

A World of ‘Purely Artistic Conception’ and a ‘Universal Art of the Spirit’: Max Dvořák and Karel Teige between Phenomenology and Surrealism¹

Josef Vojvodík — Faculty of Arts, Charles University in Prague /
Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Karlovy, Praha

During the years 1912–1913, which had such an epochal significance in the development of philosophy and modern 20th-century art — Husserl’s *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie*, Kandinsky’s *Über das Geistige in der Kunst* and the first volume of Proust’s *À la recherche du temps perdu* saw publication and Duchamp created his first ready-made — Max Dvořák, the founder of the second Viennese School of art history, offered a critique of both modern naturalism and impressionism in art and the dominance of the Positivist natural sciences and technology as having been surpassed. In an atmosphere of intense quests for new paths towards authentic experiences with the realities of the word in visual art and literature, Edmund Husserl published his *Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft* (1911), in which 19th-century naturalism and historicism is subjected to a radical critique. Just as phenomenology calls into question the idea that consciousness represents reality, the art of modernity and the early avant-garde of the 20th century turns against a purely ‘representational’ function. Despite an emphasis on the cognition of authentic experience, a pragmatic empiricism — a naïve faith in the ‘reality’ of the outer world, known on the basis of *common sense* — is decisively rejected, in the early avant-garde as it is in phenomenology. With respect to the theory and artistic practice of the avant-garde, it is highly significant that Husserl had already written in the *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie* (1913), which he considered to be a fundamental return towards transcendental phenomenology, about a ‘new way of seeing’ (*neue Weise des ‘sehens’*), which was to become a ‘gateway to phenomenology’ (Husserl 1976, p. 43, 61). This (eidetic) seeing, which is not a sensorial seeing, but rather ‘given in an absolutely original consciousness’, is akin to the ‘new seeing’ of the artist as creator and his recipient: both are meant to lead toward the ‘irrealisation of the world’ (*Irrealisierung der Welt*) — that is, toward the transformation of the real into the possible (ibid., p. 148). Through the transcendental reduction, we are ‘from the start in a situation like that of a person born blind who must be told about things and who must begin to learn how to see properly’ (Husserl 1959, s. 122). The phenomenologist must renounce the natural attitude toward the world



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and toward natural perception, which means remaining in blindness and taking up an 'anti-natural attitude' (*widernatürliche Einstellung*), much as the artist (and the recipient as well) must extricate himself from the 'thrall' of a practical, empirical type of thinking and attitude towards the world in favour of an aesthetic attitude and artistic type of thinking, which is always 'artificial', arty and purposeless, just as the method of phenomenological reduction is 'extremely artificial (if not directly artistic)'.² The aim of the phenomenologist, like that of the artist, is self-experience, self-knowledge, a penetration into 'pure subjectivity' (Husserl 1959, s. 97). 'Blindness' to the images of the outer world is a condition for seeing essences; iconoclasm 'conceals' within itself the seeing under ordinary circumstances of invisible images or, as Husserl (and later Merleau-Ponty) notes, there is nothing more difficult than to express in words what we see, that which opens up to us through 'mute', visual, aesthetic — and emotional — experience. That which is observed, seen (and experienced) always precedes words.³ From this perspective, the attitude of the philosopher and artist with phenomenological leanings is an attitude of extreme states of the imagination. In *Erfahrung und Urteil* Husserl writes on the situation of transcendental consciousness: 'Then we find ourselves in a world of pure fantasy, so to speak — in a world of absolutely pure possibility' (Husserl 1976, pp. 424).

It was at this time, at the onset of the First World War, that Max Dvořák was lecturing on idealism and realism in the art of modernity, developing the theme in his extensive study *Idealismus und Naturalismus in der gotischen Skulptur und Malerei* (1918),⁴ which foreshadowed Dvořák's pioneering lectures on Mannerism and 'aesthetically transcendental phenomena'. The fundamental significance of this study of naturalism and idealism consisted not only in that it contained the basic theses, in outline form, of a new understanding and a new conception of the history of art as a history of spirit, but also in that in it, Dvořák brings his considerations — formulated with care — on 'transcendental phenomena' into a certain proximity with Husserl's transcendental phenomenology from the post-*Ideen* (1913) period. Dvořák wrote that the late Middle Ages opposed not only the immanent world to that of the external ('temporal') world of nature, but also a third model of the world to 'another' supra-sensorial metaphysical world: a world of purely artistic conception in which the imagination had started to create its own values and in which art became 'autonomous, a source for observations of the world independent of metaphysical assumptions' (Dvořák 1991, s. 244). Dvořák developed this idea further in his studies on Breughel, El Greco and Tintoretto (done in 1920) as the great creators of Mannerism.⁵

2 As Husserl (1980, p. 516) writes in posthumously published texts from his literary estate on the imagination and visual awareness.

3 Eidos 'precedes all concepts in the sense of dictionary meanings, which are, in all probability, created and subsequently adapted to it', writes Husserl (1950, p. 104) in the Fourth Cartesian Meditation.

4 *Idealismus a naturalismus v gotickém sochařství a malířství* [Idealism and Naturalism in Gothic Sculpture and Painting]. This work by Dvořák is based on lectures he gave on the theme in 1913–1914.

5 To be sure, Dvořák's interpretations are obsolete today, almost eighty years of intensive material research into 16th- and 17th-century art. Nonetheless, this does not affect in anyway

Several weeks after Dvořák's sudden death in February 1921, Karel Teige, then a student of art history and a theoretician of the recently founded avant-garde Devětsil Union of Modern Culture, published the manifesto titled *Obrazy a předobrazy* (Images and Fore-Images, 1921). In this essay, one of his first, Teige was already dealing with the relationship between reality and 'surreality', the rational and the irrational and reflecting on the inner 'fore-images' created by both the imagination and dreams:

New genres, scenes out of our dreams and fantasies, stories of the heart woven through with love and compassion. — This is how painters paint the fore-images of tomorrow which give reality its magic and moving landscapes [...]. (Teige 1971, p. 102).

