The Method of Max Raphael

Art History Set Back on its Feet

John Tagg

'... a writer's production must have the character of a model: it must be able to instruct other writers in their production and, secondly, it must be able to place an improved apparatus at their disposal. This apparatus will be the better, the more consumers it brings into contact with the production process - in short, the more readers or spectators it turns into collaborators.'[1]

- Walter Benjamin

It has been the professed aim of *Radical Philosophy* to present, from the inside, both a critique of, and a positive alternative to, the narrow specialisation of academic philosophy courses in this country. The contents of the magazine have revealed a progressive departure from the presentation of the theoretical struggle in philosophy as divorced from the political struggle within philosophy departments and within the university or college structure as a whole. The institutional barriers which hermetically seal academic disciplines one from another have been crossed, parallels have been drawn with other domains and theoretical developments absorbed from sociology, psychology, economics etc. But where does art history figure in all this? Even the question seems ludicrous. Yet at one time, art history would have been sited at the very nodal point of all those studies I have mentioned. Now - exhibiting as it does, in chronic form, all the symptoms described in this magazine as belonging to philosophy - art history must seem to those within and without the subject, the least fruitful area of concern for committed scholarship.

The Poverty of Art History

Art history, as it is taught in English universities, has escaped examination for so long that it now stands in urgent need of radical surgery. Even as it is presented within colleges devoted to the untidy, unruly, uncultured activity of *making* art, it still follows the same patterns, reflects the same habits of thought, the same orthodoxies, the same interests. Because, in general, it cannot confront the issue of whose interests it serves, it is unable here to address itself to the most basic question: how can what the art historian has to say on the level of theory contribute to the practical activity - the involvement with making and doing - that is the concern of art students? Anyone who teaches art history in an art school ought to confront this problem every working day. Has art history a role within practical art courses other than as a sop to a bigoted academic world that would otherwise baulk at granting such studies degree status? The posing of the question is unremarkable. It has almost become a cliché. But the fact of its becoming a cliché ought not to disguise the uncomfortable truth that it has not yet been answered. Or rather, the answer implicit in present art historical practice is such that, if we are not to be entirely negative, we have to reformulate our question and ask: could it be otherwise? Could art history assume a more active, constitutive role in the making of art? Could it deal directly with those concepts, assumptions, theories, beliefs, of both a general and a particular kind, that are used in producing works of art, not just in describing them?

The questions apply wherever art history is taught but, as I have suggested, they are brought to their sharpest focus where the theoretical study is brought daily into confrontation with concrete studio practice. Here the art historian is forced into a contact with the process of production whose products he consumes yet whose proximity he finds extremely uncomfortable. Here is a unique academic opportunity for the work of the theoretician to be checked by the manufacture of the objects of his study and, conversely, for the practice of art to be impelled towards the full realization of an historically grounded theory. But the chance is usually lost: the invariable result is a reaction on the part of art students against what is put before them as the history of art, and the perpetuation of the illusion that the creative process lies beyond the range of theory. Such a reaction is not, however, inevitable. It is not art history as such that is objected to, that is rejected, but rather the interpretation of it offered by a certain school. In many ways, what we have to deal with is a malady of English art history whose peculiar development has been towards a state of affairs in which it is accepted that the purpose of the art historian is to compile an endless list of names and dates, peppered with historical anecdotes - in which the ultimate form is the '*catalogue raisonée*': a gazetteer of one artist's entire work, though what is 'reasoned' about it has yet to be shown.

With this as its ultimate object, art history in England has been reduced to a collection of techniques for authentication: a list of procedures for establishing who a work was by, at what date it was executed, who owned it, who exhibited it, and so on. One cannot but ask what caused this narrowing down and, here, I think it is not sufficient to point to 'traditional British empiricism', scoffing at theory. One must also see how English art history grew up not in the universities and studios, but in the country homes which housed the great private collections and, latterly, in the auction rooms wherein art wealth was and is cashed. It has been tied first to an aristocracy and, now, to an art capitalist class. Thus it has degenerated to a mere service industry for collectors and investors. It is as if the teaching of literature had come to be no more than a training in how to search out and authenticate first editions.

Such a debasement of art history has certain definite methodological consequences. The need

(1) Walter Benjamin, 'The Author as Producer', in *Conversations with Brecht*, trans. Anna Bostock, New Left Books, London, 1973, p98

for certain evidence, on the basis of which one may attribute a work to a particular artist and to a particular stage in his career, creates a preference for hard-and-fast written evidence - letters, contracts, receipts, eye-witness accounts - rather than risky first-hand experience of the work. Documents take precedence over the works of art themselves and these latter come to be looked on as a kind of document too: of course, the label on the back of the canvas is more interesting than the painting on the front, but this secondary source can supply some intriguing, if not totally dependable, clues for solving the art historical 'Who Done it?' There is thus a loss of contact with the work of art as a concrete object; a contact which few art historians trained as scholars, historians, literati, have. But this is a point to which I shall return.

