



PHILOSOPHY OF ART HANDOUT

2020 – 2021 EDITION

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This handout has been written by students with no intention to substitute the University official materials. Its purpose is to be an instrument useful to the exam preparation, but it does not give a total knowledge about the program of the course it is related to, as the materials of the university website or professors.

Introduction

- Aim to enable students to gain critical stance towards modern art
- Show how metaphysical tradition ends in crisis
- Explore the "WHAT" question and how it shapes the "how" question - Attempt to clarify the very nature of circumstances.
- Philosophy of art interrogates unfamiliar thoughts in a familiar context
- It builds a path - everything has to be created.
- Philosophy belongs to the western culture.

BARNETT NEWMAN → studies relationship between art, reality and human being.

VINCENT VAN GOGH → studies relationship between art and economics

Philosophy of Art	Science
Autonomous, free	Not free (scientific knowledge is "given" as far as the field is concerned and does not need to be investigated further)
Self-grounded (gives path to other forms of knowledge and questions them)	Not self-grounded (it is impossible to know "scientifically" WHAT science is) → Double blindness with regards to 1) Itself and 2) The object of study
Interrogates hypothesis and assumptions (interrogating ≠ making)	Makes and uses hypothesis and assumptions
Form of acquiring knowledge: inquiry (what)	Form of acquiring knowledge: method (generate knowledge without WHAT)

What is "art"?

- Economics assumes everything is an economic OBJECT ("value") therefore treats art as a value object and never encounters its true nature.
- So, how can economics/management OF art exist if they don't view art as art? How can they be "good" for art if they are blind to its true nature?
- If we consider art as a means of self-expression in western culture, philosophy clarifies the ground (conditions) for art to be understood as itself.
- Consider that art doesn't need grounding! (philosophy only brings light upon art's ground but doesn't define it, it is self-grounded).
- Attempt to listen to art, let it speak for itself.

Barnett Newman - Remarks at the Fourth Annual Woodstock Art Conference (1952)

- N.B. Aestheticians = experts of philosophy of aesthetics (beauty and art)
- Newman argues that aestheticians are useless to artists (mutually exclusive terms)
- Aestheticians try to explain art without taking a stance (deny any viewpoint regarding what art is) (SCIENCE OF NO DECISION), an empty position, but these are the people that make decisions daily (museum directors, art critics, art consumers).
- The science of no decision implies an important decision in itself → art = object
- Artists (and philosophers) create human reality (doesn't come by nature) so shouldn't be viewed as a mere "fact"/object as aestheticians describe it.
- Invasion of sciences, try to leave no space to metaphysics for fear of being crushed

Barnett Newman – The First Man was an Artist (1947)

- Job of the artist is not to DISCOVER truth (the unknowable) but to UNDERSTAND it
- Science has dominated over the mind of the modern man by ignoring the WHAT question (only TRUE knowledge can address this → philosophy)
- To be born human is to be born in relation to art.
- Art is a NATIVE ENDOWMENT (not innate, but can be awoken)
- The first men were artists:
 - o Man's first expression was an aesthetic one
 - o Speech was a poetic outcry rather than a demand for communication
 - o The human language is literature not communication

Vincent Van Gogh – Letters to his brother Theo

Nature of the artist

- The original nature of the artist was the task of housekeeping (draw laws that govern human norms)
- Artists NEEDS are special, obtained from interaction and relation to art.
- Art is a primary and fundamental need for human reality

Battle with the speculative art trade

- Suffers with anxiety to perform and sell – pressure of the dealer/economist
- Paying for art ENSLAVES the artist, forced to produce pieces which are no longer natural (for the need to survive)
- Van Gogh agrees with Newman that artists and dealers cannot co-exist.
- Art is fed into a scheme of trading that aims to increase its (economic) value, without moderation.
- Artists are faced with a sense of emptiness coming from battle with art trade (by selling art you are only encouraging the dealer's speculative cycle).

How can the art trade be TRUE and FAIR?

