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Freedom and Exile: Edgar Wind and the Congress for Cultural Freedom

Ben Thomas

Abstract

During the years 1952–53 the art historian and philosopher Edgar Wind participated in several major cultural events organized by the Congress for Cultural Freedom – notably the arts festival *Masterpieces of the Twentieth Century* in Paris in 1952, and the conference *Science and Freedom* in Hamburg in 1953. Wind’s involvement in this high-profile anti-communist organization, covertly funded by the CIA, led him to reflect on his experience of exile, the threat posed to The Warburg Institute by the Nazis in the 1930s, and the parallels with his current experience of American academia at the height of Senator Joseph McCarthy’s influence. The moving impact of his return to Hamburg in 1953 prompted Wind to make an unusually personal definition of freedom as resulting from ‘the breaking up of habitus’, contrasting with Martin Heidegger’s contemporary concept of ‘dwelling’ and closer to Theodor Adorno’s argument in *Minima Moralia* that ‘dwelling, in the proper sense, is now impossible’ and that today ‘it is part of morality not to be at home in one’s home’.

Keywords

Dwelling; Edgar Wind; Exile; Freedom; Martin Heidegger; Theodor Adorno

During the years 1952–53 the art historian and philosopher Edgar Wind participated in three major cultural events organized by the Congress for Cultural Freedom – the arts festival *Masterpieces of the Twentieth Century* in Paris in 1952, the conference *Science and Freedom* in Hamburg and the Alpbach Seminar in Austria in 1953.¹ Although these were lavishly

¹ On Edgar Wind see: Hugh Lloyd-Jones, ‘A Biographical Memoir’, in Edgar Wind, *The Eloquence of Symbols: Studies in Humanist Art*, ed. Jaynie Anderson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), xiii-xxxvi; Creighton Gilbert, ‘Edgar Wind as Man and Thinker’, *The New Criterion*, 7 (October 1984), 36-41; Bernhard Buschendorf, ‘“War ein sehr tüchtiges gegenseitiges Fördern”: Edgar Wind und Aby Warburg’, *Idea: Jahrbuch der Hamburger Kunsthalle*, IV (1985), 165-209; Bernhard Buschendorf, ‘Auf dem Weg nach England – Edgar Wind und die Emigration der Bibliothek Warburg’, in Michael Diers (ed.), *Porträt aus Büchern* (Hamburg: Dölling und Galitz Verlag, 1993), 85-128; Horst Bredekamp, Bernhard Buschendorf, Freia Hartung and John Michael Krois (eds), *Edgar Wind: Kunsthistoriker und Philosoph* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1998); Edgar Wind, *The Religious Symbolism of Michelangelo*, ed. Elizabeth Sears, introductions by Elizabeth Sears and John O’Malley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Ben Thomas, ‘Edgar Wind: A Short Biography’, *Stan Rzecz*, 8 (2015), 117-37.

funded events the Congress for Cultural Freedom's generosity did not extend to providing accommodation and travel for Margaret Wind in Paris and Hamburg, so fortunately for the historian the vivid, gossipy and occasionally poignant correspondence between Wind and his wife survives in the Bodleian Library as part of the Edgar Wind archive.² These documents provide illuminating insights into the brief involvement of one of the greatest art historians of the twentieth century with a campaigning anti-communist organization at the height of the Cold War. Notoriously, the Congress for Cultural Freedom (hereafter referred to as the CCF) and its associated publications, like the journals *Prouves* and *Encounter*, were later revealed to have been funded indirectly by the CIA, a fact that many involved, like the philosopher Sidney Hook, either knew or suspected to be the case.³

The CCF events in Paris and Hamburg were significant episodes in the propaganda struggle with Soviet Russia under Stalin and this political context endowed the theories on the nature of art and society that Wind articulated at them – notions which might otherwise be considered scholarly and esoteric – with a prominence and immediacy that reached well beyond academic circles. In the case of the Hamburg conference on *Science and Freedom*, Wind had the opportunity to reflect on his personal experience of exile: he had been successively displaced from Hamburg in 1933 by the rise of fascism, accompanying the Warburg Institute to London, and then from Britain to America by the events of the Second World War. After travelling widely across the USA during the Second World War to promote the Warburg Institute, and holding temporary posts at the Institute of Fine Art in New York and the University of Chicago, Wind decided at the end of the war to become an American citizen and remain in a permanent position at Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts. In 1953 Wind saw disturbing parallels between the McCarthyism threatening his adopted country and the events that had driven him out of Germany twenty years previously. This article will explore how Wind's unusually political and personal intervention in the *Science and Freedom* conference sheds light on the philosophical analysis of freedom in his early masterpiece on scientific methodology

² The Alpbach Seminar ('Was ist der Mensch?') took place at the Osterreichischen College, 15 August – 4 September 1953. Wind took part in the seminars 'Die Idee des Menschen in Wandel der Geschichte', 'Vom Impressionismus zur Gegenwart', 'Die Einheit der Moderne in bildender Kunst, Literature und Musik' (where the focus was Klee), and also 'Die moderne Musik kampf um ihr Publikum'. For Wind's programme of events see: Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ms. Wind 11, folder 3. As there are no other documents relating to this event among the Wind papers, it will not be discussed further here.

³ On the Congress for Cultural Freedom see: Christopher Lasch, *The Agony of the American Left* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968); Peter Coleman, *The Liberal Conspiracy: The Congress for Cultural Freedom and the Struggle for the Mind of Postwar Europe* (London and New York: Macmillan, 1989); Frances Stonor Saunders, *Who Paid the Piper? The CIA and the Cultural Cold War* (London: Granta, 1999); Giles Scott Smith, *The Politics of Apolitical Culture: The Congress for Cultural Freedom, the CIA, and Post-War American Hegemony* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002). Sidney Hook wrote in his autobiography that: 'In my own mind I had no doubt that the CIA was making some contribution to the financing of the congress, but I was never privy to the amount or to the mechanism of its operation. Everyone involved in the activities of the Congress had heard the rumours of covert CIA support. If anyone had deep moral scruples about it, he should have dropped out. If he did not, he did not want to know', Sidney Hook, *Out of Step: An Unquiet Life in the 20th Century* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), p. 451, and see also pp. 450-56 (hereafter Hook, 1987).

