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Boucher, Geoff 2011, The politics of aesthetic affect - a reconstruction of Habermas' art theory, *Parrhesia*, no. 13, pp. 62-78.

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Originally published online at: [http://parrhesiajournal.org/parrhesia13/parrhesia13\\_boucher.pdf](http://parrhesiajournal.org/parrhesia13/parrhesia13_boucher.pdf)

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## THE POLITICS OF AESTHETIC AFFECT —A RECONSTRUCTION OF HABERMAS' ART THEORY

Geoff Boucher

Raymond Williams once declared that works of art—he was speaking specifically of literary works, but the claim has broader implications—are “structures of feeling,” not “pictures of reality.”<sup>1</sup> The politics of art therefore result from a politicised understanding of the ways in which the judgement of taste is shaped by hegemonic norms of interpretation, where the common-sense of an historical epoch supplies, at the unconscious level, a typology of judgements that delimits possible constructions of meaning. New semantic contents, he proposed, released new feelings, promoting constructions of subjectivity that potentially defied conventional identities and commonsensical evaluations of works.<sup>2</sup> But this penetrating insight, so different from subsequent efforts to direct a politicisation of aesthetics through cognitive forms of ideology critique, was only cashed out by Williams in terms of “residual,” “dominant,” and “emergent” cultural structures.<sup>3</sup> The linear and progressive notion of history implied by these categories mortgages a politicisation of aesthetics to the conceptual framework of a philosophy of history, which is driven by an historical teleology that is no longer credible.

As part of a larger project of developing a critique of the contemporary Frankfurt School, and particularly the work of Jürgen Habermas, I want to draw attention in this connection to his aesthetics. Habermas's art theory attempts, from a post-metaphysical perspective, to concretise the emancipatory intentions of Critical Theory through understanding artworks as structures of feeling. Here is a project, then, that takes up the same sort of insight as that of Williams, yet which tries to develop it without reference to metaphysical teleology and the utopian idea that art anticipates a de-alienated society. And so I find myself in the paradoxical position of wanting to defend Habermas in the process of developing a critique of him along the following lines: this is one baby that should not be thrown out with the bathwater.

According to Habermas, a distinct aesthetic rationality exists, as one dimension of what he calls communicative reason, with responsibility for the experimental expression of human needs. The knowledge that autonomous artworks provide is affective and non-propositional, but has the power to catalyse a shift in the motivational structures of individuals. By effecting transformations of individuals' relationship to the cultural interpretation of human needs, artworks promote the maturation of the person's subjectivity and provide the motivational structures necessary for moral autonomy and scientific thinking. These links between happiness and worthiness, and between well-being and decentred cognition, are crucial components of discursive will-formation and

therefore of democratic politics.

What Habermas is proposing, then, is that artworks are not primarily “ways of seeing,” that is, vehicles for truth claims modelled on cognitive truth, but feeling complexes, whose truthfulness involves a distinct sort of non-cognitive—but certainly not irrational—claim. This is a provocative and interesting contention whose implications are potentially far-reaching. First, it means that artworks are more than just intelligible to the interpreter: they are rational because they stake a claim to a kind of truth. Authentic art cannot be ignored but should instead be placed on the same level of cultural importance as discoveries in the natural sciences and the major moral theories of modernity. Second, it links this claim to truthfulness to the exploration of human needs, proposing a substantive, rather than a formalist, interpretation of artistic modernism and the avant-garde movements. What Habermas calls, appropriating Weber, “an innovative revivification of experience” through aesthetic experimentation is entirely connected to “the interpretation of needs, that colour our perceptions” of the world, so that artistic value (beauty, sublimity, innovation) cannot be disjoined from the disclosure of socially silenced human needs.<sup>4</sup>

