculpture of Moissac Part I (2), in: The Art Bulletin, 13, 1931, pp. 464–531.

36 Sedlmayr would note in his review: *It is therefore difficult to describe their theory as more than a tendency, still fluid and changing; the essays in this volume are hardly uniform in character, and what-ever directions and theoretical assumptions are revealed in them have perhaps already been modified or abandoned by some of the writers*. SCHAPIRO, Viennese School (cit. n. 11), p. 258.

[...] *zusagen*. The collaborators are: *Brunoff, Kaschnitz, Schrade, Oertel, Linfert, Nordenfalk, Stechow, Kris, Fürst, Pächt*, and *Sedlmayr*; eventually also *Hallbaum, Ladner*, and next to the names of *Koerte* and *Benjamin* he puts a question mark; *als gelegentliche* he includes *Panofsky, Jantzen, Köhler, Swoboda, Alpatoff*. He invites Schapiro to contribute reviews on publications on Persia, Islam, Spain, and the Romanesque. What is interesting here is the inclusion of Benjamin as a possible collaborator at the beginning of 1933 which must be related to Benjamin's review of the 1st volume of the 'KWF', the first version of which, written in 1931, was rejected by the 'Frankfurter Zeitung'; it was to be published in 1933 under a pseudonym. Sedlmayr knew the content of the 1931 version for we know that at least Benjamin's critical comments (not all of which made it into the published version) were passed on to Sedlmayr by Carl Linfert, one of the volume's contributors.³⁷ But did he know that Benjamin concluded the first version "Die Männer, die in diesem Jahrbuch sprechen, repräsentieren diesen Typus in seiner Strenge. Sie sind die Hoffnung ihre Wissenschaft"? Frederick Schwartz suggests that Benjamin's comments influenced Sedlmayr to move away from the "deductive use of gestalt principles."³⁸

A letter from Sedlmayr dated 30 March 1933 responds to Schapiro's letter of 16 February 1933 with more discussion of the 'Kritische Berichte', a recommendation of Alfoldi's essay on the Hellenistic *Kurs unter Gallienus* and his positive opinion of Kaschnitz's essay on Egyptian sculpture (which Schapiro would review), unfortunately without further comment.

Then there is a break in the series until Sedlmayr's letter of 7 February 1934. Reference in the latter to an ongoing debate likely refers to conversations the two men had in person since the Schapiros spent three months in Vienna in 1933.³⁹ 7 February 1934 Sedlmayr tells Schapiro that [Ernest] Nagel was here and visited me. Nagel, born in Bohemia, immigrated to the US at the age of 10. He was a philosopher of science who taught for many years at Columbia University and was a close friend of Meyer Schapiro. In 1934 he was on a Guggenheim fellowship in Vienna. Sedlmayr tells Schapiro:

Ich durfte ihm die Diskussion, die zwischen uns im Gange war nicht verschweigen, und obwohl ich das so sachlich als möglich getan habe, scheine ich ihn dadurch verstimmt zu haben – denn er hat seinen zweiten Besuch, den er mir versprochen hatte, nicht mehr durchgeführt. Das tut mir leid, da mir Herr Nagel einen höchst sympathischen Eindruck gemacht hat, aber ich kann es nicht ändern. Hätte ich meine Meinungs-differenzen mit Ihnen verschweigen, so hätte Herr Nagel mir mit Recht Heuchelei vorgeworfen.

The difference of opinion must refer to Sedlmayr's and Schapiro's political positions and Sedlmayr's anti-Semitism, which had broken out into the open. The letter is worth citing at length:

Ich verstehe die Reaktion von Juden, denen ich ehrlicherweise sagen muss, dass ich antijüdisch bin, sehr gut. Andererseits müsste ich aber genau

37 For Linfert's letter of 1932 see SCHWARTZ, *Blind Spots* (cit. n. 9), p. 165, p. 281, n. 80. The two versions of the essay "Strenge Kunstwissenschaft. Zum ersten Bande der 'Kunstwissenschaftlichen Forschungen'" and Linfert's letter are reprinted in: R. TIEDEMANN/H. SCHWEPPEHÄUSER (eds), *Walter Benjamin, Gesammelte Schriften*, Frankfurt 1972–89, III, pp. 363–369, and pp. 653–657 (for Linfert's letter to Benjamin). Benjamin's letters to Linfert are collected in: C. GÖDDE/H. LONITZ (eds), *Walter Benjamin, Gesammelte Briefe*, vol. 4, 1931–1934, Frankfurt 1995–2000.

38 SCHWARTZ, *Blind Spots* (cit. n. 9), p. 165.

39 An obituary of Schapiro's wife Lillian notes they spent a few months in Vienna in 1933 where they saw the rise of Hitler (likely winter/spring 1933). URL: http://www.thevillager.com/villager_176/lillianmilgram.html [20.04.2011].

so reagieren dürfen, wenn Sie mir sagen, dass Sie kommunistisch sind: auch das ist ein Angriff auf meine Lebenssphäre. – Ich glaube nicht, dass Sie recht haben, den Unterschied zwischen einem rassistischen und einen politischen 'Antisemitismus' (ein rassistischer terminus der unberechtigt ist) nicht zuzugeben. Dieser Unterschied besteht zweifellos.

Ich glaube, dass sich die Judenfrage ganz klar darstellen würde, wenn man ohne Ressentiment, einfach einmal die soziologische Struktur des Judentums als Gesamtheit in Betracht ziehen würde. Die Tatsache allein, dass die Juden als Gemeinschaft einen Bauernstand als 'Basis' nicht hatten in den letzten Jahrhunderten, versteht sich, (ich weiss sehr gut dass es vereinzelt jüdische Bauern gibt, aber eben nicht in dem Verhältnis wie bei den anderen Nationen, zwischen denen sie leben) würde viel erklären – meiner Meinung nach auch ihre 'Prädestination' für das 'industrielle System', mag es individuell – oder kollektiv-kapitalistisch sein.

Es ist nicht meine Absicht, Ihnen eine weitere Diskussion zu oktroyieren – im Gegenteil. Ich begrüße es sehr, dass Sie in dem letzten Brief wieder zu dem sachlichen Ton unserer früheren Brief zurückgefunden haben. Einiges Affektive klingt noch nach. Vor allem bin ich noch immer nicht einverstanden mit der Art, wie irrational diese 'allgemeinen' Fragen, von Ihnen diskutiert werden – die so ganz abweicht, von der Art, wie konkrete Probleme unserer Wissenschaft normalerweise erörtert wurden (Was Sie auch diesmal wieder über 'Bauern' sagen ist

einfach unakzeptabel und konfus). Ich schlage Ihnen also vor, wieder zur Diskussion solcher Probleme zurückzukehren, in denen wir besser bewandert sind.⁴⁰

In the next letter, dated 21 July 1934 (fig. 1a, 1b), Sedlmayr continues to lurch between their ongoing discussion of art history and political views. About the latter Sedlmayr says: *Ich habe Ihnen gegenüber ein ungutes Gefühl, weil gewisse 'ideologische' Punkte zwischen uns nicht geklärt sind und sich brieflich auch nicht leicht klären lassen; das könnte einmal den Anschein der Unaufrichtigkeit erwecken. Nehmen Sie also lieber zur Sicherheit an, dass Sie es mit einem 'ideologischen' Gegner zu tun haben.*

He alludes to overtures from Schapiro that he come to America (he says it is unlikely, that if he had the money for travel he would rather go to the Mediterranean), and praises the controversial new introduction to Bachofen's *Mythus von Orient und Occident* written by Alfred Bäumler, a chief Nazi ideologue at the University of Berlin whose inaugural lecture in May 1933 concluded with Bäumler leading students to the infamous book burning.⁴¹ He also responds to Schapiro's suggestion that he read Dewey and summarizes his view of the current state of art history:

Man kann die wirkenden Ideen hier vielleicht auf drei Reduzieren: 1. Die 'Strukturanalyse.' Hier arbeiten hauptsächlich wir 'jüngere Wi[e]ner Schule' (also fast ich allein) und die Russen. Alpatoff schickt mir gerade die Untersuchung

40 He ends with references to books that interest him at the moment: Egon Brunswick's 'Wahrnehmung und Gegenstandswelt' and Pol Abraham on rationalism in Viollet-le-Duc. See also n. 56.

41 *Zu den wenigen guten Dingen im Umfeld der Kunstgeschichte die ich in der letzten Zeit gelesen habe gehört die grosse Einleitung von Bäumler zu Bachofens 'Mythus von Orient und Occident.'* The reference is to Alfred BÄUMLER, Bachofen, der Mythologie der Romantik, Introduction to 'Der Mythus von Orient und Occident. Eine Metaphysik der alten Welt aus den Werken von J. J. Bachofen', Munich 1926. Following upon this publication an ideological battle erupted in Germany over Bachofen (1926–29). Walter Benjamin would, in a parallel effort to that of Thomas Mann, attempt to "rescue myth from fascism" in his 1935 essay on Bachofen. On the Bachofen revival and its inspiration to both right and left see J. MALL, The Reconciliation of Myth. Benjamin's Homage to Bachofen, in: *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 60, 1999, pp. 165–187.