Panofsky's Iconology

What I am claiming may be well illustrated by looking at the highly influential methods of Iconography and Iconology developed by Irwin Panofsky, or rather, implicit in his work for, in advancing a thesis about the semantic and syntactic levels in art and their historical conditioning, Panofsky may not have imagined himself to be defining a method. Panofsky conceived of an hierarchy of approaches to art, descending from the heights of *Iconology*, able to discern the 'intrinsic meaning' the 'essential tendencies of the human mind', in the themes or concepts of a work of art; to *Iconography*, which made intelligible the intentional meaning of images and allegories by bringing all kinds of literary knowledge to bear on them; and down to the base level of '*pseudo-formal analysis*', which merely responded to 'pure forms' and their immediate representational and emotional significance.[2] Aside from its debasement as merely another means to establish chronology, influences, precedents - as another technique to be employed where documents fail - the method itself, while treating art as a profound, historically determined human and cultural expression, dismisses the physical, formal features of the work, concentrating on those characteristics which can only be explained by reference to a literary background, to a whole history of ideas. It is a literary approach to the visual arts: the kind of approach which appeals to scholars and bibliophiles, but not to artists.

The greater value attached by scholars to writing shows up in another feature of the art history I am decrying, ironically, in what may be said to be its failure to take works of visual art seriously. Once again, as we may see by contrast if we recall Panofsky, we are dealing with a peculiarly English failing. It governs the English attitude to the visual arts which are seen as furnishing decoration, distraction, delight for the senses but never the mind. To this allegedly down-to-earth English outlook might be contraposed the German art historical tradition which developed in a very different social and intellectual context and in which we find studies of art based on a philosophical aesthetic, drawing on general philosophy, sociology and psychology, and seeking to unify them in a synthetic art historical method. The concern of such studies is not with cataloguing, with naked empiricism, but with the analysis of individual works or sequences of them, or with some general thesis about the nature of history, the conditions of consciousness, the nature of representation. The writing is highly-evolved, subtle and complex, because it draws on a serious philosophical tradition, largely Hegelian in origin, and because the works of visual art under analysis are themselves conceived of as multi-faceted and complex philosophical statements. The tradition deals with a completely different set of problems from its English counterpart; if drawing up a list can be said to deal with problems at all. T J Clark has argued that the current dilemma of art history is due to a loss of problems, as old ways of posing them have become redundant and new ways have not been forthcoming.[3] It is my contention that these problems have never existed in the English conception of the history of art.

The History of Styles

However, Clark's analysis does have something to tell us about the Germanic art historical tradition which has tended to culminate in a *history of styles*. Now, this brings me to two further complaints I have still to make about the history of art. The first is related to a point I have already made: that the history of art as the history of 'streams and movements' loses the complexity and integrity of individual works of art and falls into the philosophical error of assuming that a specific configuration can be explained by enumerating its elements, sources and influences. In criticism, this error leads to the presentation of the history of art as a family tree whose branches each bear fruit: a sensitive little vignette of an artist's entire *oeuvre*. In the manner of exhibiting art, the same error leads to the development of museums where, catalogued in the manner I have described, works are hung in such a way, in such surroundings, that they cannot be studied singly or at length but must be taken in by the footsore spectator as a total effect: a seemingly inevitable progression isolated from the rest of the world. Or else, the works of these museum collections are to be seen only as marks of national pride, as a gorgeous, prestigious array on the walls like medals on a general's chest. Whichever it is, people are physically discouraged from confronting individual works and, as with survey introductions to the history of art, they are prevented from asking questions of the work before them other than those approved by an establishment art history.

The second aspect of the history of styles with which I want to take issue is that proponents of such a history have been in the forefront of an 'ideological campaign' whose possible lack of awareness of its own goals cannot excuse its political complicity. By proferring a view of art as an automonous historical process, they have mystified art's real origins; they have separated art from its concrete social setting and represented it as the result of personalities and individual whimsy, or as the outcome of super-human cultural forces, whether the inherent development of the idea or the inexorable laws of stylistic evolution. To answer this, art must be displayed as an historical and social product but it will not be enough merely to place it against some impressionistic background, or within some millennial historicist plan. Just as I have

(2) See Panofsky, 'Introductory' in *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance*, Oxford, 1939, pp3-31; revised as 'Iconography and Iconology: An Introduction to the Study of Renaissance Art', in *Meaning in the Visual Arts*, Peregrine Books, 1970, pp51-81

(3) T J Clark, 'The Conditions of Artistic Creation', *Times Literary Supplement*, 24 May 1974, pp561-2

suggested the need for concentration on particular works, there is a need to study particular social contexts and to trace the particular connections between them and the particular, concrete works arising within them. This cannot be done by framing generalities. Particular modes of interchange must be discovered and pursued to the very structure of the work of art concerned: a passage must be sought from its unique external relations to its unique internal relations

Demystifying Art

Let me sum up the type of study that is implied in these criticisms of English art history: I am calling for one which will study minutely particular works of art and particular historical sequences of works of art, which will analyse them yet preserve their integrity, which will set them in their concrete social and historical context, revealing the true complexity of artistic creations and their interchange with social and economic factors, indeed, with the whole 'form of life' of which they are a part and within which alone they have a meaning. Such a study would both demystify art and allow it a real power within social life. Such a power would also require that one treat art with utter seriousness, exploring fully equivalences with philosophy, social theory and other contemporary cultural manifestations. In particular, it would expose the interpenetration of theory and practice, and avoid that false distinction which leaves the artist as one who is merely 'clever with his hands'. Here, I return to the point that scholars cannot neglect practice or that physical contact with art which so few of them have. However, there is also an absolute and complementary requirement for artists both to raise their own practice to the level of theory and to see how theoretical studies may *constitute*, and only be fully realized in, a new art.

