



# Knowledge of art versus artistic knowledge. I. The GAKhN “Encyclopedia of Artistic Terminology” in the context of European intellectual history

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Accepted: 17 June 2022 / Published online: 8 August 2022  
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## Abstract

In this first of two articles, I look at the project for the “Encyclopedia of Artistic Terminology” in connection with the idea of a synthesis of the “artistic sciences” as the principal task of the State Academy of Artistic Sciences (GAKhN, 1921–1930) in Moscow. The most important feature of the Academy was the unity of its epistemological conception (the system of artistic sciences) and the institutional structure of the Academy (its “departments,” “sections,” and “laboratories”), which embodied the interdisciplinary intention of uniting the philosophy of art, the artistic sciences, and artistic experimentation. I analyze the connection of the project with the task of “concept formation” in the artistic sciences, which was recognized in European philosophy at the beginning of the twentieth century as the main criterion for scientificity in the human sciences. I also investigate how the Encyclopedia project, developed by Gustav Shpet, took into account previous attempts to systematize aesthetic terminology (in nineteenth-century dictionaries). I show that the project of the “Encyclopedia of Artistic Terminology” was not the sole attempt to create a new dictionary of aesthetic concepts and of the cultural sciences. Similar projects were being developed in the 1920s and 30s in Germany (Erich Rothacker planned to produce *Handwörterbuch der gesamten gemeingeisteswissenschaftlichen und kulturphilosophischen Grundbegriffe*) and in France (Étienne Souriau published *Vocabulaire d'esthétique*; see Souriau 2010).

**Keywords** Aesthetics · Theory of art · GAKhN · Encyclopedia of artistic terminology · Art studies · Aesthetic concepts · Art history

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Translated into English by Thomas Nemeth.

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## The project of a synthesis of the “Artistic Sciences”

The creation in Moscow of the Academy for the Artistic Sciences<sup>1</sup> (GAKhN) in 1921 was, on the one hand, a cultural turning point at the beginning of the “short twentieth century,” a century that opened with a series of wars and revolutions in the spheres of politics, science, and art. At the same time, the Academy was created in an attempt to analyze and understand this turning point considering all of its consequences for the culture and society of Soviet Russia. GAKhN was established to play a dual role as both a cultural institution to unite the artistic practices of the 1920s into a new “synthesis of the arts” and, at the same time, as a scientific institution that would unite all methods for the scientific study of art into an integral system of “artistic sciences.” It also received attention in current discussions concerning transdisciplinary topics and the symbiosis of knowledge and art within the bounds of artistic research (for these discussions see Tröndle and Warmers 2014).

In the minds of the founders of GAKhN, such a double task of uniting the arts and uniting the sciences was summed up in the paradoxical phrase “*artistic sciences*.” Explaining the general intention of the Academy, its academic secretary, art critic Aleksej Sidorov, described the process of the convergence of science and art, which gave rise to GAKhN:

The development of scientific thought about art, both in the form of its abstract, principled construction as well as in the form of concrete historical knowledge, required verification of the results obtained from the data of living experience: a meeting with art in its creative reality. The aspirations for a deepening and an understanding of art are tasks specifically peculiar to it, both by its material (productive basis) and by its “spiritual” character. Such an evolution of art required an orientation toward the exact methods of science. (Sidorov 1926, p. 208; Sidorov 1926/2017, pp. 21–22)

In this description, three types of knowledge related to art have already been designated. These types were included as components in the synthetic project of the “artistic sciences” and were presented at GAKhN as such: 1) scientific knowledge of art within the ever-expanding bounds of the special sciences with, as their subject matter, various types art (art criticism or theory of art; *Kunstwissenschaften*); 2) philosophy (and psychology) of art or so-called general theory of art (*Allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*), engaged in the theoretical development of the basic concepts of art theory and definitions of the object of the special artistic sciences; and 3) knowledge in art itself (*künstlerische Forschung*/artistic research), which accumulates the experience of artists, a collection of technologies and techniques for working with material and various aspects of the artist’s understanding of the connection between

<sup>1</sup>The name of the Academy can and has been rendered variously in English, often as the “Academy for the Study of the Arts” or “Academy for Artistic Research”. However, as the following lines—and article—will show, the creators of the Academy sought the scientification of all disciplines, on the one hand, according to their understanding of Marxism, or, on the other hand, the carrying out of the Husserlian idea of philosophy as a rigorous science, which would include the subdisciplines of philosophy such as aesthetics, championed by Gustav Shpet. GAKhN sought to achieve a synthesis of art and science, “science” being understood in the sense of exact science in contrast to art criticism and essayism.

seeing and the creation of form, which establishes art as a special kind of knowledge irreducible to science.<sup>2</sup>

Contemporaries were already arguing about the possible nature of the knowledge that was discussed in the project for unifying the arts and the sciences in the “artistic sciences.” The differences between these three types of knowledge were too great and the epistemological interests of the scientists, philosophers, and artists who participated in the creation of the Academy were too heterogeneous. In addition, these interests in the creation of an autonomous “artistic knowledge” came into sharp conflict with the cultural and political goals of the Academy set by the People’s Commissariat for Enlightenment (Narkompros). The Academy was to create “expert knowledge” about art, which would help determine the principles of the “social order” in the cultural sphere (cf. Lunacharskii 1927, pp. 6–7).

Thus, discussions about the epistemological status and the functions of the “artistic sciences” went on throughout the nearly decade-long existence of GAKhN. If the supporters of “rigorous science” in Shpet’s entourage declared the need for a “scientific” definition of the subject matter and methods employed in studying art (cf. Shpet 1926; Plotnikov 2013), then the investigators associated with art emphasized the need for “feeling” in handling artistic subject matter, the need to combine knowledge with “artistry” and “taste,” and the need for personal interactive experience with one’s works (Nedovich 1927, pp. 7–13). Both positions were criticized in turn for ignoring the social function of knowledge about art and for defending the “idealistic” thesis of the autonomy of art and science (cf. Fedorov-Davydov 1928; Mikhailov 1927). One influential position was the idea of a “unified science” in the Marxist spirit, which was defended by the People’s Commissar of Enlightenment, Anatoly V. Lunacharsky, who was one of the first to use the term “artistic sciences” (Gudkova 2015, p. 172). In his understanding, it was a science that establishes the exact laws governing the functioning and development of art and includes components from both the human sciences and the natural sciences.<sup>3</sup> However, the opinion of skeptics was also heard, and they denied the meaningfulness of the very expression “artistic sciences,” because the term “science” (in the English sense of the word), i.e., the exact sciences or natural science) is inapplicable to the sphere of the study of art.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup>For an understanding of art as a specific kind of “knowledge” in GAKhN, see Plotnikov (2017a).