Dr. HANS SEDLMAYR
WIEN I. LANDHAUSGASSE 9
21. Juli
1934

Lieber Herr Schapiro!

Diesmal bedanke ich mich nur ganz kurz für Ihren ausführlichen Brief. Ich habe sehr viel zu tun, da ich - falls Swoboda im Herbst nach Prag geht (als Ordinarius) - einen grossen Teil seiner Agenden übernehmen muss und dazu noch einige andere Arbeiten unter der Hand habe, die bis 1. August erledigt sein sollen. Dabei ist es furchtbar heiss.

Ich habe seinerzeit Swoboda gebeten, Ihr Manuskript Herrn Dr. Nowotny zum Lesen zu geben, ich hoffe es ist geschehen. Es tut mir sehr leid, daß ein Beitrag, den ich dazu sagen "bestellt" habe, nun zurückgeschickt werden muss. Aber ich fürchte daß ein längeres Zuwarten Ihnen andere Publikationschancen nimmt, ohne diese erste zu erhöhen. Verzeihen Sie daß also mit der allgemeinen Desorientierung in unseren Zeitschriften wesen - an dem ich unschuldig bin.

Ich habe Ihnen gegenüber ein ungutes Gefühl, weil gewisse "ideologische" Punkte zwischen uns nicht geklärt sind und sich brieflich auch nicht leicht klären lassen; das könnte einmal den Anschein der Unaufrichtigkeit erwecken. Nehmen Sie also lieber zur Sicherheit an, daß Sie es mit einem "ideologischen" Gegner

1a: Typed and handwritten letter to Meyer Schapiro, 21 July 1934. Meyer Schapiro Collection, 1919–2006.

P. S. Pöcher hat noch immer Keicen "106", nur
bei seinen Fähigkeiten sein zu bedauern ist. Wäre für ihn
in U.S.A. eine Chance?

zu tun haben. Obwohl ich drüben nahe Verwandte habe, ist es
wenig wahrscheinlich, daß ich nach Amerika komme. Wenn ich das
Geld dazu hätte, würde ich es lieber auf europäische Reisen aus-
geben (Griechenland, Frankreich, Spanien vor allem).

Ich habe noch immer nicht Dewey gelesen, werde es aber
mit größtem Interesse nachholen. Was Sie andeuten, macht ihn mir
sympathisch.

Zu den wenigen guten Dingen im Umfeld der Kunstgeschichte
die ich in der letzten Zeit gelesen habe gehört die grosse Ein-
leitung von Bäumler zu Bachofens "Mythos von Orient und Okzident".
Schreiben Sie mir gelegentlich was Sie von Heinrichs Glücks aus
dem Nachlasse herausgegebene "Wölbungsbau" halten.

Man kann die wirkenden Ideen hier vielleicht auf drei
Reduzieren: 1. Die "Strukturanalyse". Hier arbeiten hauptsächlich
wir "jüngere Wiener Schule" (also fast ich allein) und die Russen.
Alpstoff schickt mir gerade die Untersuchung der Menines in Bessy-
form. - 2. Versuch das durch die Stilgeschichte verschwandene
Vertrelief wiederherzustellen. Bisher nur schüchterne Ansätze in
den beiden selben Kreisen. - 3. Versuch die "hohe" Kunstgeschichte
auf die Basis der Urgeschichte, Ethnologie zu stellen. In absurder
strygowskiischer Form bei Glück. Dieser Gedanke hätte jetzt in
Deutschland guten Boden es fehlen aber die geschulten Kräfte. -
Gute Arbeiten ähnlicher Art bei den ungarischen Archäologen, auch
Boroffka.

Im Herbst lese ich an der Technik eine Historische
Einführung in die moderne Architektur, worauf ich mich freue.

Vielen Dank für Ihre Hilfe und Hilfeangebote. Den
Chaise besitze ich persönlich. Wollen Sie ihn unserem Institut
widmen?

Ihr Hans Sedlmayr

1b: Typed and handwritten letter to Meyer Schapiro, 21 July 1934. Meyer Schapiro Collection, 1919-2006.

der Meninas in Essay-form. – 2. Versuch das durch die Stilgeschichte verschwundene Wertrelief wiederherzustellen. Bisher nur schüchterne Ansätze in den beiden selben Kreisen. – 3. Versuch die 'hohe' Kunstgeschichte auf die Basis der Urgeschichte, Ethnologie zu stellen. In absurder strzygowskischer Form bei Glück.⁴² Dieser Gedanke hätte jetzt in Deutschland guten Boden es fehlen aber die geschulten Kräfte. – Gute Arbeiten ähnlicher Art bei den ungarischen Archäologen, auch Boroffka.

Although Sedlmayr was a voracious reader and very curious to hear Schapiro's optic on the discipline his view of art history gave little credit to methods outside of Vienna – or even outside his narrow concern for structural analysis – for the heritage of Dvorak's cultural history, Schlosser's school of textual analysis, and the interest in scholars like Ernst Kris in psychoanalysis do not enter here into his view. Although Sedlmayr rarely alludes to events outside of his discipline, in this letter he shows concern for Otto Pächt (who in 1933 had lost his position in Heidelberg) and wonders if Schapiro can find him a position in the U.S.

Three months later, 7 **October 1934**, Sedlmayr is now Privatdozent and tells Schapiro he is taking over the teaching of Swoboda and Hahnloser. At this point they are attempting to patch up a collegial correspondence. Schapiro is still talking about bringing him to New York University, Sedlmayr continues to solicit Schapiro's help for Pächt, and they have an ongoing exchange about literature. But the rapprochement is only a point, for Sedlmayr now expresses his convictions more openly:

An Ihrem letzten Brief hat mich Ihre Auffassung unserer 'ideologischen' Differenzen am allermeisten erfreut. Ihre Auffassung 'these differences become important only in so far as they affect our scientific work' ist die meine. Nur nehmen sie unrichtig an, ich, irgendjemand, könnte 'above the battle' bleiben. Ich bin entschieden antikommunist und vielleicht ist es gut auch das zu sagen antijüdisch, so weit das Judentum als politische Macht oder Körper in Erscheinung tritt (keineswegs aber aus rassistischen Gründen. Diese Einstellung hat mir meine gewesenen jüdischen Freunde hier entfremdet, deren Empfindlichkeit ich allerdings vollkommen verstehe und respektiere.

In the previous of 23 **July** Sedlmayr had responded to something Schapiro must have written about literary accounts of historical events and in response Sedlmayr expressed his preference for firsthand accounts. Thus he was uninterested in the Russian journalist novelist and poet Ilja Ehrenburg (*durch und durch Literat*) but said he would be interested in Conrad. In this next letter Sedlmayr ties his agreement with Schapiro's assessment of Conrad to the February Revolution in Austria. Without Schapiro's letter the connection is difficult to decipher but what Sedlmayr does make clear here is his lack of sympathy for the social-democratic "masses":

Ihre Bemerkungen über Conrad sind höchst richtig. Sie sehen sehr richtig die romantische Herkunft seiner Gestalten aus dem 'strong silent man' (Nebenbei: er hat die klassische Konzeption des Helden über den von aussen eine Prüfung hereinbricht – Taifun, Krankheit, Versagen, Feinde- und der sich bewährt). Gerade deshalb aber habe ich von Conrad gesprochen. Denn ich glaube ganz allgemein nicht an 'Aktionen' von

42 Sedlmayr likely refers here to the Viennese archaeologist of the Österreichisches Museum, H. GLÜCK, Hauptwerke der Weltkunst, in: Josef Strzygowski-Festschrift. Zum 70. Geburtstag dargebracht von seinen Schülern, Klagenfurt 1932, pp. 66-69.

Massen und ganz besonders nicht bei unseren österreichischen Ereignissen. Was sie nicht missverstehen wollen. Denn sogar die Regierungs-Communiqués vom Februar und später haben den Kämpfern die höchste Achtung nicht versagt.

There is also in the letter of 7 **October 1934** what seems like a shift in Sedlmayr's art historical orientation, which supports Hans Aurenhammer's circling around the work of the mid 1930s as a turning point in Sedlmayr's work:⁴³ he says that Schapiro is right to suspect that he would not be happy in the long run with a pure formal analysis.