The approach to art I am describing would be analytical, didactic, political. It would seek to release the energies held in suspension in works of art but would be of little use to collectors or to curators of museums of national pride. It would not fill the catalogues and handbooks with pages of learned argument to prove, for example, that the English National Gallery possesses the authentic version of Leonardo's 'Madonna of the Rocks', while the French have the dubious copy in the Louvre. It would judge works on a completely different basis. It would serve different interests; and here I mean 'interests' not only in the intellectual but also in the economic and class sense.

It may seem that I have laid down impossible requirements but this lengthy preamble is meant to situate the neglected writings of one who did try to establish such an approach to art and without whom, indeed, I could not have formulated my discontent in this way. The writer was the little-known German art critic Max Raphael, for whom, to put it briefly, art history neither retraced history nor dealt with art.[4] It is in his writings that we find the most thorough-going analyses of works of visual art yet to have appeared; the programme they unfold and the theory of which they are the realization, offer the means we need to a radical critique of the English art historical ideology.

The Life and Work of Max Raphael

Who then was Raphael? The best way to introduce him is probably to describe something of his life and the gradual refinement of his philosophical understanding in a series of major critical works.

Raphael was born on the 27 of August, 1889, in the frontier town of Schönlanke in West Prussia. His family were textile and cloth merchangs: solid bourgeoisie, though Raphael seems later to have cut himself off from their wealth. He completed his schooling locally, and in the Berlin High School where he took his equivalent of the baccalauréat in 1907. In the same year, he moved to Munich, though it was not until 1908 that he began his university studies there.

Raphael arrived in Munich at a time when the city was establishing itself as a centre for creative innovation in both the study and practice of the visual arts. Influenced by the painting of Hans von Marées, the sculpture of Hildebrand and the theories of Furtwängler, Wölfflin and August Endell, the direction of this innovation was towards a renewed emphasis on form. The keynote is given in Hildebrand's book of 1892, *The Problem of Form*: the first in a series of seminal texts which were to dominate discussion of aesthetics in Munich. In the year following Raphael's arrival, in 1908, Wilhelm Worringer first published his highly influential study *Abstraction and Empathy* in which he argued the need to recognise periods in history when the 'general psychology of the age' can find satisfaction only in the creation of abstract forms which, fully satisfying the 'Will to Form' of which they are the expression, ought to be accorded a status equal to that of works created under a classical cannon.[5] Whatever the validity of his theoretical framework, the freeing effect of Worringer's work cannot be denied. It was no accident that it became associated with a similar undermining of the established criteria of aesthetic quality then taking place in the practice of art.

In the next year, 1909, the painter Wassily Kandinsky founded the *Neue Künstlervereinigung-München* (the New Artists' Association of Munich), gathering together the artists, musicians and writers whose search for the common abstract and spiritual basis of all the arts led them to form the *Blaue Reiter* group in 1911, when aesthetic differences rent the *NKV*. Though the most modern art had been exhibited in Munich at the Secession and at private galleries such as those of Brackl, Zimmermann and Thannhauser, it now received a comprehensive presentation on an international scale in the second exhibition of the New Artists' Association of September 1910, and the two subsequent *Blaue Reiter* exhibits of December 1911 and March 1912. New theories, too, added to the ferment of artistic ideas, for the leading artists were highly articulate. In 1912, Kandinsky and Marc published the *Blaue Reiter Almanac* containing essays by Marc, Macke, Burliuk, Sbanjer, Schönberg and by Kandinsky who took up certain themes from his own *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*; a text crucial to the study of contemporary art which had been prepared in 1910, but which was not published till December 1911.

The artists' writings were scientific in tone, mystical in meaning, wide in scope and ambitious in intent. Kandinksy later wrote: 'To find the common root of art and science was then our dream which demanded an immediate realization'.[6] Un-

(4) Max Raphael, *The Demands of Art*, trans. Norbert Guterman, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1968, p3

(5) Wilhelm Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy. A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, trans. Michael Bullock, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1963

(6) Wassily Kandinsky, 'Franz Marc', *Cahiers D'Art* VII-X, Paris, 1936, pp273-5

doubtedly, this mystical plan had an influence on the young Raphael whose later work makes concrete what for Kandinsky was only a dream. There may be no record in Raphael's notebooks of his having met the artists of the *Blaue Reiter* group, but he had certainly read *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, and opposed it in print.[7] Furthermore, by 1910, he had struck up a friendship with Max Pechstein, a painter and former member of the group of expressionist artists which called itself *Die Brücke*, whose facile talent and familiarity with recent French art led many then to consider him the leader of the young German painters, and who exhibited thirty-eight works in the second *Blaue Reiter* exhibition organised by Kandinsky in the spring of 1912.