<sup>3</sup>Cf. “We in Russia will have to be the first to approach an institute of art and culture or the institute of art science. Testing one kind of art with another, we [need] to create an aesthetics and not only establish the laws of sound, colors, rhythm, etc., since they embrace the entire network of art. But we also need to trace the difference between different types of art, what they have common and how they are different. We are faced with a number of problems, such as optical, dynamic, acoustic, etc., in three fundamental disciplines: 1) artistic physics, 2) artistic physiology and psychology, and 3) artistic sociology” (Lunacharskii 1921, p. 63). In this speech of December 19, 1920, Lunacharsky sketched out his plan for the organization, which a year later in November 1921 was created under the title of the Academy of Artistic Sciences.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. The conversation between the American writer Theodore Dreiser and the President of the Academy Peter Kogan in 1927, in which Dreiser expressed doubts about a “science” of art (Dreiser 1996, p. 84): “The interview came to an abrupt end as we had to hurry off to an interview with Kogan, director of the State Academy of Artistic Science. My attention was called to the name of this institution and as we went in I questioned the possibility of art being a science. The discussion began with this question and ended with the question being tabled until another time. Kogan maintained that the Academy was for the purpose of scientific study of art. I maintained that science has nothing to do with art. He explained that art has three phases: 1. the materials of the artist (clay, paints, canvas, stone, etc.), 2. Technique of the artist, and

If conceptual differences in the understanding of the connection between science and art remained practically unavoidable due to their polarity, then there was at least a number of common positions on which the participants in the GAKhN project demonstrated their agreement. *The idea of language as the main medium for understanding art* was recognized as such a connecting link between art, science, and philosophy. From the perspective of this idea, all products of cultural activity were understood as different types of language with their own special “grammar.” A detailed terminological apparatus for the concepts of art studies was to be developed for an ever more detailed analysis of art works in their material and formal dimensions. This *scientific language* of art had to be brought into line with the *language of art*, which, through a connection with “elements of art,” would make possible the creation of an artistic form and the articulation of its meaning. These two languages, in turn, would have a correlate, viz., the “language of things, since the things in a person’s environment are not only instruments for practical use, but also carriers and signs of meaning. That is, they are elements of “logic” and the “linguistics” of things that make up a meaningful “image” of the world” (Gabrichevskii 2002b, pp. 32, 34, 37). The question of what kind of reality the languages of science and art mean, and in what respect they stand to the language of things, is resolved in the *language of philosophy* (philosophy of art and science). It, with the help of its (aesthetic) concepts, clarifies the basic aspects of the relationship between the language of science and reality (Shpet 1923b).

### The problem of the “Formation of Concepts” in investigations of art

The appeal of the founders of GAKhN to the idea of language as a paradigm for resolving scientific and philosophical problems follows one of the chief intellectual trends of the early twentieth century, viz., a “turn” to language and a critique of language. The cultural experience of the disintegration of an old language and the loss of the meaning of the basic concepts, so clearly expressed in the *Letter of Lord Chandos to Francis Bacon* by Hugo von Hoffmannsthal (1902),<sup>5</sup> formed the central mood of the era, which was associated with the consciousness of the crisis—the “crisis of art,” the “crisis of culture,” and the “crisis of philosophy,” which united different generations of intellectuals of the first third of the twentieth century. Therefore, the project

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creative ideas, and 3: History and influence on society of the works of artists. I said that the materials and technique could be left to mechanics and the only thing of importance was the creative idea of the artist and science could not study that. There could not be more than research and criticism for the student. Kogan said that in the Academy were not students but scholars making scientific research into art and the interview was cut short with a sort of compromise statement on my part that the Academy could turn out research workers and critics of art, but not scientists.” (I am grateful to N. Stoyukhina for pointing to this source.) In the discussion about the book by D.S. Nedovich, M.I. Fabrikant also objects to the use of the term “artistic sciences” (Nedovich 2017, p. 131).

<sup>5</sup>“At first it became gradually impossible for me to discuss a higher or more general topic and in the process to use those words which all people are accustomed to use without hesitation. I felt an inexplicable discomfort just saying the words ‘mind,’ ‘soul,’ or ‘body.’ <...> The abstract words, which the tongue naturally has to use to express any judgment, disintegrated in my mouth like musty mushrooms.” (von Hofmannsthal 1902/2019, p. 12).

of a new synthetic science at GAKhN, which was being created in response to these crises (Plotnikov and Podzemskaja 2017c), focused on the theme of “language” not only as a symptom of a crisis in the sense of Hoffmannsthal, and not only in the sense of a “critique of language,” but also as the means and ways to overcome it, namely, the formation of new scientific concepts in studies of art and culture.

We can distinguish at least three levels in the solution of the problem of “concept formation,” on which work was underway to create a new conceptual language for art in the European (primarily German) human sciences and also in the studies by members of GAKhN oriented toward European science—*philosophical, art-historical, and artistic*.

