"the style of *a*" to refer to something in the work of *b, c, d,* there is obviously some implication concerning similarity between their work. Furthermore, there is the implication that this similarity is stylistic. The work of *b, c, d* is stylistically similar. But there is no implication to the effect that the style of *b* is like the style of *c*, or that the style of *b* (or *c*) is like the style of *d*. For these propositions would be true only if *b, c, d* all had styles of their own—and nothing to this effect is implied by using the phrase "the style of *a*" to refer to something in their work.

And now the question must arise, What is it to have a style? What is it to have a style of one's own?

In trying to answer this question, I shall consider it solely in the context of the pictorial arts. And I do not mean by this just that such examples as I use will be drawn entirely from the pictorial arts. The qualification goes deeper. For it seems to me that the function and the importance—possibly even the nature—of individual style are things that differ as we move from one art to another. The relevant factors here, differentiating the arts, include the role of the medium within that art, the degree of apprenticeship required to be a practitioner of the art, the significance of tradition, the involvement of bodily techniques, the character of the structural or compositional principles employed. It may be possible, or it may not be possible, to arrange the arts on a spectrum according to the place occupied within them by individual style, but it seems most likely that there is no art where individual style occupies a more important or influential place than that which it does within the pictorial arts. But all these claims apart, I cannot insist too strongly that what I say about individual style and the pictorial arts cannot simply be transferred to some other art without grave risk of falsehood, and possibly nonsense, and the certainty of distorting my own intentions.

I shall now try to answer the question that I have set myself by enumerating three characteristics of individual style.

In order to present the first characteristic of style, I shall start with what I take to be a basic fact about our interest in pictorial art. That fact might be expressed thus: that insofar as we are interested in paintings, we are interested only in the paintings of painters. And, once again, no sooner has this fact been stated than the statement can be seen to stand in need of revision. An emended way of stating the basic fact that I have in mind would be this: that, insofar as we are interested in paintings as paintings, or (what I take to be equivalent) insofar as we take an aesthetic interest in paintings, we are interested

Richard Wollheim, "Pictoral Style," in Berel Lang, The Concept of Style (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1979).

only in the paintings of painters. Why this emendation is required is because it is indubitably true that at times we are interested in the paintings of schizophrenics, of art school applicants, of chimpanzees, of world politicians, or of our own children. But, when we are interested in such paintings, we are interested in them so as (respectively) to diagnose sickness, to discover promise, to test a theory, to elicit biographical information, or because the painting is by whom it is—that is to say, sentimentally. And, though I would be the first to admit, indeed to claim, as against a totally misguided purism, that when we come to take an aesthetic interest in a painting, we may legitimately draw upon whatever we might have learned from first approaching it with one of these other aims, the relevant point here is that approaching it with such an aim is not to take an aesthetic interest in it. It is not to take an interest in it as a painting. So the question arises, Why is it that we can (as I assert) take an aesthetic interest only in the paintings of painters?

A hasty answer would be, Because they're better. It takes a painter to turn out a painting.

But this cannot be right for two reasons. The first reason, which is superficial, is that we aren't interested—aesthetically interested, that is—only in good paintings. Indeed, if someone expressed indifference to all paintings except the best, I think that we should begin to doubt whether his interest in any painting was really aesthetic. But the second reason is the more interesting and will lead us to the intuition that we are after. It cannot be that why we are interested only in the paintings of painters is because they are better, for that presupposes that the judgment of better or worse, the judgment of quality, passed on a painting, is independent of the judgment whether that painting is by a painter or a nonpainter. And it isn't. The former judgment is dependent on the latter judgment. But what is important is to see how this dependence goes, and a good way of doing this is to contrast this dependence with another, a different though related, dependence: that is, the dependence of the judgment of better or worse, of quality, passed on a painting, with (this time) the judgment of who, or which painter, the painting is by. For the judgment of which painter a painting is by may legitimately—it may, of course, also illegitimately, but that is another matter and of no theoretical interest—affect the judgment of quality. But when it does so, it does so, characteristically, by raising or lowering the judgment of quality. Learning that a painting is not by Braque but by one of those painters who turned cubism into an academic exercise, we recognize faults that we had previously glossed over: learning that it is not by, say,

