the heavens), has now become *natura naturata*. The vision of the universe is, so to speak, detheologized, and space, whose priority over individual objects was already so vividly expressed by Gauricus, now becomes a "continuous quantity, consisting of three physical dimensions, existing by nature before all bodies and beyond all bodies, indifferently receiving everything." No wonder that a man like Giordano Bruno now outfits this world of the spatial and infinite, and thus of the thoroughly measurable, this world which, so to speak, outgrew divine omnipotence, with an almost religious sublimity of its own; he "invests it, along with the infinite extension of the Democritan *kenon* (void), with the infinite dynamic of the neoplatonic world-soul."[64a] And yet this view of space, even with its still-mystical coloring, is the same view that will later be rationalized by Cartesianism and formalized by Kantianism.

It may strike us today as somewhat strange to see a genius like Leonardo describe perspective as the "rein and rudder of painting," and to hear a powerfully imaginative artist like Paolo Uccello answer his wife's request that he finally come to bed with the now-hackneyed phrase, "But how sweet perspective is!"[65] All we can do is try to imagine what this achievement meant then. For not only did it elevate art to a "science" (and for the Renaissance that was an elevation): the subjective visual impression was indeed so far rationalized that this very impression could itself become the foundation for a solidly grounded and yet, in an entirely modern sense, "infinite" experiential world. (One could even compare the function of Renaissance perspective with that of critical philosophy, and the function of Greco-Roman perspective with that of skepticism.) The result was a translation of psychophysiological space into mathematical space; in other words, an objectification of the subjective.

IV

This formula also suggests that as soon as perspective ceased to be a technical and mathematical problem, it was bound to become all that much more of an artistic problem. For perspective is by nature a two-edged sword: it creates room for bodies to expand plastically and move gesturally, and yet at the same time it enables light to spread out in space and in a painterly way dissolve the bodies. Perspective creates distance between human beings and things ("the first is the eye that sees, the second is the object seen, the third is the distance between them," says Dürer after Piero della Francesca[66]); but then in turn it abolishes this distance by, in a sense, drawing this world of things, an autonomous world confronting the individual, into the eye. Perspective subjects the artistic phenomenon to stable and even mathematically exact rules, but on the other hand, makes that phenomenon contingent upon human beings, indeed upon the individual: for these rules refer to the psychological and physical conditions of the visual impression, and the way they take effect is determined by the freely chosen position of a subjective "point of view." Thus the history of perspective may be understood with equal justice as a triumph of the distancing and objectifying sense of the real, and as a triumph of the distance-denying human struggle for control; it is as much

a consolidation and systematization of the external world, as an extension of the domain of the self. Artistic thinking must have found itself constantly confronted with the problem of how to put this ambivalent method to use. It had to be asked (and indeed it was asked) whether the perspectival configuration of a painting was to be oriented toward the factual standpoint of the beholder (as in the quite special case of "illusionistic" ceiling painting, which goes about laying the picture plane horizontally, and then drawing all the consequences from this 90-degree rotation of the whole world); or whether conversely the beholder ought ideally to adapt himself to the perspectival configuration of the painting.[67] In the latter case, it must further be asked where on the picture field is the central vanishing point best placed,[68] how close or how far the perpendicular distance ought to be measured,[69] and whether and to what extent an oblique view of the entire space seems admissible. In all of these questions, the "claim" of the object (to use a modern term) confronts the ambition of the subject. The object intends to remain distanced from the spectator (precisely as something "objective"); it wants to bring to bear, unimpeded, its own formal lawfulness (its symmetry, for example, or its frontality). It does not want to be referred to an eccentric vanishing point, nor certainly, as in the oblique view, governed by a coordinate system whose axes no longer even appear objectively in the work, but rather exist only in the imagination of the beholder. Clearly, a decision can only be arrived at by involving those great antitheses that we usually call something like free will versus norm, individualism versus collectivism, the irrational versus the rational; and it was just these modern perspectival problems that provoked epochs, nations and individuals to take up especially emphatic and visible positions in such matters.

