

Abbreviated Historiography of Cubism

By Daniel Robbins

Serious historical study of Cubism distinct from partisan defense, attack, or efforts of vulgarization began only in the late 1920s. Until then, the issues generated by Cubism were still alive, and Cubism had not been wholly displaced as an avant-garde movement by Purism, Dada, abstraction, or Surrealism. Only, in fact, when Cubism seemed safely dead could the slow process of objective reconstruction begin. As Guillaume Janneau put it in *L'Art Cubiste* (1929), "the quarrels that still continue over its least manifestations have only a theoretical interest: they beat around a tomb."¹ Conditioned by the then dominant return-to-reality position, Adolphe Basler and Charles Kunstler wrote about Cubism as a freakish aberration safely in the past, a "method of mutilation" of realistic forms that inevitably had to degenerate into an abstract, decorative art. They regarded it as a pseudo-philosophy against which even Picasso "had to break his nose." They dismissed the other pre-1914 Cubists—Delaunay, Le Fauconnier, Gleizes, Léger, Metzinger—who "in their zeal to serve cubism" succeeded in doing exactly the opposite by applying to what they believed was a new kind of painting "the mathematical and philosophical doctrines of Riemann, Lobatchewsky, Einstein, or Bergson."²

Janneau's *L'Art Cubiste*, despite serious flaws in methodology and facts, is an earnest attempt to situate Cubism within a historical framework. Janneau felt that a necessary precondition for undertaking this task was the certainty that Cubism was dead. But unlike critics who were hostile to Cubism, Janneau accepted its importance and granted a seriousness of purpose to its practitioners. He relied, however, almost exclusively on limited data, chiefly anecdotal personal reminiscence, and opinion, much of which was derived from the twenty-two replies he had printed between November 1, 1924, and January 15, 1925, to an inquiry about the state of Cubism sponsored by Bernheim's *Bulletin de la Vie Artistique*, of

which he was the managing editor. Janneau was also heavily indebted to Ozenfant and Jeanneret's *Peinture Moderne*, without critically questioning its assumptions, which flowed from the authors' desire to have Purism recognized as the successor to Cubism. Likewise, Raynal's monographs on Picasso and Braque colored Janneau's views. But his most serious error was his consistent comparison of texts written in the 1920s with Apollinaire's 1913 *Les Peintres Cubistes, Méditations Esthétiques*. Janneau revered the martyred poet and accepted almost as gospel this hastily compiled compendium. Apollinaire's views, of course, had the merit of being frozen in the prewar period, but Janneau opposed them to texts of the 1920s, especially those of Gleizes, quoting at length from *Du Cubisme et des Moyens de le Comprendre* of 1920, as if he were dealing with the ideas of Gleizes and Metzinger's *Du Cubisme* of 1912. He did the same with *Tradition et Cubisme: Vers une Conscience Plastique* and, indeed, with virtually all of the many articles Gleizes, Severini, and Lhote published in the 1920s.³

Confounding these retrospective views by artists engaged in justifying the consistency of their ongoing trajectories as painters as if they were representative of the 1907–14 period is the most glaring fault of Janneau's book. It forced him into the awkward position of arguing with the doctrinaire views of the theoretical codifiers of Cubism, characterizing Gleizes, in particular, in opposition to the instinctive "divinations" of the first inventors and the "poetic" interpretation intuitively formed by Apollinaire. Thus Janneau was in large measure responsible for the later characterization of the Cubists—except for Picasso, Braque, Gris, and Léger—as, at best, austere "doctors of the cénacle," using the literature of the 1920s as evidence of how little Gleizes, Metzinger, Le Fauconnier, Delaunay, and the Duchamp-Villons really understood Picasso-Braque Cubism of 1912. Drawing on Gleizes, who in the 1920s is correctly

noted as "condemning all those who kept a little [recollection of] nature," Janneau formed the opinion that this group of prewar Cubists constituted a circle of theorists who tried to "turn our attention to the laws of non-Euclidian geometry . . . to a sort of metaphysical algebra."⁴ Labeling these concerns "pseudo-scientific verbiage," he stopped short of utter condemnation but stated unequivocally that all this theory was "a substitute that has turned Cubism from the tracks traced by the initiators," an unfortunate exchange of *sensibilité* for theory.

Janneau preferred painters of the modern movement to be intuitive and poetic, as he believed the free spirit of Apollinaire had been. True artists had no business writing, or even thinking, he wrote, quoting Raynal on Picasso: "true artists understand nothing, but feel all." Although affirming the importance of Cubism, Janneau shared the prejudices against abstract art found in such abundance during the return-to-reality period that began after the war.

Nevertheless, Janneau was not so adamantly opposed to abstraction as were many of his contemporaries. He accepted its relationship to Cubism as a normal but not inevitable consequence. He regarded abstraction as essentially decorative,⁵ as a design formula. To confuse the *tableau-objet* with an inspired work of art was a pretentious error made by the Cubist theoreticians, especially Gleizes, and to conceive of decorative art—much as Janneau admired Art Deco—as "a concrete fact" or totally "independent" picture, as Gleizes characterized the *tableau-objet*, was absurd: the decorative object was necessarily dependent on its destination or context within a larger scheme.⁶ Appealing to the authority of Apollinaire, who announced in 1913 that the logical end of Cubism would be in *la peinture pure*, Janneau contrasted *la peinture pure* with the *tableau-objet* and concluded that although the two ideas were not totally exclusive, they were as strange to each other "as fan-

tasy is to rule." Ironically, both pure painting and the independent picture, as well as a similar definition of decoration, were clearly articulated in Gleizes and Metzinger's *Du Cubisme* of 1912. Thus, the great flaw in Janneau's attempt to write a history of Cubism was his domination by prevailing attitudes towards the kind of painting that was successful in Paris at mid decade.