Gleizes, but is indeed by Braque, we are led to see felicities to which we had been, up till then, blind.[2] By contrast, when the judgment that a painting is by a painter rather than by a nonpainter, or vice versa—and let us take the second case as our example—legitimately affects the judgment of quality, it does so, characteristically, not by raising or lowering that judgment, but, rather, by knocking it sideways. We lose all confidence in our power to make it. Learning that a painting, believed to be by a painter, is by a nonpainter, we are likely to feel that we don't know what to make of, that we have no idea what weight to attach to, what shows up on the painted support.

Armed with this piece of insight, we may now withdraw our hasty answer to the question why it is that we can take an aesthetic interest only in the paintings of painters and replace it with a considered answer. A considered but still succinct answer would be that only the paintings of painters are decipherable.

And now let me make a substitution. I have talked, very artificially it may seem, of painters and of nonpainters. I have talked of them rather as though they were trades or professions, and in doing so I have deliberately refrained from saying anything about what for me constitutes the distinction or how the difference is effected. And now let me substitute for the term *painter* another with the same extension but also, I hope, with a little more explanatory force: that is, the term *someone with a formed style*. If I do that, then in conjunction with all the foregoing I may straightway assert the first characteristic of individual style. *Style is a precondition of aesthetic interest.*

The second characteristic of individual style can be more rapidly arrived at. It can be arrived at through imposing one of several valid interpretations that can be placed on a phrase I used earlier. I said that it is when, and only when, we know that a painting is by a painter—or, as we may now say, by someone with a formed style—that we have any confidence what to make of, or what weight to attach to, what shows up on the canvas. There are several valid interpretations that can be placed on the phrases "what weight to attach to," "what to make of"; I select "what is expressed by." Similarly, of several valid interpretations that can be placed on the term *decipherable*, I select "expressive."[3] And then I can present the second characteristic of individual style: *Style is a precondition of expressiveness.*

[2]This point is examined with great subtlety in Nelson Goodman, *The Languages of Art* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1968), chap. 3.

The third characteristic of individual style differs in certain general respects from the other two. They are external characteristics of style; it is an internal characteristic. They turn upon the consequences of style; it relates to the nature of style. And a further, a local, difference—local, that is, to this essay—is that, whereas the first two characteristics, as will not have escaped your notice, have gone quite unargued for, I shall give, if not an argument, then at least a sketch for an argument, in favor of this third characteristic.

The characteristic is that style—individual style, of course—*has psychological reality*. The characteristic, I am aware, stands in need as much of explication as of argument, and in trying to explain it I shall make use of several devices familiar by now from use elsewhere.

Let me begin by introducing the notion of a *style-description*. A style-description is to be understood as a description, a full description, of an individual style. We may contrast a style-description with a *stylistic description*, where a stylistic description is to be understood as a description of a picture in a given style which fully describes the stylistic features present in it. If style-descriptions and stylistic descriptions need to be distinguished, they are related thus: that for every stylistic description there is a style-description with which it complies, that is, the style-description describing the style that the described picture is in. I have, however, introduced the notion of a stylistic description only to clarify that of a style-description, and nothing more will be mentioned here.

Now let us suppose that an art historian is engaged in the study of a particular painter. He is a stylistically minded art historian, and we might therefore assume him to be engaged in the writing of a style-description for that artist. He completes it as best he can, and then he asks himself, Is this style-description adequate? It makes little difference whether he asks himself the question explicitly or implicitly, but let us further assume that he does so explicitly. If he does, then he must immediately become aware that the question cannot be answered unless he possesses—again either explicitly or implicitly—a criterion of adequacy for a style-description. What, he asks himself—and again let us assume that he does so explicitly—what are the criteria of adequacy for a style-description?

