**How Was the World "Perceived" in the Early 20th Century? Modern Concepts of Vision in Academic Circles of East Central Europe**

With the development of scientific psychology, which gained its institutional sanction with the opening of the first laboratory of experimental psychology in Leipzig in 1979, the issue of individual, primarily ocular perception came to the forefront of philosophical research in the last decades of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century. Within the framework of experimental psychology and through meticulous laboratory research, the complex relationship between how external stimuli, perceived through the visual apparatus, affect individual psychic phenomena was investigated. Such new theories, arising at the intersection of psychology, physiology, and philosophy, designed new, modernized practices of seeing that gave rise to new phenomena of visual culture.

Institutions such as the one in Leipzig, led by Wilhelm Wundt, were quickly established throughout Europe, but the Central European region remains a particularly important area for such specific research on modern visual concepts as the pioneers of such research were primarily active at universities located in the region. This conviction is the starting point of my research as part of the project *Modernization of Vision. The Prose of Polish Modernism in the Face of Modern Transformations of Visual Discourse (1890-1939)* (National Science Centre, Poland, PRELUDIUM no. 2019/35/N/HS2/01893), in which I am reconstructing the existing networks of academic life at the time, with a particular focus on Polish laboratories of experimental psychology. I am interested in what kind of reformulations the conceptions of vision underwent in different research centers at that time, and along what paths they migrated – within the research community of a given region and further, as an essential part of new, cultural phenomena. I understand experiential psychology not only as an important scientific paradigm of the time, but also as a cultural experience of the modernist generation, which incorporated the theories of vision learned at universities into its own artistic practices. Prague was one of the important centers of such a defined transfer, although still little known from the perspective of Polish research on the history of psychology. Therefore, materials exposing the activities of Prague psychophysiologists should be sought at their sources.

As part of the 4EU+ Fellowship I was able to come to Prague for my preliminary research in the archives of Charles University. This research stay constituted another stage of the archival queries aimed at collecting materials on the circles of researchers working on new concepts of vision in Central and Eastern Europe. The idea was to initially distinguish several groups of actors in this process:

1. Psychologists, physiologists, and philosophers primarily from the circle of Ernst Mach, who resided in Prague. The idea, then, was to distinguish potential creators of modern concepts of vision within the philosophical discourse of the period I am interested in. University documentation makes it possible to define relations within a given academic milieu, and thus to indicate trajectories of reception of the theories I am interested in. It is no less important to be able to reconstruct the institutional conditions for the production of new concepts of vision: the research funding system, the technical facilities of the institution, and perhaps even new measurement techniques for physiological and psychological research.
2. In this respect, the archival records are a source of information on the number of students (primarily from the former Republic of Poland, but also from other areas of East-Central Europe) who may have attended Mach's or his students' lectures, as well as on the contacts of local researchers with the international academic community. In this respect, the archival documentation makes it possible to determine, at least initially, the network of actors in the transmission of locally produced concepts of vision, which took place both in student circles and at the level of broader cooperation between representatives of various research centers in the region.

My research, focused especially on Polish laboratories of experimental psychology, has shown that this kind of university documentation allows one to get into the background of the history of ideas – to look at the real possibilities of producing new concepts and their further transfer within the region. It also allows us to look at the sometimes surprising technical innovations, related to the design of modern practices of image reception, which were produced at universities, but for various reasons never made it beyond the walls of the university and thus remain unknown to historians. In this sense, the area of academic life at the turn of the twentieth century is a source that allows us to reconstruct a non-obvious chapter of the visual culture of the period.

The support of researchers at Charles University in Prague was no less important in determining the initial academic circles that might prove crucial to my research. Consultation with Dr. Kocian allowed me to learn more about the history of the university and to take a broader look at cultural or technological phenomena that might be in relation to the modern theories of vision that interested me.

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