It thus stands to reason that the Renaissance would interpret the meaning of perspective entirely differently from the Baroque,

and Italy entirely differently from the North: in the former cases, speaking quite generally, its objective significance was felt to be more essential, in the latter cases its subjective significance. Thus even Antonello da Messina, under such strong Netherlandish influence, constructs the study of St. Jerome with a long perpendicular distance, so that, like nearly all Italian interiors, it is basically an architectural exterior with the front surface removed. He also lets the space begin only at (or indeed behind) the picture plane and places the central vanishing point nearly exactly in the center (Plate 18). Dürer by contrast, and he is by no means the first, shows us St. Jerome in a real "cabinet" (Plate 19). We imagine that we ourselves have been admitted into it, because the floor appears to extend under our own feet, and because the perpendicular distance, expressed in real dimensions, would amount to no more than about one and a half meters. The entirely eccentric position of the central vanishing point reinforces the impression of a representation determined not by the objective lawfulness of the architecture, but rather by the subjective standpoint of a beholder who has just now appeared; a representation that owes its especially "intimate" effect in large part to this very perspectival disposition.[70] In Italy, the rise of perspectival construction actually militated against the oblique view, which was still common in the Trecento, even if it did affect only individual architectural elements in the space and not the space as such. Yet someone like Altdorfer used just such a view to create, in the Munich *Birth of the Virgin* (Plate 20), an "absolute oblique space," that is, a space in which there are no more frontals and orthogonals at all; he even reinforces the turning movement, optically and indeed superfluously, with a round dance of inspired angels. He thus anticipates a representational principle first fully exploited only by the great Dutchmen of the seventeenth century: Rembrandt, Jan Steen and, in particular, the Delft

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architecture painters, above all De Witte. It is no accident that it was those very Dutchmen who pursued the problem of "near space" to its utmost consequences, whereas it remained for the Italians to create in their ceiling frescoes "high space." In this triad of forms of representation – "high space," "near space" and "oblique space" – is expressed the view that space in an artistic representation is determined by the subject; nevertheless, these very forms, as paradoxical as it may sound, belong to the moment when space as the image of a worldview is finally purified of all subjective admixtures, both by philosophy (Descartes) and by perspectival theory (Desargues). For when art won the right to determine for itself what "up" and "down," "front" and "back," "right" and "left" should be, it was essentially only giving back to the subject something that already belonged to it by rights, that antiquity had only unnaturally (although also by intellectual-historical necessity) claimed as objective attributes of space. The arbitrariness of direction and distance within modern pictorial space bespeaks and confirms the indifference to direction and distance of modern intellectual space; and it perfectly corresponds, both chronologically and technically, to that stage in the development of theoretical perspective when, in the hands of Desargues, it became a general projective geometry. This happened when perspective, replacing for the first time the simple Euclidean "visual cone" with the universal "geometrical beam," abstracted itself completely from the line of sight and thus opened up all spatial directions equally.[70a] Once again, however, it is clear how much the artistic conquest of this not only infinite and "homogeneous," but also "isotropic" systematic space (all the apparent modernity of Greco-Roman painting notwithstanding) presupposes the medieval development. For it was the medieval "massive style" that first created that homogeneity of the representational substratum without which not only the infinite-

ness, but also the directional indifference of space, would have been inconceivable.[71]