Yet unlike Adorno, this does not mean that formal aesthetic radicalism automatically equals a radical politics, or that aesthetic autonomy is a placemaker for moral autonomy under conditions of the pervasiveness of the culture industries and the administered society. That is because, third, what the connection between aesthetic innovation and the disclosure of needs makes possible is a reflexive relation to that cultural tradition that serves the individual as a repository of need interpretations. Autonomous art shakes the foundations of conventional ego formations and catalyses a shift in the motivational structures of the entire personality, so that through aesthetic experience “traditional cultural contents are no longer simply the stencils according to which needs are shaped; on the contrary, in this medium, needs can seek and find adequate interpretations.”<sup>5</sup> Finally, artworks bring “linguistically excommunicated” human needs into cultural debates and challenge conventional ascriptions of the sorts of personal self-realisation that will satisfy (or silence) these needs. That, in turn, means that the “politics of affect” have nothing to do with the critical assignment of programmatic political positions to aesthetic forms, because all art can do is shift the individual’s relation to their culturally-interpreted inner nature, providing the motivational dispositions that are preconditions for a radically democratic politics, but not the politics themselves.

Therefore, the real political question about art is whether the institutions of modern art can have a structure-forming effect on the lifeworld, in ways that can release the gain in rationality that autonomous artworks represent into the life histories (and personality structures) of modern individuals. Can autonomous art *really* shake the foundations of those conventional identities that are today the mass base for revivals of religious fundamentalism, authoritarian tendencies in contemporary democracies, and culturally conservative refusals of the sexual revolution? Unfortunately, this is as much a question *for* Habermas as a question posed *by* his work. For no sooner had Habermas articulated a sketch of the mature version of this aesthetic theory, in the two volumes of his *Theory of Communicative Action* [1979] (1984, 1987) (hereafter, *TCA*), than he began to retreat from this position. Today, after successive revisions and reconsiderations, although he continues to maintain that art (specifically, literature) is the equal of science and normative universality, it no longer stakes a truth claim, solves problems to do with the understanding of inner nature, or makes the same sort of social contribution to the project of modernity that science and morality make. Literature and criticism “administer capacities for world-disclosure” while science and morality “administer capacities for problem solving,” because art and literature involve a world-disclosing use of language entirely unlike the informal logic of argument that constitutes communicative reason.<sup>6</sup>

In this article, I intend to confront Habermas’s own reasons for abandoning what I take to be an interesting and promising position. For I will demonstrate that, not only are his radical and provocative claims defensible, but, given the conceptual architecture of *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Habermas retreats from these claims at his own peril. In a nutshell, if aesthetic rationality-gains in the “linguistification of inner nature” cannot be released in modernity, then the neoconservative cultural commentators are actually right.<sup>7</sup> Modern

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art would then be negatively critical without being able to replace the motivational structures hitherto supplied by cultural traditions and religious worldviews. Instead of being an “unfinished project,” modernity would be an inconsistent form of life. But, as I will show, Habermas’s position need not collapse.

## THE FRANKFURT SCHOOL AESTHETIC TRADITION

If the first generation of the Frankfurt School can be considered to be Weberian Marxists, because of their interpretation of rationalisation as reification, then Habermas is surely a Marxist Weberian, who interprets reification as an effect of unbalanced rationalisation. To understand the profound effect that this has on his aesthetic theory, it is necessary to recognise that Frankfurt School approaches to art are constituted by a dialectical tension between two poles. These poles are art as an anticipation of human and social wholeness (“totality”) and art as critical self-reflection (“reflexivity”), which themselves spring from the Hegelian-Marxist and Kantian-Weberian approaches to art, respectively.<sup>8</sup> Habermas’s central claim about art is the Weber-influenced one that with the modern separation of cultural value spheres into autonomous domains of science, morality, and art, and the reflexive application of artistic techniques, art becomes an aesthetic laboratory for the exploration of “decentred unbound subjectivity.”<sup>9</sup> But that should not be taken to mean, as it too often is, that Habermas entirely rejects the idea that art illuminates the totality of an historical lifeworld, or even that art cannot anticipate the formal structures of a better world. It only means that art does not anticipate a single substantive totality supposed to provide the normative goal for all of humanity.<sup>10</sup>

