The Edgar Wind Journal

Volume 2

2/2022

ISSN 2785-2903

www.edgarwindjournal.eu

The Edgar Wind Journal

ISSN 2785-2903

Contacts

info@edgarwindjournal.eu
submissions@edgarwindjournal.eu

The Edgar Wind Journal is a biannual, peer-reviewed and international journal, in open access format.
Authors are invited to follow the instructions on the website:
https://www.edgarwindjournal.eu/submission/

Publisher

Bernardino Branca

Contact: Corso Magenta 48, 20123, Milan, Italy

Phone: 0039 3483605940

Email: bernard.branca@gmail.com

Table of Contents

Edgar Wind: Art and Embodiment

Fabio Tononi and Bernardino Branca

The present issue is inspired by the conference *Edgar Wind: Art and Embodiment*, organised by Bernardino Branca and Benjamin Thomas at the Italian Cultural Institute of London on 28 and 29 October 2021. The aim of this issue is to reflect on a number of themes and concepts investigated by Edgar Wind throughout his intellectual career.[1] Many of his works, both in philosophy of science and art history, contain the elements that generate one of his main philosophical contributions: the notion of embodiment.

In broad terms, Wind's concept of embodiment refers to symbolic representations.[2] Wind used this notion in his writings about philosophy of science and art history, identifying the phenomenon of embodiment both in scientific practice and in image making.[3] According to Wind, the concept of embodiment is the point of encounter between history and natural sciences.[4] Wind developed his notion of embodiment by combining his readings of pragmatist philosophers[5] with Ernest Cassirer's approach to the study of symbolic forms.[6] However, whereas according to Wind the symbol has a real content, observable via embodiment, for Cassirer this is not the case.[7]

---

[1] For more on Edgar Wind, see Fabio Tononi and Bernardino Branca, 'Introduction: Edgar Wind and a New Journal', in *The Edgar Wind Journal*, 1 (2021), 1-12; and Creighton Gilbert, 'Edgar Wind as Man and Thinker', in *New Criterion Reader*, 3(2) (1984), 36-41.

[2] See Brigitte Falkenburg, 'Edgar Wind on Experiment and Metaphysics', in *Journal of Transcendental Philosophy*, 2(1) (2021), 21-45.

[3] See, for example, Edgar Wind, *Experiment and Metaphysics: Towards a Resolution of the Cosmological Antinomies*, trans. by Cyril Edwards (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017); Wind, 'Picture and Text', in *The Religious Symbolism of Michelangelo: The Sistine Ceiling*, ed. by Elizabeth Sears (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 191-193; and Wind, 'Experiment and Metaphysics', in *Proceedings of the Sixth International Congress of Philosophy*, ed. by E. S. Brightman (New York: Longmans, 1927), pp. 217-224.

[4] See Wind, 'Some Points of Contact between History and the Natural Sciences', in *Philosophy and History: Essays Presented to Ernst Cassirer*, ed. by Raymond Klibansky and H. J. Paton (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1936), pp. 255-264.

[5] The texts that played an important role in shaping Wind's concept of embodiment include: Charles Sanders Peirce, *How to Make our Ideas Clear*, in *The Philosophy of Peirce: Selected Writings*, ed. by Justus Buchle (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), pp. 23-41; Sidney Hook, *The Metaphysics of Pragmatism* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1996); John Dewey, *Experience and Nature* (New York: Dover, 1958); Charles I. Lewis, *Mind and the World Order: Outline of a Theory of Knowledge* (New York: Dover, 1956); and Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1929).

[6] See John Michael Krois, 'Kunst und Wissenschaft in Edgar Winds Philosophie der Verkörperung', in *Edgar Wind: Kunsthistoriker und Philosoph*, ed. by Horst Bredekamp et al. (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1998), pp. 181-205.

[7] See Falkenburg, *Edgar Wind on Experiment and Metaphysics*, p. 32.