In 1923, Teige wrote a text for the first monograph on Jan Zrzavý, whose work he was returning to after a period of 18 years, titled *Jan Zrzavý — předchůdce* (Jan Zrzavý — Precursor, 1941). In it, Teige harked back to a 1923 study which he expanded with a discussion of the inner model, though the fundamental interpretational thesis remained basically unchanged. In 1923, Teige had already emphasized that the moving force behind Jan Zrzavý's artistic creativity was an 'apprehension of reality':

Wherever a photographer works with a lens and a light-sensitive plate there is an artist working with all his humanity. He is apprehending the world not only through sight, but through all the senses, thoroughly, in detail. Out of his apprehension of the world, he creates in his interior or in his memory new images which do not aim to be an imitation of or an illusion based on external reality, but a new reality, newly born of the spirit (Teige 2003, p. 218).

As Teige puts it, the search for new routes toward reality, the rejection of all naturalism and a loss of confidence in the representational function of art forms the basis not only of Jan Zrzavý's art, but also of all of modern art, including the avant-garde from 1910 to the 1930s. Artists were no longer concerned with representations of reality, but with 'the concreteness of the tangible objects of phenomenal reality' (Teige 1994, p. 30). And in the 'thorough transcendence of the limits of naturalist postulates regarding thinking and feeling', Max Dvořák (1946, p. 301) saw one of the main characteristics of the art of the leading artists of Mannerism and the early Baroque. In connection with Titian's last paintings (*Crowning with Thorns* at the Alte Pinakothek, Munich), Dvořák wrote that 'everything materially apprehensible and materially measurable is substituted with a trembling cluster of forms in space. The omnipotence of art has changed the realm of the senses which was the starting point of Titian's art into a purely subjective, spiritual matter' (1946, p. 225–226).

the significance and validity of Dvořák's understanding and his insightful interpretation of the phenomenon of Mannerism in the context of the avant-garde in the late 1910s. Similarly, his conception of 'art history as spiritual history' seems today to be more of a 'scholarly utopia of a past agethan a concretely usable programme' (Aurenhammer 1996, p. 10), but it is precisely for this reason — and because it coincides temporally with the avant-garde as a 'utopian project', among other things — that it is relevant and inspiring today.

In his 1923 study, Teige had already written of the ‘spiritual expressivity’ of Zrzavý’s painting and of the essence of art, which is to ‘descend’ profoundly ‘into the mystery of things and the interior of humanity, to embrace the life of the universe intimately, to join its breath with that of the universe. [...] Zrzavý’s art arises with Arcadian calm and clarity from the mysterious depths and abysses of life. It leaves a world of shadows and enters into a world of realities. He raises matter into the spiritual sphere and endows it with psychological powers. It emerges from the darkness of afflicted spiritual states anchored in an individual’s unconscious and finds itself in the light of day’ (Teige 2003, p. 215, 219–220). Although Teige does not refer explicitly in this study to Max Dvořák (as he does in his study *Zrzavý — předchůdce* (Jan Zrzavý – Precursor, 1941), his approach to and interpretation of the painter’s work is close to Dvořák’s spiritual-intellectual conception of artistic creation, particularly in the emphasis he places on the spirituality of his artistic expressivity and the operation of psychological forces concealed in the artist’s interior. Teige, who began his studies in art history at Charles University in 1919 — under Vojtěch Birnbaum, interestingly, one of the principal representatives of the Viennese school of art history at the university in Prague — was doubtless already familiar at the time with Dvořák’s ideas on art history and most probably knew about Dvořák’s initial lecture on El Greco and Mannerism, first published in 1922.⁶

Both of Teige’s studies on the work of Jan Zrzavý are connected by the idea that the painter’s artistic evolution tended not towards an escape from the reality of life and the world, but — on the contrary — was rather ‘a path toward a *re-conquest of the reality of modern art*’ (Teige 2003, p. 220; Teige’s italics). Similarly, Teige wrote in the conclusion of his 1941 study on Zrzavý’s path toward a ‘reconquest of reality’:

Jan Zrzavý rightly identified the conception of a work of art as the moment when we penetrate ecstatically into a thing, when we surrender to its allure: thus he expressed the contact between the artist’s soul and the thing, the reality. [...] The painter’s resources borrow the irrational vision of the concreteness of the tangible objects of phenomenal reality. The imagination, giving form to matter, creates a new reality of its own, impregnated with a powerful affective charge which, thanks to its magnetic nature, grants its unconscious yearnings the gratification denied to them by everyday experience (Teige 1994a, p. 30).

Teige’s insistence on the ‘spiritual function of art’ and on the idea of the auto-intentionality of a work of art is noteworthy: ‘The work of art is complete and represents itself alone. [...] it has its own order, its own language, independent and autonomous and a full and specific form of expression. [...] It does not try to change the world or influence practical life’ (Teige 1971c, p. 507). It is not, as it happens, an aesthetic sensibility, the activity of a ‘higher spirituality’ or a drawing near of reality — albeit through the sphere of ‘another world of imagination’ (Dvořák 1991c, p. 145), which is a fundamental category in the last phase of Dvořák’s art-historical and intellectual cultural thought in the late 1910s. It is in the same spirit that Dvořák interprets Man-

⁶ Dvořák’s lecture titled *Über Greco und den Manierismus* was first published in the *Jahrbuch des Kunsthistorischen Instituts der Zentralkommission* (16, 1922).

nerism as a crypto-modern manifestation of a 'new spirituality' and a 'culture of the heart' as the synthesis of enthusiasm, spirituality and a singular sensibility which Teige writes about (Teige 1971c, p. 507) in his *Moderní umění a společnost* (Modern Art and Society, 1924): 'The century of industry, calculations, stock exchanges, in the century of political upheavals, is seeing the rise of a great need, a wonderful thirst for pure lyricism'.