The connection between philosophical method and the idea of language was being developed in a quite broad spectrum of strictly philosophical theories, starting with neo-Kantian conceptions of “concept formation” (*Begriffsbildung*) and that developed into a philosophy of language (E. Cassirer, R. Höningwald), culminating in a definition of philosophy’s central task as a critique of language as conceptually envisaged by L. Wittgenstein and F. Mautner. At the same time, the typical philosophical motive behind the turn to language and the establishment of a new conceptual system was the “surmounting of psychologism” in philosophy, logic, and the theory of knowledge. Even in E. Husserl’s phenomenology, which became the standard bearer in the critique of psychologism at the beginning of the twentieth century, the analysis of the linguistic structures of consciousness occupies a very important place, contrary to the widespread conceptions of the “mentalism” and the “Platonism” of early phenomenology.<sup>6</sup>

The turn to language and to an analysis of terminology among GAKhN philosophers was also dictated by the desire to free themselves from the “psychologism” that prevailed in aesthetics. This desire united representatives of various philosophical movements, including, the supporters of phenomenology (Shpet, M. Königsberg, N. Zhinkin, A. Gabrichevskii, A. Solov’ev) with the representatives of neo-Kantianism (M. Kagan, A. Saketti, B. Fokht) and devotees of metaphysics (A. Losev’s “metaphysics of the name”). The most distinctive positions in this sense were those of the representatives of phenomenological aesthetics in GAKhN, who combined their positions with the philosophy of language of the Brentano school (A. Marty). The focus of their investigations was the correlation of the aesthetic object with types of intentionality, in which the various “layers” of the object’s sense are constituted. For the phenomenologists of GAKhN, the paradigm of such a correlation is the “word” (in poetry and in logic) in its relation to reality.<sup>7</sup> From the modifications of this initial relation, an entire system of aesthetic categories was drawn up. This system was developed, within a phenomenological framework, by N. Zhinkin (Zhinkin 1926/2017), who proceeded from the analysis of the “thing – image” correlation, and by A. Losev, who, using a dialectical approach, developed it on the basis of the “eidōs – image” correlation (Losev 1927 and 1928/2017).

<sup>6</sup>Cf. an analysis “Expression and Meaning” (Investigation I) or “The Idea of Pure Grammar” (Investigation IV) in E. Husserl’s *Logical Investigations* (for the role of language in the phenomenological project, see Gethmann 2007).

<sup>7</sup>For a phenomenological analysis of the structure of a word, see Shpet 1923a. For the specifics of the structural-hermeneutic method developed by Shpet and his colleagues at GAKhN, see Plotnikov 2017b.

Another direction in the turn to the problem of language and in the development of basic philosophical concepts is associated with the theory of “general art studies” (*Allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*) by M. Dessoir, E. Utitz, and R. Hamann, the intent of which was to distinguish between the traditional categories of aesthetic assessment and scientific conceptions of art (about this movement, see Collenberg-Plotnikov 2021). The categories of aesthetics, as R. Haman emphasized, point to the “intrinsic importance” (*Eigenbedeutsamkeit*) of an object as an autonomous entity (*ästhetisches Gebilde*) that makes an aesthetic impression. On the contrary, the concepts in the theory of art deal with an object that “is significant in relation to something else” (*fremdbedeutsam*), which they describe as an artistic and cultural fact (Hamann 1915, pp. 122ff.). This distinction between aesthetics and the theory of art was also developed by GAKhN scientists when they discussed the formation of basic concepts in the artistic sciences (Nedovich 1927; Sidorov 1922/2017).

If, for the theorists of the “general theory of art,” the focus was on the problem of the systematization of concepts and the differentiation of their main types, then for the historical hermeneutic direction associated with the school of W. Dilthey the problem of “concept formation” is focused primarily on an understanding of the historical changes in concepts and the pluralism of their historical forms. Moreover, we are talking not only about the historical transformations of the semantics of concepts. In the human sciences, says Dilthey, the very procedure for the formation of concepts is faced with the problem of a vicious circle in our definition: a general concept (philosophy, art, religion, etc.) can be derived only from a variety of intellectual formations designated by this concept (for example, “philosophy”) in history. However, in order to distinguish a special class of such formations in history, it is necessary to have already a preliminary understanding of what “philosophy” is (Dilthey 1907/1990, pp. 343ff.). Thus, the historical forms of the development of philosophy form an integral element of its general theoretical concept. Combining such a historico-hermeneutic approach with the historical typology of art in the sense of Hegelian aesthetics, G. Lukács in his *Theory of the Novel* (1916) further developed the idea of the historical evolution of aesthetic categories on the example of comparing the ancient epic with the modern novel. At the same time, he sought to find in the stream of historical change the basis for establishing the superhistorical significance of the aesthetic (Lukács 1920/1971, pp. 9f.).

All of these basic directions in the modern understanding of philosophical and aesthetic concepts in European philosophy—antipsychologism, the synthesis of historical and theoretical analysis, the differentiation of the approaches to aesthetics and theory of art—also determine the theoretical outline of the artistic investigations at GAKhN and, above all, in its Philosophy Department, within which work on the study and development of aesthetic terminology took place.

However, this outline contained not only philosophical conceptions. Another, no less important level of discussion and terminological development belonged in the sphere of the *sciences of art*. In it, the issue of the formation of concepts was immediately linked to the assertion of the status of the theory of art (*Kunstwissenschaft*) as an independent discipline or a complex of disciplines, methodologically delimited from the general history of culture and spirit. At the end of the nineteenth century, A. Riegl was one of the first to develop a special terminology within the theory of

art for the objective knowledge of art that was not reducible to the analysis of mental reactions. Indeed, already in his investigations, the focus was on the analysis of the “language of art” and knowledge of the “historical grammar of the visual arts” (Riegl 1966). More specifically, the task of “revising the general terminology” (*Revision der gemeinsamen Terminologie*) and establishing “basic concepts” was formulated by August Schmarsow in his polemic with factographism and the historicism of the earlier history of art (Schmarsow 1905, pp. 2f.). Schmarsow assumes the physical and mental elements of the “human constitution” (*Organization des Menschen*) to be the basis for defining the basic concepts of the theory of art, which serve as the principles for distinguishing between the various types of the spatial arts (Schmarsow 1905, p. 14).