The Edgar Wind Journal 2: 1-8, 2022
DOI: 10.53245/EWJ-00007

In *Experiment and Metaphysics* (1927), Wind discusses the close relationship between physical laws and scientific measurements in the following terms:

> There is a paradox inherent in physical inquiry. The formulation of physical laws is based on measurements carried out within the field of physics. But measurements carried out with physical instruments are, themselves, subject to physical laws. It seems, then, that the possibility of controlling the accuracy of experiments presupposes the knowledge of those laws which the experiments intend to test, and the physicist's method of inference thus seems to move in a circle. The laws which he discovers cannot claim to be universal unless the measurement has been accurate. But the measurement cannot claim to be accurate unless it is based on the knowledge of universal laws.[8]

Wind considers the scientific measuring instruments as metaphysical symbols. In this way, he provides a definition of embodiment in the context of philosophy of science:

> The physicist himself may feel shocked at the idea that he, the most exact of all scientists, should share the company of people who indulge in metaphysical speculations. But perhaps his distrust in metaphysics will be slightly shaken when he is told that the very basis of his scientific pride, the measuring instrument, is one of the most striking examples of a metaphysical symbol. As a physicist he will not hesitate to admit that the metrical significance of his instruments is embodied in their physical construction. Should he be averse to philosophy, he may be surprised to learn that if anything deserves the name of metaphysical divination it is such an act of embodiment.[9]

According to Wind, the notion of embodiment enters the scientific practice in the dialectics between scientific instruments and physical construction, since the former are embodied in the latter. In this act of embodiment, metaphysics comes into play, being strictly related to the scientific process via scientific measuring instruments (i.e. metaphysical symbols).[10] In another passage, Wind adds:

> Viewed from a logical standpoint, the claim of universality in the conception of laws is related to the claim of accuracy in the construction of instruments as the universal is related to the individual. As a negative instance this correlation of the two is, to be sure, of the greatest importance for physical inquiry. If, for instance, an experiment fails to test an individual hypothesis, this failure reflects not only upon the hypothesis as such, but on the entire system of assumptions upon which it was founded. It criticizes not only the construction of the individual instrument, but the whole system of methodical rules from which this construction has been derived. In this sense it is no exaggeration to say that with every individual experiment a whole system of experimentation comes to a test. But to make this correlation of the individual and the universal the basis of a positive

[8] Wind, *Experiment and Metaphysics*, p. 217.

[9] Ibid., pp. 221-222.

[10] For more on Wind's notion of embodiment, see Branca, *Edgar Wind filosofo delle immagini: La biografia intellettuale di un discepolo di Aby Warburg* (Milan: Mimesis, 2019), pp. 55-58; and Matthew Rampley, 'Introduction', in Edgar Wind, *Experiment and Metaphysics: Towards a Resolution of the Cosmological Antinomies*, trans. by Cyril Edwards (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), pp. xiii-xxviii.

> method of inference would be a fallacious procedure. We would deduce the individual claim from the universal one, and then test the validity of the latter by showing that it can include the former, – a subsumption which would only prove what the deduction had defined. As it is, however, we not only derive the individual claim from the universal system, but *embody* it by construction, in a physical instrument.[11]

In stating that 'with every individual experiment a whole system of experimentation comes to a test' and that metaphysical symbols are embodied in the scientific construction by physical instruments, Wind rejects the concept of pure science as objective and indisputable.

Wind's notion of embodiment largely derives from his reading of pragmatist philosophers such as Charles Sanders Peirce, who, in *Logic as Semiotic: The Theory of Signs*, presents his notion of embodiment in the following way:

> A Symbol is a law, or regularity of the indefinite future. Its Interpretant must be of the same description; and so must be also the complete immediate Object, or meaning. But a law necessarily governs, or 'is embodied in' individuals, and prescribes some of their qualities. Consequently, a constituent of a Symbol may be an Index, and a constituent may be an Icon. A man walking with a child points his arm up into the air and says, 'There is a balloon'. The pointing arm is an essential part of the symbol without which the latter would convey no information. But if the child asks, 'What is a balloon', and the man replies, 'It is something like a great big soap bubble', he makes the image a part of the symbol. Thus, while the complete object of a symbol, that is to say, its meaning, is of the nature of a law, it must *denote* an individual, and must *signify* a character. A *genuine* symbol is a symbol that has a general meaning. There are two kinds of degenerate symbols, the *Singular Symbol* whose Object is an existent individual, and which signifies only such characters as that individual may realize; and the *Abstract Symbol*, whose only Object is a character.[12]

Therefore, there is a parallelism between Peirce's and Wind's notions of embodiment. If, according to Peirce, symbols, and it doesn't matter what kind, are embodied in individuals, in the same way, according to Wind, scientific instruments are embodied in physical construction.