Throughout this period, Raphael was studying at the universities of both Munich and Berlin, reading political economy. At Berlin, however, his studies were broadened to include philosophy and the history of art and, in both subjects, his teachers were then at the height of their fame. Georg Simmel, Raphael's lecturer in philosophy, is now regarded as the founder of formal sociology conceived as a 'geometry of the social world'. His influence was, however, much wider and even at this time had drawn into his orbit philosophers of the phenomenological circle, art historians such as Worringer, and literary critics like Georg Lukacs. The dominance within his own field of the art historian Heinrich Wölfflin was, if anything, greater than that of Simmel. It was Wölfflin who first elaborated the idea of the history of art as a development implicit in art's formal features and almost entirely separate from any other kind of history.[8] We can still see the residue of his ideas in the Formalist criticism of recent years, but for Raphael, Wölfflin's system was to become something against which he could strongly react.

Raphael's interest in art itself probably predated the beginning of his art historical studies. In Italy, in 1909, he had made observations of paintings by Giotto and Tintoretto and of the mosaics at Ravenna. But it was in 1910 that a trip to Holland brought him his first contact with French painting and fired his interest in contemporary art. It was this experience that persuaded him to travel to Paris where he settled in 1911. In Paris, he continued his work in philosophy - attending lectures by Bergson - but his central interest was art. Through persistent appearances at Khanweiler's gallery, Raphael made the acquaintance of the Cubists' dealer and subsequently, through the privileged circle of the Steins, met Uhde, the German art dealer, Picasso, Matisse and Rodin.[9] Most importantly, he also saw a large collection of works by Cézanne: much of Raphael's later technical vocabulary - his use of 'Realization' and his central concept of 'Organic' or 'Dialectical' works of art - still reflects this initial contact with the art and theories of Paul Cézanne and later French painters. Though his philosophical base changed, these early enthusiasms continued to provide the backbone of his subject-matter, at least until the final phase of his life.

Raphael completed his philosophical studies in Germany but in 1912 he was back again in Paris, this time to begin his research on Flaubert, to study Poussin and to look at French medieval art, especially the sculpture, stained glass and architecture of Chartres. His concern with contemporary art persisted, however, and in 1913 he both lectured on Picasso in Munich and, in the same city, published his first book, *From Monet to Picasso*.[10] This exceptionally topical work was to have been his doctoral thesis but it was rejected out of hand by Wölfflin who refused to read anything that concerned Picasso. It was this experience which left Raphael completely disenchanted with the universities. As in the case of Walter Benjamin, the rejection was to determine many of the hardships of his career outside the academic system.

It may also have left him with the desire to escape, to seek out solitude, for he spent the next few years at various retreats on the German border with Switzerland, studying natural history, sociology, literature and history, writing a long series of articles and, apparently, trying to dodge conscription. It was to this same region that Raphael returned in 1917 after he had served a period with the army. Here he brought to completion his first real analysis of the genesis of the work of art, summarizing the ideas of this early phase.

Marxism and Mysticism

Idea and Structure. A Guide to the Nature of Art,[11] published in Berlin in 1921, was a work Raphael was to turn against and prevent from being reissued. It belonged, in his own words, to a period of 'philosophical destruction and reconstruction, of empiricism and idealism', when 'judgements and condemnations were made and points of view taken up which conformed as nearly as possible to emotional longings and spiritual ideals and which for that reason were *a priori*'.[12] As this early outlook receded, it was replaced by an 'objective attitude' in which 'reality was registered as on a blank tablet - everything was accepted before a personal point of view had been taken up. The material of reality was assembled and a method of thought prepared'.[13] The 'method of thought' was one rooted in the study he now began of Newton's rules of reasoning, of ethics and of phenomenology, from which came Raphael's technique of imagining a work of art dissolved away in order that he might recreate, *reconstitute* it again in his mind from its basic parts.

Raphael's new method was also increasingly influenced by Marxism and dialectical materialism. The emotional impact of the death of Lenin in 1924, the festering political situation of Germany in the twenties, the politicising of German art; all these must have contributed to his attraction to Marxism. But there was also the philosophical system itself - especially as presented in *The German Ideology* - which showed Raphael the way to integrate his very strong feeling for the concrete particularity of the work of art and its materiality, with an understanding of the historical conditions which determine the laws of construction of that concrete particular, and limit the repertoire of ways of working with that material, offered to the artist. Unlike his contemporaries, it was not the historicism of Marxism - its alleged revelation of an inevitable historical pattern - that Raphael built on, but rather its siting of concrete individuals within a general historical process.