The decision on the part of Mannerist artists to 'subjectively choose and assert a degree of reality' (Dvořák 1991b, p. 19) as well as their ability to do so; the creation of works guided, like El Greco's *The Burial of Count Orgaz*, 'solely by the artist's inner creative inspiration' (Dvořák 1946a, p. 291); the endeavour, like that of Tintoretto, to 'express that which excited the artist's passions'; and the conception of the work of art as *varietà*, a variation of one among many possible ways to interpret a particular subject artistically — are all criteria which might be ascribed to 'kunstwollen' Mannerism as they might to the avant-garde. In the period when Dvořák was writing on El Greco and Mannerism, he wrote his last text as well, a foreword to Oskar Kokoschka's cycle of drawings titled *Variationen über ein Thema* (1921), published shortly following Dvořák's sudden death. The significance of this text for the reception of Kokoschka's work and for modern art theory is betokened by its warm reception both then and today (Aurenhammer 1998, pp. 34–40).

In the 1950s, the historian and psychologist of art Otto Kurz (1955, p. 419) expressed the view that whenever Max Dvořák spoke of El Greco, it was actually Kokoschka he had in mind: 'Quando lo Dvořák parlava dal Greco voleva invece dire Kokoschka'. At first glance, it is conspicuous that Dvořák uses here the same language with which he characterizes El Greco's art. According to Dvořák, El Greco's figures give the impression of obeying laws different than those of earthly gravity and the atmosphere of his paintings 'radiates a dreamlike, unreal existence' (Dvořák 1946a, p. 297). Likewise, Kokoschka's portrait drawings are permeated by '[something] spiritually transitory and flowing which Kokoschka [...] pursues with a fervent intensity. [...] In Kokoschka's portrait studies [...] the physical is but a reflection of the spiritual [...] (Dvořák 1988, p. 32). And he writes, similarly, in a study on El Greco in connection with Germain Pilon's *Bust of Jean de Morvillier*, that 'physical appearances are merely reflections of the fire blazing inside a human being' (Dvořák 1946a, p. 301). Both in the works of the 16th-century Mannerists and in Kokoschka's drawings of the late 1920s, Dvořák sees an effort to penetrate, by means of individuality and the individual, into that which is spiritually above the individual.

'THE INNER SUBJECT' — 'THE INNER FATE OF MAN': TEIGE'S CONCEPTION OF THE 'INNER MODEL'

At the very start of *Jan Zrzavý — předchůdce* (Jan Zrzavý — Precursor, 1941), when he takes up the disregard of 'fantastic art' 'in the thrall of classical standards', Teige refers to Max Dvořák in an extensive citation in which he, as Teige writes, warned against a false belief 'in unchanging foundational concepts in art which are based on the supposition that despite the changing variety of artistic aims, the idea of a work of art can be considered something abiding and unchanging.

Nothing, however, is more false and less historical than such a view, for the idea of a work of art and art in general have evolved in their basic traits throughout history, undergoing the most varied transformations and have always been temporally and culturally circumscribed and a variable result of the general evolution of humankind' (Teige 1994a, p. 7). Teige refers here to the Viennese historian primarily as a researcher who had already stressed at around the time of the First World War that historical knowledge can never be final, no matter how great the effort at objectification; neither can it be bounded or fossilized. It entails 'uninterrupted continuation and inexhaustible regeneration' (Dvořák 1974, p. 12). In the context of what in the 1910s was a field of art history with strong Positivist leanings encompassing the history of styles, this uncommonly modern understanding of historical development of art (though not art alone) applied, of course, to Dvořák himself in the first place. His study on the great Mannerist artists convincingly shows something Teige had clearly been aware of — namely, that Dvořák's art-historical and art-theoretical thought was 'thinking in constant motion', from theses to antitheses as Hans H. Aurenhammer (1996, pp. 9–39) showed based on the emergence of Dvořák's study on Tintoretto, against the background of a constantly metamorphosing modernity.

Teige returned to Dvořák's conception of art history 'as a history of spirit' in his last, unfinished work, *Fenomenologie umění* (The Phenomenology of Art, 1947–1951) and thus also to his own conception of art in the early 1920s: to art as a grand synthesis of poetry, love and spirit. For Teige, 'L'Amour — la Poésie' was the identity as well as the key motif of his art-theoretical thinking in the 1940s. At the end of a text he wrote for the catalogue of the *International Surrealism Exhibition* in Prague (November 1947), Teige urgently — and rather 'provocatively' in the post-war period — underscored the 'dominance of poetry', which was the 'universal art of the spirit':

Mythic poetry should give that basic and passionate human thirst for exaltation and ecstasy which rationalistic civilization has not been able to quench full satisfaction. The mythic function which lives in our unconscious, the archaic components of our psyche, pre-logical, uncontrolled and magical thought dramatise and lyricise our inner universe and develop freely in our dreams. Poetry, which has its sources in them, has always been a myth-creating force. [...] A dream, made real in a poem or a picture, becomes a force which wants to become true, to become one with life. Whoever believes in man, whoever has faith in the human spirit, knows that miracles, dreams, poems and utopias come true (Teige 1994, pp. 334–335).