Further, because Habermas’s defense of autonomous art means endorsement of the idea that aesthetic specialisation arises from expert knowledge about the expressive dimension of speech, his position on aesthetic rationality in *TCA* is often misunderstood. For instance, John Thompson and Jonathan Culler both think that this is the idea that artworks are a form of subjective self-expression governed by the validity claim of authorial sincerity.<sup>11</sup> Viewed against the background of the Frankfurt School tradition in aesthetics, however, this is an implausible construction of Habermas’s position. For it then soon becomes evident that the defense of autonomous art is a defense of the liberating power of authentic artworks to disclose silenced human needs. In fact, Habermas’s position blends aspects of Marcuse’s psychoanalytic understanding of bourgeois realism, Adorno’s modernist formalism and Benjamin’s democratic preference for popular culture in a complicated synthesis.<sup>12</sup>

From Marcuse, Habermas adopts the idea that the artwork, as a release of the pleasure principle in the context of a representation of social reality, creates an aesthetic illusion whose separation from a society organised by the reality principle of instrumental reason at once constitutes an escapist compensation for lives ruled by the work ethic, and a promise of happiness that indicts real social suffering. Art intends to “redeem a promise of happiness” whose “superabundance radiates beyond art,” because it alludes to a real need for a balanced relation to nature, especially human nature.<sup>13</sup> This implies a demand for intersubjective structures of mutual recognition within which the satisfaction of all is a condition of the satisfaction of each, something that defines a meaningful life in terms of participation in the social conditions required for human flourishing.

Although Habermas is highly suspicious of Adorno’s hermetic modernism and the “philosophical extravagance” of Adorno’s quasi-teleological notion of reconciliation (a naturalistic adaptation of Hegel’s concept of *Versöhnung*, reconciliation), perhaps surprisingly, Habermas endorses two Adornian tenets of art criticism. These are that technical rationalisation, although not to be conflated with artistic content, is an essential precondition for aesthetic innovation, and that what this aesthetic innovation unlocks is a complex experience of latent expressive potentials that have been socially suppressed or blocked by one-sided rationalisation.<sup>14</sup>

Finally, Habermas adopts from Benjamin not only a preference for collectively received popular art, said to be capable of yielding a “secular illumination” of the expressive potentials in aesthetic experience that are otherwise concealed in religious art or locked away in modernism, but also the notion that art involves a complex experience whose root is in human needs. For Habermas, as for Benjamin, the expressive dimension

of language derives from the material substrate of human nature, which means that the mimetic deployment of language expresses “a historically changing interpretation of needs” rooted in biology.<sup>15</sup> On this basis, Habermas develops a series of striking formulations that go right to the heart of his aesthetic project. “Could an emancipated humanity,” he asks rhetorically:

One day confront itself in the expanded scope of discursive will-formation and nevertheless still be deprived of the terms in which it is able to interpret life as good life? A culture which, for thousands of years, was exploited for the purpose of legitimating domination would take its revenge, just at the moment when age-old repressions could be overcome: not only would it be free of violence, it would no longer have any content.<sup>16</sup>

Habermas responds that only the “store of semantic energies” that criticism must redeem from aesthetic traditions holds the answer to this question, for “we need those rescued semantic potentials if we are to interpret the world in terms of our own needs, and only if the source of these potentials does not run dry can the claim to happiness be fulfilled.”<sup>17</sup> This not only makes aesthetic expression the guardian of those hopes that articulate a demand for human happiness, but also means that artistic mimesis humanises the world, because it represents an anthropocentric projection of human needs onto the world considered as a context of potential satisfaction.