In 'Warburg's Concept of *Kulturwissenschaft* and its Meaning for Aesthetics' (1931), a paper that Wind delivered at the 4th Congress of Aesthetics held at the Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg, Wind connects Warburg's notion of *Pathosformeln* to his notion of embodiment, thus extending its meaning also to artistic

[11] Wind, *Experiment and Metaphysics*, p. 222.

[12] Peirce, *Logic as Semiotic: The Theory of Signs*, in *The Philosophy of Peirce: Selected Writings*, ed. by Justus Buchle (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), pp. 98-119 (112).

practice.[13] In talking about the artistic representation of physical movement and physiognomic expression, Wind states:

> One should point out that between the two stages of greatest detachment and closest connection – that is, between the level at which the stimulation of movement seems to have been almost entirely transformed in the act of contemplation, and the stage at which stimulation and expression become almost one and the same in the precipitated action – there lie two intermediate stages: that of the expressively charged muscular movement, whose two poles are the states of being mimetically tense and of being physiognomically relaxed, and that of the expressive use of an implement, which oscillates between the poles of the social urge to appropriate a thing and the social will to distance oneself from it.[14]

In analysing this type of representations – i.e. the Renaissance representations of figures in movement, which enact the expression of emotions – Warburg coined his notion of *Pathosformeln*:

> Warburg showed how important just these two intermediate levels are for the theory of the formation and the recall of images, once again referring to the example of the continuing vitality of features of the ancient world. For time and again it was the expressive gestures of antiquity or, to use Warburg's words, the 'pathos formulae' of that civilisation, which were taken up by later art and polarised in being redeployed.[15]

Therefore, in accordance with Warburg, there are formulas in the history of art that consist of a repertoire of gestures, movements – both physical and evident in accessories such as garments – and emotions, which recur in history across different eras and cultures. It is in this sense that, as Wind argues, an era is embodied in another:

> But when they were rediscovered in works of art or handed down, these ancient emotive formulae always appeared in a form which was tangible: in the form of sculptured stone or painted paper – in any case as objects which stand in a technological relationship to tool-using man. The status which an epoch accords to the tangible embodiments of these emotive formulae – whether a classic work of art is an object of specialised archeological interest added to a collection, an *objet d'art* built into a garden wall to satisfy its owner's pride of possession, or reproduced in miniature, no more than a mere ornament for the

[13] For more on Wind's paper 'Warburg's Concept of *Kulturwissenschaft* and its Meaning for Aesthetics', see Tononi, 'Aby Warburg, Edgar Wind, and the Concept of *Kulturwissenschaft*: Reflections on Imagery, Symbols, and Expression', in *The Edgar Wind Journal*, 2 (2022), pp. 38-74.

[14] Wind, 'Warburg's Concept of *Kulturwissenschaft* and its Meaning for Aesthetics', in *The Eloquence of Symbols: Studies in Humanist Art*, ed. by Jaynie Anderson (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press and Clarendon Press, 1983), pp. 21-35 (32).

[15] Ibid. For more on Warburg's notion of *Pathosformeln*, see Tononi, 'Andrea Mantegna and the Iconography of Mourners: Aby Warburg's Notion of *Pathosformeln* and the Theory of Aesthetic Response', in *IKON: Journal of Iconographic Studies*, 13 (2020), 79-94; and Claudia Wedepohl, 'Von der Pathosformel zum Gebärdensprachatlas. Dürers Tod des Orpheus und Warburgs Arbeit an einer ausdruckstheoretisch begründeten Kulturgeschichte', in *Die Entfesselte Antike. Aby Warburg und die Geburt der Pathosformel*, ed. by Ulrich Rehm and Claudia Wedepohl (Köln: Walter König, 2012), pp. 33-50.