But the return to Dvořák also takes place on another plane: much as Dvořák, who re-discovers and interprets Mannerism and El Greco's art through the prism of the artistic endeavours of the 1920s avant-garde, Teige interprets Grünewald's art not only through the prism of Surrealism, but also as the work of the 'first Baroque genius of the late Gothic period', spiritually and artistically akin 'to the prototype of the Baroque spirit, to El Greco':

Through El Greco, whose posthumous fate was so similar to that of Grünewald's, who was also forgotten for entire centuries [...] and whose work was only understood fully

in the light of modern art and modern art theory and became an active developmental and orientational factor in the genesis and history of post-Impressionist painting — that is, Grünewald's path towards the present day leads us past El Greco, and just like El Greco, Grünewald [...] is a living flame which illuminates the paths of present-day research. He is not an old master, but a living presence, a spouting fount of vertiginous emotions; he is a splendid example of that 'convulsive beauty' which the poetic imagination rises up to (Teige 1994e, pp. 57–58).

If Dvořák had placed Mannerism within the context of the late Gothic period,⁷ Teige interpreted Grünewald's 'late Gothic' as the prototype of the Baroque art and spirit.⁸ The idea of a 'Gothic-like Baroque' extends into the art history of the 1890s; the interpretation of the Gothic period, Mannerism and the Baroque from the perspective of avant-garde art, however, was new.⁹

Teige's study on Jan Zrzavý (1941) was an opportunity for him to lay aside questions regarding the sociology of architecture and, following the cultural-political

7 In the conclusion of his study on Michelangelo, Dvořák (1946c, p. 174) writes: 'Michelangelo once said that a good sculpture must be conceived so that one could roll it down a mountain without it getting damaged — and another time he said that there is no boulder which does not already contain everything a sculptor might want to say. Both of these thoughts are embodied here: what is important is not a verist competition with nature, but a purely visual representation which becomes one with the boulder and fills it to the bursting point with an absolute sculptural life in a rush of divine creative might. There is no extraneous aim, but pure artistry, which is the antithesis of antiquity and brings us close to the Gothic period; still, it is not based on abstract concepts like the Gothic, but on an individual mastery over the surrounding world. It is thus not a norm, but a subjective *Confiteor*'.

8 At the time when he was writing his text on Grünewald (1941), Teige was intensively investigating the issues revolving around the imagination and fantastic art, on which he had intended to write an extensive monograph. Nevertheless, only a detailed outline (Teige 1994, p. 490) has survived, indicating that Teige did not want to content himself with superficial parallels between ancient art and modernity; instead, he wanted to carry out a thorough reconstruction of the genesis of products of the imagination and the imaginative pictorial consciousness from the late Middle Ages to Munch and Gauguin, which he wanted to develop in a theoretical section made up, among other things, by the 'Baroque Cycle' as a freestanding chapter (Teige 1994, p. 613). Regretfully, he never did so, but Teige does carry out a partial treatment of the problem of the imagination as a creative principle in his studies from the 1940s and in the fragments comprising *Fenomenologie umění* (The Phenomenology of Art).

9 In a way, it is curious that Dvořák's student Hans Sedlmayr situated (in 1949) — apparently for the very first time, though in a rather misleading way and imprecisely — Dvořák's rediscovery of Mannerism in the context of Surrealism. In addition, it must be noted that it was Sedlmayr himself who, in a study titled *Die „Macchia“ Bruegels* (1934) placed Brueghel's Mannerism as interpreted by Dvořák in the immediate context of Surrealism — much as shortly thereafter Mukařovský situated the bizarre 'portraits' of the Mannerist Arcimboldo within the immediate context of Nezval's Surrealist text titled *Absolutní hrobař* (Absolute Gravedigger). I compare Sedlmayr's art-theoretical structuralism and Mukařovský's structural aesthetics in a 1996 study (Vojvodík 1997, pp. 3–22; cf. also Vojvodík 2005, pp. 116–144).

polemics of 1937–1938, return to the issue of the inner model which he had foreshadowed in the postscript to his monograph on Štyrský and Toyen (1938) and which became at the time a fundamental question in his theory of ‘imaginative painting’ as the antithesis of the external subject of naturalist painting. Teige refers to Hegel’s favouring of poetry as the real art of the spirit and at the same time evokes the ‘disegno interno’, one of the basic principles of the Mannerist aesthetic, with roots in neo-Platonist aesthetics. For Teige, the concept of the inner model is synonymous with the concept of the reality of ‘its kind, permeated with a powerful affective charge’ (Teige 1994a, p. 30). The essence of the so-called imaginative painting is the visualization of the ‘spiritual forms’ of the inner model, which Teige specifies as being a mental — that is, a ‘fantastic, lyric, poetic’ (Teige 1945/1946, p. 150) — notion, rendered on canvas with technical means. According to Teige, the image arises in two stages: ‘1.) through inspiration, which is the spiritual shaping of the inner model; at this moment the image, rooted in the spirit, is basically completed, 2.) and through the process by which this psychic image is fixed on the canvas [...]’ (Teige 1945/1946, p. 150). In Teige’s (and Breton’s) interpretation, the ‘inner model’ is externalized onto the canvas through a process of psychic automatism; here Teige is availing himself of Breton’s theory of psychic automatism and his interpretation of the inner model (*modèle intérieur*). In *Le Surréalisme et la Peinture* (1925/1928), Breton wrote that the ‘values of the real need to be subjected to a total revision, in this all people of the spirit are as one, and in order that we may pursue this need, the work of art must turn to a purely interior fore-image or it will cease to exist’ (Breton 1965, p. 9).¹⁰ In this connection, Teige wrote of the photo-mechanic automatism by which a snapshot of an external model is created in a fraction of a second and contraposes his psychic automatism to such a photo-mechanic automatism: ‘It should be possible to photograph the inner world’:

First, it revealed modern optics and chemistry; then it helped us invent modern psychology. We shall become light-sensitive plates capable of receiving images if we are able to imagine ourselves in this state of passivity, with its separation of psychic energy and mercurial attention analogous to a state of sleepiness or hypnosis, when a person observes the images of his interior, a state in which unwanted images come to the surface and the volitional and critical activities wane. It is a state of introspection [...] (Teige 1945/1946, p. 151).