Experiment and Metaphysics (1934), on his post-war opposition to existentialism, and on his resistance to McCarthyism at Smith College.

Wind's involvement with the CCF resulted from the invitation of the exiled Russian composer Nicolas Nabokov to participate in the spectacular arts festival he organised under the aegis of the CCF in Paris in May 1952. Nabokov was a close friend of the philosopher Isaiah Berlin, who described him as 'a very gifted and delightful man' although 'not a very good composer', and also 'the most obsolete of all types – a Russian bourgeois Liberal of 1910'.⁴ Wind was probably already acquainted with Nabokov through mutual friends like Berlin and Hook, but it was while they were both Fellows at the American Academy in Rome during August 1951, where Wind was carrying out research on Raphael and Michelangelo, that the possibility of Wind's participation in the Paris festival was discussed. Nabokov wrote to Wind on 9 February 1952 stating that 'of course we want a lecture from you in the course of our Exposition, and yes of course we want that lecture to be in the general lines of what we have discussed in Rome'.⁵ Wind's initial suggestion had been to lecture on 'Klee and Candide', focusing on the lively illustrations to Voltaire's picaresque and satirical novel *Candide, ou l'optimisme* (1759) that Paul Klee began producing in 1911. Although Nabokov expected a statement condemning socialist realism from Wind, it may be that in proposing a lecture on the German reception of *Candide* Wind already had in mind the theme of exile and the itinerant intellectual. Following various changes of plan, Wind participated in a discussion on modern art in Paris, alongside Herbert Read and Lionello Venturi, in which he departed from the approved script that the vitality and modernity of art produced in the non-communist world was an index of political freedom. In well-received remarks, Wind invoked Klee to argue that art had been displaced by science at the cultural centre of modern society, and that consequently the best modern art was essentially capricious, and exercised a form of marginal anarchy.⁶

Following Wind's success in Paris, Nabokov attempted to persuade him to participate in a further CCF event. In a letter of 18 May 1953, Nabokov described the *Science and Freedom* conference to be held at the University of Hamburg:

it is going to be a curious conference and in a way a novel approach to the problem of scientific conferences in general, for we are trying to bring together representatives of the various scientific disciplines both of the exact and humane sciences.

⁴ Isaiah Berlin to Philip Graham, 14 November 1946, in Henry Hardy and Jennifer Holmes (eds), *Isaiah Berlin: Enlightening, Letters 1946-1960* (London: Pimlico, 2011), 20 (hereafter Berlin, 2011). Sidney Hook's view of Nabokov was that 'like many who regarded themselves as geniuses, [he] had the morals of an alley cat', Hook, 1987, 525. On Nicolas Nabokov see: Ian Wellens, *Music on the Frontline: Nicolas Nabokov's Struggle against Communism and Middlebrow Culture* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002).

⁵ Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ms. Wind 10, folder 2: Nicolas Nabokov to Edgar Wind, 9 February 1952.

⁶ Edgar Wind, 'Un art de caprice, de recherches, un art marginal', *Supplément de la Revue 'Preuves'*, 29, 1953, 16-17: 'Paul Klee, par exemple, nous révèle le caractère d'un intellectuel détroqué – un intellectuel qui, avec une suprême ironie, joue le naïf, mais sans renoncer à son intelligence. En se faisant enfant subtil, il suggère des limites à notre entendement raisonnable et nous réduit à un état d'innocence artificielle'. See: Ben Thomas, *Edgar Wind and Modern Art: In Defence of Marginal Anarchy* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020).

The late arrival of this invitation to participate in an academic event scheduled for 23–26 July 1953 was due to Nabokov’s awareness of ‘a reluctance on your part to go to Germany’, but he felt that the prospect of meeting once more their mutual friend, the classicist Bruno Snell, might provide Wind with the incentive to overcome this disinclination. Fearing that Wind might refuse, Nabokov followed up the invitation with a formal letter, and two telegrams (one of which stated ‘your *coloratura* indispensable awaiting you Hamburg’).⁷ Returning to Hamburg – the city where he had studied with Erwin Panofsky and Ernst Cassirer, worked closely with Aby Warburg as a research assistant at his library, and from which he had been driven out by the Nazis when dismissed from his university post – was an emotional event for Wind, and his conference speech proved to be both intensely personal and his first public use of the German language since 1933.⁸

The intellectual parameters of the Hamburg conference were neatly summed up in Bruno Snell’s speech on ‘Science and Dogma’:

Theologians have often been accused of attempting to arrest the progress of scientific discovery by blind adherence to religious dogma. Today we have a new development, in that political ideologies are being raised to the status of dogmatic truths which claim to derive their authority from scientific theories. Thus, a particular theory of race development, or the materialist philosophy of history, can become the basis of national ideology. Through this development scientific progress is stunted and the very systems of thought upon which these latter-day revelations claim to be founded are themselves destroyed.⁹

A more aggressive anti-communist version of this line of argument was articulated by Sidney Hook, when he argued that dialectical materialism was ‘one of the most fateful assertions ever put forward in the history of ideas’ because ‘it serves as a theoretical justification ... for such propositions as “science, like all culture in modern society, is national in form and class in content”’.¹⁰ In this context it is interesting to note that Isaiah Berlin had been sent for his comments by the British Foreign Office the transcripts of the Ideological Conference of University Scientific Workers held at Brno in Czechoslovakia from 27 February to 1 March 1952: at Brno, Professor L. Stoll, the Rector of Prague College for Political and Economic Sciences, had denounced ‘imperialist’ countries where scientists are

⁷ Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ms. Wind 11, folder 2: Nicolas Nabokov to Edgar Wind, 18 May 1953; telegrams from Nabokov to Wind, 23 May 1953 and 16 July 1953; a further letter from Nabokov to Wind, 12 June 1953.