These problems aside, Janneau's book is of interest for the observations it contained. Several prefigure conclusions of the revisionist literature of the last decade. Among these, he assigns "a certain anteriority" to Braque over Picasso in expressing the "plastic quality of masses considered as volumes" and not as anecdotal motifs.⁷ He used the term "expressionist" to describe the first phase of Cubism, through which he maintained all the Cubists passed (although with different velocities) before reaching "pure Cubism" attained by Braque and Picasso, respectively in 1910 and 1911. The "expressionist" stage was dominated by "the sensation of mechanism suggested by human anatomy," and with Picasso resulted from the artist's desire "to rid himself of intellectual notions and find true newness of expression." Thus, the period of the *Demoiselles* and *Three Women* (1907-8) is described explicitly as "not Cubist" but "négroisant." It is to Braque in 1908 that Janneau ascribes the beginning of "the rationalist" and "analytic methods" borrowed from Cézanne that will ultimately convert the "combinations of syncopated volumes" of the first stage into "pure" Cubism. Here a work is ordered intellectually, as in *Bar and Ace of Clubs* (1911); glasses or carafes are no longer represented, but rather evoked. The spectator needs "to seize the thought of the painter and to admit his synthesis of all the notions evoked by an image."⁸ This terminology is interesting because it employs the terms that subsequently came to characterize Cubism's historical development, embedding them, however, in the sequential order of "Expressionist" and "Pure."

Janneau did not develop his notion of the two phases further, and towards the end of the volume, out of reverence for Apollinaire, whose four categories of Cubism he recapitulated in detail (that is, Scientific, Physical, Orphic, and Instinctive Cubism), he blends his own phases, like a pastry chef beating in a flavoring. Thus, he wrote that Apollinaire's category of Scientific Cubism (Picasso, Braque, Gleizes, Metzinger, Laurencin) is really what he meant by "pure" Cubism, except for Metzinger

and Laurencin, who properly belong in an "expressionist" category; that Physical Cubism is the same as his expressionist category, represented not only by Le Fauconnier, Apollinaire's exemplar of the tendency, but constituting according to Janneau "the most widely followed" current of the movement; and that Orphic Cubism, the sublime art entirely created by the artist, had, since Apollinaire coined the term in 1913 for Picasso, Delaunay, Léger, Duchamp and Picabia, in its "development sometimes contradicted its premises." While Janneau recognized that Apollinaire had meant by the Orphist category pure painting independent of all subject, even calling it "perfection," he could not see that its promise had been fulfilled. As a trade or substitute, after dismissing Apollinaire's fourth category, Instinctive Cubism (he claimed that the poet himself had proposed Instinctive Cubism with some scorn by giving no criteria for it), Janneau proposed still one more classification, Decorative Cubism, to encompass that tendency "which currently reigns in the industrial arts."⁹ This addition was Janneau's substitute for the lost category of Orphic Cubism, arising from the fact that he could not conceive of purely abstract painting except as decoration, and therefore as "governed by exterior conditions."

A genuine historical concept of Cubism emerges only in 1936 with Alfred H. Barr's *Cubism and Abstract Art*, the text and catalogue for The Museum of Modern Art exhibition of the same year. This work, which has shaped our understanding of Cubism until the present day, could only have been written by an American, moreover one who was a trained historian, who sought objective truth, was not partisan to the currents and counter movements of European, especially Parisian art politics, and who by dint of diligent research commanded access to documents and ideas that had never before been pulled coherently together.

Barr relied heavily on one major source for his ideas, Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler's *Der Weg zum Kubismus*, published in 1920.¹⁰ He was also influenced by another important factor, his knowledge of and at least partial subscription to the ideas of the great English artist-critic Roger Fry, whose *Vision and Design* (1920) summarized a powerful point of view for English-speaking historians. Although Barr certainly knew and had absorbed the theories of Clive Bell as well (especially the famous *Art*, of 1913), Bell's ideas must

have seemed simplistic and naïve compared with Fry's, especially by the mid 1930s, when Barr was assembling his landmark exhibition.

Barr took two terms used by Kahnweiler, "analytic" and "synthetic," and elevated them to the level of genuine historical concept; that is, the terms do not refer merely to optional methodologies available to the artist, as Kahnweiler wrote, but to a historical sequence imposed on the development not only of Picasso and Braque but of Cubism as a movement. Hardly less important was Barr's firm linking of Cubism with abstract art, and the concomitant creation of a historical lineage for the sequential development of a mainstream of art in which, indeed, "analytical" and "synthetic" take their places as distinct stages in a logically unfolding evolution.

