

# *The Edgar Wind Journal*



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# *The Edgar Wind Journal*

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# Introduction

Bernardino Branca

The fifth volume of *The Edgar Wind Journal* is divided into two parts, the first containing two critical essays on Edgar Wind's writings. The encyclopaedic iconography of the Stanza della Segnatura in the Vatican Palace (1508–11) is one of the most widely discussed yet elusive decorative schemes of Italian Renaissance art. Kostantinos Gravanis's 'An Intellectual Journey through the Four Elements in Raphael's Stanza della Segnatura' elaborates and expands on Edgar Wind's reading of the room's ceiling as a complex network of symbolic correspondences based upon the structural and thematic device of the four elements. Gravanis uses contextual analysis and iconographic examination of the wall paintings to show that the four faculties of knowledge (Theology, Poetry, Philosophy and Jurisprudence) were notionally associated by Raphael and his adviser with the four elements of nature (Fire, Air, Water and Earth) to produce an admirable intellectual microcosm that reflects the universal macrocosm.

In 'Benjamin West: Modern History and Religion', Larry Silver discusses Edgar Wind's well-known fascination with eighteenth-century English painting, especially the heroic portrait tradition around Joshua Reynolds. However, Silver underscores that Wind conspicuously neglected West's contributions, despite West's adherence to the conventions of religious painting and strong awareness of Roman traditions. West's imagery, especially his depictions of Revelation, was steeped in contemporary theories of the sublime, evoking terror and the horror of the Apocalypse. This romantic attitude was very much at odds with Wind's sensibility.

The second part of volume 5 contains two translations related to Wind's writings. The first is of an interview Jeannie Carlier conducted with the French philosopher Pierre Hadot, who enthusiastically discussed and endorsed Edgar Wind's *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance* when the French edition of the book was released in 1992. Hadot commented on the book in his conversation with Carlier, which was published in the periodical *Préfaces* under the title 'Métaphysique et Images'. This interview has now been translated into English for the first time by Emma Mandley. In a short note to the translation, Robert Pawlik underscores Hadot's deep understanding of Wind's linkage of Renaissance metaphysics and Renaissance imagery and provides background on their common research interests.

Also in volume 5 are Edgar Wind's previously unpublished notes for his 1932–33 lectures at Hamburg University, translated by Jonathan Blower as 'Basic Concepts in the Philosophy of History and Culture'. This series of cryptic notes, available in English for

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the first time, supported the lectures Wind gave in the dramatic period that immediately preceded his departure from Germany because of Hitler's rise to power. As Blower observes in his introduction to the translation, Wind was a polymath with a prodigious memory. He mentioned seventy authors in the notes to the 1932–33 lectures, and nearly half of them were social or natural scientists. Hence, these notes could be regarded as the first and only tentative draft of a summa, or an attempt to systematise his theoretical studies, since his return from the US to Germany in 1928 to work with Aby Warburg. During his years in Great Britain and America after 1933, Wind never quite resumed the systematic theoretical effort he had devoted to these lectures, making this translation all the more interesting and important. Blower's introduction explains some of the challenging aspects of the translation and the biographical and theoretical background of Wind's 1932–33 lectures.