Teige does, to be sure, allude to Breton’s conception, but he modifies the inner model quite substantially in his interpretation. Teige’s use of optical and photo-technical terms has a particular significance and indicates a somewhat different

¹⁰ Breton assumes that the rationalism of Western culture subjugates the depths of our inner, individual experience and is not able to capture and express this true, but hidden reality. In contrast with this rational conception of the world, Breton posits his model of the inner world consisting of ideas, products of the imagination and of fantasy, desires and unconscious forces, and this is the reality the modern artist must give expression to. The aim of art is to make visible that which is irrational, fantastic and miraculous while precluding ‘rational direction’.

spin to his use of psychic automatism and the inner model than that of Breton and the French Surrealists. Teige was able to tap into the store of information produced by Jan Evangelista Purkyně's investigations into inner seeing, which he practiced and described in the first half of the 19th century, inspired, among other things, by Goethe's theory of colours (*Farbenlehre*), and which was not without influence on one of the main theories of abstract painting in the early 20th century, František Kupka's theory of 'pure colours'. In his dissertation, *Beiträge zur Kenntnis des Sehens in subjektive Hinsicht* (1819), Purkyně wrote about the existence of inner visual apparitions and imagery: 'In our interior, dreams, fantasy and reality intertwine prodigiously [...] we thus gradually set everything outside ourselves and ourselves against everything and orient ourselves within the sphere of our being [...]' (Purkyně 1969, p. 17). Purkyně explored the relationship between the external visual image and the inner pictorial vision; he was interested in sensorial, particularly visual illusions — 'phantoms', which he referred to as 'subjective sensorial phenomena' — and was keen to cast light on their objective (physiological) basis. He concentrated on the subjective basis of visuality and through his explorations and experiments, he presaged certain considerations on the modern imagination in art and on problems related to modern intersubjectivity in general as well. Teige also familiarised himself with Purkyně's line of research into visual apparitions in the 1940s through Bohumil Kubišta, whose aesthetic reflections were a subject of intense interest to him. In *Vnitřní model* (Inner Model, 1945/1946), Teige uses terminology from the field of optics and 'photo-mechanics' in order to bring home the essence of this theory, even though he stresses that 'painting does not here share common interests or tasks with photography' (Teige 1945/1946, p. 150). The inner model calls forth a 'psychic upheaval', a form of inspiration, which may resemble enlightenment: 'the magnesium flash of inspiration is the moment of exposure. At this drop-shutter moment, the image is brought forth and congealed on the light-sensitive plate' (Teige 1945/1946, p. 152). It is no accident that a similar metaphor is to be found earlier, in Teige's early 20th-century writings, where Teige vindicates 'the art of photography' and film photography, which 'reveals the breathtaking epic of life, its dramatic visual nature and the photogenic character of the forms of the earth, embodying the authentic rhythm of the globe and its incessant drama. It is the sister of Whitman's poetry. Man Ray's photos are something out of the sphere of Edgar A. Poe' (Teige 1971d, p. 615).

Nevertheless, the uniqueness of Teige's conception of the inner model also consists in his emphasis of the spiritual basis of artistic creation as a delving ever deeper into the 'spiritual sphere' and in his insistence on the significance of the 'aesthetic moment', of 'aesthetic contemplation' and aesthetic delight, even though he notes that the role of the 'aesthetic coefficient' should not be overstated (Teige 1945/1946, p. 154). It is as if Teige were harking back to the hedonistic aesthetic of 'poetism'. In his reflections during the 1940s on the essence of modern art, however, he turned toward the existential dimension of the aesthetic experience and the aesthetic attitude of the existential Ego. This is all the more noteworthy in that Teige developed his interpretation of the inner model in his studies on the work of Bohumil Kubišta (1947, 1949). In the conclusion of his *Estetické úvahy Bohumila Kubišty* (The Aesthetic Reflections of Bohumil Kubišta, 1947), Teige draws — with

reference to Kubišta's paintings *Svatý Šebestián* (Saint Sebastian) and *Polibek smrti* (Kiss of Death) — a striking parallel between the 'inner fate of man' and the 'inward subject', which is interpreted as an extraordinary 'aesthetic emotion' with a marked existential scope:

Kubišta understands that the aesthetic emotion, which provides a creation embodying spiritual agitation with an artistic form, elicits a far mightier disturbance to the spectator's psyche as it is amplified by the resonance caused by hidden desires, unconscious inclinations and veiled passions living in the cellar of our soul and which that emotion kindles. The work of art, driven by the delight principle, awakens irrational forces in the interior of modern man, whose rational everyday life is thoroughly subjected to the reality principle — forces born of dreams, fantasy, desire and love which awaken dreams, fantasies, desires and love. [...] the work of art has a mysterious power to sanctify certain moments in life, as long as the aesthetic emotion which it incites manages to stir the most concealed depths of the spectator's psyche, making the most subjective and shrouded forces of his eroticism resound within him and to give symbolic satisfaction to his unfulfilled desires; as long as that aesthetic emotion taps into the most profound psychic wellsprings and abysses and raises the secret veil of Sais, as it were, of our being (Teige 1994c, pp. 184–185).