It is in this second construct, heavily indebted to Fry's conception of Cézanne, that the outlines of a future formalist art theory are to be found.¹¹ While mainstream history of modern art, deriving from Cézanne, passing across an analytical and synthetic phase of Cubism through geometric abstraction to finish in formalist American painting and sculpture of the 1960s, has been shaken by both critical rebellion and historical revisionism in the 1970s, the twin terms of Analytical Cubism and Synthetic Cubism have not only survived but remain firmly entrenched in the vocabulary of art history to define the evolution of Cubism from its beginnings in 1907 to its dispersal or disintegration during and even after World War I. Barr's application of the terms had the qualification both of describing sequential phases and of characterizing style. His historical imposition has acquired not only the weight of conceptual truth but also the convenience of a universally accepted descriptive code. Nearly every writer who has discussed Cubism since 1936 has used the terms "analytical" and "synthetic" in a paraphrase of Barr's original text.

Barr developed the concept of Analytical Cubism first in connection with his discussion of what constitutes an abstract work of art, which he believed to be "independent," "emancipated," "an end in itself, with its own peculiar values." He qualified Cubist painting as "near abstraction," offering an impure and ambiguous enjoyment to which the title is a guide (here he also follows Kahnweiler). For although the primary interest in art lies in the organization of color, line, light, shade, "secondary relationships between the pic-

ture and the subject matter are also enjoyable." Furthermore, although "abstract art is presumably devoid of subject interest," subject has "played a part of some importance in several of the movements which will be considered . . . from a primarily formal point of view."¹² Here, importantly, Barr follows Roger Fry in allowing a qualification, which, however, he does not develop. Although Fry's notions of plasticity developed in connection with Cézanne across a period of many years¹³ and were widely confounded with Clive Bell's much simpler idea of "significant form," Fry always stressed that the independent painting included a spiritual as well as a material, plastic reality; he admitted a degree of philosophical content discoverable in the relationship between conceptual and its formal qualities,¹⁴ and this modest hedging about the capacity of pure plasticity to account wholly for the value of art found its way into Barr's text. It was, however, the least influential element in a book that shaped the historical consciousness of Cubism and its seminal place in the evolution of abstract art for the next generation of art historians and critics.

Barr observed that the Cubists "seem to have had little conscious interest in subject matter." They used traditional subjects, "figures, portraits, still life and landscape," all "serving as material for cubist analysis." This is the precise context in which Barr first uses the term "analysis" in connection with Cubism, and consistent with his sensitive understanding of Fry, one should record his footnote on this occasion: he carefully noted that Meyer Schapiro had suggested that perhaps the iconography of Cubism should *not*, in fact, be ignored. Yet, with this balanced reservation recorded, he proceeded to contrast Cubism with those other, later movements where "in summary it may be said that only in Futurism, Dadism, Surrealism and Purism had subject matter any real importance, at least so far as the conscious program of the artists was concerned."¹⁵

Thus, the first time the word "analysis" is introduced it is in the context of a discussion of the reduced interest of subject for the Cubist artists. The next clue that adumbrated the use of the word "analysis" comes a few pages later, after Barr sketched the two main traditions of abstract art: the first and most important beginning with Cézanne and Seurat flows through Cubism to its delta in geometrical and constructivist movements; the second originating in Gauguin, flowing through Matisse and the Fauves to the abstract expressionism

of prewar Kandinsky. The first tradition is described as "intellectual, structural, architectonic, geometric, classical, logical, austere, calculated"; the second as "intuition, emotional rather than intellectual, organic or biomorphic, not geometric, curvilinear, not rectilinear, decorative rather than structural, romantic rather than classical, mystical." Then Barr wrote that the "cubists continued analysis from Impressionism," but it was an analysis of form, not color. Implicit in this discussion, by the ordering of topics and introduction of ideas, is the assumption that subject matter was not very important for the Impressionists, either; a common view in the 1930s, when consistently most judgments were made on the basis of technical matters. Thus, to the "analytical procedure of the Impressionists and Neo-Impressionists," Barr opposed the "synthetism" of Gauguin, who cleared the path for Denis, Matisse, Fauvism, Kandinsky, and Expressionism.¹⁶ This is the first instance that Barr used the term "synthetism," which anticipates the subsequent word "synthetic"; and he did not explain why, whether because it was a term contemporary with Gauguin and his circle, or because in opposition to Impressionist and Neoimpressionist analysis it conveyed also a technical quality, meaning preoccupation with decorative patterns. At this juncture in the text, a historical precedent has been established, akin to the initial introduction of a theme, to prepare the way for the subsequent division of Cubism into analytical and synthetic phases.

Still one more fundamental point had to be made before Barr was ready to set down the chronology of Analytical Cubism. It was necessary to demonstrate the importance of Cézanne, "the greatest artist of the late nineteenth century," as the primary source for Cubism, "above all for his abandonment of deep space and emphatic modelling, for a compact composition in which foreground and background forms are fused into an angular, active curtain of color."¹⁷ It would be difficult to overestimate the importance of this formulation, for it is the clear basis—the main pattern—of all subsequent discussions for the next forty years of the concept of the picture plane, its role in Cubism, and in the evolution of abstract art.