If Schmarsow’s anthropological and psychological point of view still dominates in defining the “essence of the individual arts” (Schmarsow 1905, p. 342), then H. Wölfflin’s goal in his new approach to defining “basic concepts” is to explain with their help the historical evolution of artistic styles and the terminological differentiation of eras in the development of art (classics and baroque). Continuing the line of the formal analysis of art dating back to K. Fiedler, Wölfflin associated his basic concepts with the historical forms of “seeing” (*Sehen*). Their transformation takes place, in accordance with the pattern expressed in the binary opposition of concepts: “linear – pictorial,” “unity – multiplicity,” “surface – depth,” etc. (Wölfflin 1915). With their help, Wölfflin not only showed historically different forms of contemplating the world. That is, he substantiated the thesis that “seeing has a history,” but he also re-defined the status of the theory of art as “art history without names,” legitimizing its scientific character by explicating the structures of visual experience (see Wölfflin 1941).

Despite the success of Wölfflin’s formal approach and his justification of the theory of art as a science, his interpretation of the basic concepts and their systematization became the subject of numerous critical objections. They were formulated most clearly by E. Panofsky in his analysis of the conceptions of Riegl and Wölfflin (Panofsky 1915, 1920, 1925). Panofsky asserts that these “basic concepts” do not describe factual connections in the history of art and do not contain their genetic explanation (for example, from “forms of seeing”), but are intended to reveal a “meaning” in the interpretation of the historical development of art (Panofsky 1920, pp. 335f.). In Panofsky’s conception, this thesis means that the “basic concepts” articulate abstract “artistic problems” (for example, the correlation between surface and depth) that require a resolution in works of art. Therefore, their formulation always has the antithetical form of binary oppositions. Panofsky distinguishes these “basic concepts” (*Grundbegriffe*) from “characterizing” concepts (*Charakterisierungsbegriffe*), which describe resolutions to artistic problems in particular periods of art history and even in individual works (Panofsky 1925). This establishes a completely different relationship between theory and the history of art from that proposed by Wölfflin. Since the “basic concepts” do not express “the relationship of the eye to the world”, as in Wölfflin, but “the relationship of the soul to the world of the eye” (Panofsky 1915, p. 463), they are not empirical concepts that order visual experience, but theoretical concepts

that explain how, in general, visual experience can be organized by analogy with the Kantian categories of pure understanding.<sup>8</sup>

Discussions about the basic concepts of the theory of art were no less intense in Soviet Russia in the 1920s, during which there was a vigorous reception of the ideas of H. Wölfflin<sup>9</sup> and other German-language theorists of art studies. GAKhN, as well as a number of other institutions for the scientific investigation of art (RIII, Institute of Archeology and Theory of Art RANION) were becoming the epicenter of discussions about a new understanding of the science of art. At the same time, among Russian art critics, a movement begins to dominate away from the psychological analysis of perceptual processes as the sole scientific approach to art. On the other hand, a demand is forming for a theory that would take the understanding of art beyond the bounds of historical factography. The general epistemological framework of these theoretical investigations becomes questions of both the substantive and the methodological differentiation of aesthetics (as a philosophical discipline), of a systematic theory of art and art history. Such a demarcation of various types of knowledge about art served, in turn, as a condition for determining the scientific nature of the artistic sciences.<sup>10</sup>

Art critics directly linked the issue of the status and meaning of artistic terminology, which aims to create a universal scientific discourse about art, with the problem of grounding the scientific nature of the theory of art. The “urgent need to revise the entire terminological apparatus of the science of art from the point of view of its suitability, modernity and expediency” was pointed out not only by M.I. Fabrikant (Fabrikant 1928b, p. 18), a member of GAKhN, but also many of his colleagues at the Academy (Gabrichevskii, Nedovich, N. Tarabukin) as well as from outside (Bogaevskii<sup>11</sup>).

Finally, the *statements of artists* about art form a third level in the discussion of the problem of artistic terminology. At the turn of the century, the very question of the meaning of these statements or the so-called “artist aesthetics” (*Künstlerästhetik*) in the development of concepts about art is highly controversial. Moreover, in the course of these disputes, polar opinions were crystallized. For representatives of academic art history and other “artistic sciences” fighting for the status of an independent science in the confines of European universities, knowledge about art was increasingly identified with scientific knowledge and was sharply differentiated from artistic criticism and judgments of direct experience. For this reason, the statements of artists about their work are considered, first of all, as a material for the formation of con-

<sup>8</sup>For Panofsky’s early conception and its connection with Kant and neo-Kantianism, see Lüdeking (2014). For a discussion of the concept of “artistic problems” (Panofsky and Edgar Wind) see Gabrichevskii (2002c), pp. 170–171.

<sup>9</sup>For examples of Wölfflin’s discussion, see: Sidorov (1922), Giatsintov (1928), Zhirmunskii (1927). For other examples of Wölfflin’s reception in Russia, see Dmitrieva (2009, 2017).

<sup>10</sup>See the various attempts at such a demarcation in the investigations of Gabrichevskii (2002a), Bogaevskii (1924), Nedovich (1927), Fabrikant (1924).

<sup>11</sup>Cf. “If art exists in a vital way, if it now faces the difficult conditions of transitioning from one era to another, then it is especially important to study the processes taking place regularly in art, which has an independent existence, to develop methods for investigating the basic elements of art and to establish clear and understandable terms for art history that everyone can understand. <...> As a result of its work, the theory of art will, hopefully, develop a single language of art, which so far is recognized by only a few.” (Bogaevskii 1924, p. 61).



cepts in the field of the theory of art, but not as the primary way of interpreting art. Moreover, art science looks very critically on the conviction that the artist has some special privilege in interpreting and defining artistic terminology. The conviction that an artist knows better what art is than does the art critic or an aesthetician is based on a mixture of the artist's "inner confidence" in the sense of his work with terminologically formalized reflection on art (cf. Waetzoldt 1909, p. 300).

At the same time, the idea of a specific "knowledge" of reality that is inherent in art and that focused on the seeing of "form," took shape within the confines of the modernist understanding of art. This "knowledge," however, was seen as conceptually different from scientific knowledge, but also as having its own language (a language of forms) and its own corresponding "grammar." The fact that this idea, which underlies the "formal analysis" of art, was developed by a community that brought together artists and art critics (H. von Marées, K. Fiedler, A. von Hildebrand), emphasized the active role of artists in creating a new understanding of art.