- Have FAITH → most profound relation to the unknown, our innate endowment.
- Have TASTE → when we pursue something intangible, we find taste.
- Have EDUCATION → capacity to distinguish
- Trade should be FOR art, not OF art

Metaphysics, Aesthetics and Metaphysical Art

Metaphysics

- Metaphysics = philosophy → Exists today in a purely derived/functional form
- Born from Greek philosophers (Socrates, Plato, Aristotle) who became aware that REALITY is not only the thing/being but MORE
- Metaphysics (like philosophy) is self-grounded
- Man is born an artist but is also born a PHILOSOPHER → to create = to philosophize

What is the "more"?

- That which gives things their concrete character
- Any being owes its *sense* and *being* to the "more"
- Not a being/thing but a LIGHT in which the being appears as such
- Greeks acknowledged that for human reality to be self-grounded, the "more" needed to be understood in human reality (called POLIS).

Metaphysical hence becomes, a fundamental form of knowledge that goes BEYOND (meta) THE PHYSICAL (into the more)

What is contingency?

- Contingency = the character of things that keep the more to themselves
- Contingency presses and imposes itself in the forefront (although it shouldn't)
- Leaves no time/space for the true sense of things to appear
- No more, means that, in contingency, human beings collapse into the senseless.
- Human reality disappears (since it is only thanks to the more that reality is reality)

How does contingency relate to metaphysics?

- Mans' natural state is being immersed in contingency (at first and for the most part, it is all he knows)
- Metaphysics started (ancient Greece) in the middle of contingency
- From the beginning of philosophy, contingency was classified as knowledge that can be gained from the senses (although this method is unstable, INSUFFICIENT, biased)
- SUFFICIENT knowledge is brought only by metaphysical exploration of the "more" → something which is SUPERSENSIBLE (beyond the senses, TRANSCENDENCE)

Philosophy thus establishes two worlds (referred to as "metaphysical distinction"):



Neuro-aesthetics (not directly tested on exam!)

- Leading scientific approach to art, based, entirely on CONTINGENCY
- Makes operative assumptions on man/life (e.g. man = biochemical system), and explains everything in terms of its calculable impact on life
- When neuro-aesthetics considers "incalculable" outcome it never escapes contingency, as it looks at the factual incalculability of contingent situations.

Aesthetics

- Aesthetics = philosophical reflection of art, comes from Greek "sense" perception
- Determined by metaphysical framework (sensible vs. supersensible)
- Although it is perceived through the senses, ART can capture "more" things within → Art is the capacity to capture the SUPERSENSIBLE WITHIN THE SENSIBLE!
- Artistic beauty is not self-grounded (like metaphysics) → it is the sensible shining of the more

Metaphysical Art

- Western art has traditionally understood itself according to metaphysical distinction → material support (sensible) and immaterial depiction (supersensible)
- For example, color (material) allows us to see metaphorical/allegorical/symbolic (immaterial) meaning
- ART consists in the production of an object by an artist through the peculiar FORMING of certain MATTER through which the supersensible is brought to shine through the sensible.

Of Modernity, End and Beginning

The Path of Philosophy

- Philosophical hypothesis cannot be demonstrated nor substantiated, they thus depend on mindful consideration in the present epoch.
- The following explorations and ideas, in terms of the path of philosophy, metaphysics, and contingency, are merely HYPOTHESIS.
- The shaping of human reality has experienced many transformations (continues to)
- From the very beginning of philosophy, the "more" remained affected by contingency, without philosophy's awareness of such.
- Art aims to rid itself of contingency – obtain freedom.
- Metaphysics has attempted to save the "more" (and itself) as contingency becomes more powerful (contingency is a means of enhancement of contingency *i.e. contingency leads to more contingency*)

Modernity

- Modernity = dominance of contingency (philosophically marked by thinking of Descartes, Newton and Galilei)
- Modernity marks the appearance of methodical and scientific thinking
- Modern notion of METHOD: objectify reality (and make assumptions) in such a way that it is available to be manipulated and studied, to gain knowledge of it. → Notion of MAKEABILITY (N.B. ≠creation of human reality!!!)