Here, the theory of the inner model acquires a new dimension: it is connected with the 'aesthetic emotion' which is capable of reaching the deepest core of the human personality. Herein also lies the singular value of the depth of aesthetic phenomena. If the work of art reaches down to those deep strata of a man's being, then life is capable of transcending itself, of crossing beyond the restricting horizon of everyday existence and its practical, goal oriented nature, of conciliating the 'delight principle with the reality principle', writes Teige.¹¹

Teige returns to the theory of the inner model again in his study titled *Bohumil Kubišta* (1949):¹²

*The shift from the external model to the inner model is a comprehensive process which has spanned several of modern art's developmental stages. [...] The ordeal was so radical that any effort on the part of the artist to bring back the theme of human and poetic tension will no longer take him back down the path of nature or that of the external subject; instead, it will lead henceforth towards what we refer to (if we may use Breton's term, which has gained currency and is analogous to the antinomy expressed in the early 17th century by Federico Zuccari in his *Idea dei pittori: the disegno interno and the disegno esterno — the inner and external design*) as the inner model. The presence and appeal of the inner theme blurs the boundary between painting and poetry. Painting enters the Promised Land of Poetry* (Teige 1994d, p. 381).

11 In 1921, Geiger (1880–1937) published a text on the psychology of the unconscious in the 4th volume of Husserl's *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung* titled *Fragment über den Begriff des Unbewussten und die psychische Realität*.

12 The last of Teige's studies published in the journal *Kvart* (1949, pp. 350–378).

By highlighting the existential dimension of the aesthetic emotion and its ability to plumb the most profound structures of human existence, Teige draws near to the phenomenological aesthetics of Husserl's student Moritz Geiger, particularly his conception of the aesthetic attitude which Geiger developed in the course of the 1930s. As early as his *Zugänge zur Ästhetik*, in which he tries to integrate metaphysical and existential impulses within a phenomenological aesthetics, Geiger writes:

The aesthetic object must acquire a subjective significance; it must touch the existence of the Ego; it must be 'experienced', not just perceived. In our everyday life we also know that space has depth — yes, we see it when we open our eyes, at every moment. Only art is not satisfied with this: that spatial depth must be 'experienced' (Geiger 1928, p. 84).

In these considerations, the aesthetic object comes into immediate existential proximity with the experiencing subject in the sense of an existential connection between the artist as creator and the perceiver having the aesthetic experience. Here Geiger ponders on the 'psycho-vital' (in the existential sense) dimension which is embodied in the work of art. In this way, the work of art acquires a 'spiritual existential significance' which bears down on the perceiving subject with particular vehemence. Thus, the perceiving Ego penetrates into a sphere which is inaccessible in everyday life. In such an aesthetic experience of a work of art, the artist's intentionality is co-perceived and, at the same time, the essence ('*Wesen*') of being is experienced in the aesthetic object. An entirely new world of essences is constructed beyond the limits of the ontological world and made visible in the work of art. It is as if the ontological groundedness of the aesthetic object were given only in the existential depths of the subject, to which the object gives itself over in full. In texts written in the 1930s and published posthumously, Geiger wrote:

The deep-seated dimension of the aesthetic upheaval reveals two criteria: the delight in the upheaval is a sign that the Ego is affected by artistic objects in its structure, in its elementary essence. The artistic upheaval may thus serve to disclose these structures of human existence, which lie in the deepest depths! The recognition of aesthetic values may thus become a sign post, touch the skeleton of our human existence and pierce through to the marrow of a person's being. [...] Aesthetics is crucial for understanding existence — more so than ethics, logic and the philosophy of religion. [...] Art turns only to a person's existence as such; art must answer not to the reality of the world, but solely to the laws that derive from the structure of the personality. [...] Each new great work of art enlarges on a person's existence at a new depth and thus transforms man's existence. This new creation redeems through its withdrawal from the privations of the world (Geiger 1976, pp. 301–302).

The aesthetic attitude transforms reality — literally purges it — in the sphere of unreality; however, this unreality is an autogenous — writes Geiger, alluding to Schopenhauer — and specific form of reality. It is as if the work of art called forth the unreality of our psychic 'attunement', manifesting therein, however, a 'more real' reality than the reality of the world.

THE BIRTH OF THE 'NEW IDEALISM' FROM THE SPIRIT OF MODERNITY

There is, however, a crucial moment here in which Teige's art-theoretical thought of the 1940s draws close to Dvořák's theory of the liberation of art from the passive depiction of external reality (in Gothic painting and sculpture) which Max Dvořák takes up his study *Idealismus und Naturalismus in der gotischen Skulptur und Malerei* (1918),¹³ mentioned above. This study is a prelude to Dvořák's exploration of Mannerism as a pre-modern phenomenon, whose first manifestations arose — hardly by chance — in the art of the Gothic period, as Dvořák saw it. Here, he deals with those very aspects of modern art, which Teige returns to again and again during the course of the 1940s, which form the nucleus of his conception of the inner model and his ideas on the significance and function of fantasy and imagination and which he wanted to elaborate thoroughly in *Fantastické malířství* (Fantastic Painting), a book he intended to write but never did.

Nonetheless, the contrast Dvořák draws between the terms 'naturalism' and 'idealism' deserves attention if only because the Viennese art historian concerned himself with it, as noted by Edwin Lachnit (2005, p. 92),¹⁴ at a time of very lively discussions about realism and abstraction in the context of the early avant-garde, when Kandinsky distinguished in his *Über das Geistige in der Kunst* (1912) between 'great abstraction' and 'great realism'. Much as Dvořák, Kandinsky too reflected on 'primary' realism, or naturalism, which the process of abstraction is based on — that is, the abstraction of an object and its 'laying bare'. Kandinsky tried to reinterpret the term 'realism', which was encumbered by 19th-century Positivism. According to Kandinsky, the modern work of art 'purifies' and abstracts the real object in that the reality of the object depicted is substituted by the real material character of the picture's surface. From this standpoint, Kandinsky believes it is not important whether the artist works with real or abstract forms, because both forms are innerly identical. That is to say, on the one hand the objectification of the abstract and on the other the abstraction of the object, depicted as the expression of a radical rejection of any form and semblance of mimesis whatsoever in early avant-garde art. For reality had become the subject of the modern world, its experience not only suspicious, but inaccessible as well. This conflict between the Ego and the world could be elaborated — from the perspective of the theory and artistic practice of the avant-garde — primarily using aesthetic means. Similarly, during the late Gothic period there had been a conflict between two worlds — the world of ephemeral nature and the world of supranatural values and phenomena — reconciled, as Dvořák points out, through the creation of a third world of 'autonomous aesthetic thought'.