Habermas’s defence of authentic art must not be confused with a preference for hermetic forms of modernism. Consonant with his egalitarian concern for the release of rationality potentials from expert cultures into the everyday fabric of the modern lifeworld, Habermas’s hopes are pinned to the “post-avant-garde” of the 1970s and 1980s, rather than the interwar modernists. Referencing Peter Bürger’s *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1978), Habermas maintains that the (then new) art movement “is characterised by the coexistence of tendencies toward realism and engagement with those authentic continuations of modern art that distilled out the independent logic of the aesthetic.”<sup>18</sup> Thus, the post-avant-garde unites modernist aesthetic forms with the representation of society characteristic of realism, bringing cognitive and moral elements into connection with the aesthetic in a way that is experimental yet accessible.<sup>19</sup> Although Habermas is parsimonious with names here, his description of the post-avant-garde coincides with the main features of what has been called “resistance postmodernism,” aesthetic strategies that situate themselves on the frontier between popular culture and the avant-garde, in the wake of modernism. Examples are Cindy Sherman and Richard Hamilton, in the visual arts, and Donald Barthelme, Thomas Pynchon, and Robert Coover in literature.<sup>20</sup> Habermas’s preference for the aesthetic strategies of the post-avant-garde imply that his defence of autonomous art is rather different from what he describes as Adorno’s “hibernation strategy,” which proposed that authentic modernist art must cultivate a rebarbative and dissonant aesthetics in order to resist capture by the commodified “culture industries.”<sup>21</sup>

Habermas therefore has a complex but definite relation to the Frankfurt School aesthetic tradition, for which “authentic art” means an art that expresses historically legitimate but socially silenced human needs, and thereby articulates a demand for happiness. Accordingly, it is not surprising that his understanding of expressive language centres on the fate of the poetic faculty whereby “human beings interpret the world in terms of their own needs.”<sup>22</sup>

## FOCUSING THE SCOPE OF AESTHETIC RATIONALITY

The idea of art as an expressive repository of socially silenced human needs remains a constant in Habermas’s defense of autonomous art from neoconservative cultural critics. Yet because Habermas positions this within an understanding of modernity derived from Weber, the framework for that defence is different from that of the first generation of the Frankfurt School. Instead of stressing art’s power to critique the reified social totality in light of an image of human wholeness, Habermas emphasises the legitimacy of the autonomous cultural value sphere of the aesthetic. As this perspective matures in the lead up to *TCA*, the primary focus of the defence shifts away from the idea that the historically developed human needs expressed in authentic artworks indict the social limitations and cultural fragmentation produced by instrumental reason. Rather, the main argument becomes

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that cultural specialisation in the expression of needs potentially augments the ability of modern individuals to exercise their autonomy, because aesthetic debates contribute to clarifying the interests of actors pragmatically seeking to coordinate action around a value consensus. In other words, autonomous art represents a potential rationality gain in the specific department of reason for which the aesthetic sphere is responsible.

In *Legitimation Crisis*, written around the same time as the essay on Walter Benjamin already cited, Habermas accepted the argument of neoconservative critics such as Daniel Bell that there is a “divergence between the values offered by the socio-cultural system and those demanded by the political and economic systems,” but he disagreed vehemently with their negative evaluation.<sup>23</sup> From this perspective:

Bourgeois art has become the refuge for a satisfaction, even if only virtual, of those needs that have become, as it were, illegal in the material life-process of bourgeois society. I refer here to the desire for a mimetic relation with nature; the need for living together in solidarity outside the group egoism of the immediate family; the longing for the happiness of a communicative experience exempt from imperatives of purposive rationality and giving scope to imagination as well as spontaneity.<sup>24</sup>

I will return to the medley of different sorts of “needs” that are here in a moment. Habermas then goes on to restate the Frankfurt School’s analysis of the split within bourgeois “affirmative culture,” between art’s potentially critical promise of happiness and the ideological effect of the aesthetic illusion as an apology for actual dissatisfaction. This, he argues, brings to light “the truth ... that in bourgeois society art expresses not the promise but the irretrievable sacrifice of bourgeois rationalisation,” so that the radicalised art movements of aestheticism and then the avant-garde represent a counter-cultural protest “hostile to the possessive-individualistic ... lifestyle of the bourgeoisie.”<sup>25</sup>