History of Modernity

Growing power of the “contingency virus” in the 19th-20th centuries (approximately) causing:

1. Transformation

2. Crisis

1. Transformation

- Philosophy comes to an END because contingency takes over (methodical science)
- MODERN SCIENCE arises as a result = new form of knowledge, offspring of philosophy but BLIND to the “more”
- Contingency has also taken possession of the “more” and made it a resource for its self-empowerment
- Experience CONTINGENCY UNBOUND (unprecedented explosion of contingency)

2. Crisis

- Unbound contingency is bound to **end** as it exhausts itself (the ending [or “ultimate transformation”] is bound to come to an end)
- Ending INTO a beginning → awareness of the ending implies an awareness of another beginning (an awareness which we find in artists/philosophers from 19th century onwards)
- What is waiting to begin as the metaphysical world goes through its final phase? In terms of our (hypothetical) reconstruction of the path of philosophy, the new beginning has one possible protagonist: the “more” itself.
 - o No longer metaphysical more (affected by contingency) but entirely CONTINGENCY-FREE (impenetrable)
 - o Contingency doesn’t “die”, it is simply left to itself
- THE TRUE FUTURE (to come) consists of interrogating the unprecedented freedom of the more and implies new point of view of supersensible (which we do not know much of yet).

Point of Generation

- We can catch a glimpse of the contingency-free “more” at the end of metaphysics
- Grasped in terms of makeability → PHOTOGRAPHIC NEGATIVE OF makeability (free unmakeable **point of generation** of all sense and being)
- Contingency-free point of generation (PoG) is the protagonist of the new beginning
- Not located in sensible nor supersensible ∴ can be both thought and sensed (through a thought and sense which are no longer metaphysical)

Consequences of the ending for art

- Ending of metaphysical art, new art arises out of awareness of a new beginning and FOR that beginning
- Two possible directions which may unfold as a result of the crisis:
 - a. ART OF THE END - Art that has no awareness of the end (and thus of beginning), acts like methodical science in the sense that it blindly reflects the ending of the metaphysical world. Not rooted in a true experience
 - b. ART OF THE BEGINNING - Art born out of awareness that something is waiting to begin, dedicates itself entirely to understanding the beginning, new style (no longer metaphysical). Veneration of the future to come.

The Present Epoch

- Coexistence of ending and beginning, two modes of art which are radically different but not always distinguishable (ending disguises itself as the beginning, while the beginning may be perceived as old/outdated).
- N.B. art of the end and beginning are not simple definitions – they are interpretative tools and aids for our understanding of the crisis/point of generation.

Art of the End

Fundamentally powerless (can be easily imitated/adapted), following characteristics:

1. Considers metaphysical art as a RESOURCE for constructing something new
2. Poses as “radically new” when it is really only a reflection
3. Comes with a narrative that instructs on its meaning (tells consumer what to feel)
4. Pedagogical character: Trains man to adapt to regime of contingency (makeability), without asking for more
5. It is a “makeability site”, creating spaces for makeability to exist
6. Only involves man as a neutral observer, the innate artistic trait remains inactive
7. Develops advanced forms that dictate exclusiveness of contingency (contingency builds contingency)
8. It is intrinsically marketable (please consumers)

Art of the Beginning

- Indicates a fundamental issue of “new” art, aware of the beginning, of THE TRUTH
- Surprising since truth is normally reserved to philosophy
- The truth that is envisaged in the art of the beginning is not the truth of something, but the dimension of the “point of generation” of all sense and being (dimension through which man becomes aware of it)

Truth, Space and Time in Art

Notion of Truth

- Around 19th century artists started to claim that their art was made FOR TRUTH (they didn’t start with the intention of imitating something)
- What artists referred to as “truth” can be sensed & thought through the ending
- The truth of “something” (point of departure) is not the truth of art in the metaphysical sense = *non-metaphysical dis-contingent character of truth*.
- Paul Klee says “Art doesn’t reproduce the visible; it makes visible” i.e. creates a dimension in which anything can become visible (appear as it is), hence truth is the dimension in which anything can appear
- Everything is freed into appearing as it truly is, in art.
- Therefore, TRUTH is the point of generation of sense and being.