If our art historian genuinely seeks an answer to this question and is not too cast down by the extreme theoretical poverty of the existing discussion, he is likely to find two broadly plausible answers suggested in the literature. The interest of each answer is that, as well as providing a criterion of adequacy for a style-description, it brings in

train a certain conception of the nature of style. Indeed, it might be said that it provides us with the first out of the second. And I can think of no better way of getting at these two conceptions of the nature of style than through the associated criteria of adequacy for style-descriptions.

So one answer goes: A style-description is adequate if and only if (1) it picks out all the interesting/significant/distinctive elements of a painter's work, *and* (2) it groups them in the most convenient available way into stylistic features. And it is to be noted that the terms *interesting, significant, distinctive, convenient,* as they occur here, are to be understood as relative to a certain point of view. The point of view envisaged is that (roughly) of the progressive art historian of the age, and it is further understood, accepted, indeed rejoiced in, that the standpoint of the progressive art historian of one age will not, or is highly unlikely to, coincide with that of the next. In the eyes of those who accept this criterion of adequacy for a style-description, it is only welcome evidence of the continuing vitality of art history that style-descriptions would have to be rewritten each generation.

I shall call this criterion of adequacy for a style-description a *taxonomic criterion,* and I shall call the associated conception of the nature of style the *taxonomic conception of style.* What justifies this label is that the problem of describing a style is conceived of as a problem in classification.[3]

The other answer goes thus: A style-description is adequate if and only if (1) it picks out those elements of a painter's work which are dependent upon processes or operations characteristic of his acting as a painter, *and* (2) it groups these elements into stylistic features accordingly, that is, according to the processes or operations that they are dependent upon. I shall call this criterion of adequacy for a style-description a *generative criterion,* and I shall call the associated conception of the nature of style the *generative conception of style,* and what justifies this label is that the problem of describing a style is conceived of, on this way of looking at the matter, as a problem in explanation.

(In case it is not already clear, I should point out that, in principle at any rate, art historians who subscribe to a taxonomic criterion and those who subscribe to a generative criterion of adequacy could agree on the style-description that they provide for any given painter.

[3]Cf. James S. Ackerman, "Western Art History," in *Art and Archeology,* ed. James S. Ackerman and Rhys Carpenter (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963), where something like this conception is argued for.

Where they would clearly have to disagree would be on the justification that they gave for this description, and also on the consequences that they would draw from it or its force. I shall, however, go on at the very end of this essay to suggest that there is a very strong likelihood that art historians who disagree on the point at issue would favor style-descriptions of a different general form.)

Now to say that style has psychological reality, or to attribute to it the third characteristic on my list, is just to adopt a generative criterion of adequacy for a style-description or to think that the generative conception fits the nature of style. As I have said, I shall present considerations in favor of the psychological reality of style or the generative conception of its nature—considerations falling short of a fully constructed argument—but first I should say something in elucidation of a notion that is evidently central to the generative conception of style: the notion of a *process* or *operation.*

What is a process constitutive of style? *What is a style-process?* A *style-process* can be divided up into three different items or aspects. The first item in any such process is a *schema* or *universal* under which some part of the pictorial resources available to the painter are brought by him. Secondly, there is a *rule* or *instruction* for placing, or otherwise operating on, that part of the pictorial resources which the schema picks out. Thirdly, there is an *acquired disposition* to act on the rule, where this disposition is, generally, not just psychological but psychophysical. Now let me expand on this tripartite division of a style process.

I have preferred the terms *schema* and *universal* to the term *concept* for the characterization of the first part of a style-process because they do not carry the implication, which *concept* seems to, that the artist verbalizes, or has a verbal equivalent for, the way in which he segments the resources of his art. Nevertheless, of the two preferred terms each has its characteristic drawbacks. *Schema* suggests something highly configurational, which is wrong, as I shall go on to show. And *universal* will suggest—to some at any rate—that the schemata employed by any one artist are available to, or even availed of by, all artists: in other words, that there are—to borrow a phrase from literary stylistics—"primes" of pictorial style. And this again is wrong. Indeed, sometimes what is most distinctive about a style is the way in which it segments—that is, the particular way in which it either conjoins or isolates items in—the pictorial resources. So, for instance, in the work of one artist (Leonardo), line and shading might