It is now finally clear that the perspectival view of space (and not merely perspectival construction) could also be contested from two quite different sides: Plato condemned it already in its modest beginnings because it distorted the "true proportions" of things, and replaced reality and the *nomos* (law) with subjective appearance and arbitrariness;[72] whereas the most modern aesthetic thinking accuses it, on the contrary, of being the tool of a limited and limiting rationalism.[73] The ancient Near East, classical antiquity, the Middle Ages and indeed any archaizing art (for example Botticelli[74]) all more or less completely rejected perspective, for it seemed to introduce an individualistic and accidental factor into an extra- or supersubjective world. Expressionism (for recently there has indeed been yet another shift in direction) avoided it, conversely, because it affirms and secures that remnant of objectivity which even Impressionism was still obliged to withhold from the individual "formative will" – namely, real three-dimensional space. But this polarity is really the double face of one and the same issue, and those objections are in fact aimed at one and the same point:[75] the perspectival view, whether it is evaluated and interpreted more in the sense of rationality and the objective, or more in the sense of contingency and the subjective, rests on the will to construct pictorial space, in principle, out of the elements of, and according to the plan of, empirical visual space (although still abstracted considerably from the psychophysiological "givens"). Perspective mathematizes this visual space, and yet it is very much *visual* space that it mathematizes; it is an ordering, but an ordering of the visual phenomenon. Whether one reproaches perspective for evaporating "true being" into a mere manifestation of seen things, or rather for anchoring the free and, as it were, spiritual idea of form to a manifestation

of mere seen things, is in the end little more than a question of emphasis.

Through this peculiar carrying over of artistic objectivity into the domain of the phenomenal, perspective seals off religious art from the realm of the magical, where the work of art itself works the miracle, and from the realm of the dogmatic and symbolic, where the work bears witness to, or foretells, the miraculous. But then it opens it to something entirely new: the realm of the visionary, where the miraculous becomes a direct experience of the beholder, in that the supernatural events in a sense erupt into his own, apparently natural, visual space and so permit him really to "internalize" their supernaturalness. Perspective, finally, opens art to the realm of the psychological, in the highest sense, where the miraculous finds its last refuge in the soul of the human being represented in the work of art; not only the great phantasmagorias of the Baroque – which in the final analysis were prepared by Raphael's *Sistine Madonna*, Dürer's *Apocalypse*, Grünewald's Isenheim altar, indeed perhaps already Giotto's *St. John on Patmos* fresco in S. Croce – but also the late paintings of Rembrandt would not have been possible without the perspectival view of space. Perspective, in transforming the *ousia* (reality) into the *phainomenon* (appearance), seems to reduce the divine to a mere subject matter for human consciousness; but for that very reason, conversely, it expands human consciousness into a vessel for the divine. It is thus no accident if this perspectival view of space has already succeeded twice in the course of the evolution of art: the first time as the sign of an ending, when antique theocracy crumbled; the second time as the sign of a beginning, when modern "anthropocracy" first reared itself.

Notes

INTRODUCTION

1. "Der Begriff des Kunstwollens," reprinted in Panofsky, *Aufsätze zu Grundfragen der Kunstwissenschaft*, ed. Hariolf Oberer and Egon Verheyen (Berlin: Hessling, 1964), p. 29; originally published in *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und Allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft* 14 (1920), pp. 321–39. Translated by Kenneth J. Northcote and Joel Snyder as "The Concept of Artistic Volition," *Critical Inquiry* 8 (1981), pp. 17–34.

2. "Der Begriff des Kunstwollens," p. 30.

3. Riegl, *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie* (Vienna: Österreichische Staatsdruckerei, 1927; originally published in 1901), pp. 400–401. Translated by Rolf Winkes as *Late Roman Art Industry* (Rome: Bretschneider, 1985).

4. This point was made by Sheldon Nodelman in his essay "Structural Analysis in Art and Anthropology," *Yale French Studies* 36/37 (1966), pp. 89–103. On Riegl's art history generally, see the excellent essay by Henri Zerner, "Alois Riegl: Art, Value, and Historicism," *Daedalus* 105 (1976), pp. 177–88; and the discussion in Michael Podro's *Critical Historians of Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), pp. 71–97.

5. Wölfflin, *Principles of Art History* (New York: Dover, 1950), p. 250; originally published as *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (Munich: Bruckmann, 1915).

6. Wölfflin's most important early methodological propositions are found in his dissertation, *Prolegomena zu einer Psychologie der Architektur* (1886), reprinted