This 'autonomous aesthetic thought' meant primarily a fundamental transformation in Gothic art's relationship with the external world in the sense of the interiorisation of sensorial perception, of sensorial phenomena, and their transformation into spiritual formations of subjective perception and consciousness. Related to this is the discovery of man not as a subject of 'artistic truth', but as an individual. This may have been particularly

13 This study was published once again following Dvořák's death in a collection of his Works titled *Kunstgeschichte als Geistesgeschichte* (Munich 1924).

14 This noteworthy convergence of Dvořák's 'naturalism' — 'idealism' with Kandinsky's 'great abstraction' — 'great realism' was noted by Edwin Lachnit in his Viennese dissertation (1984), which was published in a rather recast version in 2005.

interesting for Teige: the burgeoning of creativity and the 'wondrous wealth of imaginativeness in Gothic art, that restless innovativeness in conceiving motifs which contained not only new natural impressions, but also continuously offered up new nourishment for the imagination'. This 'omnipotence of the imagination' was, according to Dvořák, in Gothic art anchored in an idealistic view of the world which in a fundamental, a priori way defined the limits of any representation of nature in art (Dvořák 1991, pp. 229–230). An entirely new world of artistic imagination is constructed out of subjective sensorial experience. As Dvořák stresses, a phenomenon is born in Gothic art which will have 'fatefully momentous' consequences for the future of art; a phenomenon which becomes the germ of the 'anti-classical' styles of Mannerism, the Baroque and the historical avant-garde — that is, the 'effort to overcome all norms' in direct contradistinction with the normative efforts of 'classical art' (Dvořák 1991, p. 233). By means of the trend towards a-naturalism and subjectivism, towards a-mimesis, towards the imagination consisting in nothing but itself, art attained an autonomous position within the framework of 'human existence'; it was here that 'autonomous artistic problems' and the phenomenon of specifically 'artistic truths' emerged. This trend, which meant an 'inevitable reappraisal of all values in art' and which inexorably led to the 'great formations of the imaginative mind in the Baroque period' (*ibid.*, p. 253), to the character tragedies of Shakespeare and Racine and to the novelistic art of Cervantes. Teige's observation that in the art of Grünewald, 'the first Baroque genius of the late Gothic period [...], the Gothic element, which had traversed the Renaissance as through a latency period, suddenly broke its silence in new, Baroque forms' and that 'the Gothic period in the German sphere took on signs of an evident Baroque tendency' (Teige's 1994, pp. 55–57) appears to be an elaboration of an idea Max Dvořák presented in his study on idealism and naturalism in Gothic art.

This study was supposed to be part of a more extensive work. In it, Dvořák wanted to trace the issues involved until the question of the new spiritualisation of art in Mannerism and the early Baroque in the work of Brueghel, El Greco and Tintoretto. Only the study on Brueghel was completed. The basic thesis of this work, which had already been expressed in his study on idealism and naturalism in Gothic art, was the trend towards aesthetic autonomy in art, which became the 'third spiritual world power' in the late Middle Ages, along with theology and the natural sciences:

Added to the two worlds which governed human desire, sentiment and thought in the Middle Ages, to the limited external world and to the factual world, a third world was added — a world of artistic conception which obeyed its own laws, [...] which found its tasks, goals and standards within itself and which [...] now elevated the poet to the status of father and author and bestowed a title of nobility on him, which was no lesser than that which the state or the church might have bestowed (Dvořák 1991, p. 242).

This trend led, in Dvořák's conception, through Mannerism and the Baroque to 20th-century modern art, as Dvořák stressed once again in his last text-meditation on Koschka's portrait drawings.

It was chiefly in the art of the avant-garde and Surrealism that Teige saw the realisation and fulfilment of this artistic trend toward aesthetic autonomy: the art of the avant-garde, as well as that of Mannerism and the Baroque, which undermined and rejected the classical central perspective of the 'phantasmal play of fantasy in which

smokescreens and flashes of colour reflect spiritual states, independently from the observation and depiction of reality' (Dvořák 1946, p. 297), the mimetic representation of the 'external model' to the advantage of an aesthetic of variety (and thus of provocation, too) — *varietas* — and (whether in appearance or in reality) incoherence, fragmentariness and decomposition, leaving a space open for new variation.

These are all moments which, for Teige's art-theoretical reflections, were important both in the early 1920s, when he was developing his conception of avant-garde art in the framework and atmosphere of post-Cubist modernism, and in the 1940s, when he realized that the great epoch of the avant-garde was closing — with respect to its significance, not its duration — or that at least a new period was beginning in which the artistic avant-garde would undergo what were still unforeseeable but fundamental changes, as Teige indicated in his extended meditation titled *Osud umělecké avantgardy v obou světových válkách* (The Fate of the Artistic Avant-Garde during the Two World Wars, 1946, Teige 1994, pp. 99–125).