The aspirations to overcome disciplinary boundaries and to synthesize scientific and artistic knowledge gave rise in postrevolutionary Russia to a number of institutional projects (the Section of Monumental Art of INKHUK, VKhUTEMAS),<sup>12</sup> in which the possibility of such a synthesis was formulated as the task of developing a new artistic terminology. V.V. Kandinsky was the most active participant in formulating this task and in organizing forums for its solution.<sup>13</sup> The search for the "basic elements" of painting and for the possibilities of synthesizing them was not only an integral part of his artistic experiments, but a necessary component of his theoretical reflection on his own practice as an artist and pedagogical reflections on teaching strategies (in art workshops). His conception of "synthetic art" included both the idea of the interaction of various types of art and the idea of the interaction of the arts and sciences that study the physiological and psychological impact of painting elements on the recipient.

Kandinsky's projects to create a "precise terminology" for art, repeatedly expressed in his speeches in the early 1920s, were dictated expressly by his desire to reconcile the semantics of physical and psychological concepts (about color, about material, about form) with the conceptualization of artistic practice and its basic techniques (construction and composition). As part of a short-term collaboration with INKhUK (1920/21), he became involved in the creation of an "Encyclopedia of Fine Arts," which was designed to become the basis for the "study of the arts" in a collaboration between artists and representatives of natural science (Kandinskii 2020, II, p. 148).

Kandinsky linked this project with the work of the Scientific and Art Commission of the People's Commissariat for Enlightenment in 1921, which laid the foundation

<sup>12</sup>See Khan-Magomedov (1997). A terminology commission was established at VKhUTEMAS with the participation of V.A. Favorskii. On this, see Goncharov (1979), p. 216: "Vladimir Andreevich said that a terminology commission made up of teachers was created and worked at VKhUTEMAS. They got together, discussed various art-related terms, and everything went well and smoothly. But when they began to clarify and discuss the term 'space,' there was confusion and wild disputes. They could not figure out anything and decided that 'space' is what connects and separates. At this point, the commission stopped its work."

<sup>13</sup>Cf. Avtonomova (1999), Kandinskii (2020), II, pp. 148–160; Podzemskaia (2017).

for the activities of the Academy of Artistic Sciences. In a report at a meeting of the Commission in July 1921, Kandinsky formulated the main tasks of the institute, which later became the Physico-Psychological section of GAKhN: “34. Neither art theory nor, much less, the nascent science of art has a precisely established terminology. 35. The task of the section is to check the existing terminology and to establish definite terms. 36. In order to check the existing terminology, special bibliographic work is needed. 37. In order to establish precise terms, their scientific definitions are necessary. These definitions will serve as material for the creation of a special dictionary” (Kandinskii 2001, p. 73).

These proposals coincided with the described aspirations of art researchers and philosophers to develop “basic concepts” and as a result of such a resonance of ideas within the framework of the emerging Academy of Artistic Sciences, the creation of an “Encyclopedia of Artistic Terminology” was identified from the very start as one of its primary tasks.<sup>14</sup>

### **The idea of the encyclopedia and the search for systematic knowledge in the sciences of art**

In order to understand in detail the scientific task set by the creation of the “Encyclopedia of Artistic Terminology,” we must consider the prototypes that the GAKhN scientists were guided by and from which they started. Information about these prototypes, however, is quite scanty. It is known that within the confines of the discussion on the conception of the Encyclopedia, the head of the Philosophy Department of the Academy, G. Shpet, in his report “On the Dictionary of Artistic Terms”<sup>15</sup> observed:

The most recent dictionaries and reference books on artistic terminology were published at the beginning of the nineteenth century, more than 100 years ago. Since then, art studies, aesthetics, and philosophy of art have done tremendous work, and many new methods and terms have been introduced that have not been collected and systematized anywhere. This work can be summed up by the publication of a “Dictionary of Artistic Terminology,” which unites all theoretical and principled terminology, and “Dictionaries of Artistic Technology,” which unite the terminology of the individual arts.

Information about Shpet’s report did not provide exact knowledge about the dictionaries and encyclopedias that he had in mind when developing his conception, but it can be assumed that this matter was discussed within the Academy.

Several years later, M.I. Fabrikant made for *Iskusstvo* [Art], the GAKhN journal, a special survey of terminological dictionaries (Fabrikant 1928a) with an analysis of their structure and conceptions. Fabrikant described the general tradition of art dictionaries, starting with the very first explanatory dictionary of words related to the

<sup>14</sup>Igor Chubarov (Chubarov 2005) undertook the reconstruction of history and the first publication of fragments of the Encyclopedia. Regarding this edition, see Footnote 1 in my contribution “II. The GAKhN ‘Encyclopedia of Artistic Terminology’” in this issue.

<sup>15</sup>Shpet 1923c (O slovare khudozhestvennoi terminologii).

field of the spatial arts (Baldinucci 1681), including dictionaries from the Enlightenment era—*Dictionnaire des arts de peinture, sculpture et gravure*, compiled by a contributor to the *Encyclopédie* of D’Alembert and Diderot (1792), as well as Sulzer’s *Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste* [*General Theory of Fine Arts*], arranged in the alphabetical order of the dictionary (Sulzer 1771–1774), and into the nineteenth century the unfinished project of the French Academy of the Arts, the *Dictionnaire de l’Académie des beaux Arts* (1858–1896, in six volumes up to the letter “G”).<sup>16</sup> As Fabrikant notes, these dictionaries combine four groups of terms that are almost systematically indistinguishable: “1) art education and the practice of the arts <...>, 2) the terminology of the theory and history of art and aesthetics, 3) iconography and topography, 4) phenomena of artistic culture and everyday life (academies, furnishings, costume, ceremonies, etc.)” (Fabrikant 1928a, p. 80).