Dass ich kein Einzelgänger bin beeinflusst meine wissenschaftlichen Versuche nun insofern als ich – wie Sie richtig vermuten – mit einer reinen Formalanalyse auf die Dauer nicht zufrieden bin. Ich würde einen Versuch einer konsequent politisch-soziologischen Kunstgeschichte für so wichtig halten, wie nichts anderes – selbst wenn er einseitig ausfällt. Nur sehe ich gar keine Ansätze dazu, nirgends. Dafür habe ich meine eigene Erklärung. Von unserem heutigen Zustand ist die Funktion der Kunst nicht mehr recht verständlich. Sie ist unverständlich wie Magie, Religion oder wie der Bauer – den man auch entweder als einen kleinen Grossgrundbesitzer oder Industriellen missversteht. – Aber das führt zu weit.

At the beginning of this paragraph, though Sedlmayr starts to say that the fact that he is not a lone wolf makes formal analysis unattractive in the long run, it seems that he had come to think of himself as isolated in structural analysis (he alluded to it in an earlier letter) and this might have had something to do with a change in direction, towards a *konsequent politisch-soziologischen Kunstgeschichte*.

In a postscript to the letter Sedlmayr's distinction between racial and political anti-Semitism breaks down in his explanation of what has happened to Schapiro's submission to the 'Kritische Berichte' edited by Bruno Fürst (who was Jewish). Sedlmayr details how he and Swoboda had recommended the essay and left it to Fürst to make the final decision. Sedlmayr, in a previous letter, had recommended that the article be returned to Schapiro in order that he could seek publication elsewhere. Fürst, he says, used this as an excuse, about which he commented: *Dass aber Fürst diese Ausrede gebraucht ist einfach 'a shame'. Es gehört ganz in die Linie der mehr als unglücklichen Taktik der hiesigen Juden.*

After this letter Schapiro can contain himself no longer. It is a pity that his letter is not preserved but Sedlmayr's response, the only written in English and only two weeks later, 1 **November 1934**, gives us a sense of the openness of the hostility. The letter in full, reads:

Dear Mr. Schapiro!

What can a man who is an opponent of communism an[d] of jews (as far as they – in consequence of their history and the social structure of that nation – are preparers and allies of communism) – what can a man who believes in peasants, religion and art (see the end of my last letter) be? I am astonished that you could not solve this riddle. He naturally is a 'conservative.'

A 'conservative' not in the sense of one of the destroyed parties which in later nineteenth century represented different ideas of conservatism, but in a broader and simpler sense: one who wants to have conserved (not mummified [sic]), which he is sure to be alive. I for ex. believe that a peasant can not be replaced by an industrial producer of agricultural goods; I believe that there is a certain sphere of religion (the 'holy') which cannot be replaced by 'Weltanschauung' or science; I believe that there is a

43 AURENHAMMER, Zäsur oder Kontinuität (cit. n. 2), p. 49.

certain essence of art which can not be substituted either by taste, 'form' or 'expression.'

The will to conserve things living is to be combined with the will not to revive artificially things dead (e.g. monarchs, 'Stände' or thomisme), with the will to destroy things thoroughly rotten (e.g. industrial capitalism in its present form) and with the will to build up in an organic process new entities which are not found amongst the things conserved. You will easily deduce other peculiarities of a conservatism understood on this line.

Now that idea and will today is no real power, therefor their adherents if they do not resign to act in and on reality have to join other groups whose program is not theirs. They e.g. where communism is an imminent danger will have to support fascism and similar movements, while, – on the other part – they will have to fight cryptocommunist, atheist and so on trends inside fascism. That situation of course is a difficult one and dangerous in a moral sense, but such are the situation and the tactics of all minorities in practical politics and life. For the rest we have seen quite a lot of minorities become majorities in the post-war times.

If you want you can try to deduce what I am and must be a 'conservative.' I shall furnish you the data: I am born and grown up until my tenth year in the 'wild' country (in Slavonia) where my father was the director or governor of vast domains. My ancestors are countrymen, rangers and peasants from Bavaria. My name means the major that is (I think) chief of a sedl (sedis) that is a peasants farm privileged

with rights of a squire. Very few of my ancestors and relatives lived and live in towns. My brother is tenant of a small estate⁴⁴ and if by chance I should come to a reasonable sum I would perhaps join him and follow my studies living on my own soil a way of living to whom I incline not for romantic devotion to country and countryfolk (both are ugly very often) but by the habits of my childhood and family. – But my greatgrandfather also was an able scholar, friend of Liebig; my father has written one of the best books, I think the first important one (except some Russians like Tchayanof who were killed by the bolschevists) on 'Bäuerliche Landgutswirtschaft' (a subject which has become fashionable since in nowadays Germany).⁴⁵ So science is almost as hereditary in my family as conservatism.

I do ask you not to discuss my opinions – which must be very strange to you: american, communist and jew (I hope not offending) because I am too deeply convinced of the barrenness of discussion where there is no common basis. Such a common platform we have e.g. on the scientific field, where our discussions have been fruitful and will continue to be so.

I guess you will try to deduce from that 'sociological' difference given the difference in our attitudes towards Kunstwissenschaft and I am sure not without results. Here we are on common basis in the estimation of 'Strenge,' of rational and critical methods. We are – it seems to me – separated through our views on art. I can not get rid of the suspicion that – in spite of your fine gifts in observing forms and form-

44 Kurt Sedlmayr (1900–1965) followed their father's career path as an agricultural economist in Hungary.

45 Ernst Conrad Sedlmayr (1868 Siegendorf (Burgenland)–1939 Vienna), son of a sugar factory director, was an agricultural economist, active in agriculture for many years for a period as director of a large property in Hungary. From 1907–36 he was professor of landwirtschaftliche Betriebslehre at the Hochschule für Bodenkultur in Vienna. His publications include: Die landwirtschaftliche Betriebsstatistik. Anleitung zur Einrichtung der Wirtschaftsstatistik landwirtschaftlicher Betriebe, Berlin 1925; Fruchtfolgen und die Aufstellung des Fruchtfolgeplanes. Ein Beitrag zur Organisation des Feldbetriebes, Berlin 1927; Zuckerrübenbau, Vienna 1928; Betriebserfolg und Jahreschlußrechnung in der Landwirtschaft, Berlin 1930; Die bäuerliche Landgutswirtschaft, Berlin, 1930. Source: Wikipedia, URL: http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ernst_Conrad_Sedlmayr [20.04.2011].

differences – you must fail to grasp the true object of our studies i.e. ‘art’ in its very peculiarity and marrow. For similar reasons why the ablest scholar will fail to grasp religion if he is a positivist: for lack of experience of a specific kind. I mean experience of what art meant in the past, not in our days.

The suspicion of mine is confirmed by your approval of Strzygowski's characterization of the essays of my own group.⁴⁶ His word of ‘Miniature – painting’ leaves me quite indifferent – not only because, as you in fact know very well, I am trying things which are not miniature at all, but because that word betrays a view which must come short when applied on art. For it is a fact that a work of art can be transformed by minute changements in a mere aggregation of forms without artistic qualities. One who is not interested in that microstructure will never gain the substance for a broad view. In fact, where Strzygowski is at work history of art turns to be a history (or mythos) of form-types, materials, techniques in connection with theories on races, regions, ‘blood and soil.’ He would be better on his place in history of external culture.

If you see in him features sympathetic to you I can understand you; I had and have myself impressions of that. ‘August Weltumsegler’ (you know Hamsun's fine figure) which would be favourable if they were [sic] not darkened by other features most contemptible.⁴⁷ It is easy to respect if one does not know the person. Slav nationalist if he wants a profit from slaves [sic], liberal when he takes money from jews, teuton when he awaits to be canonized by nazis – he would disgust you as deeply – I am quite sure – as me. And I think these features are visible in his work (which also for quite other reasons I cannot value like you do)

Dear Mr. Schapiro! I must close this long letter because since Swoboda and Hahnloser have left us I am overcharged with work of all kind. If there is some obscurity left you must think that it is difficult to write all in an (austrian) letter, but you must [sic] not impute lack of frankness. I must [sic] frankly avow that there is an undertone in your last letter which I do not like. I am afraid you have taken offence at the statements of my last letter. May be I am wrong – I hope so. But I have too often experienced that partisans of most aggressive movements are very irritable when they have to hear statements of the same resoluteness which seems quite natural to them in their own utterances.

As there is such a deep gulf between our political and so on positions we shall call our attention to the links between us. I mentioned the attitude towards sciences. I am sure there are further more. E.g. (perhaps) my honest and unaffected predilection for workman whom I know (a little) by three years of common life in war. I often found and find in them a genuine dignity which I estimate very much. (Though if I take the best types of workers and peasants the peasant is superior in my eyes.) I ask you to tell me if you can see other connecting links.

Excuse my abominable English!