Notions of Space and Time

- Notion of S&T in art of the beginning ≠ space-time in physics
- A fundamental trait of S&T is non-metaphysical sense (they are neither independent of man, as in physics, not pertaining to the being/sense, as in metaphysics)
- *Spatium* = a favorable occasion for the generation of SENSE
- *Tempum* = dimension capable of receiving SENSE
- Hence, S&T are dimensions for generation of sense in relation to truth (PoG).
- The task of the artist is thus to generate a human reality in which things can appear as they truly are
→ ART GENERATES SPACE AND TIME

Space, Time and the Point of Generation

- Truth is the element of the unknowable, impregnable by contingency.
- Understanding the unknowable involves acknowledging it without removing its essence; remains unknown.
- Truth creates a dimension in which things appear as “world-things” (human reality).

- For truth to be determined as point of generation, space and time must be understood in its original sense (dis-contingent dimensions receiving/holdings sense)

Fugue: derives from Latin, *flight*. Meeting point of space and time in a **firmness**, consisting of a feeling at first alone, then followed by other.

- The point of generation is thus the first "feeling" experienced by the fugue.
- The chasing of space and time creates a harmonic unity (feeling)
- The space and time of the PoG are original (did not previously exist) and are created at the fuguing \neq S&T (above)
- The TRUTH thus becomes the firmness of the beginning, PoG, fugue of S&T

If we objectify S&T as the scientific space-time, the source of all sense (PoG) becomes a resource for contingency (everything turns into a resource, a value) - must avoid!

Consider the following traits of truth:

- Truth as S&T is dependent on man, needs man to come into play (Man is truth, truth is the man).
- Truth is a fugue of space and time, the beginning and end of all sense, inextinguishable richness of sense which is at the same time poor (as it is in need of ART - site of the truth itself).
- Therefore, man suffers until he can affirm truth in his art (fulfil his human and ARTIST *responsibility*)

Space and Time in Painting

Color

- Truth as space and times comes into painting as COLOR
- Van Gogh said "Je vous dois la vérité en peinture" (truth itself is color)
- Color = "immense heat and blaze", an outbreak of light, dimension for all appearing (it is a dis-contingent element thanks to which things appear)
- Color needs to be created in a unique creative act
- Sensing color is no longer performed by the senses (metaphysical) → it is a matter of CONTENTION OF CLEARING (pay attention to color as it lets appear)

Sensing color through time

- Color declares space, through the physical sensation of **time** (time is a private feeling, while space is shared - why each person has a different sensation of art)
- Sensing time means bearing suffering of the point of generation
- Man bears PoG by physically sensing time (not through senses!!!), and thus it becomes SPACE-OF-TIME (time, in turn, declares space)

Barnett Newman - "The Problem of Subject Matter"

- Color of painting of the beginning is truth, hence the subject matter is truth
- BN believed that only by understanding the purpose of painting can we arrive at its true nature (not through scientific, contingent, mechanisms)
- Color makes fullness (they are not full *because* of color but *through* it).
- Painting does not involve manipulating *space* but DE-CLARING IT (making it visible)
- Hence, the painter CREATES COLOR (doesn't manipulate it), declaring space

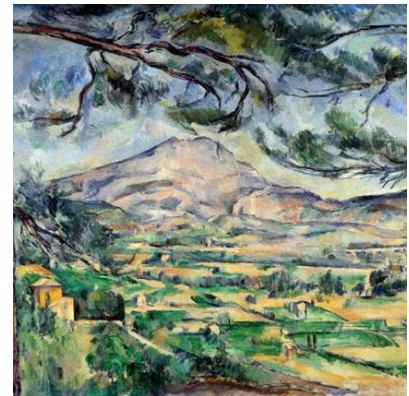
Vincent Van Gogh's Perspective on Color

- "Sense of color" is a native endowment of man (blind people know what color is)
- To create color artists must follow "laws" - paint FREELY for result to be TRUE
- "local color" is what Van Gogh refers to as the color of nature when it is "contingentised" (captured with the aim of precise reproduction) NEVER TRUE
 - o Overcoming such contingency towards truth in color does not happen once and for all, must be trained (it is a STRUGGLE!).