I shall return again to the question of Raphael's relation with Marxism when I discuss his theory of knowledge. For the present, let me stop at this brief sketch of some of the constituents of the immensely sophisticated way of thinking Raphael began to develop in the period he described as one of 'scientific destruction and reconstruction, of the concrete manifold, or nirvana'.[14] 'Of nirvana', because, as a counterbalance to the impersonal approach he was evol-

ving, Raphael turned to skepticism and to the mysticism of Meister Eckhardt. His own later theories furnish an explanation of the dangerous attraction of these twin modes of thought - 'mysticism is emotional skepticism, skepticism is rational mysticism'[15] - but, as in the writings of Walter Benjamin, the mystic and the tradition of German Romantic criticism were to remain crucial, if contradictory, elements in Raphael's Marxist approach to art.

The early twenties were, then, a period of renewed study. It was in the second half of the decade, when Raphael began to apply his methodology, that he produced those intense analyses with which he is associated, following the publication of *The Demands of Art* in 1968. The essays in this book, in which he sought to address 'all who aspire to culture in the broadest sense, and especially ... young people who must work for a living',[16] grew out of what were originally lectures at the Berlin *Volkshochschule*. The *Volkshochschule* was a kind of People's College where working men and women could study. Raphael's teaching there ranged through studies of Rembrandt, Aristotle, Eckhardt, Thomas Aquinas, Hegel, Marx, Lenin and Husserl. It was because of his involvement with teaching, because of his dedication to an educationally deprived class, that his writings, for all their difficulty, preserved a didactic air. As he himself described, the essays of *The Demands of Art* were worked out in the context of a study group which demanded intensive co-operation and concentration on the part of every member. His aim, he said, was 'to teach them to understand art through the work of art itself'.[17] That is, by discussing a sequence of problems in relation to specific works of art, he sought to furnish his students with a certain conceptual equipment that could then be applied in releasing the creative energies stored in every true work of art. In short, Raphael's attitude to art criticism might be said to parallel that prescribed by Walter Benjamin for the truly revolutionary writer: he was not content merely to manufacture more art criticism but broke down 'the separate spheres of competence to which, according to the bourgeois view, the process of intellectual production owes its order'.[18] He transformed himself from 'a supplier of the production apparatus, into an engineer who sees his task as adapting that apparatus to the ends of the proletarian revolution'.[19]

Picasso

Many other of Raphael's writings from this period originated in his lecture material: his survey of Doric temples, for example, published in 1928;[20] or his critical study of Pyrrhonian Skepticism.[21] This critique, published in German in 1931, dealt with the ancient doctrine in its formulation by Sextus Empiricus, but it did so in a way that, it seems to me, is essential to the understanding of Raphael's attack on Liberalism and of his closely related criticism of Picasso. The notion of *ataraxia*, which is central to Raphael's analysis of 'Guernica' in *The Demands of Art*,[22] is fully explained here as part of the 'positionless position' whose modern descendants are only too clear.

Raphael's work at the Berlin People's High School was not his only commitment at this time. He was also teaching in Switzerland, at Davos, the centre for convalescence he had been visiting since the onset of lung disease and severe mental depression in 1926. Raphael continued to teach at Berlin in the winter and at Davos in the summer until the autumn of 1932, when the refusal of the directorate of the *Volkshochschule* to allow him to proceed with the seminars he had planned on the history of dialectical materialism in Greece forced him to resign. The incident prompted him to take his final leave of a Germany terrorized by Nazism. He travelled to Zurich, where he lectured on Picasso, and then on to Paris which he was to make his home for the next nine years.

Despite recurring illness, it was during this second long sojourn in Paris that Raphael produced the works which were to make a considerable impression on continental philosophy and bring him to the attention of writers like Sartre and Georg Lukacs. In 1933, Raphael published *Proudhon - Marx - Picasso. Three Studies in the Sociology of Art.*[23] It was followed by a monograph on the construction of a group of schools in the newly elected communist municipality of Villejuif - a kind of Clay Cross of its day - by the architect André Lurçat.[24] Raphael described his monograph as a critique of 'functional idealism' in architecture from a point of view of dialectical materialism, and among its many remarkable features was a complete list of all the workers engaged in producing the buildings, including the name of every labourer. The work on Proudhon, Marx and Picasso was more clearly of general theoretical significance. It contained a marxist critique of the theory of art of the nineteenth century French social thinker, Pierre Joseph Proudhon; a forceful apologetic for a sociology as opposed to a history of art; and an exemplar of what such an approach to art might entail, in the form of an examination of the phases of Picasso's artistic development within the framework of a general theory of the role of the artist in bourgeois society.