Barr's chronology of Analytical Cubism then follows, but it is introduced with as yet no definition of what "analytical" means other than the two hints previously established, that is, something akin to the "analytical procedure" of the Impressionists and Neoimpressionists. Thinking exclusively of Picasso

at the outset, he characterized 1906 as the year of the influence of African sculpture and the beginning of the *Demoiselles d'Avignon*; 1907 as the year of more influence of African sculpture, now combined with that of Cézanne; 1908 as the first instance of the use of the word "cube,"¹⁸ but it is only with 1909 that Barr approaches the categorization of a methodology henceforth to be integral with the idea of Analytical Cubism. This was the year that Picasso, now joined by Braque, proceeded with the "disintegration of natural objects" by dislocating facets. It was also the year that "Gleizes, Metzinger, Picabia and Delaunay" were "drawn to the movement," establishing the idea that there was, in fact, a movement. According to Barr, in 1910 Picasso and Braque became more abstract, in 1911 Braque introduced letters and textures, and 1912 is the apogee of Analytical Cubism—still not positively defined. Other subsidiary notions introduced by Barr at this time that subsequently became integral to our historical concept of Cubism included his discussion of the publication in 1907 of Cézanne's letter to Bernard about the cone, the sphere, and the cylinder, and finally—but crucially—his assertion that the other Cubists undergo the same evolution, that is, go through the same "stages" (p. 42, a discussion of Léger).

The first instance of the word "synthetist" occurs on page 46, when the years 1912-14 are bracketed as witnessing the transformation from Analytical to Synthetic Cubism. But before Barr launched his brilliant chronology of Synthetic Cubism (p. 77), he sketched in the principal outlines of the other major movements of modern art, in the course of which he made a number of reinforcing observations about Cubism. In connection with Futurism (p. 54), he advanced an earlier more tentative judgment by stating that "both Impressionism and Cubism denied the importance and integrity of the object"; and he distinguished between the Futurists, whose "primary problem was to express movement, force and the passage of time," and the Cubists, who "might move about the object, but it remained static." The possibility of a significant revision in the already generalized theory of Cubism's development is raised in a brief treatment of "Pure Abstract Painting in Paris, 1910-20," where Gleizes, Delaunay, and Villon are described as "heretic cubists" (p. 73), and it is stated (incorrectly, but understandably from the perspective of 1936) that Villon and Gleizes, like Kupka,

"constructed without reference to a natural object."

The great formulation of Cubism comes on pages 77–79, where Barr summarized the chronology of Synthetic Cubism from 1910–11 through 1921: from Braque's introduction of imitation textures and letters, through the 1913 transition from Analytical to Synthetic; and from 1914, when Synthetic Cubism becomes "soft and decorative," until in 1921, "the movement which had begun to disintegrate in 1914 loses all sense of continuity and homogeneity," although, to be sure, works like Picasso's *Three Musicians* and Léger's *Grand Dejeuner* are nevertheless masterpieces of Cubism. Barr at last gave a statement to justify the terms "analytical" and "synthetic." It develops in connection with the elaboration of the Cubist exploitation of texture (that is, in the spirit of the mid-1930s urge to isolate the constituent elements of art) and the culmination of textural concern in collage: Analytical Cubism is so termed because of a "progressive tearing apart or disintegrating of natural forms. During this progression, color was gradually eliminated . . . suddenly, heresies appear, illusionistic techniques, wood grain, and marble, the nail [in Braque's 1910 *Violin and Palette*], letters. These textures contributed not merely to the variety of forms and surfaces . . . but also to what might be called cubist realism, that is, an emphasis not upon the reality of the represented objects but upon the reality of the painted surface." As these ideas are developed further, it emerges that the famous twin terms are inextricably yoked together not only sequentially but as fundamental and reciprocal tools in understanding the methodology of painting, borrowed perhaps from the methodology of chemistry. "In the development of Analytical Cubism from 1911 to 13, the disintegrated image of the natural object gradually took on a more and more abstract geometrical shape," until finally "the geometrical shapes are so remotely related to the original form of the object that they seem almost to have been invented rather than derived. Their texture further adds to their independent reality so they may be considered not a breaking down, or analysis, but a building up or synthesis."

For the first time, Cubism had been treated in a fashion that accounted for its method, the method had been followed across stages, and the process embedded in the history of modern art. The speed with which Barr's concept was accepted not only in the United States but in Europe and even in

France¹⁹ is no less astonishing than the inevitability of its origin in the United States in the mid thirties. But before looking at the further elaboration and extraordinary durability of Barr's understanding of Cubism, it is useful to contrast his signification of the key terms "analytical" and "synthetic" with the author who, as earlier indicated, was the source of the words, if not precisely of their usage.

Kahnweiler's *Der Weg zum Kubismus* focused entirely on the artists he had exhibited and signed to exclusive contracts. It was, in fact, begun at a time when the war had forced the rupture of his relationships with these artists: Derain, Picasso, Braque, Léger, and Gris. It represented Kahnweiler's first critical-historical writing under the pseudonym of Daniel Henry, and his first attempt—ultimately successful—to repossess Cubism for those artists who he believed had created it. Kahnweiler also attempted to set Cubism into history, but the span of time and events with which he dealt was thinner than Barr's. Beginning with Impressionism, out of whose method in part Barr derived his use of the idea of analytical procedure, Kahnweiler characterized this movement as the last whose goal was illusionism: "With [Impressionism] illusionism appeared as one last burst of color pyrotechnics, sputtered and extinguished itself."²⁰ This is in sharp contrast to Barr twenty years later, who saw Impressionism, like Cubism, denying the importance and integrity of the object. The distinction is interesting because for Kahnweiler the "new painting" was Cubism, while for Barr Cubism was finished, and the dominant, long-term historical tendency in which Cubism had to take its place was abstraction. With illusionism finished, Kahnweiler, in one sentence, saw the fundamental purpose of painting since the early Renaissance—the recording of history—"vanished." Thus, he reasoned, the new painting, which he described as "lyric," eschewing "epic or dramatic overtones," strives to capture the beauty of things. The new painting is both representational and structural, and these two conflicting elements, the one lying in values of the observable world, the other within the painting, are reconciled by the new painting.