⁸ On the Hamburg school see: Emily J. Levine, *Dreamland of Humanists: Warburg, Cassirer, Panofsky and the Hamburg School* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

⁹ *Science and Freedom, proceedings of a conference convened by the Congress for Cultural Freedom and held in Hamburg on July 23rd-26th, 1953* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1955), 134 (hereafter *Science and Freedom*, 1955).

¹⁰ *Science and Freedom*, 1955, 182.

only permitted to do scientific work on the condition that they sell their human dignity and subordinate their knowledge and learning to the selfish interests of this or that industrial trust, or directly to the service of war, infamy and stupidity.¹¹

The discussions in Hamburg did, of course, involve considerable criticism of the invalidity of totalitarian approaches to controlling scientific research in response to this type of criticism from the Eastern Bloc, but more interestingly they reflected on the organisation and funding of scientific research, the dissemination of its results, and the implications for scientific method and academic freedom in the West.

Wind spoke at the close of the conference, unexpectedly following immediately after the Social Democrat Mayor of West Berlin, Ernst Reuter, the hero of the Berlin Blockade, who urged 'eternal vigilance' as the price to be paid for freedom, and even survival.¹² In a letter to Margaret Wind, Wind contrasted his own 'conversational' delivery with Reuter's 'slow and pounding kind of oratory' which was

of enormous force and steadily growing, and since the man himself is monumental and every word he says is backed up by what he has done, the atmosphere (to put it mildly) is very charged by the time he has finished.

Wind was able to report to his wife the very favourable reception of his contribution:

I weaved my argument into a semi-personal tale about Berlin, Hamburg, and America, with a moral drawn from Poincaré and Peirce: for there had been considerable confusion, in one of the sessions, about American pragmatism. The after-effects were so many that I shall have to postpone the account to the oral phase. Sidney Hook was so delirious that he came back again and again, tearfully mumbling two phrases: 'This was the most poetical speech I ever heard', and: 'You really should have joined the diplomatic service'.

Afterwards Wind was able to talk with Reuter at some length about the German situation, and also with Rudolf Pechel, the editor of *Deutsche Rundschau* and a conservative opponent of the Nazis in whom Wind discerned 'a savage melancholy which I begin to recognize in those who have survived a concentration camp'.¹³

Wind's speech appears to have consisted of two principal elements: a tribute to Bruno Snell's heroic resistance to the Nazi Rector of the University of Hamburg in 1933, and a defence of the pragmatist philosophy of Charles Sanders Peirce in a personal vein, inflected by some of the arguments of his Habilitationsschrift *Das Experiment und die Metaphysik* (written in Hamburg in 1929, accepted by the faculty in 1930, and published in 1934). Wind began his speech by stating that 'in Hamburg I learnt about Science and

¹¹ Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ms. Berlin 130, General Correspondence May-October 1952, 19-20, 22.

¹² *Science and Freedom*, 1955, 283.

¹³ Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ms. Wind 11, folder 4: Edgar Wind to Margaret Wind, 'Monday', July 1953.

Freedom in many ways' ('In Hamburg habe ich in vieler Weise über Wissenschaft und Freiheit gelernt'):

I remember very clearly the events of 1933. I remember very clearly the event which the present Rector has described [Bruno Snell] – how as a young professor he went to the newly installed national-socialist Rector and pointed out to him that the sort of things he proposed to do were certainly not appropriate for the University. But I also remember something else, namely that this same young professor in that moment of peril invited all those who he believed felt the same to a meeting in his flat and called on them to resist. This resistance failed. It was not the young professor's fault; it was the fault rather of the old men, who thought this sort of proceeding was an empty gesture. But I have come to realize that in these matters there is no such thing as an empty gesture. Those actions of your present Rector have remained not only in my memory, their influence continues to be felt today.¹⁴

What this translation does not convey is the rhythmic repetition of the phrase 'ich erinnere mich' as Wind bears witness to these events, literally 'reminding himself' of Snell's actions. Snell's own account of the events of 1933, delivered at the opening of the conference in his welcome address as Rector of the University of Hamburg, was reported in an article by Irving Kristol in *Der Monat*:

Twenty years ago when the new rector had taken over at our University of Hamburg, I tried to make him see in a very frank conversation that at this university of all places the measures that were threatened could not be carried through, and to show him with factual arguments that they would destroy the foundations of scholarship and science. The answer I received was: 'Do you actually think the professors will put up any real resistance if we do the things we believe are right'? I have rarely in my life been so ashamed as I was then...

It seems to me the point of this conference that we should try to make such shameful situations impossible in future. At that time it was too late, because people no longer knew what was at stake over freedom of research; or people perhaps knew in theory – it was a received truth that had become pale and empty, it no longer seized hold of their whole being, it was not felt heart and soul. We have become wiser through experience, at least I hope so. After the answer I received, factual argument was no longer possible. But many people found that they were continuing the conversation in their minds, that they were arguing it out with the suppressors of freedom even in their dreams.¹⁵

¹⁴ *Der Kongress für die Freiheit der Kultur, Wissenschaft und Freiheit* (Berlin: Grunewald Verlag, 1954), 280-81. The German conference proceedings transcribe two passages from Wind's speech. These are omitted from the English conference proceedings: *Science and Freedom*, 1955. The English translation cited here was published in *The Oxford Magazine*, 53, 1990, 8. Wind's speech was also reported in *Kontakte – Mitteilungen vom Kongress für die Freiheit der Kultur*, August-September, 1953, 4.