Sincerely

Hans Sedlmayr

P.S. Ich danke Ihnen sehr für Ihre Versuche Pächt zu helfen, Ich habe ihm Ihren Brief übergeben, ohne Zweifel wird er selbst antworten. Leider spiest sich die Sache daran, dass er Englisch mühsam liest und nicht spricht. Die Lage der österreichischen Juden ist ganz ungerregelt und deshalb in gewissem Sinn noch

46 I have not yet identified a publication that can be connected to this remark.

47 The reference is to the Norwegian novelist Knut Hamsun's ‘August Weltumsegler’, 1930, the protagonist of which figures the modern age, an imaginative (or dishonest) cosmopolitan who introduces early forms of capital to a remote fishing village.

*problematischer als in anderen Ländern.*⁴⁸
Nach meiner Meinung wäre eine Minoritätenrecht die gerechteste Lösung.

In this sole letter written in English (because of the censors?), Sedlmayr lays bare the roots and nature of his conservatism that drove him presently to fascism as the only (imperfect) current choice to fight communism, the Jews, and “similar movements,” to preserve religion, art, and a traditional life connected to the land. He says that this is the product of his family history and that he would gladly live on the land and study if he were able. Here Sedlmayr certainly distances himself from a conservatism that held fast to the failed monarchy (one can thus understand his view of the importance of Musil’s *Mann ohne Eigenschaften*) but also it seems from the estate-based revival proposed by the Ständestaat installed in May 1934 under the leadership of Engelbert Dollfuss. In spite of this expression of opposition by Sedlmayr to the “Stände,” his nostalgic support for the peasant, his anti-modernism (and anti-capitalism) correspond to Dollfuss’s platform to strengthen agriculture, the peasantry and Catholicism – all keys to the survival of the state.⁴⁹ Later, in *Verlust der Mitte*, Sedlmayr would argue that the treatment of agricultural land offered up an example of the possi-

bility of the repair of humanity: if the Americans, who had decimated agricultural lands through poor soil management to plant wheat in the 19th century could be turned back through a practical (not a Romantic) return to medieval practices *life itself can cause men to turn about and retrace their steps*. The hope is that *an analogous process of self-healing can happen in the spiritual sphere*.⁵⁰

Given that Sedlmayr left the Nazi party in 1932 where does this place him politically in the fall of 1934, following the failed Revolution, the assassination of Dollfuss in July, and the outlawing of the Nazi party he had already left? It is unlikely that he had been a Dollfuss supporter or a supporter of his successor, Kurt Schuschnigg.⁵¹ And although Sedlmayr had left the Nazi party (for reasons which remain unclear) and of course rejoined in 1938⁵² it cannot be excluded that between the lines he also refers to National Socialism and believed in the party as the best solution for Austria. For the preservation of the peasantry and his anti-modernism also accords well with a strong and typical theme of the agrarian philosophy of National Socialism, the “life-spring of the Nordic race” with its ancient mystique of the soil.⁵³ This letter really points to Sedlmayr’s dissatisfaction with the political options of the moment although his anti-Semitism, anti-communism, and his Catholicism remain constant.

48 On the ambiguous situation of the Austrian Jews before the Anschluß see B. F. PAULEY, *From Prejudice to Persecution. A History of Austrian Anti-Semitism*, Chapel Hill (NC) 1992, esp. pp. 268ff.

49 J. W. MILLER, *Engelbert Dollfuss and Austrian Agriculture*, in: G. BISCHOF/A. PELINKA/A. LASSNER (eds), *The Dollfuss-Schuschnigg Era in Austria. A Reassessment*, New Brunswick (NJ) 2003, pp. 123–124.

50 SEDLMAYR, *Verlust der Mitte* (cit. n. 3), p. 246; translation in idem, H. SEDLMAYR, *Art in Crisis. The Lost Center*, trans. Brian Battershaw, Chicago 1958, p. 251.

51 Sedlmayr claims to have made “propaganda” against Schuschnigg at the university before 1938. HAIKO, *Hans Sedlmayr* (cit. n. 2), p. 87. Further on Sedlmayr’s lack of sympathy for the Ständestaat see AURENHAMMER, *Zäsur oder Kontinuität* (cit. n. 2), pp. 20–25.

52 According to his university Personalakten Sedlmayr was a member of the NSDAP in 1932. OTTENBACHER, *Kunstgeschichte in ihrer Zeit* (cit. n. 2), p. 74. Sedlmayr’s Gauakten (Bundesministerium für Inneres) uniquely record the date he entered the party first as November 7, 1930. Archiv der Republik, Gauakten, Hans Sedlmayr, 27415, fol.4. Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Vienna. He was known to have been an “Illegaler,” as a member of the party already early in 1938, although this was later officially denied since it appears that his second enrollment in the party was pre-dated. See HAIKO, *Hans Sedlmayr* (cit. n. 2), p. 87. My thanks to Hans Aurenhammer for clarifying this point.

53 P. G. J. PULZER, *The Rise of Political Anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria*, New York 1964, p. 310.

While Schapiro and Sedlmayr probably saw each other in Vienna in 1933, it seems that it is only in this letter that Sedlmayr completely confesses to his political views though not his party allegiances (although in the end he will admit to being a fascist). But Hitler was now in power, he had been a member of the Nazi party (now illegal in Austria) and his anti-Semitism was coming out into the open as he broke with his Jewish friends. And yet he is reluctant to allow politics to interfere with their scholarly exchange. In spite of his anti-Semitism he is concerned about Pächt (who broke with Sedlmayr around this time) though he undermines him by pointing out his poor English. The letter from Schapiro that Sedlmayr was to give to Pächt came shortly after their direct correspondence – which would long outlast Schapiro's with Sedlmayr – had begun. (Indeed on Christmas day of 1951 Schapiro wrote in a postscript to a letter to Pächt, then in England: *Believe it or not, I've had a 'Gruss' from Hans Sedlmayr through one of his students, a Frl. von Kallwitz. What do you make of this?*⁵⁴)

One month later, **4 December 1934**, Sedlmayr's response (here cited in its entirety) to a letter from Schapiro which must have been filled with strong reactions, shows Sedlmayr knocked off his feet:

Lieber Herr Schapiro!

Ihr letzter Brief erinnert mich ein wenig an ein amerikanische Filmgroteske aus den zwanziger Jahren, in welcher der Held sich seiner Feinde (die natürlich Dummköpfe, Schurken und Feiglinge sind) dadurch erwähnt, dass er

alle Gegenstände, die ihm zur Hand sind, nach allen Richtungen herumschleudert. Ich sage das aber wahrhaftig nicht um Sie zu ironisieren. Es geht reichlich irrational zu in Ihrem Brief: da gibt es Unterstellungen, unbewiesene Prämissen (wann hätte ich je gegen die Technik gesprochen?), falsche Schlüsse (aus der Tatsache einer einmaligen Zitierung kann man nicht auf eine Vorliebe für den zitierten Autor schließen – ich schätze Vierkandt's gar nicht), mangelhafte Definitionen – kurz das ganze Arsenal der affektiven Logik.

Ich habe Ihren Aerger hervorgerufen durch die Feststellung, daß ich antikommunistisch und antijüdisch bin (im politischen nicht im rassistischen Sinn, was ich auch damals betonte.) Ich hätte dann das Recht beleidigt zu sein, dass Sie Kommunist sind. Ich habe mit meiner Ueberzeugung so lange hinter dem Berg gehalten, weil ich gerade das voraussah, was nun wirklich eingetreten sind: dass ich einen Affekt auslösen würde. Allerdings haben auch Sie bei mir einen (kleineren) Affekt erzeugt, dadurch dass Sie die Aufrichtigkeit meiner Mitteilungen in Frage stellen. Dazu haben Sie wahrhaftig kein Recht. Sie verstehen meine Position nicht; sie ist aber nicht weniger fest und deutlich, weil ich sie nicht nach den Koordinaten eines bestehenden Parteiprogramms bezeichnen kann. – Ich lehne eine Diskussion dieser Fragen prinzipiell ab, weil nach meinen Erfahrungen, diese scheinbaren Diskussionen zu affektiven Angelegenheiten entarten. Eine Diskussion müsste auf ganz anderem Niveau und, erlauben Sie mir das zu sagen, nicht mit Argumenten

54 Meyer Schapiro to Otto Pächt, 25 December 1951. Fachkorrespondenz 1945–1960. Otto Pächt Nachlaß, Institut für Kunstgeschichte, Universität Wien. See n. 63 for what likely was Pächt's reply.

55 Alfred VIERKANDT (Hamburg 1867– Berlin 1953) was a German sociologist, ethnographer, social psychologist, social philosopher and philosopher of history. Sedlmayr had put Vierkandt's "non-atomistic" theory of objective spirit (from *Gesellschaftslehre: Hauptprobleme der philosophischen Soziologie*, 2nd ed., Stuttgart 1928) to use in "Das Quintessenz Riegls" (in: A. RIEGL, *Gesammelte Aufsätze*, Augsburg/Vienna 1929, p. 18) to explain the *Kunstwollen*; he also cited Vierkandt's image of the world as an "überindividuelle Wirklichkeit" in his 'Die Architektur Borrominis', Berlin 1930, p. 127. Whether Sedlmayr had, in the meantime, rethought his interest in Vierkandt's ideas, remains to be seen.

geführt werden, die für eine Agitatoreschule zu schlecht sind.