Fabrikant’s review, however, lacked a number of works, which Shpet most likely had in mind when he spoke of dictionaries “of the early nineteenth century.” To be precise, there are dictionaries of “aesthetic concepts”—the *Aesthetisches Lexikon* [*Aesthetic Lexicon*] by Ignaz Jeitteles (Jeitteles 1835–1837) and the *Encyklopädie der Aesthetik* [*Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*] by Wilhelm Hebenstreit (Hebenstreit 1843), which already include not only aesthetic technical terms, but also, to a large extent, the conceptual means to effect philosophical reflection on art. In order to emphasize the central importance of aesthetics as a form of scientific knowledge of art, Hebenstreit not only begins his dictionary with the article “Aesthetik” (Hebenstreit 1843, pp. 1–11) in violation of its alphabetical order, but also prefaces the entire *Encyklopädie* with a detailed sketch of the history and classification of aesthetic theories from A. Baumgarten to Hegel (Hebenstreit 1843, pp. III–LXXXVII). In addition, both encyclopedias were not limited merely to the terminology of the fine arts, but strove to cover all types of art in a single alphabetical order, also adding the particular associated art form of the terms (painting, music, theater, architecture, rhetorical arts, etc.) to most of the articles.

This organization of the material reveals the dilemma involved in composing an encyclopedia that emerged during the Enlightenment and continued on until the middle of the twentieth century.<sup>17</sup> On the one hand, an encyclopedia is a reference publication that strives for a *complete* coverage and presentation of information in a certain sphere and even the entire “scope of knowledge,” sorted alphabetically for ease of use, but thereby subordinating the organization of knowledge to the goals of popularity and accessibility. All large national encyclopedias (Britannica, Brockhaus, Larousse, etc.) are examples of such universal reference books for general use.

On the other hand, an encyclopedia is primarily the presentation of an ordered body of knowledge, organized in accordance with definite principles and methods of classification. This approach to mapping knowledge, showing the systemic correlations and the genealogy of its basic concepts and principles, is demonstrated by Hegel’s *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, as well as by numerous nineteenth-century theological, legal, and philological encyclopedias, compiled to

<sup>16</sup>For a sketch of the history of artistic dictionaries, see Pfisterer (2019).

<sup>17</sup>For the development of the concept of an encyclopedia and the practices associated with their creation, see Dierse (1977).

teach the basics of these disciplines. They did not set as their task to cover the entire content of knowledge, and there is no alphabetical ordering. The presentation is subordinated exclusively to the goals of a methodological organization of knowledge, presenting it as a single system or as a “genealogical tree” with a common origin.

On the contrary, the famous *Encyclopedia* by D’Alembert and Diderot (1751–1772) embodies a compromised approach already in its title—*L’Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné*, in seeking to combine the systematic principle of presenting knowledge with a vocabulary. D’Alembert’s *Le discours préliminaire* describes knowledge as a unified system of the sciences, genealogically deduced from the basic cognitive faculties—mind, memory, and imagination. However, at the same time the entire *Encyclopedia* is constructed in an alphabetical order, violating the systemic division of knowledge, which is preserved only in the indication of the subject area following the dictionary word.<sup>18</sup>

Hebenstreit’s *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics* demonstrates the same compromised approach in the systematization of knowledge related to only one sphere, viz., knowledge about art. On the one hand, Hebenstreit sought to summarize the development of aesthetics over the century from Baumgarten and to present aesthetics as a system of knowledge. With this intention, he followed Hegel, who viewed his own systematic exposition of the philosophy of art, set forth in his *Lectures on Aesthetics*, as a body of *scientific* knowledge about art. At the same time, Hebenstreit not only clearly articulated his belief in the scientific character of aesthetics as a discipline, but deduced from his survey of the history of aesthetics the systematic nature of basic aesthetic concepts. Along with this, he saw his task as “proceeding not so much by constructing, as by critically analyzing, clarifying and ordering” the terminological material, and as making “the productive ideas of the spirit as clear as possible” (Hebenstreit 1843, p. LXXXIII). At the same time, Hebenstreit took into account in his *Encyclopedia* the increased public interest in art that had formed in Europe since the French Revolution with the establishment of large national museums and art galleries as well as the institutionalizing of the “literary public” into a network of numerous societies and organizations interested in all types of art. Therefore, Hebenstreit directed his book equally to both the “art scholar” (*Kunstgelehrte*), who expects systemic knowledge, and the “art lover” (*Kunstfreund*), who wishes to get acquainted with the basics and the results of a scientific (aesthetic) study of art in a popular presentation. Referring to these two target groups—the scholarly community and the literary public—he also explained the title of his work *Scientific and Literary Encyclopedia of Aesthetics or an Etymological-Critical Dictionary of Aesthetic Terminology* (Hebenstreit 1843, p. LXXXIV).

GAKhN’s “Encyclopedia of Artistic Terminology” reflects, almost a hundred years later, a new stage in the scientific discourse of art, which is characterized by the dominance of the “theory of art” (*Kunstwissenschaften*), which had reclaimed its thematic sphere and its scientific status from “aesthetics.” However, unlike Hebenstreit, the creators of the GAKhN Encyclopedia did not have a ready-made system before their eyes, like Hegel’s. They had yet to formulate a new conceptual systematization

<sup>18</sup>On the conception of the French *Encyclopedia* in the context of encyclopedic writing practices, see Schneider (2013), pp. 53–72.

of art and determine not only the principles for the differentiation of the sciences, but also the character of their interrelationship and their relationship to the previous form of the integration of scientific knowledge of art to philosophical aesthetics.

The most developed form of reflection on the issue of systematizing knowledge of art in the first third of the twentieth century is the intellectual movement called the “General Theory of Art” (*Allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*). It appeared in Germany (and beyond) on the platform of the journal *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft* (since 1906) and united around the idea of a new “science of art,” which should replace metaphysical and psychological “aesthetics” as a general framework for scientific knowledge of art.<sup>19</sup> Since the task of creating such a science was decisive for the art critics and philosophers of GAKhN, the discussion of the conceptions of “general theory of art” by M. Dessoir and E. Uitz occupied a significant place in the Academy’s investigations<sup>20</sup> and became one of the key theoretical factors in the development of the conception of the Encyclopedia, although the German theorists of the “general theory of art” had no plans to create an encyclopedia or a dictionary of the new science.