¹⁵ Irving Kristol, 'Wissen als Tugend oder Macht – Bericht von der Tagung "Wissenschaft und Freiheit"', *Der Monat*, 60, September, 1953, 590-94. Wind's tribute to Snell is highlighted here, although his remarks on pragmatism are not.

Wind's praise for Bruno Snell's exemplary moral stand was not simply a personal tribute to a friend. In fact, it illustrated one aspect of the link between science and freedom that was not only the subject of the CCF conference in 1953, but also of the thesis concerning Kant's cosmological antinomies that Wind had developed in his *Habilitationschrift*. This remarkable philosophical work tackled the problem of circular argument in both the sciences and humanities, advanced a theory of the experiment based on 'internal delimitation' as an empirical method for testing hypotheses, and proposed ways in which the four antinomies described in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) could be resolved through a critique of their underlying Newtonian assumptions regarding space and time in the light of scientific advances such as the theory of relativity and quantum mechanics. Fundamental here is Wind's notion of 'embodiment' – the conceptual link between a pragmatist revision of Kant and a Warburgian understanding of the symbol. Physical hypotheses are embodied in the instruments devised to verify them just as the symbol embodies the cultural tension between sign and living image – and the behaviour of a man embodies his beliefs.¹⁶

Bruno Snell, for example, had been faced in 1933 with a classic moral dilemma – one that brings to mind Kant's third antinomy: that freedom is necessary to account for the appearances of the world, and that paradoxically there is no freedom and everything is determined solely by natural laws. Wind argued in *Experiment and Metaphysics* that when the dynamical, linear understanding of time implicit in the third antinomy's formulation is replaced by a statistical, configured and therefore 'uncertain' temporality, the Kantian paradox of free-will and determinism can be overcome:

For the problem of freedom of will, however, it follows from this that it would at least be premature to maintain that a man could never have acted differently from the way in which he did in fact act. This assertion would only be justified if all natural occurrence were subject to dynamical laws. In configurative occurrence the range of possible actions which can follow upon a given action is indeed limited, but within this range there is room for free decisions.¹⁷

It is probably in the context of this brief discussion of the ethical implications of Wind's understanding of the problem of freedom with relation to the cosmological antinomies that the two paragraphs deleted from Wind's original preface in the published version of *Experiment and Metaphysics* can best be understood.¹⁸ Wind wrote in these deleted passages:

¹⁶ Edgar Wind, *Experiment and Metaphysics: Towards a Resolution of the Cosmological Antinomies*, trans. Cyril Edwards (Oxford: Legenda, 2001), (hereafter *Experiment and Metaphysics*); Edgar Wind, 'Warburg's Concept of Kulturwissenschaft', in *The Eloquence of Symbols*, ed. Jaynie Anderson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 28-9.

¹⁷ *Experiment and Metaphysics*, 122.

¹⁸ *Experiment and Metaphysics*, 125: 'A false assessment of the matter, or a false intervention on the part of the individual, seem to me fully to merit the designation 'ethical errors'. That one can, however, speak meaningfully of an 'ethical error' is one of the most important points of this doctrine – but this cannot be explored further here, as we are concerned merely with the cosmological concept of freedom, not its ethical execution'.

Is it not here, in philosophy itself, that the guilt of those most prominent representatives of that ‘Idealism’ which is today condemned as ‘liberal’ lies? Possessing and enjoying a philosophy which they thought to be adequately anchored in a glorious tradition, at the critical moment they proved neither willing nor able to fulfil their logical obligations. Challenged to battle, they had the choice of weapons, but they preferred to behold from on high the development in which they ought to have intervened, to woo the enemy through tokens of their favour, and, despite all their wisdom, to pin their hopes on the illusion that they might be able to make their peace even with this enemy.¹⁹

Similarly, Wind argued that the philosophical opponents of an idealistic conception of freedom that had become ‘vacuous and shallow in its impotent universality’ had simply withdrawn into a ‘gloomy Innerlichkeit’ with their own refusal to intervene (here Wind had in mind Karl Jaspers and Martin Heidegger whose work he saw as defining the ‘current tenor of philosophy’).²⁰ Whether idealistic or existential in its justification, the failure to resist the ‘Gleichschaltung’, the political alignment of German universities and other public institutions to the Nazi party, was an ‘ethical error’ according to Wind’s concept of freedom. By contrast Snell’s conduct confirmed Peirce’s view that theory and practice could not be divorced and that, as Wind went on to argue in his Hamburg speech in 1953, ‘if you want to know a man’s beliefs with regard to a given proposition, there is no better test than to observe his behaviour’ (‘...wenn man den Glauben eines Menschen mit Bezug auf einen gegebenen Satz untersuchen will, es kein besseres Mittel gibt, als seine Handlungsweise zu beobachten’).²¹

At this point in the speech, as he continued to summarise Peirce, Wind’s narrative became a more personal one about his successive homes in Berlin, Hamburg and America, and with this shift in emphasis he also introduced a different if related conception of freedom – one less defined by consistency of theory and practice, which Kant might term the ‘categorical imperative’ and the pragmatists ‘belief’, but arising from successive adaptations to external shocks. According to Peirce, Wind argued, our beliefs are confirmed by habitual behaviour which forms character. This ‘habitus’ makes us predictable to a certain extent – but the sign of freedom (‘das Zeichen der Freiheit’) is the

¹⁹ *Experiment and Metaphysics*, 2 and also 3, note 2 – Nigel Palmer here discusses how far this criticism of ‘idealistic’ philosophers extends: ‘the criticism is certainly directed at Henrich Rickert in Heidelberg... but it may also extend to others such as Bruno Bauch and the Hamburg professors who declined to stand by Bruno Snell in his protest against the National Socialist regime’.

²⁰ Heidegger, of course, actively embraced National Socialism in his tenure of the rectorship of the University of Freiburg. See, for example, Rüdiger Safranski, *Martin Heidegger: Between Good and Evil*, trans. Ewald Osers (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1998), 225-63; Hugo Ott, *Martin Heidegger. A Political Life*, trans. Allan Blunden (London: Basic Books, 1993), 133-260; Emmanuel Faye, *Heidegger: The Introduction of Nazism into Philosophy*, trans. Michael B. Smith (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011).