This analysis is carried forward into the same year as the publication of *TCA*, when, in “Modernity versus Postmodernity,” Habermas again confronts Bell in the same terms as before. He argues that Surrealism marks the moment when the opposition between the affirmative deployment of art’s promise of happiness in mass culture and the critical negativity of a hermetic modernism’s denunciation of actual unhappiness in high art becomes intolerable. This premature effort to “blow up the autarkical sphere of art and force a reconciliation between art and life” misfires, not only because an anti-art aesthetic is a performative contradiction, but also because this conflates “aesthetic judgement with the expression of subjective experiences.”<sup>26</sup> “When the containers of an autonomous cultural sphere [such as art] are shattered,” Habermas argues, “the contents [just] get dispersed,” not released into the everyday.<sup>27</sup>

The demand for happiness, which in autonomous art is carried forward as the implied ideal that licenses a critical negation of unsatisfied needs, cannot be redeemed through the direct aestheticisation of everyday life. The “specialised treatment of autonomous problems” in art production implies an experimental rationality dedicated to the refinement of the means of expression of human needs. The gains from this expert culture can only be released through their translation into publically accessible propositions about identity formation and shareable experience, and the integration of these into individuals’ life histories and shared culture. “A reified everyday praxis can only be cured by creating unconstrained interaction of the cognitive with the moral-practical and the aesthetic-expressive elements [of the culture of modernity]. Reification cannot be overcome by forcing just one of those highly stylised cultural spheres to open up and become more accessible.”<sup>28</sup>

Notice, though, that this claim is again framed in Weberian terms of the release of rationality potentials through cultural specialisation rather than the redemption of a promise of wholeness through the revolutionary de-alienation of society. But this is incompatible with the earlier claim cited above that art is a bearer for the desire for an authentic relation to the natural world, for a moral “need” for social solidarity, and for a demand for happiness that only a radically transformed society could satisfy. Such a medley of “needs” only fits with the model of art as totality, as a utopian anticipation of a reconciled form of life. Not surprisingly, then, as Habermas shifts from art as a pre-political means for raising political questions, to art as a cultural



specialisation, his account of the needs that art expresses becomes increasingly focused. The scope of his claim shrinks from “raising matters of general concern” (which the eighteenth century republic of letters is said to do) to mapping the shared experiences of the “subjective world” (which modernist art is said to accomplish).

## THE NEED IN ART

This mapping of the subjective world (or “inner nature”) and its relation to the objective world of the natural environment and the social world of normatively regulated interaction is most fully explored in the long article on “Moral Development and Ego Identity.”<sup>29</sup> There, Habermas advances the notion of the maturity of the ego (or “ego identity”) as the criterion by which to measure the rationality gains made in science, morality, and art in the modern world. The concept of ego identity—a psychoanalytically-derived and post-metaphysical replacement for idealist notions of the autonomy of the transcendental subject—is the enlightenment ideal the unconstrained communication presupposes.<sup>30</sup> Ego identity means the ability to narrate a unique life history as a developmental sequence “under the guidance of general principles and modes of procedure,” within which impulse satisfactions are integrated with cognitive and moral accomplishments.<sup>31</sup> Accordingly, ego identity integrates the three aspects of personality development which relate to the three referential worlds of external nature, internal nature, and the social world: cognitive development, moral development, and motivational development. In a characteristic schematising move, Habermas proposes that the general stages of development in each aspect of personality are all reciprocal preconditions of one another, so that the structures of the ego can be clearly related to degrees of reflexivity.<sup>32</sup> Abstracting from the discussion and summarising:

External nature (Cognitive development via Piaget)	Social world (morality) (Moral development via Kohlberg)	Internal nature (motivation) (Motivational development via reconstructive argument) <sup>33</sup>
<i>Stage I</i> Pre-operational	<i>Stage I</i> Pre-conventional	<i>Stage I</i> Egocentric pleasure/pain continuum
<i>Stage II</i> Concrete-operational	<i>Stage II</i> Conventional	<i>Stage II</i> Quasi-natural “culturally interpreted needs, [whose] satisfaction depends on following socially recognised expectations”
<i>Stage III</i> Formal-operational	<i>Stage III</i> Post-conventional	<i>Stage III</i> Post-traditional “critique and justification of need interpretations” as action orientating motivations

The exact details of Piaget and Kohlberg’s developmental models need not detain us here. In relation to motivational structures, Habermas’s reconstruction of the ego-psychological, object-relations, interactional-psychological, and empirical-developmental literature is exhaustive (and exhausting), but its main thrust is a prolongation of his discussion of psychoanalysis in *Knowledge and Human Interests*. The quasi-biological notion of instinctual impulses must be replaced by the notion of the psychic representation of drives acquired via the process of socialisation, without this losing its conceptual connection to its somatic basis in the natural body. Habermas describes these as “cultural need-interpretations” and rejects the idea that the dynamics of these drives can be described through the notion of libido.<sup>34</sup> Instead, focusing on clinical practice, Habermas argues that these are best described linguistically, in terms of culturally symbolised motivations arising from socialised

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need interpretations, and repressed material with the character of “linguistically excommunicated” need interpretations.<sup>35</sup> Motivational development consists of integrating repressed components into the individual’s narration of their life history, which is equivalent to a dismantling of ego defences and a reduction of superego pressure, together with the global restricting of the ego to reflect a new relation to interpreted needs.<sup>36</sup> In short, the mature ego is capable of re-integrating formerly repressed inclinations into socially legitimate motivational dispositions by means of a critique of the limitations of their cultural tradition.<sup>37</sup> This conception of ego flexibility in terms of a reflexive relation to motivational dispositions then connects with flexibility toward cognitive and normative questions. These strictly defined stages of development all express a reflexive de-centring of experience where persons become capable of adopting hypothetical attitudes toward the natural world, taking up the moral positions of others, and considering the need-interpretations of other cultures (or counter-cultures) as potentially valid.

Habermas denies that this position on psychoanalytic theory and motivational development, which replaces “drive energies with interpreted needs and ... instinctual vicissitudes ... [with] identity formation” vaporises everything “into a culturalist haze” reminiscent of, for instance, Erich Fromm.<sup>38</sup> This is because “this change in perspective does not entail the elimination of inner nature as an extralinguistic referent.”<sup>39</sup> Although that rejoinder seems adequate, the accent in Habermas’s account falls on the reciprocal relations between cognitive, normative, and motivational components of the total personality, in ways that suggest that “ego identity” is too restricted a description of the global restructuring of subjectivity that he seeks.

Nonetheless, Habermas clearly relates the acquisition of post-traditional need-interpretations, with their accompanying flexible motivational structures, to the potential effects of autonomous artworks.

Inner nature is rendered communicatively fluid and transparent to the extent that needs can, through aesthetic forms of expression, be kept articulable or be released from their paleosymbolic pre-linguisticity. But that means that internal nature is not subjected, in the cultural preformation met with at any given time, to the demands of ego autonomy; rather, through a dependent ego it obtains free access to the interpretive possibilities of the cultural tradition. In the medium of value-forming and norm-forming communications in which aesthetic experiences enter, traditional cultural contents are no longer simply the stencils according to which needs are shaped; on the contrary, in this medium, needs can seek and find adequate interpretations.<sup>40</sup>

Habermas’s defense of autonomous art in terms of its ability to articulate silenced needs has now taken shape. The power and significance of autonomous art is its capacity to bring into communicative circulation those linguistically excommunicated need-interpretations, those desires and feelings, which were split off in the process of socialisation. This happened because socialisation involved the internationalisation of the expectations of others, framed not as intersubjective agreements, but as quasi-natural imperatives backed by superego recriminations. The strong feelings that autonomous art unleashes are the product of its expression of these needs in ways that interrogate quasi-natural cultural traditions and rigid ego identities, thereby potentially catalysing a dramatic alteration in the motivational dispositions of modern individuals. Art is not responsible for figuratively representing the general will (or more softly, raising matters of general concern), or for a utopian anticipation of a reconciled totality. Instead, its task is, in Kafka’s words, to “break up the frozen sea within”<sup>41</sup>: to loosen the reified grip of cultural traditions over need-interpretations and therefore to explore alternative forms of self-realization as new pathways to human happiness.