> mantelpiece – is crucial to the determination of the relationship of that epoch to classical antiquity.[16]

As Wind states, the early Renaissance is the characteristic example of an era in which the past, and more precisely classical antiquity, is embodied in a subsequent artistic culture:

> Nothing is more characteristic of the development of the early Renaissance than the first form in which it incorporated into its art the emotive formulae of classical antiquity (to whose stimulus it was so highly responsive) – that highly distancing mode of representation, grisaille.[17]

Consequently, according to Wind, the notion of embodiment emerges in the artistic practice during the process of the transformation of images from one era to the next. In this metamorphosis, elements of the past (such as theological and metaphysical ideas, magic rituals, literary themes, and artistic formulas) are embodied, or incorporated, in the subsequent cultures.

In *Picture and Text*, an early draft of the introduction to the first edition of *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance* (1958), Wind elaborates further his notion of embodiment in relation to the artistic practice in the following terms:

> In studying a philosophical text, we may find that a singularly bothersome series of arguments becomes suddenly lucid and transparent because we remember a picture which reflects it. When we have reached this point, that a picture helps us to place the right accents in a text, and a text to place the right accents in a picture, they will both acquire a new luminosity: and this is all we should aim for. But it is only when this experience begins to spread, when more texts and more pictures reinforce this sensation, that we may be allowed to trust it.[18]

Hence, according to Wind, the notion of embodiment also emerges in the dialectics between images and text, that is, between artistic representations and ideas, since ideas are embodied in images. He continues:

> To convey this experience, a method of demonstration is required which is radically different from mathematical proofs. In the place of a linear logic, in which each proposition has its well-defined antecedents by which it is linked to a well-defined set of premises, we must aim for a configurational logic by which contingent arguments are interlocked. In the words of Charles Peirce, it is essential to this form of study that our reasoning 'should not form a chain which is no stronger than its weakest link, but a cable

[16] Wind, *Warburg's Concept of* Kulturwissenschaft *and its Meaning for Aesthetics*, p. 32.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Wind, *Picture and Text*, pp. 192-193.

> whose fibres may be ever so slender, provided they are sufficiently numerous and intimately connected'.[19]

Therefore, Wind argues that the entire range of symbolic representations of the world, both scientific and artistic, are verifiable and experimental through a specific method, which should be identified in opposition to the mathematical one.

The present issue brings together four articles that in one way or another develop or apply Wind's notion of embodiment. For example, Jaynie Anderson offers a re-evaluation of Wind's interpretation of Giovanni Bellini's painting *The Feast of the Gods* by considering Edgar Wind's papers at the Bodleian Library, Oxford, other archival material, and scholarly contributions. Fabio Tononi analyses Wind's interpretation of Aby Warburg's main ideas by focusing on Robert Vischer's concept of *Einfühlung* (empathy) and the relationship between Warburg's notion of *Pathosformeln* and Wind's notion of embodiment. Furthermore, Tononi updates Vischer's, Warburg's, and Wind's insights on the biological implications of empathy in light of recent neuroscientific research. Monica Centanni investigates the relationship between Edgar Wind and Gertrud Bing. In doing so, Centanni argues that an hermeneutically oriented reading of documents may shed new light on Warburg's legacy. Finally, Gioachino Chiarini's paper focuses on the travels of Dante and Virgil in Purgatory. In doing so, Chiarini applies the Warburgian iconological method to the interpretation of the *Divine Comedy*, stressing the role of time and delay in Dante's journey.

It is part of the editorial programme of the Edgar Wind Journal to continue publishing articles that apply Wind's notion of embodiment to art-historical research.

Bibliography

Branca, Bernardino, *Edgar Wind filosofo delle immagini: La biografia intellettuale di un discepolo di Aby Warburg* (Milan: Mimesis, 2019).