Ich glaube wir müssen zu Ihrem Prinzip aus Ihrem Sommerbrief zurückkehren, dass ich damals mit Freude begrüßt habe: uns wissenschaftlich auseinandersetzen und unsere politischen (und nicht nur politischen) Überzeugungen zu respektieren. Ich respektiere die Ihrige (obwohl ich meine, dass sie auf einer falschen Theorie aufgebaut ist) und Sie respektieren die meinige, obwohl Sie Ihnen fremd (unverständlich) ist. Wir können uns politisch bekämpfen, aber nicht erniedrigen und verschimpfen. Und gleiches Recht für beide!

Nun zum Wissenschaftlichen. Da haben wir beide Bedenken gegen die Position des Anderen. Sie finden in meiner Widersprüche. Das ist möglich. Aber wer wäre ganz frei von solchen? Sie müssen nur überzeugt sein, daß ich mit aller Kraft versuche, diese Unstimmigkeiten vernünftig aufzulösen. Ich ersuche Sie, mit Ihrem Urteil zuzuwarten bis mein Versuch über die 'Architektonischen Systeme' erschienen ist.

Ich habe Bedenken, ob es bei Ihnen zu einer echten Kunstgeschichte (über eine bloße formal-Stilgeschichte hinaus) kommen wird. Ich stütze mich bei diesem Urteil auf Ihre Geringschätzung der Mikroskopie und auf Ihren Begriff des Soziologischen, der mir ein Hineintragen moderner Kategorien in die Vergangenheit zu implizieren scheint. Die Feststellung, dass Sie ein namhafter Maler sind entkräftet diese Ansicht nicht nur nicht, sondern bestätigt sie eher. (Ich hatte Ihnen ein Verständnis der modernen Kunst ausdrücklich zugebilligt). Hier kehrt sich Ihr eigenes Argument vom 'madman' gegen Sie. Trotz dem ist es möglich, dass ich mich täusche. An Ihren Werken werden wir Sie erkennen.

Infolgedessen stelle ich mir auch unter einer historischen Soziologie der Kunst etwas Anderes vor als Sie –

Aufrichtig

Hans Sedlmayr

Schapiro seems frustrated that Sedlmayr will not come out and say directly that he is a National Socialist; Sedlmayr in turn says he concealed his political position because he was afraid that it would have precisely this result. He says again, and more clearly now, that Schapiro is jumping to an unwarranted conclusion since there is no single party that corresponds to his position (*Sie verstehen meine Position nicht; sie ist aber nicht weniger fest und deutlich, weil ich sie nicht nach den Koordinaten eines bestehenden Parteiprogramms bezeichnen kann*). Multiple references to Schapiro's "affective" tone and irrational reasoning show Sedlmayr is disturbed by the storm he has unleashed though he seems naïve in his hope that he has not offended Schapiro. He declines a discussion of their political differences because he does not believe it possible. So he proposes that they respect each other's positions: he is, however, immediately unable to do so. When he says: *Ich respektiere die Ihrige* - he adds in parentheses: *obwohl ich meine, dass sie auf einer falschen Theorie aufgebaut ist [...]*. So when he then asks Schapiro that *Sie respektieren die meinige*, he acknowledges *obwohl Sie Ihnen fremd (unverständlich) ist*, implying that his position is not based on a false theory. So the further ground rules he sets, he has already violated: *Wir können uns politisch bekämpfen, aber nicht erniedrigen und verschimpfen. Und gleiches Recht für beide!*

Sedlmayr admits that Schapiro may be right also about their scientific differences: that Schapiro is skeptical about the "microscopic" view, that they have different conceptions of history. Schapiro has expressed himself on Sedlmayr's architectural system (this likely refers to the work on the Justinian period which Schapiro would try to dismantle in the review). For his part Sedlmayr trots out an argument that would be one of the bases of *Verlust der Mitte*, and to which he alluded already in the previous letter: namely that Schapiro cannot really understand art (earlier he said that these were not times in which art could be understood).

Two months later (4 April 1935) Sedlmayr writes his last letter as a response to Schapiro's call for an end to their correspondence. The tone on both sides is emotional, angry, intolerant. Yet while Sedlmayr concurs that the conversation cannot continue, by the end of the letter he is still proposing approaches to the conversation, on the condition that it be free of emotion. His string of postscripts shows his difficulty closing the door on Schapiro:

Ihre Empfindung, dass Sie kaum mehr den Mut aufbringen, die Diskussion fortzusetzen, teile ich ganz und gar, denn es ist meine eigene.

Wenn man jemanden auffordert 'aufrichtig' zu sein, so muss man dies Aufrichtigkeit auch anhören können. Sie aber versuchen seither (vielleicht Ihnen selbst unbewusst), das was Ihnen unangenehm war, zu degradieren, indem Sie Ihrem unvermuteten Gegner die intellektuellen und moralischen Eigenschaften herabsetzen.¹

¹ zum Beispiel, indem Sie die Tatsache, dass das Judentum seit Jahrhunderten keinen Bauernstand in dem Sinn wie die anderen Völker besitzt, einfach als 'nonsense' abtun.

Sie geben jedem meiner Sätze, jene Deutung, die ihn unmöglich macht, so dass Sie dann 'auf einen solchen Unsinn gar nicht mehr einzugehen brauchen.'²

² zum Beispiel indem Sie mich, den Juden für den geborenen 'bösen' Kapitalisten erklären lassen.

(ich sage das ohne Affekt, rein als Beschreibung Ihrer Methode). Dadurch wird die Diskussion für Sie uninteressant ('mit so einem bornierten Reaktionär kann man nicht sprechen') und für mich zu einer harten Geduld- und Beherrschungsprobe. – (Leider diffundiert diese

Ihre Haltung auch auf Teile der Diskussion, die früher neutral waren. Sie versuchen auch da, mit einer ganz überflüssigen Heftigkeit das zu entwerten (bekannter Mechanismus!), von dem Sie annehmen, dass ich positiv dazu stehe. Diesmal allerdings irrtümlich, den ich finde Ihre Kritik von Herrn Pol Abraham in den Hauptpunkten vollkommen richtig.)⁵⁶

Der Ausweg wäre, dass Sie mir die intellektuellen und 'moralischen' (wenn Sie wollen) Qualitäten auch weiterhin kreditieren, die Sie seinerzeit bewogen haben, den Briefwechsel mit mir zu suchen und weiterzuführen. Sie müssten sich dann ernstlich fragen, wie man trotzdem (und in welchem Sinn man) eine antijüdische Haltung einnehmen kann, mit welchen vernünftigen Argumenten und aus welchen moralisch möglichen Motiven. (Etwa wie ein Volk in einer bestimmten historischen Lage durchaus begründet und mit allem Recht, aber ohne Gehässigkeit und ohne die Qualitäten des Gegners zu verkennen eine antideutsche Politik betreiben kann.) Mit der Zulassung dieser Frage würde die Diskussion wieder einen möglichen Sinn bekommen – nicht den eines Kompromisses, oder auch nur einer 'Verständigung,' aber vielleicht den einer neuen Erfahrung. Sie würden dabei erfahren, wie eine Haltung beschaffen ist, die heute in Europa gar nicht selten ist (womit ich ihr keine übertriebene Bedeutung vindizieren will).+

+Allerdings müssten Sie dabei so sonderbare (vielleicht aus amerikanischen [sic] Verhältnissen erklärliche?) unhaltbare Vorurteile aufgeben, wie dass ein Antisemit immer oder auch nur sehr oft ein Faschist ist: der Faschismus par excellence, der italienische, beweist das Gegenteil.

Mich, meinerseits, würde es dagegen interessieren zu erfahren, auf welcher Basis ein

56 Hippolyte ("Pol") Abraham, architect and historian of medieval building, was known for his controversial argument that Gothic architecture's system of ribbed vaulting was not necessary for structural reasons. P. ABRAHAM, *Viollet-le-Duc et le rationalisme medieval*, Paris 1934. Hans Aurenhammer has pointed out that Abraham's work would be important for Sedlmayr up through his 'Die Entstehung der Kathedrale', Zürich 1950.

Intellektueller heute noch Marxist aus Ueberzeugung (nicht aus taktischen Gründen, wie ich viele kenne) sein kann. Oder genauer: wie ein solcher sich mit jenen Teilen der marxistischen Doktrin abfindet, die sich ganz offensichtlich in der Empirie nicht bewährt haben (keine Kummulierung des Kapitals in der Landwirtschaft) und welche Konsequenzen er zieht. (Rückkehr zu einem utopischen Kommunismus oder Korrektur des wissenschaftlichen Marxismus an der Stelle wo er falsch war?) und in welchem Sinn?). Es scheint mir dass auch bei der Beantwortung dieser Fragen ein Typus einer Haltung (oder mehrere) sich zeigen würden, der in der gegenwärtigen Lage eine nicht geringe Bedeutung besitzt.