²¹ *Der Kongress für die Freiheit der Kultur, Wissenschaft und Freiheit* (Berlin: Grunewald Verlag, 1954), 280-81. For the source in Peirce see, for example, ‘How to Make Our Ideas Clear’, in Justus Buchler (ed.), *Philosophical Writings of Peirce* (New York: Dover, 1955), 30: ‘Thus, we come down to what is tangible and conceivably practical, as the root of every real distinction of thought, no matter how subtle it may be; and there is no distinction of meaning so fine as to consist in anything but a possible difference of practice’.

tendency for this habitual behaviour to be disrupted ('dieses Durchbrechen der Gewohnheit'). To always think along the same lines constitutes a form of madness, which enslaves, silences and makes us stupid. Henri Poincaré had argued that when experience forces the researcher to abandon a favourite hypothesis that this should in fact be a source of joy, and because Wind had learnt the brutal truth of this fact of the 'breaking up of habitus' in Hamburg, even after twenty years of absence, he still considered himself a member of the Hamburg school.

Although Wind had offered a critique of Poincaré's concept of 'arbitrary convention' in developing his theory of the experiment (or '*experimentum crucis*') in *Experiment and Metaphysics*, he was indebted to the French scientist's thinking concerning hypotheses, and was particularly fond of quoting him on the joy of discovery resulting from experience forcing the abandonment of a favourite hypothesis.²² Wind had previously combined Poincaré and Peirce when advancing his views on historical method, particularly in relation to a favourite passage in Peirce's essay 'Some Consequences of Four Incapacities' where the American pragmatist argued that:

Philosophy ought to imitate the successful sciences in its methods, so far as to proceed only from tangible premises which can be subjected to careful scrutiny, and to trust rather to the multitude and variety of its arguments than to the conclusiveness of any one. Its reasoning should not form a chain which is no stronger than its weakest link, but a cable whose fibres may be ever so slender, provided they are sufficiently numerous and intimately connected.²³

This combination of Poincaré and Peirce in Wind's methodological thinking had been previously articulated in 1949 in his searing response to Erica Tietze-Conrat's review of his interpretation of Mantegna's *Parnassus*.²⁴ Here Wind argued that

²² Henri Poincaré, *La Science et l'Hypothèse* (Paris: Ernest Flammarion, 1941), 278: 'Toute généralisation est une hypothèse; l'hypothèse a donc un rôle nécessaire que personne n'a jamais contesté. Seulement elle doit toujours être, le plus tôt possible et le plus souvent possible, soumise à la vérification. Il va sans dire que, si elle ne supporte pas cette épreuve, on doit l'abandonner sans arrière-pensée. C'est bien ce qu'on fait en général, mais quelquefois avec une certaine mauvaise humeur. Eh bien, cette mauvaise humeur même n'est pas justifiée; le physicien qui vient de renoncer à une de ses hypothèses devrait être, au contraire, plein de joie, car il vient de trouver une occasion inespérée de découverte'. For Wind's critique of Poincaré see, for example, *Experiment and Metaphysics*, 16-52. A succinct statement of Wind's position can be found at 32: 'Treated purely mathematically, the thinking out of transformations thus remains a pretty game, but one which can only prove fruitful if man believes his destiny does not lie in his mirroring himself like a god in his own thoughts. Only in combination with an act of embodiment does transformation become an instrument of cognition, and the instrument becomes all the more powerful (and thus all the more dangerous) in proportion to the comprehensiveness with which the embodiment is attempted'. Transposed to the arts, this is essentially the argument of *Art and Anarchy*.

²³ Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (eds), *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1934), V, 157.

²⁴ Edgar Wind, 'Mantegna's *Parnassus*: A Reply to Some Recent Reflections', *Art Bulletin*, 31(3) (1949), 231. Erica Tietze-Conrat, 'Mantegna's *Parnassus*: A Discussion of a Recent Interpretation', *Art Bulletin*, 31(2) (1949), 126-130, in response to Wind's *Bellini's Feast of the Gods: A Study in Venetian Humanism* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1948).

hypotheses are the most vital part in the logic of exploration, and no scientific discovery can be made without them. The historian who thinks he can say *hypotheses non fingo* is either deceived or he is barren. As Poincaré observed, the only vicious hypotheses are those which have hardened into customs and commonplaces and are hence mistaken for safe.

Wind then goes on to cite Peirce on the weakness of linear arguments.

With regard to Peirce's views on the 'breaking up of habitus', to quote from Wind's Hamburg speech, it is perhaps more accurate to state that the American philosopher saw this as leading to doubt rather than to freedom. For example, we find in Peirce's essay 'The Essentials of Pragmatism' the following passage:

Belief is not a momentary mode of consciousness; it is a habit of mind essentially enduring for some time, and mostly (at least) unconscious; and like other habits, it is (until it meets with some surprise that begins its dissolution) perfectly self-satisfied. Doubt is of an altogether contrary genus. It is not a habit, but the privation of habit. Now a privation of habit, in order to be anything at all, must be a condition of erratic activity that in some way must get superseded by a habit.²⁵

Doubt, therefore, results from external surprise disrupting the habit of belief, and is experienced as an irritation that stimulates the intellect towards acquiring new convictions. In his 'semi-personal' account of Peirce, it is as if Wind has conflated 'habitus' and 'habitat', making the enforced and unlooked for experience of exile an unexpected source of freedom, and an opportunity to shake off 'vicious hypotheses' that had become constraining.