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(7) Raphael, *Von Monet zu Picasso. Grundzüge einer Ästhetik und Entwicklung der modernen Malerei*, Delphin Verlag, Munich, 1913, p44
(8) See Heinrich Wölfflin, *Principles of Art History. The Problem of the Development of Style in Later Art*, trans. M D Hottinger, Dover, New York, 1932
(9) Raphael, 'Grosse Künstler: II Erinnerungen um Picasso', *Davoser Revue*, 1932, pp325-9
(10) *Von Monet zu Picasso*
(11) Raphael, *Idee und Gestalt. Ein Führer zum Wesen der Kunst*, Delphin Verlag, Munich, 1921
(12) From Raphael's unpublished notebooks. Quoted by Herbert Read in his Introduction to *The Demands of Art*, ppxvi-xvii
(13) *ibid*, pxvi
(14) *ibid*, pxvii
(15) Raphael, *Pyrrhonian Skepticism*, an unpublished translation by R S Cohen, p51
(16) *The Demands of Art*, p3
(17) *idem*
(18) Benjamin, *op cit*, p95
(19) *ibid*, p102
(20) Raphael *Der Dorische Tempel. Dargestellt am Poseidon Tempel von Paestum*, Dr Benno Filser Verlag, Augsburg, 1930
(21) Raphael, 'Die pyrrhoneische Skepsis', *Philosophische Hefte* vol 3, nos 1/2, pp47-70
(22) Raphael, 'Discord Between Form and Content', Chapter V of *The Demands of Art*, pp135-179
(23) Raphael, *Proudhon - Marx - Picasso. Trois études sur la sociologie de l'art*, Editions Excelsior, Paris, 1933
(24) Raphael, 'Introduction à une architecture en beton armé', introductory text of *Group Scolaire de L'Avenue Karl Marx à Villejuif, Réalise pour La Municipalité par André Lurçat, Architecte...* Editions de l'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui, Paris, 1933

Raphael's analysis of Picasso in no way corresponded to that type of art history which, in his view, while deriving from art, could never be more than an auxiliary hypothesis.[25] In his *Marxist Theory of Art*,[26] Raphael showed that this so-called art history lost sight of its subject because it dealt with the artist's will and not his ability, with his style not his art; and it further neglected to show how both these aspects were conditioned historically. Art historical problems were problems of variation and fluctuation in artistic creation but the influences, dependencies, variations and changes in form which art history described were merely accidental and temporary modifications of the structural constants. The true sources of modifications in art, whose action might be expressed in the form of laws, were changes in the means of production, the spiritual relationship of man and his world, and the formal principles corresponding to these factors.

Dialectical Theory of Knowledge

In the year following the appearance of *Proudhon - Marx - Picasso*, in 1934, Raphael's most important philosophical and psychological analysis of the artistic process was published, in German, as *The Concrete Dialectical Theory of Knowledge*.[27] Raphael always considered this text the main work of his lifetime and the general base of his theory of art. The most effective summary of it is his own. Attempting to have the work republished in English translation, he wrote to American publishers:

> *This book was written to give a new solution to an old problem: if the world outside the human consciousness is real or only an appearance of the human senses and reason. Altogether taking the side of the realists against the idealists, it seemed to me that the proof can be given only by a complete analysis of the human mind. Thus the task was to create a new theory of intellectual creation broad enough to encompass all fields of human activity: art, science, religion etc. After thirty years of studying history of philosophy, it seemed to me that this problem, how the human mind works during its creative process, can be solved only with the help of the philosophy of Hegel and Marx. Starting from this historic point I tried to continue and complete the most progressive philosophical development of the nineteenth century.*[28]

In the work itself, Raphael outlines the history of dialectical materialism and identifies three completely different systems of logic. He analyses the main faculties of the human mind, isolating four faculties through which we have our knowledge of the world: the body, the senses, the intellect and the reason, of which the first three are based in real experience and the last is a speculative process. He then seeks to prove that the method of the natural sciences which has come to replace that of philosophy falls, like that of the historical sciences, within materialist dialectics. It is thus dialectical materialism which alone can solve the riddle of the outside world.

Before his death, Raphael revised this major work, giving it the new title of *The Theory of Intellectual Creation on a Marxist Basis*. So far, it has only been published in a Serbo-Croat translation.[29] The fact that it has not appeared in English is at once a condemnation of the English and American publishers to whom it was offered, and one more confirmation of the narrowness of the anglo-saxon philosophical tradition.

But I have not yet exhausted the list of Raphael's outstanding writings of this period. His prolificacy is daunting and it has not yet been possible to produce a comprehensive bibliography of his achievement. There are works on the architects Perret and Corbusier, and on what he called the reactionary architecture of the Palace of the Soviets; there are studies of German eighteenth-century art and of French literature, of Racine, Flaubert and Valéry; there is a weighty study of the aesthetic of Romanesque churches in France; and, above all, there is *Worker, Art and Artist: A Contribution to a Marxist Science of Art*.[30] In this study Raphael confronts the main problems of marxist aesthetics and formulates the task of modern artists, to produce an art that is both materialist and dialectical. He was still revising the text when war broke out. Forty-five years later, the very copy that he sent from Paris to Herbert Read in England, for safe-keeping at a time when he, not unreasonably, thought he might never escape from France, - that copy - still lies unpublished in a university archive.