Halten Sie es für sinnvoll und möglich eine solche Diskussion (die letzten Endes durch Sie provoziert worden ist) affektfrei zu führen oder nicht? Ich erwarte Ihre offene Antwort.

Aufrichtig

Hans Sedlmayr

P.S. Vielleicht ist mein Irrtum, dass ich Sie für einen Marxisten halte: Sie haben sich ja nur als Kommunist erklärt.

P.P.S. Ihr Irrtum ist hauptsächlich, dass Sie zwei wesentlich verschiedene Dinge 'Faschismus'

nennen: den Anti-Antikapitalismus – der wie sie richtig sagen – selbst Kapitalismus ist. Und eine Haltung für die Kapitalismus und Marxismus (und auch jener erste Faschismus) als These und Antithese auf einer Ebene liegen und die beide ablehnt. In diesem Sinn wäre ich allerdings Faschist.

By 1934, the discussion focused on Sedlmayr's recitation of the cornerstones of a historical Austrian anti-Semitism and anti-Communism that were taken up in National Socialism: a view of the Jews as a rootless people, who were, by and large, not landowners, and whose dominance in banking led many anti-Semites to argue that they had a hold on entire economies.⁵⁷ Sedlmayr's sympathy with the landowner and nostalgia for the peasant (over the city worker) concurs with the tone of his wartime journal, a nostalgic memoir of early childhood on the land that has strong resonance with his mature political views.⁵⁸ It is not to be excluded that Sedlmayr, who always seemed short on money in these letters, looked on with envy even at the lives of his well-heeled Jewish friends.⁵⁹ Sedlmayr is pained that Schapiro judges him for his anti-Semitism; he does not understand why this widely-held position cannot be considered a moral one. Sedlmayr insists that his anti-Semitism is political rather

57 See especially PAULEY, From Prejudice to Persecution (cit. n. 48).

58 H. SEDLMAYR, Das goldene Zeitalter. Eine Kindheit, Munich 1986. Norbert Schneider noted *Diese sorgenfreien Kindheitsidyllen machen es begreiflich (freilich nicht immer entschuldbar), dass Sedlmayr zeitlebens ein Anwalt der tempi passati war, der den durch die gesellschaftliche Moderne, das ökonomische System der bürgerlichen Sozietät, herbeigeführten Untergang des 'Reichs' nicht begriff und diesen 'Verlust der Mitte' der kulturellen Moderne anlastete.* SCHNEIDER, Hans Sedlmayr (cit. n. 2), p. 267.

59 One has the sense from these letters that Sedlmayr was always short on money, perhaps a decline in the family's fortune (he tells Schapiro who must have written to him about the effects of the great depression in 1931 that their circumstances were unchanged since 1922, or rather, since 1914), that he was part of a generation that could not maintain the life on the manor of his forebears. *Ob ich dazwischen in den Sommer die schon dringend notwendige Reise nach Frankreich (hauptsächlich Paris und Loire) legen kann, steht aus Geldgründen noch immer nicht fest.* Sedlmayr to Schapiro, 2 May 1931. *Leider – ich bedauere es sehr – muß ich aus Geldmangel (zum Teil aber auch durch eine Drehung meiner Hauptarbeitsrichtung) den Gedanken einer französischer Reise aufgeben.* Sedlmayr to Schapiro, 12 July 1931. *Ich wollte im Mai nach Griechenland, weiss aber noch nicht, ob ich genug Geld haben werde – zumal ich übersiedle.* Sedlmayr to Schapiro, 30 March 1933. Pächt and Bruno Fürst, for example, came from wealthy Jewish families, well-off enough to contribute to the support of Robert Musil and to accompany him to Paris on the occasion of a conference of anti-fascist writers. See CORINO, Pächt und Musil (cit. n. 30).

than racial. The distinction between political and racial anti-Semitism, is, however, itself a product of anti-Semitism and is a distinction based on false logic. Sedlmayr himself demonstrates in the letters how pointless this distinction is when he flies into a self-justifying rage at his colleague and friend Bruno Fürst over the mishandling of Schapiro's essay, referring to the "tactics of the local Jews."

To Sedlmayr's racial charge that Jews are *geborenen 'bösen' Kapitalisten* and *dass das Judentum seit Jahrhunderten keinen Bauernstand in dem Sinn wie die anderen Völker besitzt* Schapiro responds that this is *simply nonsense*. In self-defense Sedlmayr says that when he terms Jews *den geborenen 'bösen' Kapitalisten* he says so *ohne Affekt, rein als Beschreibung Ihrer Methode*, frustrated that in spite of his "objectivity" Schapiro throws up his hands because *'Mit so einem bornierten Reaktionsär kann man nicht sprechen.'* Sedlmayr's patience is tried; he cannot understand why Schapiro's attitude has changed when his earlier tone "was neutral."

It should be obvious by now that there are numerous aspects of this correspondence that are of interest for the history of the discipline. For historiographers there is a surplus of philological clues about what they were reading, what they thought of their colleagues' work, substantiation of their scholarly views, their collegial networks and on Sedlmayr's side preoccupation with the state of various journals ('Kritische Berichte', 'Kunstwissenschaftliche Forschungen'). With these letters in hand Schapiro's published and unpublished work, especially around the mid-1930s but also into the 1950s, should be re-

examined. It may be that Schapiro was reacting against Sedlmayr (including his post-war work) more than has been obvious.⁶⁰ The letters support further investigation of a shift around 1933-34 in Sedlmayr's work. For instance, I am inclined to read two essays published in 1934 in this light: in the short article on Della Porta's contribution to the Capitoline Sedlmayr reframes a question he had considered as a pure problem of structural analysis in an article of 1931. He now re-reads the same monument, begun by Michelangelo and completed by Della Porta, through Croce's idea of the inseparability of body and soul, a work "von zwei verschiedenen Körpern unter dem oberflächlichen Schein eines und desselben Körpers."⁶¹ I would also consider "Brueghels *Macchia*" as a personal essay in addition to a critique of (early) modernity: that Sedlmayr's interest in the "spiritual detachment" and "isolation" of Brueghel's peasant, their inability to "communicate their feelings," that they "hardly any show any emotional contact with the others" may be, amongst other things, a projection of his own anxieties as he shed his own mask and watched his intellectual community break down. He speaks of a departure from a "natural" way of seeing to one that is "correct" and "cold." The viewer of Brueghel's paintings in this essay fails in empathy; his experience before the breakdown of the logic of the picture is described by Sedlmayr as an "experience of shock and disturbance, in sensitive viewers even of anxiety and something approaching fear."⁶² Brueghel's picture, he says "is wearing a mask": "Behind the mask is hidden a second face about which the first betrays nothing."

60 Compare, for instance, Sedlmayr's account of Cezanne in his 1948, 'Verlust der Mitte' (cit. n. 3), pp. 123-127, to Schapiro's in Paul Cezanne [1952] 3rd ed., New York 1965, 29. Walter Cahn was kind to share these thoughts about the impact of this correspondence many years later: "I myself heard Schapiro express great bitterness when I took his course of Early Christian art around 1960 at Columbia about Sedlmayr's reinstatement in Munich by the American occupation authorities after the war, which was probably the first time I heard his name mentioned. Some of Schapiro's negative feelings about the reactionary cult of peasantry and the earth also enter into his critique of Heidegger's article on Van Gogh's shoes from his later years." Walter Cahn, email to the author, 25 April 2010.

61 H. SEDLMAYR, Das Capitol des della Porta, in: Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte, 3, 1934, p. 264.

62 There is some resonance in this language also with Ernst Jünger's "poetical and phenomenological description of the

But the highest value of these letters is indisputably in their contribution to Sedlmayr's political biography: for these contain the most explicit statement of Sedlmayr's political views that have come to light as well as a live enactment of the effect of them on his short and long-term dealings with colleagues⁶³ (not just Schapiro) and his work.

And yet, we should not rush to categorical conclusions about Hans Sedlmayr for he is not without contradictions – beyond and in spite of the common ground shared by right and left in this period – a fact also noted by Schapiro.⁶⁴ Sedlmayr is at once a conservative and wants to be a leader of the *Junge Garde*. He gathers together scholars for 'Kritische Berichte' with *die gleiche wissenschaftliche Gesinnung*, seeking collaboration with scholars on the left, some Jewish, at the very moment that he is an early member of a reactionary and violently anti-Semitic political party. Later he assures Meyer Schapiro (from whom he conceals and never comes out and declares his party loyalty) *dass Sie es mit einem 'ideologischen' Gegner zu tun haben*. Sedlmayr was an anti-Semite but one of his closest intellectual allies was Jewish. He did not see any contradiction. He tells Schapiro: I am anticommunist and *antijüdisch* and hopes he does not offend! He understands why Jewish colleagues have distanced themselves but is sad that Ernest Nagel chooses not to return for a second visit because he found him nice. Sedlmayr was naive. He does not understand

why the offense to his world view constituted by Schapiro's Communism should be taken on different terms than his anti-Semitism.