Dewey, John, *Experience and Nature* (New York: Dover, 1958).

Falkenburg, Brigitte, 'Edgar Wind on Experiment and Metaphysics', in *Journal of Transcendental Philosophy*, 2(1) (2021), 21-45.

Gilbert, Creighton, 'Edgar Wind as Man and Thinker', in *New Criterion Reader*, 3(2) (1984), 36-41.

Hook, Sidney, *The Metaphysics of Pragmatism* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1996).

[19] Ibid, p. 193. The passage quoted by Wind is in Peirce, *Some Consequences of Four Incapacities*, in *The Philosophy of Peirce: Selected Writings*, ed. by Justus Buchle (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), pp. 228-250 (229).

Krois, John Michael, 'Kunst und Wissenschaft in Edgar Winds Philosophie der Verkörperung', in *Edgar Wind: Kunsthistoriker und Philosoph*, ed. by Horst Bredekamp et al. (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1998), pp. 181-205.

Lewis, Charles I., *Mind and the World Order: Outline of a Theory of Knowledge* (New York: Dover, 1956).

Peirce, Charles Sanders, *How to Make our Ideas Clear*, in *The Philosophy of Peirce: Selected Writings*, ed. by Justus Buchle (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), pp. 23-41.

Peirce, Charles Sanders, *Logic as Semiotic: The Theory of Signs*, in *The Philosophy of Peirce: Selected Writings*, ed. by Justus Buchle (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), pp. 98-119.

Peirce, Charles Sanders, *Some Consequences of Four Incapacities*, in *The Philosophy of Peirce: Selected Writings*, ed. by Justus Buchle (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), pp. 228-250.

Rampley, Matthew, 'Introduction', in Edgar Wind, *Experiment and Metaphysics: Towards a Resolution of the Cosmological Antinomies*, trans. by Cyril Edwards (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), pp. xiii-xxviii.

Tononi, Fabio, 'Andrea Mantegna and the Iconography of Mourners: Aby Warburg's Notion of *Pathosformeln* and the Theory of Aesthetic Response', in *IKON: Journal of Iconographic Studies*, 13 (2020), 79-94.

Tononi, Fabio, 'Aby Warburg, Edgar Wind, and the Concept of *Kulturwissenschaft*: Reflections on Imagery, Symbols, and Expression', in *The Edgar Wind Journal*, 2 (2022), 38-74.

Tononi, Fabio, and Bernardino Branca, 'Introduction: Edgar Wind and a New Journal', in *The Edgar Wind Journal*, 1 (2021), 1-12.

Wedepohl, Claudia, 'Von der Pathosformel zum Gebärdensprachatlas. Dürers Tod des Orpheus und Warburgs Arbeit an einer ausdruckstheoretisch begründeten Kulturgeschichte', in *Die Entfesselte Antike. Aby Warburg und die Geburt der Pathosformel*, ed. by Ulrich Rehm and Claudia Wedepohl (Köln: Walter König, 2012), pp. 33-50.

Whitehead, Alfred North, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1929).

Wind, Edgar, 'Experiment and Metaphysics', in *Proceedings of the Sixth International Congress of Philosophy*, ed. by E. S. Brightman (New York: Longmans, 1927), pp. 217-224.

Wind, Edgar, 'Some Points of Contact between History and the Natural Sciences', in *Philosophy and History: Essays Presented to Ernst Cassirer*, ed. by Raymond Klibansky and H. J. Paton (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1936), pp. 255-264.

Wind, Edgar, 'Warburg's Concept of *Kulturwissenschaft* and its Meaning for Aesthetics', in *The Eloquence of Symbols: Studies in Humanist Art*, ed. by Jaynie Anderson (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press and Clarendon Press, 1983), pp. 21-35.

Wind, Edgar, 'Picture and Text', in *The Religious Symbolism of Michelangelo: The Sistine Ceiling*, ed. by Elizabeth Sears (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 191-193.

Wind, Edgar, *Experiment and Metaphysics: Towards a Resolution of the Cosmological Antinomies*, trans. by Cyril Edwards (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017).