- o Artists must “listen” to what the colors say and preserve this (become acquainted with the true BEAUTY of nature)
- Hence, only with the CREATION of color (PARALLEL to colors of nature) can artists affirm sensation of firmness (PoG) and harmonize colors of nature

Paul Cézanne (1839-1906)

- Notion of S&T led to art of the beginning (truth of painting as painting of the truth)
- Cézanne was a primitive (beginner) of a new art (impressionism)
- Cézanne’s art is NOT metaphysical... but also not at the fullest art of the beginning
- Cézanne had certain realizations:
 - o Color is the dimension for appearing/disappearing
 - o Art as parallel harmonies (one for the other) that modulate themselves
 - o Saw nature as it TRULY is for the first time
 - o Painting as the realization of colored sensations
 - o Color as an element in which man is regenerated in his humanity
 - o The entirety of figures have NO LINES but appear as contracts of tone/color
- “To paint is to give firmness to colored sensations”



Space and Time in Poetry

Giacomo Leopardi (1798-1837)

- Pessimistic world view referred to as “cosmic pessimism”, motif of mother nature
- What defines a “great” poet? He writes what BECOMES language (Leopardi writes, and that IS Italian) requires skills beyond communication.
- Leopardi experienced an omnipresence of senseless/contingency, and recognized that there was and scape from this evil sensation which he described as the “NOUGHT” (point of generation)
- When the nought is in contact with man, it generates its own S&T for a human world to arise

“L’INFINITO”

- *Representation of the point of generation fuguing its own truth*
- a. The “lonely hill” described is in the neighborhood of the infinite PoG (*nulla*)
- b. The hedge = VAGUENESS (it demands to be modulated/affirmed)
- c. “endless spaces”, “superhuman silences” = truth (PoG), still awaiting to become true for human reality
- d. Truth is liberated upon the encounter with the MAN (Point of generation and truth fugue into S&T of human reality), announced concretely by “rustling of the wind”
- e. “Immensity” of human dimension is dis-contingent
- f. Poet “shipwrecks” as the “creation of the world” (human reality) has been accomplished
- g. The poet has sustained his own end, which is not CATASTROPHIC but “sweet”, in a sense almost perfect

The Infinite

Always dear to me was this lonely hill,
 And this hedge, which from so great a part
 of the farthest horizon excludes the gaze.
 But as I sit and watch, endless
 spaces beyond, and superhuman
 silences, and profoundest quiet
 in my thoughts I mould; where almost
 my heart loses itself in fear. And as the wind
 I hear rustling through these plants, that
 infinite silence to this voice
 I keep comparing; and eternity comes to mind,
 and the dead seasons, and the one present
 and alive, and the sound of it. So in this
 immensity my thinking drowns:
 and shipwrecking is sweet for me in this sea.

Space and Time in Sculpture

Sculpture of the ending

- Sculpture of the beginning:
 CHILLIDA and GIACOMETTI
- Metaphysical sculpture (forming of matter to represent the supersensible) mainly concerned the figure of the ideal, heroic man
- Space is DYNAMIC - nothing but a continuum of dynamic things (dynamized contingency) → opportunity for empowerment of contingency

- Chillida and Giacometti attempted to provide a dimension for human reality to exist while the world experienced unleashed contingency (the ending)

Eduardo Chillida (1924-2002)

