

Chapter 11

Chapter 11 of *The Art Thief* takes a closer look at Breitwieser's psychological profile, exploring the underlying factors that drive his art thefts. Diagnosed with narcissistic and antisocial personality disorders, his behavior suggests a deep disconnection from societal norms. Despite undergoing various therapy sessions, including consultations with psychologist Schmidt, Breitwieser remains blind to the consequences of his actions. Schmidt's analysis reveals that Breitwieser views himself as a kind of "seer" of beauty, believing that he has a unique and superior appreciation of art, one that transcends the ordinary. This sense of entitlement leads him to justify his thefts as acts of artistic redemption, with no harm done as he avoids stealing from private homes or using violence in his methods. Instead, he chooses his targets carefully—museums, which he considers fair game because they represent an establishment that does not appreciate art in the same way he believes it should be appreciated.

Psychologist César Redondo also evaluates Anne-Catherine, Breitwieser's accomplice, and finds that she is highly susceptible to manipulation. According to Redondo, Anne-Catherine lacks the emotional resilience to break free from Breitwieser's influence, which allows her to become increasingly involved in his illegal activities. Both psychologists agree that while Breitwieser is aware of the moral implications of his actions, he rationalizes them, seeing himself as a part of a greater artistic legacy. Psychologist Brunner adds another layer of analysis, suggesting that Breitwieser's behavior cannot be classified as a psychological illness. Instead, his actions are rooted in his personality, and they are an expression of his distorted worldview—one in which art theft is not only justifiable but is an extension of his personal philosophy and artistic ideology.

For Breitwieser, art theft is a continuation of historical patterns of acquisition and appropriation. He often cites examples from art history, such as the Horses of Saint Mark, a set of statues that have been stolen and repurposed across several empires, to support his view that art has never truly belonged to anyone. This belief becomes a crucial part of his justification for stealing works of art—he sees himself as a participant in a longstanding tradition of art theft, rather than a criminal. The fact that he is simply continuing what he perceives to be a historical narrative gives him a sense of moral high ground. He feels that by taking these works, he is not committing a crime but rather righting the wrongs of art history. This philosophical justification allows him to detach from the true consequences of his actions, which include the irreparable loss to public and private collections, and the damage to the art world's integrity.

By the end of the chapter, Breitwieser emerges as a complex character who remains convinced that he is part of a larger narrative of artistic evolution. While his repeated thefts paint him as an entitled thief, driven by a compulsive need to possess art, his self-justifications make him believe that he is merely following the example set by history. His actions, driven by a desire to collect and possess, are cloaked in a veneer of artistic righteousness, and he views his thefts as a rightful continuation of the artistic legacy. The complex mix of entitlement, historical revisionism, and self-delusion shapes Breitwieser's identity as both a criminal and a self-proclaimed art connoisseur. His psychological makeup reveals the internal conflict between his desire for personal fulfillment through art and the societal norms he disregards, making him a fascinating yet morally ambiguous character whose actions challenge the boundaries between artistic passion and criminality. This chapter ultimately portrays the moral complexity of Breitwieser, highlighting how personal justification can lead one down a dangerous and destructive path.