Wind's emphasis on the disruption of the habitual – 'dieses Durchbrechen der Gewohnheit' – is in stark contrast to the importance placed on the concept of 'dwelling' by Martin Heidegger, notably in his 1951 lecture 'Building Dwelling Thinking' ('Bauen Wohnen Denken'). Here Heidegger developed a sense of freedom as the securing of a 'locale' so that 'to dwell, to be set at peace, means to remain at peace within the free, the preserve, the free sphere that safeguards each thing in its essence'. Dwelling can be understood, therefore, as securing a space of freedom for thinking and as '*the basic character of Being*', while homelessness understood in its fundamental philosophical character (rather than just as the social problem of a post-war housing shortage) is '*the plight*' of the current 'precarious age'.²⁶ By contrast with Wind's narrative of dislocation and exile,

²⁵ Justus Buchler (ed.), *Philosophical Writings of Peirce* (New York: Dover, 1955), 257.

²⁶ Martin Heidegger, 'Building Dwelling Thinking', in David Farrell Krell (ed.), *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings* (London and New York: Routledge Classics, 2011), 246 and 254-55 (hereafter Heidegger, *Basic Writings*). The lecture was given on 5 August 1951 at the Darmstadt Symposium on *Man and Space*, and further develops aspects of Heidegger's 1946 'Letter on Humanism' written in response to Jean-Paul Sartre's 'Existentialism is a Humanism'. See, for example, 177: 'Thinking builds upon the house of Being, the house in which the jointure of Being fatefully enjoins the essence of man to dwell in the truth of Being. This dwelling is the essence of "being-in-the-world"'.

Heidegger holds up the old bridge in Heidelberg and the Black Forest farmhouse ‘on the wind-sheltered mountain slope, looking south, among the meadows close to the spring’ as buildings that achieve a sense of dwelling as the bringing together of the ‘primal oneness’ of the four characteristics of the locale: earth, sky, and the presence of divinities and mortals.²⁷

In *Minima Moralia*, a text published in 1951, Theodor Adorno argued that ‘dwelling, in the proper sense, is now impossible’ and that today ‘it is part of morality not to be at home in one’s home’.²⁸ Adorno’s statement has a certain aptness for Wind in Hamburg in 1953, as there was to be no homecoming to that city for him beyond the CCF conference in spite of various attempts to woo him back. A letter to Margaret Wind reports that:

... there is one *anima candida* here, and that is Snell. He is a very great friend; you will like him; and he seems to be very forlorn. He is begging me to come back, and help ‘remake this place into what it was’ (as if that were possible). But I have not the heart to say ‘No’ to his face, at least not yet; and it may all pass quietly.²⁹

Heidegger’s ideas on ‘dwelling’ were meant as a philosophical contribution to post-war reconstruction, although they also functioned as a cultural critique of rootless cosmopolitanism that had uncomfortable political associations. Wind had briefly studied with Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger at the University of Freiburg in 1919, and when he later heard that Heidegger had become ‘a convinced fascist’ it had seemed to him ‘a natural development’. The formative influence of Heidegger’s thought on French existentialism in the post-war period appeared to Wind like the manifestation of a ‘disease’ or ‘epidemic’ that he hoped had died out with Hitler’s regime, but ‘it has frequently happened after a military victory, that the victors became the spiritual slaves of the vanquished’. In particular, Wind had been shocked by Jean-Paul Sartre’s views on freedom that emerged in conversation following the lecture he gave at Smith College in 1946 prompting him to reflect on Heidegger’s philosophical influence in a short article written for the Smith faculty: Sartre had then argued that ‘a man who senses his liberty as a state of “dereliction” has a genuine, “authentic” experience, whereas he who greets it with joy, has not’.³⁰ Against a view of freedom that emphasised dereliction, the persistent fear of death and facing the void as the proper condition of living, Wind preferred to hold to rationality,

²⁷ Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, 246.

²⁸ Theodor Adorno, ‘18: Refuge for the homeless’, in *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*, trans. E. F. N. Jephcott (London and New York: Verso, 2005), 38-39. On Adorno, see: Lorenz Jäger, *Adorno: A Political Biography*, trans. Stewart Spencer (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004).

²⁹ Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ms. Wind 11, folder 4: Edgar Wind to Margaret Wind, ‘Saturday’, July 1953. In May 1955 Wind was offered a Visiting Professorship in Philosophy at the University of Hamburg.

³⁰ Edgar Wind, ‘Jean Paul Sartre: A French Heidegger’, *SCAN* (Smith College Associated News), XL, 5 March 1946, 1-4. To Wind’s annoyance this article was reprinted without his permission in *Polemic*: Edgar Wind, ‘Blood, Iron and Intuition’, *Polemic*, 5, September-October 1946, 54-7; reprinted with related documents in Horst Bredekamp, ‘Falsche Skischwünge. Winds Kritik an Heidegger und Sartre’, in Horst Bredekamp, Bernhard Buschendorf, Freia Hartung and John Michael Krois (eds), *Edgar Wind: Kunsthistoriker und Philosoph* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1998), 207-26.

lucidity, a harmonious sense of existence, and the experience of freedom as joy in discovery.

It is interesting to compare Wind's fears concerning Heidegger's post-war influence with those of another prominent art historian: Meyer Schapiro took exception in his essay 'The Still Life as a Personal Object' (1968) to Heidegger's interpretation of Van Gogh's painting *Shoes* (1886, Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum) to support his concept of 'dwelling' in the lecture 'The Origin of The Work of Art' (1935-36).³¹ Heidegger had asserted of the pair of shoes depicted by Van Gogh that 'this equipment belongs to the *earth*, and it is protected in the *world* of the peasant woman' – thereby investing the painting with cultural associations not dissimilar to the 'blood and soil' rhetoric of the Nazi regime.³² By contrast Schapiro argued that the shoes depicted were actually those of the artist and their worn condition was indicative of Van Gogh's personal state, a deduction from empirical observations that if correct would undermine Heidegger's thesis. This dispute over Van Gogh, as Jacques Derrida would later put it, led to 'the identification, among many other identifications, of Heidegger with the peasant and Schapiro with the city dweller, of the former with the rooted and sedentary, the latter with the uprooted emigrant'.³³