A whole aesthetic is encapsulated on Kahnweiler's first page, which is far more embedded in philosophy than in history. From it later writers like Christopher Gray²¹ were to elaborate on the Kantian implications of Cubism's conception of reality.²² The balance

between representation and structure is based on the equilibrium between empiricism and speculative ideas, and identifies the source of Kahnweiler's aesthetic in Kant, whose influence was especially strong when the future art dealer was a student in Germany. No wonder then that the distinction between synthesis and analysis arising for the first time in Kahnweiler should have become central to Cubism. They are, of course, key terms for Kant. The representational nature of painting corresponds to the world of sense, of phenomena, of observation. It is material, revealed by sensation and given form, which is the ordering of sensation. But the employment of reason, the logical use of understanding, yields pure ideas, the laws of the mind. This is the paradigm for Kahnweiler's concept of structure: the reconciliation of the two by Cubist painting is the straightforward translation of Kantian oppositions to the problems of art. How to unite two radically different, even divergent modes of explaining cognition, joining experience to a self-sufficient logical process, was the question Kahnweiler paraphrased at the outset. It was answered by the new painting. Empirical experience was to be joined to a *a priori* structure, or at least an oversimplified analogy to this famous dichotomy was proposed, in which the work of art, the painting, resolved the conflict. For Kahnweiler this was conceived as akin to the combining of both Kantian modes of knowing. When Kahnweiler wrote "representation and structure conflict, their reconciliation by the new painting, and the stages along the road to this goal, are the subject of this work," he set himself essentially a task of philosophic transposition, having borrowed the whole dichotomy, not from the tangled issues of early twentieth-century science and historical consciousness, but from the remote yet clearer accomplishments of a century earlier, as taught in gymnasium and university.

Kahnweiler's treatment of the recent history of painting was significantly different from Barr's, but it must be kept in mind that he was merely looking for stepping stones that would lead to the new painting as the reconciler of representation and structure. Thus, in Kahnweiler's second chapter, he dispensed with Seurat, whose "solution was not new" (p. 3). Cézanne, however, was singled out as the point of departure for the new painting, because although his renunciation of illusionism was only partial, his motivation was exclusively "delight in form." "He struggled with the object, trying to capture it in all its beauty and carry it into his painting."

This sentence, on scrutiny, can only be intelligible by assuming certain diluted Kantian principles at work in the mind of the author. By scrapping illusion and delighting in the forms, Cézanne is made to suspect that there is some formal quality within objects, some higher quality within nature, which the artist struggles to find, and these forms are the forms in which one delights. This assumes an ideal form, or at least a corrected one behind our sensate experience of the world, which is thus, by contrast, acknowledged as imperfect. The discussion of technique that follows further reveals the Kantian basis of Kahnweiler's understanding of Cézanne, explaining the reason for distortions and discolorations of objects, or as Kahnweiler wrote, "to extol the form of objects and simultaneously to comprehend them within the unity of the work of art" (p. 4).

Then follows an anecdotal and inaccurate account of the application of the word "cubism" to the work of Picasso and Braque, and a description of changes that occurred during the course of Picasso's painting of the *Demoiselles d'Avignon*, when the next major element essential to future understanding of Cubism was developed: the presentation of three dimensions and color on a flat surface. This problem is stated by Kahnweiler as if it had never before been attacked in painting. The sole element in Kahnweiler's reformulation that aligns it with the author's underlying philosophic point of view is his qualification that to comprehend the representation of three dimensions and color on a flat surface "in the unity of that surface," the task must be done (p. 7) "in the strictest and highest sense." Thus, the problem is still understood as one of reconciliation. The rhetorical setting for Picasso's subsequent activity also betrays the sources of Kahnweiler's notions of duality, for Picasso, now exhausted, withdraws "from the diversity of the physical world," turning "to problems of pure structure," "to the undisturbed peace of the work of art."

There is only one section in this highly influential book where Kahnweiler's familiarity with philosophy candidly emerges, and where his debt to Kant is acknowledged. On page 12:

In the words of Locke, these painters distinguish between primary and secondary qualities. They endeavor to represent the primary, or most important qualities, as exactly as possible. In painting these are: the object's form, and its position in space. They merely

suggest the secondary characteristics such as color and tactile quality, leaving their incorporation into the object to the mind of the spectator.

This new language has given painting an unprecedented freedom. It is no longer bound to the more or less verisimilar optic image which describes the object from a single viewpoint. It can, in order to give a thorough representation of the objects' primary characteristics, depict them as stereometric drawing on the plane, or through several representations of the same object, can provide an analytical study of that object which the spectator then fuses into one again in his mind. The representation does not necessarily have to be in the closed manner of the stereometric drawing; colored planes, through their direction and relative position, can bring together the formal scheme without uniting in closed forms. This was the great advance made at Cadaques. [Two pages earlier Kahnweiler had characterized the paintings made by Picasso during the summer of 1910 as "the decisive advance which set cubism free from the language previously used by painting," for "he had taken the great step; he had pierced the closed form."] Instead of an analytical description, the painter can, if he prefers, also create in this way a synthesis of the object, or in the words of Kant, put together the various conceptions and comprehend their variety in one perception.