However, GAKhN was not alone in its plans to create an encyclopedia of basic concepts. In the 1920s, several attempts at a lexicographic organization of knowledge about art emerged at the same time in Europe, all striving to summarize the development of the terminology of the artistic sciences in the post-Hegelian era and to affirm the new status of the “theory of art” as the scientific knowledge of art *par excellence*. Such encyclopedic projects included Étienne Souriau’s *Vocabulaire d’esthétique* (Souriau 2010) in France and Erich Rothacker’s *Handbuch kulturphilosophischer Grundbegriffe* in Germany (Stöwer 2012, pp. 94–100).

Although Souriau’s dictionary was published for the first time only in 1990, his project dated back to the scientific initiatives of Victor Basch<sup>21</sup> to institutionalize aesthetics as a discipline in the 1920s and ’30s in France. Basch, who headed the department of aesthetics at the Sorbonne in 1928, also rested on Dessoir’s idea of a “general theory of art,” but at the same time advanced a synthetic conception of aesthetics as a science that studies art as an autonomous sphere of the spirit, “distinct from all others and having its own fauna and flora, its own code, its own mores and customs” (Basch 1935a, p. 29). The systematization of knowledge of art with all the differences in the methods of obtaining it (Basch talks about psychological, phenomenological, and sociological methods), is the same, since it concerns a single sphere of subject matter. Accordingly, aesthetics is a unified science of art, despite

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<sup>19</sup>From the very start of the journal by Max Dessoir, the conjunction “und” in the title meant, first of all, an opposition of earlier aesthetics to “general theory of art,” conceived as a discipline embodying a new systematization of knowledge about art in general (Collenberg-Plotnikov 2021, pp. 37–52).

<sup>20</sup>For a discussion of the concept of “general theory of art” at GAKhN, see Collenberg-Plotnikov (2021), pp. 294–300. In addition to the already published texts by members of GAKhN that contain a discussion of this concept (Shpet 1926; Nedovich 1927; Sidorov 1922/2017; Losev 1927/2017), one should also point out the remaining unpublished texts of N.M. Tarabukin, who developed an independent conception of a “general theory of art” (see Tarabukin 1929, *Teoriia iskusstva*).

<sup>21</sup>Concerning him, see Collenberg-Plotnikov (2021, pp. 301–309, *passim*); Trautmann-Waller (2002).

the presence of various components of philosophical knowledge and knowledge of art studies (Basch 1935a, p. 33).<sup>22</sup>

Based on this concept, Basch, together with his colleagues Étienne Souriau and Charles Lalo, developed in 1931 the project *Vocabulaire d'Esthétique et de Science de l'Art*, which he presented in 1935 in the first issue of the journal *Revue d'Art et d'Esthétique* (Basch 1935b). According to their plan, the dictionary had to summarize the development of aesthetics in Europe over the past half-century, and following the model of the *Vocabulaire technique et critique de philosophie* by André Lalande, lexically fix the various meanings of concepts in order to present as fully as possible the structure of aesthetic terminology. It was assumed that since aesthetics “lies at the junction of several disciplines” (psychology, logic, metaphysics, theory of art, and sociology) (Basch 1935b, p. 121), the dictionary should cover the terms of these disciplines used to solve the problems of aesthetics. However, if the inclusion of philosophical, aesthetic, and art-studies terminology did not present difficulties for the creators of the dictionary, within the sphere of art itself they had to accept semantic limitations and abandon a large number of technical terms as not belonging to the area of aesthetic theory. As a result, the first step was the compiling of a general list of terms, “which must be determined by asking for advice from psychologists, logicians, and sociologists, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, from artists: architects, sculptors, painters, musicians, artists of the spoken word and movement” (Basch 1935b, pp. 122–123). This was done, but the Second World War prevented the further implementation of the project.

After the war, the project was headed by Étienne Souriau, who, like his predecessor Victor Basch (who died at the hands of the Nazis), linked the project of the dictionary with new initiatives to institutionalize aesthetics as a discipline at the intersection of philosophy, theory of art, and art criticism (for a history of the project, see Souriau 2010, pp. XIII–XXII). In 1958, Souriau essentially reorganized work on the preparation of the dictionary. He combined all the previously existing parallel commissions by the type of art into one Central Commission and himself led the editing process for each individual article. At the same time, he retained Viktor Basch's previous strategy of preparing articles on a competitive basis, choosing an article from several options and supplementing or refining it during the discussion at the meetings of the commission. In the course of the discussions, the ambiguity of the same terms in different art forms and different disciplines of their study was increasingly revealed. Because of this, the process of preparing and discussing articles in accordance with a vocabulary covering 1800 terms was extremely slow. In 1979, when Souriau died at the age of 87, work on the Dictionary, on which 36 authors and editors had taken part, had reached only the letter “D.” However, the commission decided at all costs to complete the work, the charge of which was taken over by Anna Souriau, Étienne's daughter. The dictionary was first published in 1990 with the authorship given as Étienne Souriau in memory of its chief creator. Thus, the dictionary has become not only a fundamental reference work on aesthetic terminology,

<sup>22</sup>Basch is also unequivocally opposed to the separation of aesthetics from the general theory of art in the works of K. Fiedler, E. Utitz, and M. Dessoir, although he agreed with them that a normative aesthetics of beauty as well as an aesthetics of values impede the scientific understanding of art (Basch 1935a, p. 38).

but at the same time a monument to the history of the scientific and philosophical understanding of art in the twentieth century.