- Completely opposite to contingency of other (ending) sculptures
- Space is now in its own right (no opportunity for empowerment of contingency), the sculptor collaborates with space to modulate form
- Chillida considers both SPACE and MATTER as MATERIALS (clay, stone, iron are SLOW materials, space is a FAST material, in terms of immediacy with respect to time)
- "Slow materials" and space struggle, but "slow materials" is open to space.
- Hence, materials can be more broadly described as bricks of dis-contingency (sculptor essentially works with both matter and space, but only serves to assist space in erecting its dwelling; space-FOR-time)
- Therefore, time exists in sculpture through space
- Materials confirm the PoG (hence Chillida considers everything as materials, except for the PoG itself).
- Like colors for the painter, materials speak for themselves



The space through sculpture

- A "point" (that is, the protagonist of SPACE) is a place without dimensions (geometry at the basis of technical world)
- It is a FALSE geometry if it has dimensions (makes space contingent)
- Things make up space, but space sustains everything ∴ Space is, in its own right, a "point without dimensions"
- Only a point without dimensions can generate the geometry for HUMAN REALITY
- Like Cézanne, there are "no lines, but only contrasts"
- Fuguing of S&T is immeasurable, DIMENSIONLESS (dis-contingent!)
- Hence, only by CREATING SPACES (like creation of colors) can reality be generated → (creating space → creates time → affirms fuguing point → generates human reality)

Alberto Giacometti (1901-1966)

- Transformation of vision and task of affirming the very appearance as it is
- Giacometti views art as a tool to understand what he is seeing: see the truth
- Humans are biased by a "photographic vision" by which we unconsciously apply (contingentising) rules to appearance: we think we see people "life-size", but we never actually do, we see a unique, unseen and ever-changing image
- The impossibility to preserve the appearance of things is what motivates Giacometti → experiences daily STRUGGLE with appearance of FUGACIOUSNESS
- To preserve the appearance as it truly is, it must be recreated without losing fugaciousness (point of generation through which things appear true)



Concluding remarks: Economists FOR Art

- One's skill (innate capacity) is not enough to create good art, requires understanding
- Art is every artist's greatest hunger: Van Gogh said, "if you cannot be an artist through art, be an artist as a dealer".

Two-sided epoch (brief summary)

1. Ending of metaphysical world (unaware of the ending), exclusive rule of contingency as it implements forms of knowledge that empower a contingent totality, senseless.
2. A human reality that is "still to come", artists are waiting for it, attempt to open new ways for art to appear as TRUE, to bring forth dis-contingent point of generation through the fuguing of space and time.

Central implication of a two-sided epoch is AMBIGUITY:

- Art itself (Art of the beginning vs. of the end)
- Innate artistic quality vs. evolutionary advantage of our species
- Useful artistic trade vs. speculative artistic trade
- Economics as laws for building human reality vs. for building contingency
- Terms used by artists (dis-contingent vs. metaphysical applied to contingent circumstances)
- Creative sciences (Giacometti) vs. New sciences (Newman)





The ambiguity of the two-sided epoch implies a unique TA for economists for art:

1. Must be able to stand in the SCISSURE between *art of the end* and *of the beginning*, be AWARE of this ambiguity without being UNDECIDED.
2. Must mitigate speculative appetite of the other side (beginning) while encouraging search for truth.
3. Must appease demand for the computable while sustaining the unmakeable journey
4. Must resist temptations of renouncing critical stance adopting science of no-decision, while having a neutral vision to let art of the beginning be heard
5. Must moderate greedy demand for immediate access to consumption of art while holding out its fugaciousness
6. Must dialogue with domain which is everything is exclusively a "value"
7. Must bear uselessness of art in terms of what deadlines are "pressing" (cannot rush creation of space and time)
8. Must be an example for future economists and managers while never ceasing to be an attentive student of art.

A THRILLING STANCE - as he becomes economist FOR art, he becomes a "primitive" of "economics of the beginning" whose time is NOW (past and future economics co-exist).

Additional Exam Tips

- 1.5 hours, 6 questions (5 x 4.5 points + 1 x 7.5 points - add your own thoughts)
- Questions are based on the required readings (PowerPoints + books)
- You are allowed printed notes but without highlights/annotations
- You can quote texts, but answers should not be made up entirely of quotations (show your own understanding of the texts)

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