After his arrival in the USA in 1941, Raphael, realizing that the temper of reaction in that country left little chance of *Worker, Art and Artist* being accepted for publication, cut out the sections on the relationship of workers to the art of the past and present, and the discussion of the question whether a marxist theory of art is possible, and prepared chapters three to five of part one for separate publication under the title *Art in the Epoch of Liberalism. A Monography of a Painting by Corot*.[31]

This work parallels *The Demands of Art* but was written in a more expanded style. It is undoubtedly an important step towards the formulation of his later philosophy of art. Chapter one[32] is an equivalent of the opening chapter of *The Demands of Art* - a place which Raphael's notes show it to have once occupied - interwoven with a shortened version of the *Empirical Theory of Art*.[33] It treats of the work of art and its source in nature, in a clearer, more didactic, style than the later analysis of Cézanne's *Mont St. Victoire*. Corot's view of the island of San Bartolommeo in Rome is used as a constant illustration, just as the expanded *Empirical Theory* would have used the Cézanne, Degas, Giotto, Rembrandt and Picasso which are the subjects of the studies in *The Demands of Art*. In addition to providing a clue to some of the unknowns of the *Empirical Theory* in this way, the essay on Corot also includes a full section on Realization, which is missing from the later, incomplete manuscript. Indeed, the second and third chapters of *Art in the Epoch of Liberalism* might be further construed as supplying the two sections missing from the *Empirical Theory of Art*, on history and on criticism. In the earlier work, chapter two is a social, economic and political history of France; while chapter three furnishes a general theory of Capitalist art in the age of Liberalism, in which Werner Sombart's seven characteristics of Capitalism are applied to art.[36]

The study of art in the age of Liberalism is not, however, of interest only as an earlier and fuller statement of Raphael's theories. It is a major advance in the study of nineteenth century art, anticipating the approach of very recent scholars such as T J Clark.[37] Raphael gives us a complete artistic analysis of the single, chosen painting while at the same time expounding his descriptive theory which had not at that time been published. He goes on to disclose the relation between the artist and his era in history, finally

formulating a 'sociologic-aesthetic theory of all the arts of this epoch'. He achieved what he called a 'Monography' of a work of art, explained through the social base of its time and set in relation to all the other arts. Such a 'Monography' he rightly believe to be an absolutely new type of explanation: 'completely individual in respect to the work and completely concrete and general in its historical and theoretical background'.[38] As he wrote:

- DAUMIER : La Salle des Ventes. 1869

The analysis presented here differs essentially from the bourgeois theory of art, which is an aesthetics either of content or form, whereas ours is an aesthetic of method... The evil can be remedied only if to the individual's method of artistic creation is contrasted the society's method (or methods) of making history. Here society includes all the classes in opposition, and the question to be answered is to what extent the form and content of the work of art gives expression to them.[39]

This summary of his aims would clearly also apply to Raphael's essays in *The Demands of Art*. I do not have space to discuss this work now but let me reiterate what I have said about the dependence of Raphael's approach to art on his wider philosophical theory. What Raphael set out to elaborate in *The Demands Of Art* was a 'Science of Art'. But, whilst the *scientific* nature of his enterprise may be doubted, what he did in fact achieve was a complete reversal of the positivistic emphasis in philosophy since the early nineteenth century: instead of putting science at the centre, he took the work of art as his model for an epistemology or, more exactly, a theory of intellectual creation. Thus he provided the foundation for a unified understanding of both the arts and the sciences from a revolutionary point of view which, without lapsing into anti-rationalism, saw the artist's concrete creation, in all its complexity, as the basis of a new, dialectical, human and socialist world view.

I have mentioned Walter Benjamin several times during this essay and that is because not only the philosophical but also the personal lives of Raphael and Benjamin ran strangly parallel. They shared a notion of criticism as a recreative activity; as an exhaustive, complex and systematic structural analysis in which the critical 'translation' is often more impenetrable than the original work. Yet, paradoxically, for them both, the existential completeness of the work of art remained beyond the reach of analysis and could only be realized by an intuitive leap. What was common to Raphael and Benjamin was an elaborate scholarly, philosophical and mystical heritage which seemed to run counter to their political commitment to make their work serve a new, non-specialist mass audience. Both adopted radical and unconventional approaches to their subjects, and both were rejected by the German academic establishment. Both were persecuted for political and racial reasons in Hitler's Germany and both fled to France in 1933, only to find themselves trapped as that country was itself occupied. Both were incarcerated in prison camps and both tried to make good their escape through the Pyrenees to Lisbon and on to the USA. But here the parallel ends for, while Benjamin brought his life to an end in the tragic misbelief that he would not be allowed to pass over the Spanish border, Raphael did reach New York in 1941. There he was able to embark on a new phase of his working life.