The balance of these two paragraphs has the symmetry of an elementary course on modern philosophy, beginning with a paraphrase from John Locke, the critic of the empirical data of human experience, and finishing with a quote from Kant, who quite deliberately had set out to supply the complement to the ambiguities in Locke by becoming the critic of the intellectual and moral aspects of human experience.

From the standpoint of historiography, however, we have encountered very distinct differences in the use of the words "analytical" and "synthetic" by Kahnweiler and Barr. Kahnweiler outlined two methods open to the artist: analytical study or description of the object, which involves several representations so that the spectator may then reassemble the object in his mind; and synthetic, where the artist can unite

various conceptions, creating a synthesis of the object. The methods are alternate, and they are not necessarily sequential; one is not specified as preliminary to the other. It is only in context, in light of the references to Locke and Kant preceding and terminating the pertinent passages, where the implications for an idealist interpretation of Cubism are found. They are nevertheless clear. For Kahnweiler a higher reality looms behind material forms; the higher reality is formal, and not exclusively mental, although graspable only by mental process. But Barr placed "analytical" and "synthetic" in historical order, finding precedents for both in a wider tradition beginning with Impressionism. He did not choose to follow the idealist clues embedded in Kahnweiler, and instead of suggesting that there is a higher reality extant behind the materiality of objects, he chose to stress the new, created reality of the independent work of art. This now became the key fact in understanding the development of Cubism. The painting as a concrete fact, as a material object in itself, the contrary of questioning the real materiality of objects as had Kahnweiler, is manifest in the transition from analytical to synthetic. Barr side-stepped the idealist trap, and perhaps this can be characterized as an American and pragmatist solution to the problem.

There did exist, however, at least one major source for Barr's assigning to the terms a historical sequence, and given his familiarity not only with Kahnweiler but with Kahnweiler's favorite—and most loyal—Cubist artist, he must have known of Juan Gris's reply to Janneau's *enquête, Chez les Cubistes*, conducted by the *Bulletin de la Vie Artistique* in the last months of 1924 and in January of 1925. Here, Gris said simply that the "analysis of yesterday has yielded to the synthesis of today." He was, of course, contrasting his origins as a Cubist in the prewar years with his subsequent development as realized in his current 1924–25 work.

the mind [l'esprit] always begins by a description, that is to say by an analysis, a classification. Before the existence of physics as a science, one described and classified physical phenomena. And, in the beginning, cubism was an analysis which was no more painting than the description of physical phenomena was physics. In its beginnings cubism was only a new mode of the representation of the world, a reaction against the fugi-

tive elements employed by the Impressionists. . . . For the momentary lighting of objects one substituted, for example, what one thought to be their local color. To the visual appearance of a form, one would substitute that which one believed to be the quality of that form.

We may note here perhaps the influence of Kahnweiler's thinking on Gris, or at least a high degree of identity in idealist outlook; namely, there is a "quality" to "that form," an assumption of some immutable higher reality behind the object. Continuing, Gris summed up the consequences of this procedure: "But that led to a purely descriptive and analytic representation," and the problem for Gris, the problem for Cubism, was how to pass beyond this "analytic expressionism" and arrive at "the synthesis by the expression of the relationships between the objects themselves."²³

Gris had carried the Kahnweiler terminology further by contrasting the two methods, by making the first prior to the second, and, finally, he had even increased the weight of idealism inherent in Kahnweiler by complicating the problem: in effect, Synthetic Cubism was to discover the true relationships among objects, subsuming several qualities in one higher reality, but the higher reality is still assumed to lie behind the world of objects.

In Gris, then, Barr may have found precedent and example for the concept of historical order that he imposed on the development of Cubism, even a subsidiary confirmation relating analysis in Impressionism to the early analytical phase of Cubism. But Barr did not feature the idealist weight of either of his sources; he was not in the least concerned with the question of how real objects are in the world of phenomena. Rather, he focused on the artists' creation of a new phenomenological reality, the independent work of art,²⁴ the actuality of which was free from the burden of representation. This stress, as we have seen, was practical, pragmatic, and above all fit Cubism into its key place in the evolution of abstract art. By concentrating on technical and historical matters, Barr's theory swept all contending accounts of Cubism's origin to one side.

Barr's historical concept was derived from Kahnweiler, and modified by Gris. Above all it neutralized the complex questions of philosophic idealism in regard to the importance of the true nature of objects in the world of phenomena; and it was based—following his sources—on a close examination of

Picasso and Braque, and to a lesser extent Léger and Gris: all Kahnweiler's group. In addition to "analytical" and "synthetic" it relied heavily on another pair of significant elements, the *Demoiselles d'Avignon* and the influence of primitive, particularly African and Iberian sculpture, in Picasso. To be sure, the 1936 book and exhibition led to the 1939 purchase of the *Demoiselles* by The Museum of Modern Art, but this important fact, which gave New York the prize of owning the primordial Cubist picture, raises questions that more properly belong in a history of the institutions of art. Nevertheless, The Museum of Modern Art's ownership of this key work reinforced the theory that rapidly became official and entrenched especially in English-language publications. American and English scholarship for the most part accepted and elaborated on Barr's theory. And French scholarship, even as early as Raynal's 1953 *Le Cubisme 1907–1914*, the first great post-World War II assessment of the movement, found it convenient to agree; although clinging to a pre-analytical phase of Cubism, "Cézannien," which yields to analytical only in 1910, *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* was the beginning: "the first expression of the painting baptised only later by the name of cubism."²⁵