This seems an appropriate moment to ask whether, in spite of their differences in subject matter and tone, there is a related set of concerns underlying Wind's contributions to the CCF conferences in Paris and Hamburg? 'Klee and Candide' is an instructive topic, after all, not just for the capricious marginality of the modern artist, but also for the salutary effect of the 'breaking up of habitus'. The comedy of *Candide* derives from the absurd persistence displayed by its principal characters in holding to the belief that 'all is for the best in the best of all possible worlds' in spite of repeated external shocks and reversals, and disastrous wanderings around the world. Pangloss's optimistic Leibnizian system of cause and effect ('la métaphysico-théologo-comolo-nigologie'), which the hypocritical philosopher maintains unchanged to the end of the novel in spite of abundant empirical evidence to the contrary, is certainly a vicious and unsafe hypothesis ripe for abandonment. Wind argued in *Experiment and Metaphysics*, that a hypothesis is valid to the extent that it can be embodied in an '*experimentum crucis*', whereas a reluctance to abandon a false hypothesis results from what Pico della Mirandola had called 'tyrannical acts of the will'. Ultimately, Wind's concerns about freedom and the obstructions to 'necessary revision of belief', about the correct balance between testing a hypothesis and research driven by what William James, one of Wind's favourite authors, called 'the will to believe',

³¹ Meyer Schapiro, 'The Still Life as a Personal Object – A Note on Heidegger and van Gogh', in *Theory and Philosophy of Art: Style, Artist and Society* (New York: George Braziller, 1994), 135-42.

³² Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, 100-101.

³³ Jacques Derrida, 'Restitutions', in *The Truth in Painting*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 260.

found their expression in the final chapter, 'Art and the Will', of his classic text *Art and Anarchy* (1963).³⁴

To summarise, therefore, a hypothesis can either enlighten or mislead, and wilful persistence in error leads to warped thinking. Similarly, the symbol for Wind can either give coherent form to society's values, bringing them into focus, or transmit traumatic memories and perpetuate falsehoods; art, like science, can either free or oppress and requires the experimental test of engaged patronage and critical debate to determine which of these functions it will perform. Freedom, therefore, whether artistic, scientific, academic or political, is only real when it is put to the test. These ideas are further clarified by Wind's practice as a teacher at this time, as he constructed for his students at Smith College a course consisting of a sequence of engagements with primary texts from Plato through Kant to William James, in order to explore the dynamics of 'mythos' and 'logos' in Western thought (a theme that is also close to Cassirer's late thinking during his period of American exile).³⁵ Wind said of Humanities 292a 'The Traditional Conflict between Reason and Myth', a sophomore course taught during the 1952–53 academic year, that:

The imaginative and intellectual powers of man are almost perpetually at odds; he is involved in a continuous struggle between his enthusiasms and his critical acumen, between superstition and enlightenment. Clearly, this problem is still very much with us. When we think of ourselves as really enlightened, we are likely to be very superstitious. We do not, for example, recognize myth in the guise of science, and succumb to this fetish in a half-primitive idolatry. On the other hand, so-called primitive men are often quite enlightened although they express their insights obliquely through poetry and metaphor. The work of every week is planned on the basis of the confusions which the lecture of the week before aroused, so that the whole, as I see it, is not an orientation course but a disorientation course, whose purpose is to break up prejudices. And when new ideas are bred, these in turn create new prejudices which I hastily try to break up again. It is a slightly explosive process.³⁶

³⁴ Edgar Wind, *Art and Anarchy*, third edition (London: Duckworth, 1985), 76: 'As is well known, tyrannical acts of the will are not confined to external pressures. Internally, too, our will intrudes into regions where it does not belong. A scientist or historian is sometimes unwilling to give up a theory to which he has become attached, even though he comes across facts that do not quite fit it. Rather than relinquish the theory, he tries to explain the facts away, ascribing them to secondary causes which might account for the facts without disturbing the theory. The will can thus obstruct a necessary revision of belief. Thinking becomes warped because it is wilful'.

³⁵ Ernst Cassirer, *The Myth of the State* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1974), 293: Cassirer described Heidegger's philosophy as one that 'did enfeeble and slowly undermine the forces that could have resisted the modern political myths'. On the complex philosophical relationship between Cassirer and Heidegger, see: Peter E. Gordon, *Continental Divide: Heidegger, Cassirer, Davos* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 2010). Parallels can also be drawn with Adorno's thought during the Second World War, see: Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (London and New York: Verso, 1999), xiv: 'False clarity is only another name for myth; and myth has always been obscure and enlightening at one and the same time: always using the devices of familiarity and straight-forward dismissal to avoid the labour of conceptualization'.

³⁶ Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ms. Wind 9, folder 2: *Smith Alumnae Quarterly*, May 1953, 136.

When Wind spoke in Hamburg of how Bruno Snell's principled opposition to the Nazis in 1933 continued to have an influence, he was no doubt thinking of his own position at Smith College at the height of Senator Joseph McCarthy's anti-communist purges. A colleague at Smith, the literary critic Robert Gorham Davis, who had been a Communist Party member during the 1930s, had testified to the House Committee on Un-American Activities ('with reluctance' according to his obituary in *The New York Times*) naming fellow communists from that period. Whether or not he had been right to testify split the faculty at Smith in what Isaiah Berlin described as 'an undeclared war between the government, which wants people to testify before committees, and Edgar who is a very effective, subtle and formidable leader of the opposition'. In this letter to Wind's close friend Anna Kallin, Berlin continued:

There was much agitation at Smith about a Professor of English, named Gorham Davis, who was apparently once a Communist – he looks like a neurotic casualty of some kind – he testified before McCarthy, and got various people into trouble – you could imagine that his horrible conduct caused a terrific controversy between those who thought he should have talked, and those who thought he shouldn't, and what one should and shouldn't do, etc., etc.; some said he did it by collusion with the people he named; some that he did not, etc.³⁷