As on previous occasions, a change in domicile heralded a change in Raphael's way or working. What became increasingly visible in his writings

from 1941 onwards was a transition from the 'scientific' to the historical: having concentrated on the minute examination of individual works of art, and having sought to translate their forms and methods into abstract concepts and social ideologies without the aid of literary texts, Raphael now felt free to write their history. If his previously practised method had sought to discover in the internal relations of works of art correlates for external social and historical relations, his new method explored the complementary dimension: it began with the history and, in some way, sought to 'deduce' the art works.[40] Thus, while he continued to extend the range of his individual analyses - taking in primitive and Greek sculpture, and the wealth of paintings now available to him in the museums of New York, Philadelphia and Boston - Raphael began to research the earliest epochs of art history. He now produced great studies of prehistoric civilisation in Egypt and the pottery it produced,[41] of prehistoric cave painting[42] and the culture, customs, religion and iconography of the Stone Age.[43] He added to these further essays on classical Greece.[44] Yet he never forgot his political and philosophical perspective. A passage from his great unpublished work *Classical Man in Greek Art* makes the point with sufficient clarity and leaves us in no doubt about his final alignment:

> *We hope that, in addition to contributing towards the solution of the problem of classical man, this book will serve as a weapon against the reactionary irrationalism of the phenomenologists, existential philosophers, Expressionists and Surrealists, no less than against the pseudo-classics from Raphael to Ingres and contemporary abstract artists. The heart of genuine classical art is dialectics; and it is one of the more astonishing ironies of history that this most dialectical art has come to be regarded as the most dogmatic, as the mother of all academies. Dialectical art is inimitable, academic art is by definition imitative.*[45]

A mass of material - much more than I have listed here - was left unpublished when Raphael died on 14 July 1952, in New York City, aged sixty-two. No one could pretend that he had not become bitter in his last years. You can hear the pain of his past life in the tone of the introduction to his *History of German Industrial Capitalism*;[46] you can see the scars it left in the way he cut himself off even from his former friends. He hated America as the epitome of all he had fought against in writing. Fearing to be contaminated by the very place in which he sought refuge, he chose to live in penury on the lower east side of New York, in a tiny apartment, surviving on the pittance his wife earned as an office cleaner. All his life he had struggled for the self-realization of all people, yet he seemed to be denying it to himself and her. There are contradictions in the man and in his work, as there are in all of us and in what we create. By taking a little of his courage and a great deal of his method, we may be able to resolve them and to use his works as he would have wished: as tools of progress to a further stage of social development.

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(25) *Proudhon - Marx - Picasso*, p137
(26) Raphael, 'La Théorie Marxiste de L'Art in *Proudhon - Marx - Picasso*, pp123-185
(27) Raphael, *Zur Erkennetnistheorie der konkreten Dialektik*, Editions Excelsior, Paris, 1934; trans. into French by L Gara as *La Théorie Marxiste de la Connaissance*, Gallimard, Paris, 1938
(28) Unpublished notes in the archive of Raphael's papers at Boston University
(29) Raphael, *Teorija Duhovnov Stvaranja Na Osnovi Marksisma*, Veselin Maslesa, Sarajevo, 1960. The German text, *'Theorie des geistigen schaffens auf marxistischer grundiage'* has recently been published by S. Fischer Verlag, Frankfurt/M, who are also to publish *'Arbeiter, Kunst und Künstler* in 1975.

(30) Raphael, *Arbeiter, Kunst und Künstler, Beiträge zu einer marxistischer Kunstwissenschaft* unpublished, though an excerpt has been translated by Anna Bostock as 'Workers and the Historical Heritage of Art' in 'On Art and Society', special supplement to *Women and Art*, New York, summer/fall 1972, pp1-8, 20
(31) Raphael, *Corot. Kunst unter dem Liberalismus. Monographie eines Bildes*, unpublished.
(32) 'Ein Bild von Corot. Künstlerische Analyse'
(33) Raphael, 'Empirische Kunsttheorie', trans. as 'Towards an Empirical Theory of Art' and published as an appendix to *The Demands of Art*, pp205-238
(34) 'Allgemeine Frankreichs von 1800-1860'.
(35) 'Allgemeine Kunsttheorie zur Zeit des Liberalismus'.
(36) Cf. Werner Sombart, *Der moderne Kapitalismus*, Leipzig, 1902; see also Talcott Parsons '"Capitalism" in Recent German Literature: Sombart and Weber', Part One, *The Journal of Political Economy* vol 36, no 6, December 1928
(37) T J Clark, *The Absolute Bourgeois. Artists and Politics in France 1848-1851*, Thames & Hudson, London, 1973; and *The Image of the People. Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution*, Thames & Hudson, London, 1973
(38) Unpublished draft of a letter to prospective publishers, in the Boston archive.
(39) *Corot, Kunst unter dem Liberalismus. Mongraphie eines Bildes*, p68
(40) The most masterful example of this is his unpublished essay on the Easter Island statues, *A Head from Easter Island*, dated 1948
(41) Raphael, *Prehistoric Pottery and Civilization in Egypt*, trans. Norbert Guterman, Pantheon Books, New York, 1947
(42) Raphael, *Prehistoric Cave Paintings*, trans. Norbert Guterman, Pantheon Books, New York, 1945
(43) The three most lengthy and comprehensive works of a series of unpublished writings are *Die Altsteinzeitliche Jagdkultur; Wiedergeburtsmagie in der Altsteinzeit. Beitrag zur Geschichte der Religion und religiösen Symbole; Ikonographie der quaternaren Kunst.*
(44) *The Classical Man in Greek Art* (Illustrated by Edith Kramer), unpublished.
(45) *ibid*, pp3-4
(46) Raphael, *Portrait Deutschlands. Geschichte des deutschen Industriekapitalismus*, unpublished.