The other artists who were associated with Cubism during the period of 1910–14 either fit the historical theory or were thrown out of the movement as "heretics,"²⁶ or as mere cubifiers, who did not understand the means and ends of the initiators. Ironically, in English-language art history, by 1950 this group of non-Cubists came to include nearly all the artists who were precisely the ones about whom the controversy of Cubism raged in the years prior to World War I. Sir Herbert Read typified the mid-twentieth-century zenith of acceptance of the Kahnweiler-Barr history of Cubism when, for example, in 1948 he wrote that Cézanne "would have been revolted by the academic cubism of a Gleizes or a Delaunay."²⁷ In France, to be sure, where all the group of original Cubists were still alive except Delaunay and Le Fauconnier, greater caution was observed in making historical judgments. Although the *Demoiselles* was elected the beginning of Cubism, Dorival, who wrote the chronology to the Musée National d'Art Moderne exhibition of 1953, drew careful attention to the Groupe de Puteaux, insisting that it was very different from the group of Montmartre, "at once more Cézannien and more abstract."²⁸ Dorival, indeed, had already shown himself to be highly dis-

trustful of the Kahnweiler-Barr generalization, but his books published during the agonized time of World War II answered psychological and emotional needs, rather than addressing historical questions.²⁹ Dorival, above all, wanted a "French" Cubism to exist, and considerations of nationalism rather than the development of shared ideas and resultant methods distorted his views.

Around midcentury then, the Barr history of Cubism was still in the ascendant. Although it had succeeded in giving shape and symmetry to the history of the modern movement, definitively transcending its sources, it had its flaws. The most glaring of these on the level of integrating the facts of the 1910–14 period as they continue to emerge through research was that the Cubist artists did not march in lock step across the same evolutionary phases of development, that the artists Metzinger, Le Fauconnier, Gleizes, Delaunay, and Léger—precisely those who were labeled "cubists" during the Salon des Indépendants of 1911—did not fit comfortably into the categories of analytical and synthetic, which had been formulated without serious consultation of their work. It had to appear either that they had looked at Picasso and Braque and persistently refused to understand; or perhaps they had not even looked? Léger's intentions, as even Kahnweiler makes clear (p. 17), were somewhat different from Picasso's and Braque's, and therefore productive of somewhat different results. In either event, the stages of development proposed in the Barr system, formulated without close attention to the work of these artists, excluded them from full participation in the Cubist movement, or else relegated them to minor, satellite roles.

Since Golding's 1959 wide recovery of facts that prove the 1911–14 identification of these artists with Cubism,³⁰ the once dominant historical theory has been the object of revision. Thus, in the dominant interpretation of Cubism that arose in the mid 1930s, we were obliged to forget that the Impressionists used the double point of view, that the Symbolists, also admirers of Cézanne, flattened the picture plane and asserted its artistic primacy, reducing subjects to second place and to geometric simplicity. Like Kahnweiler, who lamented the collapse of Seurat, the influence of Neoimpressionist structure, subject matter, and technique had to be dismissed as a dead end—"its effort to translate depth into plane relations" a failure because it "was not new."³¹ We had also to neglect parallels between the

new painting and literature, social thought, and science, turning to these only after 1911, when Cubism became a recognized movement, instead of earlier, when in fact the fabric of intellectual and social, scientific and historical concern provided the whole experience of the late nineteenth century as ripe for conversion into a new language.

If the Barr history of Cubism growing out of Kahnweiler was adequate as a tool for the understanding of Picasso and Braque, our first objection should have been triggered by its obvious limitations when applied to the work of the nonconforming Cubists. Yet, for many years, the opposite occurred: the work of the other Cubists was ruled out because it failed to conform to the rigors of a very limited definition. At the least, the historian should analyze other Cubist works with greater breadth of vision, even if in the process a qualifying adjective must be added to differentiate between branches of the movement. But, now that we know unequivocally—thanks to the late 1960s work of Robert Rosenblum, Charlotte Murray, Alvin Martin, and many others—that the Cubism of Picasso and Braque is, in fact, laced with narrative content, redefinition and reformulation of our historical theory is mandatory in order to incorporate the new ground that has emerged.