Sedlmayr's open display of anti-Semitism complicates the already complicated discussion around the value of his work because it has now become personal and it is tempting to judge him rather than understand him: his expression of racially offensive ideas (in addition to his anti-communism) to an individual changes the register. While I do not want to assume absolute unity between the work and author, the Sedlmayr-Schapiro correspondence is troubling and deepens our quandary over his work.

Even in the works of scholars who do not foreground their politics their value systems infuse their thinking and if we do not notice a political register it may be that it is because we are in agreement. The discussion over the extent to which personal and political beliefs are embedded in a scholar's work is more apt to take place when it is unclear to what extent a heinous politics "infects" the thinking (as in the debates over early De Man, over Ernst Jünger – another ambiguous conservative critic who Sedlmayr read⁶⁵ – and over the wartime Heidegger); and over the ambition of the intellectual's work to actively support a worldview and or a regime (which Sedlmayr's work from 1938 on demonstrably does). It is still not entirely clear to what extent pre-1938 Sedlmayr was driving a political agenda. As I noted above, the early period of

individual subject's helplessness and dread (Grauen) in the face of successive catastrophes in modern experience that defy all rational means of order and prediction." E. Y. NEAMAN, *A Dubious Past. Ernst Jünger and the Politics of Literature after Nazism*, Berkeley 1999, p. 9 (describing the argument of Karl Heinz Bohrer).

- 63 When Schapiro wrote to Pächt that Sedlmayr had sent his greetings to him (see above), Pächt replied, 1 July 1952: *What you wrote to me last time about Sedlmayr's friendly gestures does not surprise me at all. There will be, if necessary, a third and a fourth volte face, but I am not interested in the psychology of chameleons*. ALEXANDER, Otto Pächt (cit. n. 26), p. 116, n. 3.
- 64 I have been stimulated in thinking about the following by the thoughtful discussion of politics and philosophy in the Third Reich in H. SLUGA, *Heidegger's Crisis: Philosophy and Politics in Nazi Germany*, Cambridge (MA) 1993, esp. chapter 10 and by the various essays in: W. HAMACHER/N. HERZ/T. KEENAN (eds), *Responses: On Paul de Man's Wartime Journalism*, Lincoln 1989.
- 65 For a review of the post-war debates over Jünger, whether his thought can be taken in isolation from "its possible relationship to fascism and National Socialism" see NEAMAN, *A Dubious Past* (cit. n. 62), Introduction.

Sedlmayr's work has tended to be viewed more openly because slightly less tainted although Aurenhammer and others have directly confronted this very question.⁶⁶ (Sedlmayr's anti-Semitism broke out into the open in publications after 1938, but as Aurenhammer has pointed out, it has less obvious importance for his work, in comparison to a figure like Strzygowski.⁶⁷ But what Beaman has observed about the reception of the absence of *völkisch* and racial elements in Ernst Jünger's work also applies to Sedlmayr: that "National Socialism included a hodgepodge of intellectual currents so that nonracial variants within that range can hardly be turned into documents of resistance."⁶⁸ The question nonetheless still deserves further consideration.

These are all difficult matters and I am not certain how to situate these letters in relation to them although I am certain that to continue to pose these questions is the main point. One of the interesting things about the Sedlmayr letters to Schapiro is that they may be taken as an enactment of these thorny issues. For whatever questions Sedlmayr may have been forced to answer after the war in the de-Nazification process had already flashed before his eyes in the break with Schapiro (and likely others). Though self-righteous and sure of his views, Sedlmayr agonized over the impossibility of carrying on a discussion once his politics became known:

Ihrem letzten Brief hat mich Ihre Auffassung unserer 'ideologischen' Differenzen am allermeisten erfreut. Ihre Auffassung 'these differences become important only in so far as they affect our scientific work' ist die meine. Nur nehmen sie unrichtig an, ich, irgendjemand, könnte 'above the battle' bleiben.

One the one hand the two could agree that *ideologischen' Differenzen* only matter where they concern the work. But they do not seem to agree on the effects on the work: Why, Sedlmayr asked, couldn't Schapiro separate their scientific from their political discussion? He repeatedly called for a neutral, a rational, an unemotional discussion all the while Schapiro contended that "there is no reasoning with a stubborn reactionary." Sedlmayr asks Schapiro: *I do ask you not to discuss my opinions – which must be very strange to you: american, communist and jew (I hope not offending) because I am too deeply convinced of the barrenness of discussion where there is no common basis. Such a common platform we have e.g on the scientific field, where our discussions have been fruitful and will continue to be so. (1 November 1934)* He has second thoughts on this and finally he is unable to keep from himself the possibility that the separation between political views and art history cannot be sustained: *I guess you will try to deduce from that 'sociological' difference given the difference in our attitudes towards Kunstwissenschaft and I am sure not without results. Here we are on common basis in the estimation of 'Strenge,' of rational and critical methods. We are – it seems to me – separated through our views on art. I can not get rid of the suspicion that – in spite of your fine gifts in observing forms and form-differences – you must fail to grasp the true object of our studies i.e. 'art' in its very peculiarity and marrow. For similar reasons why the ablest scholar will fail to grasp religion if he is a positivist: for lack of experience of a specific kind. I mean experience of what art meant in the past, not in our days.* It is a short step from Sedlmayr's insistence on his rationalism and his attribution of a mystical apprehension of art, invisible to a communist and a Jew like Schapiro, to the latter's critique of Sedlmayr's work in his article of 1936.

66 AURENHAMMER, Zäsur oder Kontinuität (cit. n. 2), pp. 43ff.

67 AURENHAMMER, Zäsur oder Kontinuität (cit. n. 2), pp. 43–44; SAUERLÄNDER, Der Münchner Protest (cit. n. 1), p. 196, n. 24.

68 NEAMAN, A Dubious Past (cit. n. 62), p. 16.

If we struggle today with what to do with Sedlmayr, Schapiro it seems struggled too, but in the end, came to a judgment. Schapiro's decision to review the 'KWF' shows that Schapiro decided for critical engagement, calling attention to the dangers of the work while expressing his personal judgment of Sedlmayr by breaking off their collegial relationship. On Schapiro's side the letters are most revealing about the attitude he struck towards the work of Sedlmayr and his colleagues in his 1936 review, "The New Viennese School," an essay full of ambivalence, praising on the one hand and sharply critical (of Sedlmayr above all) on the other. Wood says that Schapiro may have known of Sedlmayr's membership in the Nazi party and of his break with Otto Pächt – we now know he knew much more than this. But Wood also says that "he could not have foreseen the full extent to which the potential for nonsense in Riegl's syntheticism would return in the later Sedlmayr's writing, virulent theses on modern art and culture. I would argue that he already had a good sense of this."⁶⁹

Let us consider why Schapiro would have been sympathetic at all? Later in life Schapiro lamented the "lack of serious questions" being asked in the American academy at the time.⁷⁰ As a student, in December 1926, Schapiro wrote to his wife from Paris, for instance, that although Richard Hamann's photographic campaigns in France were impressive, his criteria were weak: 'In spite of all the detailed studies, and methodological investigations, & the contempt for 'theoretische' works, his reasons for any solution are usually 'feeling,' 'Stil', something looks earlier, or later, related or unrelated – with nothing more precise."⁷¹ Like Sedlmayr and his colleagues in Vienna, Schapiro was critical of intuitive ap-

proaches to style and was engaged in a similar critique of an American school of positivism through a structuralist project that involved close looking without connoisseurship. Linda Seidel has characterized his efforts as being "directed towards systematic analysis of works of art and the formulation of an approach that constructed disciplined strategies in that pursuit."⁷²

While Schapiro captured the investigative intensity and imagination of the younger Vienna School in his review, he is in the end more intent on pointing out its dangers. There are two main lines of attack of Sedlmayr's work in particular, and the Vienna version of structuralism in general. First is that it lacks a historical basis: "The school lacks an adequate conception of history to direct their historical interpretations in the sense of that scientific rigor that they require in the analysis of forms."⁷³ What Schapiro meant by this is laid out in a letter dated 5 May 1936 to Henri Focillon that followed a discussion they had in which Schapiro posed a question informed by the same issue raised in his critique of the Vienna school:

When I asked you at Columbia if it were possible to explain the form of a cathedral and the historical emergence of given types by purely plastic intentions, without taking into account the specific institutional uses, the social interests and practices, the stage of material development, etc., you at once identified my question with "sociological" interpretation in the manner of Taine, and you declared, if I remember rightly, that this method was long ago refuted and out of fashion. I am not a disciple of Taine; if there is any social thinker whose views guide me, I would say that he is Karl Marx, rather than Taine; and there is all the difference in

69 WOOD, Vienna School Reader (cit. n. 6), p. 36.

70 Ibid., p. 565.

71 SEIDEL, Meyer Schapiro (cit. n. 16), p. xvii.

72 L. SEIDEL, 'Shalom yehudin!' Meyer Schapiro's early years in art history, in: Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies, 27, 1997, p. 559, pp. 563–564.