In contrast, the German project of E. Rothacker remained only at the stage of its initial conception, which arose in connection with Rothacker's works on the theory and history of the human sciences (Rothacker 1926) in the early 1920s.<sup>23</sup> The "Compendium of Basic Cultural-Philosophical Concepts" was intended to combine the explication of the philosophical content of concepts with an analysis of their application in the individual disciplines of the human sciences as well as with the reconstruction of their semantic transformation in the history of philosophy and science. "All of our work devoted to a philosophical clarification of basic concepts will amount to nothing if philosophy fails to find a vital relationship between its concepts and the basic concepts of the individual sciences," Rothacker wrote in this connection (Kranz 2012, p. 167). As a follower of W. Dilthey, he believed that such a "vital attitude" could be established only within the framework of a whole spectrum of studies on the history of science and the formation of the *Geisteswissenschaften* as independent scientific disciplines. From this analysis of the history of the human sciences and, above all, from an investigation of the genesis and development of their terminology, he intended to derive a new "systematization" of the cultural sciences, strictly separating it from the previous metaphysical systems that abstractly constructed the order of categories without a connection to the practice of the human sciences. On the contrary, contemporary philosophy of culture should build the order of its categories, based on the interrelationship of the individual sciences and their connection to philosophy. Only then will it be possible, according to Rothacker, to "free the individual sciences from their isolation and, distinguishing the basic 'general scientific' problems," give them a cultural and philosophical grounding and show their historical continuity (Kranz 2012, p. 167).

Rothacker believed that such a plan could be realized in the most adequate way in the form of an encyclopedia of the basic concepts of the human sciences and the philosophy of culture, which, like the *Encyclopedia* of Diderot and D'Alembert, could open a new stage in the development of knowledge in the human sciences (Kranz 2012, p. 170). The first attempts at the idea of such an encyclopedia can be found in the framework of his large review of 1927, which criticized Rudolf Eisler's *Dictionary of Philosophical Concepts*, which was already then in its fourth edition (Rothacker 1927, pp. 766–791). Despite the fact that Eisler in his *Dictionary* set for himself the task of giving a historical overview of definitions of philosophical terms, Rothacker reproached him not only for incompleteness and arbitrariness in his choice of material, but on the whole for the absence of a "historical approach" (Rothacker 1927, p. 767). The enumeration of the different opinions of philosophers is not yet a demonstration of the historical development of philosophical terminology. The approach should be based on a "history of concepts" (*Begriffsgeschichte*) approach that would combine the analysis of a "history of terms" with an investigation of the "history of problems" (Kranz 2012, p. 169). It was such an approach that Rothacker in-

<sup>23</sup>On the project "Handbuch der kulturphilosophischen Begriffe" in 1927–1929, see for more details Stöwer (2012), pp. 94–102; Kranz (2012), pp. 141–153, 166–193; Müller and Schmieder (2016), pp. 100–115. Kranz published, in an appendix to his study, Rothacker's archival documents containing an account of his project.

tended to realize in the form of a *Dictionary of All Basic Concepts of the Human Sciences and Philosophy of Culture* (*Handwörterbuch der gesamten geisteswissenschaftlichen und kulturphilosophischen Grundbegriffe*, Rothacker 1927, p. 780), the need for which he deduced from the critical analysis of the vocabulary of Eisler.<sup>24</sup>

Rothacker—at the time still an assistant professor at the University of Heidelberg—presented in 1927 a plan for the creation of such a dictionary to the German Research Foundation (Stöwer 2012, p. 98; Kranz 2012, pp. 166–171), proposing to establish an Institute for Cultural Sciences. This institution would realize the task of developing a systematization and history of “all” (*sämtliche*) the concepts in the human sciences and cultural philosophy (Kranz 2012, p. 169). Such a task was, of course, beyond the power of a single investigator, taking into account also the basic requirements for the dictionary, in which Rothacker proposed to include not only the philosophical semantics of basic concepts (e.g., “absolute”), but also the entire range of meanings that have attached to them in the history of political science (e.g., “absolute monarchy”) or the arts (e.g., “absolute pitch”). The received grant money was enough, however, only to finance the work of the philosopher himself and his assistant, with the help of which he compiled a lexical compendium, which included 800 terms, and also began to collect a card index on the history of concepts. Attempts to involve other institutions in this project, in particular to obtain the support of Aby Warburg and his library in Hamburg, were ultimately unsuccessful, despite Warburg’s interest and Rothacker’s stress on the affinity of his dictionary project with Warburg’s own idea of a “historical atlas of images” (“Mnemosyne”) and E. Panofsky’s investigations on the history of artistic and philosophical concepts (see Kranz 2012, pp. 145–148). As a result, Rothacker’s project remained only in the preparatory stage, although after the Second World War it was continued in the form of the journal *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte*, which he headed in 1955 as a forum for the preparation of a future “Dictionary of Philosophical and Worldview Terminology” (Rothacker 1955, p. 5). However, by that time a parallel project for revising Eisler’s dictionary had already emerged, viz., the *Historical Dictionary of Philosophy*, edited by J. Ritter (see Müller and Schmieder 2016, pp. 869–905), which at least partially embodied Rothacker’s idea of the connection between the history of terminology and the history of problems.<sup>25</sup> However, his plan to reconstruct the history of basic concepts in such a way as to reveal all the semantic lines that permeate the disciplinary field of the human sciences and philosophy remained unrealized (and, apparently, even unrealizable).

**Acknowledgements** This Article was created as part of the research project “Artistic Research in Between Stenogram and Encyclopaedia. Strategies of Gaining and Documenting Knowledge at the State Academy for Artistic Research (1921–1930)”.

**Funding** Open Access funding enabled and organized by Projekt DEAL. This work was supported by Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, Grant # 386757512).

<sup>24</sup>It is significant that Eisler’s dictionary takes as its starting point not only Rothacker, but also the creators of the fundamental *Historical Dictionary of Philosophy*, ed. J. Ritter (*Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, hrsg. von J. Ritter), which was also created as a “completely revised” (“völlig neubearbeitete Ausgabe”) work by Eisler. The creators of the GAKhN Encyclopedia (Popov 1929, Materialy, p. 4) were also guided by Eisler’s dictionary.

<sup>25</sup>J. Ritter himself insisted that his “Historical Dictionary” was not a dictionary of the “history of concepts,” but only provides preliminary material for such a history (Kranz 2005, pp. 34–35).



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