At that time, however, Teige's skepticism redoubled — under the influence of an increasingly tense socio-political and cultural state of affairs — with respect to both the possibility of any further free development of artistic activities, and the external world in general as well. It is symptomatic that in the late 1940s Teige would set the terms 'inner' (world) and 'outer' (model, reality, etc.) against each other in increasingly keen-edged contrast. If in the early 1920s he had connected the idea of the fore-image, born of our imagination, with a vision of an ideal future, in the late 1940s he was connecting the idea of the inner model with an idea of the world which was a rigorous antithesis of the external 'real world':

[...] *a radical pessimism and the most apathetic indifference to the bustle of the external world — that is the best medicine. I tell myself that everything that is outside does not matter, that it is all vain and pointless and in the end more comical than tragic in its senselessness and foolishness [...]* (Effenberger 1994, pp. 644–645).¹⁵

15 This quotation comes from a letter written by Teige on 15–16 February 1948, cited by Vratislav Effenberger. These letters to his girlfriend, Marie Pospíšilová are remarkable evidence of the exhaustion of the utopian potential of the avant-garde model of the world in the thought of one of its protagonists: 'Nothing of what we promised has come to pass [...]. As far as art goes, there is nothing left of our world — not even ruins — and it shall not be until the close of the century, perhaps, that the time will come again when the art we cannot manage to live without will have the right to exist somewhere. Today, though, it is moribund'. More radical still was the skepticism expressed in a letter from 20–21 June 1948: 'After numerous and long-lasting depressions, I have concluded, in my quite calm and sober pessimism, that life does not matter in the least to me; I know that life no longer has any meaning and yet I have not thought and am not thinking of suicide, just the same. One must realise and get used to the thought that life is a shipwreck and a failure, that it comprises a series of grey and barren days, months and years of a senseless tragicomedy, interspersed with a few precious, radiant moments when something allows one to forget the world and everything which is outside the realm of, which is not human. [...] These precious few moments allow one to keep on living, but they are not the meaning of life, because they are attained only at the cost of forgetting both the real world and real life. It is that so-called real world which has become, due to its senselessness, an unreal world, an inauthentic life for me' (Effenberger 1994, p. 645).

The ‘inner world’ as the antithesis of the ‘unreal world’ and the ‘inauthentic life’ is a world of fantasy and imagination, writes Teige in this fragment of *The Phenomenology of Art*:

Those rare flashes, isolated at first, lighting up that distinctive path towards expressing the depths of human nature, towards creating an image of the inner world, remain but solitary expectations as long as the separation with the representation of external nature has not taken place. [...] In the drama of the development of modern art, the path which retreats from the material model repeatedly encounters and crosses the path which brings us closer to the spiritual model. [...] (Teige 1994d, pp. 485–486).

In this context, the theory of the inner model — and the sentence cited uses Teige’s concept of the ‘spiritual model’ in contradistinction to the ‘material model’ — becomes, it seems, a theory of a *different* vision of the world which is not interested in the external world (‘a forgetting of the real world and real life’, as Teige emphasized in the letter cited above), which it turns away from, directing its attention towards thought, towards ideas, mental acts and a different order of the visible.

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RESUMÉ / RÉSUMÉ

Svět „čistě uměleckého tvoření“ a „univerzální umění ducha“:

Max Dvořák a Karel Teige mezi fenomenologií a surrealismem

Na počátku čtyřicátých let 20. století se teoretik české avantgardy Karel Teige vrací ke koncepci dějin umění Maxe Dvořáka, totiž dějin umění jako „dějin ducha“. Od konce třicátých let 20. století se Teige intenzivně zabýval podstatou tzv. imaginativního (nebo, jeho terminologií, fantazijního) umění a své studium a rozbory, které chtěl syntetizovat v rozsáhlé koncipované, ale nedokončené práci *Fenomenologie umění*, jej vedly k názoru, že podstatu imaginativního umění tvoří vizualizace „duchových forem“ vnitřního modelu. Je to především zásadní proměna vztahu k vnějšímu světu ve smyslu zvnitřnění smyslového vnímání, smyslových vjemů, jejich proměna v duchovní útvary subjektivního vnímání a vědomí. Zde mohlo na Teigeho uvažování silně působit právě Dvořákovo zrušení antiteze mezi naturalismem a idealismem, vnitřním a zevním obrazem, jeho požadavek jednoty vědy o umění a umělecké praxe. Uvědomoval si, že jde o problém, který je zásadním způsobem konstitutivní pro celou epochu moderny a avantgardy, podobně jako si byl Dvořák vědom toho, že dějiny a teorie umění moderny nemohou být mechanickým pokračováním tradiční umělecko-historické metodiky, nýbrž reflexí tvůrčích procesů modemy samotné.

A World of ‘Purely Artistic Conception’ and a ‘Universal Art of the Spirit’:

Max Dvořák and Karel Teige between Phenomenology and Surrealism

In the early 1940s, Karel Teige, a prominent theorist of the Czech avant-garde, returns to Max Dvořák's concept of history of art as 'history of the spirit'. Starting in the late 1930s, Teige pursued a sustained inquiry into the essence of the so-called imaginative (or 'phantasizing', in Teige's own terminology) art, and his findings, which he intended to synthesize in a broadly conceived *Phenomenology of Art* (left unfinished), led him to the view that the essence of imaginative art consists in the visualization of 'spiritual forms' of an inner model. Primarily, it consists in a substantial transformation of one's relationship to the external world: specifically, an internalization of sense-perception and its metamorphosis into spiritual forms of subjective perception and consciousness.

This is where Teige might have been influenced precisely by Dvořák's abolition of any antithesis between naturalism and idealism, internal and external image, and his quest for a unity of *Kunstwissenschaft* and artistic practice. Teige was aware that this problem is central and constitutive for the entire era of Modernity and of the avant-garde, just as Dvořák was aware that the history and theory of modern art cannot consist in a mere mechanic continuation of the traditional art-historical method; rather, it must reflect upon the creative processes of modern art.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA / KEYWORDS

vnitřní model; česká avantgarda; fenomenologie vnímání; subjektivní prožitek skutečnosti; manýrismus; surrealismus / inner model; Czech avant-garde; phenomenology of perception; subjective experience of reality; mannerism; surrealism

Josef Vojvodík | Faculty of Arts, Charles University in Prague / Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Karlovy, Praha
Josef.Vojvodik@ff.cuni.cz