73 SCHAPIRO, The New Viennese School (cit. n. 11), p. 260.

*the world between their conceptions of society and the driving forces of history. Taine presents us the various arts as reflections or expressions of given societies and environments (or races); but he cannot explain why society changes; he lacks an historical dynamic. He is a positivist with certain romantic notions of culture as an expression of social individuality, but he is not an historical materialist. I am aware of certain difficulties in the theory of historical materialism, but I do not consider them inherent in the theory; they belong rather to certain narrow and mechanical formulations. I accept it as an hypothesis for approaching history and society, in which art is one element.*⁷⁴

The lack of a model for history is, moreover, inseparable from a reliance on irrational concepts:

*In several of the articles we meet with spiritualistic conceptions and with allusions to qualities or causes that we have no means of verifying. The authors often tend to isolate forms from the historical conditions of their devpt, to propel them by mythical, racial-psychological constants,⁷⁵ or to give them an independent, self-evolving career. Entities like race, spirit, will and idea are substituted in an animistic manner for a real analysis of historical factors. [...]*⁷⁶

We encountered the kernel of this in Schapiro's critique of Andreades in a letter to Sedlmayr. 19 December 1932 Sedlmayr quoted Schapiro back to him: *I am dissatisfied with stylistic analysis which describes the object admirably but terminates in a more or less mystical explanation of their history.* (Note mythical and mystical are used interchangeably.) Sedlmayr responds: *Was ich einfach unterschreibe.* Sedlmayr agreed – and would, in an act of projective identification, turn the criticism on Pächt in 1936⁷⁷ – but in the review Schapiro would find Sedlmayr guilty of the same, with the critique of Andreades now applied to Sedlmayr's essay on the architecture of Justinian:

*This neglect of concrete relationships is masked by the brilliant variety of aspects, largely formal, treated briefly by the author. The appearance of comprehensiveness conceals the lack of historical seriousness in such writings. We reproach the authors not for neglecting the social, economic, political and ideological factors in art but rather for offering us as historical explanations a mysterious racial and animistic language in the name of a higher science of art.*⁷⁸

And more specifically:

Dr. Sedlmayr explains to us that the system of Justinian, being 'rational, could not last more than thirty years, whereas the succeeding

74 The letter is reprinted in W. B. CAHN, Schapiro and Focillon, in: *Gesta*, 2002, pp. 129–136.

75 For Schapiro's elaboration on the danger of national and racial constants in his 1936 essay 'Race, Nationality and Art' that appeared in: *Art Front* in March 1936, see P. HILLS, Meyer Schapiro, 'Art Front,' and the Popular Front, in: *Oxford Art Journal*, 17, 1994, pp. 33–34. For further examples in Schapiro's reviews of the mid 1930s and his preoccupation with the problem into the 1940s see C. L. PERSINGER, *The Politics of Style: Meyer Schapiro and the Crisis of Meaning in Art History*, unpub., Ph.D. Diss., University of Pittsburgh, 2007, pp. 68 ff., pp. 124–125. My thanks to Cindy Persinger for allowing me to read her dissertation.

76 SCHAPIRO, *The New Viennese School* (cit. n. 11), p. 259.

77 *Schon 1936 hatte er Pächts 'Österreichische Tafelmalerei der Gotik' (1929) wegen der 'extremen' Ausklammerung der Realgeschichte kritisiert (er hatte genauso gut seine eigene 'Österreichische Barockarchitektur' von 1930 oder andere Frühchriften nennen können).* The reference is to H. SELDMAYR, *Geschichte und Kunstgeschichte*, in: *Mitteilungen des Österreichischen Instituts für Geschichtsforschung*, 48, 1936, pp. 193–95, noted in AURENHAMMER, *Zäsur oder Kontinuität* (cit. n. 2), p. 45.

78 SCHAPIRO, *The New Viennese School* (cit. n. 11), p. 260.

*Byzantine system, being irrational, was capable of a life of six centuries. This is palmistry or numerology, not science.*⁷⁹

I have repeated here these oft quoted passages in Schapiro's review essay for Sedlmayr's letters now endow them with concreteness and vividness. Schapiro warned art historians off of the young Viennese scholars without name-calling although it would have been clear to his contemporaries exactly what he meant when he invoked myth and race. Sedlmayr's anti-Semitism was ugly and offensive. It also exposed his vulnerability to unreason, to his blind spot in his historical understanding. It showed Schapiro that Sedlmayr in some fundamental way was irrational. This is why Schapiro's critique was not personal but was based on their scientific differences. Schapiro did not believe that science could come out of National Socialist thinking.

Sedlmayr never addressed Schapiro's critique of his Justinian essay directly⁸⁰ although he seems to do so indirectly in the extended post-script to *Verlust der Mitte* (which did not appear in the first edition of 1948⁸¹). There he outlines four methods of criticism: the first "judges the timeless *presence* of the work of art as a microcosm" – a reference to his writings of the early 1930s – which he does not endeavour to do in *Verlust der Mitte*. The second method treats art as past, as the "outcome of a past event," and is historical. Here he does not propose a model of history that might have responded to Schapiro's critique, arguing rather, that most art arises from (conflict with) other works of art and that this internal history is one basis for art history's disciplinary independence. Sedlmayr has not yet decided what event it was that took place, he

believes, in England in the mid-eighteenth century that holds the key to the decline of humanity (as he notes the French Revolution would for Burckhardt). But the view of the work of art as a past event will, he says, need a supplement in intellectual-historical criticism: for the "great task of the history of the intellect is to establish the personal credo of every work of art and of every artist (not his private article of faith, but that proclaimed through his art), and to relate what is established to the cognate creeds in literature, philosophy, religion, etc." – this is a gesture towards his micrological method but on a completely different, religious, basis. If the first method considered the work of art as eternally present, and the second as a past event, the third method understands art and artist as a harbinger of the future, as expressing that which has not yet reached consciousness. To assess a work fully all three methods must be present. But it is the fourth method he deploys in *Verlust der Mitte*, and which "transcends" the previous three through the introduction of an absolute standard of values. Here works of art are understood as "symptoms of a disturbance in the condition of man," the notion of disturbance presupposing a norm: "This book diagnoses that the disrupted relationship with God is at the heart of the disturbance." When Sedlmayr says that "It is no untruth that the severest break with God can turn to salvation," one wonders whether he speaks as much about works of art, artists and their personal credos, as he does about himself. Is *Verlust der Mitte* to be read as Sedlmayr's personal chronicle? "Mit dieser Betrachtungsweise scheint der Boden der Wissenschaft verlassen. In Wahrheit ist er aber überhöht, nicht verlassen."⁸² That is to say, yes, Sedlmayr's criticism is mysti-

79 SCHAPIRO, *The New Viennese School* (cit. n. 11), p. 259.

80 In the 1959 republication of the Justinian essay reviewed by Schapiro several reviews of the article are noted but not Schapiro's. I have yet to find Schapiro cited in Sedlmayr's work. H. SEDLMAYR, *Das erste mittelalterliche Architektursystem* (Epochen und Werke. Gesammelte Schriften zur Kunstgeschichte) vol. 1, Vienna/Munich 1959. p. 359.

81 Sedlmayr, *Verlust der Mitte*, 4th ed. (1950).

82 Sedlmayr, *Verlust der Mitte* (cit. n. 32), p. 58.

cal as Schapiro charged, but he answers in this not to his discipline but to God. It is almost as if Sedlmayr opted for one of Schapiro's alternative explanations for the mystical/mythical explanations in Andreaes' essay: *Auch unannehmbar sind Adrandes [sic] liturgische- theologische Spekulationen die rein deduktiv sind und imaginaere ästhetisch-pietistische Gestaltungen (Wenn Andreaes nicht religioes ist, dann kann man diese*

Bemuehungen als ästhetische-Laien-Pietismus oder ästhetische religions-anschauung.) In his own defence Sedlmayr may have argued that he had always thought this way - that is to say, that his Catholicism was always compatible with National Socialism.⁸³

83 Wilhelm Schlink, a student of Sedlmayr's after the war recalled that Sedlmayr "imagined an art historical period always in its relation to God," and that "This restrained him from overdrawn nationalist or racist art historical positions – the destiny and misery of so many of his art historian colleagues." SCHLINK, *Gothic Cathedral* (cit. n. 2), p. 276.

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