Notes

- 1 Guillaume Janneau, *L'Art Cubiste*, Paris, 1929, p. 1.
- 2 Adolphe Basler and Charles Kunstler, *La Peinture Indépendant en France*, Paris, 1929, pp. 49–54.
- 3 Amédée Ozenfant and Charles Edouard Jeanneret [Le Corbusier], *La Peinture Moderne*, Paris, 1925; Maurice Raynal, *Picasso*, Paris, 1922; idem, *Georges Braque*, Rome, n.d. [1921]; Guillaume Apollinaire, *Les Peintres Cubiste. Méditations Esthétiques*, Paris, 1913, Albert Gleizes, *Du Cubisme et des Moyens de le Comprendre*, Paris, 1920; Gleizes and Jean Metzinger, *Du Cubisme*, Paris, 1912; Albert Gleizes, *Tradition and Cubisme: Vers une Conscience Plastiques*, Paris, 1927.
- 4 Janneau (cited n. 1), pp. 34, 35, 41.
- 5 Ibid., p. 42. Janneau had previously produced a study on interior decoration, cf. *Technique du Décor Interieur Moderne*, Paris, 1927. His editing of the galerie Bernheim-Jeunes house magazine, *Bulletin de la Vie Artistique*, reflects his deep interest in modern design, more in the decorative arts than in architecture.
- 6 Janneau (cited n. 1), p. 45.
- 7 Ibid., pp. 3, 10. This conclusion was also reached by Alvin Martin, "Georges Braque: Stylistic Formation and Transition, 1900–1909" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1977), and followed by William Rubin, "Cézannisme and the Beginnings of Cubism," in *Cézanne: The Late Work*, exh. cat., The Museum of Modern Art, 1977, pp. 151–202.
- 8 Janneau (cited n. 1), pp. 18, 12, 14, 12, 19.
- 9 Ibid., pp. 49, 50, 51.
- 10 Although published as a book only in 1920 (Munich), the first four chapters had appeared in *Die Weissen Blätter*, Zurich and Leipzig, in September 1916.
- 11 Perhaps best formulated by Clement Greenberg in his well-known essay on Cubist collage; see: "The Pasted-Paper Revolution," *Art News* (September 1958), pp. 46–91.
- 12 Alfred H. Barr, Jr., *Cubism and Abstract Art*, exh. cat., The Museum of Modern Art, 1936, pp. 13, 14, 15.
- 13 See: George Heard Hamilton, "Cézanne and His Critics," in *Cézanne* (cited n. 7), pp. 139–49, esp. 147, nn. 1 and 2, for a succinct summary of Fry's use of the word and concept of "plasticity."
- 14 See: Virginia Woolf, *Roger Fry*, Richmond, 1940, p. 183, for a letter to G. L. Dickenson on "the function of content"; Roger Fry, *Vision and Design*, London, 1920, p. 194, for a comment on Tolstoy's conception of emotion, and p. 199, for a critique of Bell's notion of "significant form"; and Quentin Bell, *Vision and Design: The Life, Work, and Influence of Roger Fry*, Nottingham, 1966, for a discussion of the limits of design in satisfying Fry's conscience.
- 15 Barr (cited n. 12), pp. 15, 16.
- 16 Ibid., pp. 20, 24.
- 17 Ibid., p. 24.
- 18 This refers to Louis Vauxcelles's now famous, but then overlooked, brief review of Braque's L'Estaque paintings (rejected at the Salon d'Automne, 1908) at Kahnweiler's gallery. The twelve lines conclude: "Il méprise la forme, réduit tout, sites et figures et maisons, à des schémas géométrique à des cubes," *Gil Blas*, November 15, 1908. This was, however, not the first time the word "cube" was used; see: Daniel Robbins, *Albert Gleizes, 1881–1953*, exh. cat., New York, The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1964, for an earlier usage of the word by Chassevent (1906) for Metzinger and Delaunay; also, Robert L. Herbert, *Neo-Impressionism*, New York, 1968, for an even earlier usage (1901).
- 19 The terms "analytical" and "synthetic" are not used in the nearly contemporary exhibition, *Les Créateurs du Cubisme*, Paris, Galerie des Beaux-Arts, 1935, catalogue by Raymond Cogniat, with preface by Maurice Raynal.
- 20 Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, *Der Weg zum Kubismus*, Munich, 1920; quoted from English translation, *The Rise of Cubism*, ed. Robert Motherwell, New York, 1949.
- 21 Christopher Gray, *Cubist Aesthetic Theories*, Baltimore, 1953.
- 22 Olivier Hourcade has been singled out by John Golding, *Cubism: A History and Analysis*, London, 1959, as the first critic of Cubism to relate Cubist painting to Kantian aesthetic theory, in "La Tendance de la peinture contemporaine," *La Revue de France et des Pays français*, 1 (February 1912). Hourcade's understanding of Kant, however, seems tinged with Bergson, for in quoting from Schopenhauer he emphasizes "That between the thing and us, there is always the intelligence," a position equally susceptible to even a materialist interpretation, and one moreover extremely close to Gleize and Metzinger's view as elaborated in *Du Cubisme*. Maurice Raynal, "Qu'est-ce que le Cubisme?," *Comoedia* (December 1913), makes a statement similar to Hourcade's in stressing that artists do not imitate the erroneous appearances of vision but "celles plus vraies de l'esprit," which can be interpreted as close to Bergson's more down-to-earth attitude that it is the intervention of intelligence and memory that conditions perception; see: Golding, p. 87.
- 23 Juan Gris's reply appeared in *Bulletin de la Vie Artistique*, Paris, 6th year, No. 1 (January 1, 1925), pp. 15–17. Parts appear in Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, *Juan Gris: His Life and Work*, New York, 1947, pp. 144, 145.
- 24 Christopher Green, *Cubism and Its Enemies*, London, 1987, chose to emphasize the origin of the idea of the independent work of art with the poet Pierre Reverdy in an important article of 1917; see: ch. 10, "The Aesthetics of Purity," pp. 158–67.
- 25 Maurice Raynal, *Le Cubisme, 1907–1914*, Paris, 1953.
- 26 Barr (cited n. 12) p. 73.
- 27 Sir Herbert Read, *Constructivism: Gabo and Pevsner*, exh. cat., New York, The Museum of Modern Art, 1948., p. 7.
- 28 Bernard Dorival, in *Le Cubisme* (cited n. 25).
- 29 Bernard Dorival, *L'Étapes de la Peinture Contemporaine*, Paris, 1944.
- 30 Golding (cited n. 22), passim.
- 31 Kahnweiler (cited n. 20), p. 3.

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