Wind himself reported on these events to Kallin in a letter that made explicit his view that America during the McCarthy era was horribly similar to Nazi Germany in 1933:

Isaiah, no doubt, reported to you that I became too much involved in the local political scene; but given the dimensions of the danger, there was no choice; and although he did not say so here, I think Isaiah knew it best. We have had, in our own midst, the usual traitor, the usual cowards, and the usual fools, but also (I am happy to say) a solid resistance, which distinguishes some of the American professors from their German counterparts: for the situation became unpleasantly similar. A little palace revolution organized at a crucial moment (when the "Administration" of this place, which is not all that it should be, tried to endorse an informer and to silence protests) had a clarifying effect on many, including the president; and one can look with a mild satisfaction at a few results which are negatively wholesome: that no one has been dismissed; that no one is any longer afraid of his (or anyone else's) courage; and, best of all, that I am persona non grata in the local White House. All these we regard as decided assets, and so we have returned into a happy privacy.³⁸

It is difficult to reconstruct the precise nature of Wind's role at this time as 'leader of the opposition' – he drafted, but did not send, a letter to *The New York Times* citing Montaigne, and gave a private talk on 'Kant's Defence of Benign Despotism' at the New York apartment of Josephine Crane on 9 April 1953 – but the most open manifestation of his

³⁷ Henry Hardy and Jennifer Holmes (eds), *Isaiah Berlin: Enlightening, Letters 1946-1960* (London: Pimlico, 2011), 393-94: Isaiah Berlin to Anna Kallin, 15 October 1953. In a letter written to Maurice Bowra the following day, Berlin described Wind as 'most anxious to leave America' (395).

³⁸ Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ms. Wind 46, folder 2: Edgar Wind to Anna Kallin, 17 July 1954.

opposition consisted in the organisation of the major conference at Smith College on the subject of 'Art and Morals' before which Wind's friend the left-wing artist Ben Shahn was questioned by the FBI.³⁹

Wind seems also to have been in correspondence at this time with Sidney Hook about two controversies current in 1953 relating to the McCarthyite purges: the Chafee – Sutherland statement on suspected communists invoking the Fifth Amendment in order to avoid self-incrimination when questioned by the House Committee on Un-American Activities, and the Rumely Case involving a distributor of political literature who refused to reveal the identity of customers who had made bulk orders for further distribution.⁴⁰ Hook's position at this time was firmly opposed to McCarthy (and other 'cultural vigilantes'), whose extremism he saw as compromising the liberal anti-communism he stood for, but he was also opposed to members of the Communist Party being allowed to remain in the teaching profession or university posts. Hook argued in *Heresy, Yes – Conspiracy, No* (1953) that while a liberal society should support dissenting opinions, it could not allow active conspiracies to overthrow the democracy that allowed such dissent, and that membership of the Communist Party effectively meant participation in such a conspiracy. The question of the Fifth Amendment became pressing in these circumstances because communists operating covertly were advised by the Party to 'take the Fifth' and refuse to answer questions to avoid incriminating themselves and others, and also to avoid committing perjury. 'Ritualistic liberals' who defended communists, Hook argued, were illogically mistaking 'conspiracy' for 'heresy' and inadvertently increasing the threat to freedom.

While Wind was in Hamburg, Margaret Wind wrote to him that

apropos Sidney Hook, there was a very good review of his conspiracy-heresy book by A. M. Schlesinger Jr, who holds entirely our opinion, that professors should be judged by performances only and not, as Hook apparently still holds in this book, that a man should be dismissed ipso facto if he is a Communist.⁴¹

Arthur Schlesinger Jr, author of *The Vital Center* (1949), was also known to Wind through the CCF and had participated in the *Masterpieces of the Twentieth Century* conference in Paris. While praising Hook's record ('a resolute and faithful friend of freedom'), Schlesinger disagreed with his policy of dismissing communists from academic posts by setting up faculty ethics committees, preferring to rely on 'the traditional tests of academic freedom and responsibility – professional competence and lawful behaviour'. Giving universities the right to exclude communists from their campuses would by implication give them the

³⁹ Howard Greenfeld, *Ben Shahn: An Artist's Life* (New York: Random House, 1998), 276-79. See also: Frances K. Pohl, *Ben Shahn: New Deal Artist in a Cold War Climate 1947-1954* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989).

⁴⁰ Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ms. Wind 271.

⁴¹ Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ms. Wind 11, folder 4: Margaret Wind to Edgar Wind, 'Sunday', July 1953.

responsibility of identifying who were communists, thus raising the problem of ‘fellow-travellers’ and ‘guilt by association’. This was a case where Hook’s logic had ‘carried him far beyond his underlying pragmatic faith’ as his response was not proportional to the threat.⁴² Schlesinger’s article helps to clarify Wind’s position during the McCarthy era: in other words he disagreed with Hook, and consistently held to the pragmatist view that ‘performance’ was what defined whether someone was a friend or enemy of freedom.

Wind’s own behaviour at this time was also consistently pragmatist: mindful of the example of Bruno Snell and of the worrying parallels between German universities in the 1930s and American campuses in the 1950s, he briefly became politically engaged as, to quote Berlin again, ‘a very effective, subtle and formidable leader of the opposition’. It could even be argued, therefore, that the ‘experimentum crucis’ of McCarthyism had revealed that Hook was more of an anti-communist than a pragmatist, and that Wind was more of a pragmatist than an anti-communist. Once the danger had passed, however, he could return ‘into a happy privacy’ – perhaps a final echo of Voltaire’s *Candide*? (‘il faut cultiver notre jardin’).

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⁴² Arthur Schlesinger Jr, ‘Polemic against Monotony’, *The Saturday Review*, 13 June 1953, 13-14.

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