## THE DIALECTIC OF AUTONOMY

The fact that Habermas affirms that autonomous art—*aesthetic experimentation conducted within a relatively separate cultural value sphere that is exempted from the demands of everyday pragmatics and the requirements of utility*<sup>42</sup>—has a legitimate role to play in modernity, does not mean that he subscribes to a naïve estimation of its ability to fulfil this mandate under reified cultural conditions. But these reservations need to be understood



in a systematic context.

Habermas's recasting of the idea of reification as a theory of the "colonisation of the lifeworld by the system" is relatively well known, so I will not tire the reader by rehearsing the argument in detail. Suffice it to say for present purposes that the core idea is the problematic intrusion of the logic of the anonymous functional social systems of economy and administration, into social processes of renewing cultural knowledge, social norms and socialised personalities that can only be successfully performed through communicative interaction. Communicative action (action coordination through reaching mutual agreement) and communicative reason (the suspension of the speech pragmatics of communicative action for a reflexive interrogation of proposals for mutual agreement through dialogical argumentation) are the substrate of that horizon of expectations that is the endangered lifeworld. Communicative reason drives a multidimensional process of cultural rationalisation that theories of reification had falsely diagnosed as "cultural fragmentation," because these (Hegelian-Marxist) positions had mistaken effects of system colonisation for problems inherent to the modern lifeworld.

Habermas's position on the tension between processes of societal rationalisation (functional differentiation of social systems) and cultural rationalisation (the separation of cultural value spheres) is the key to his account of aesthetic rationality. The core of this position is the Weberian claim in descriptive sociology that with the decline of religious worldviews and the disenchantment of nature, the distinct cultural value spheres of science, law and post-conventional morality, and art/criticism, emerge. These become autonomous domains of cultural inquiry whose institutionalisation allows the independent logic of value-enhancement in their respective domains to connect with social learning processes. On Habermas's interpretation, each of these value spheres operates according to the distinctive logics of cognitive (science), normative (law and morals), and expressive (aesthetic) reasoning, governed by the particular procedures by which their defining validity claims of truth (cognitive), rightness (normative), and truthfulness (aesthetic) are articulated symbolically and redeemed argumentatively. Because these domains are institutionalised as specialised forms of inquiry, liberated from religion, protected from the pragmatic pressures of everyday communicative action, and purified from the intrusive predominance of one another's validity claims, they can develop expert knowledge about the objective, social, and subjective worlds (respectively). Ideally, this flows back into the lifeworld of modern individuals through processes of translation, resulting in the release of rational potentials into cultural knowledge, social integration, and socialised personalities.

In a systematic sense, then, Habermas's reservations about autonomous art are the specification in the aesthetic sphere of his broader critique of the colonisation of the lifeworld by the system. I want to call this the dialectic of autonomous art, and what I mean by this is the process whereby an art that has become autonomous must defend itself from systematic and pragmatic pressures by becoming increasingly inaccessible to popular reception. As expert criteria of artistic value develop historically, they depart more and more from those aesthetic norms that previous developments have deposited in mass consciousness, so that the familiar Habermasian critique of cultural knowledge locked up in expert specialisations because of lop-sided rationalisation also takes shape in the aesthetic field.

In explicating the situation that I have called the dialectic of autonomous art, Habermas identifies four stages in the cultural rationalisation of the aesthetic sphere within modernity, where, as art separates from religion and from science and morality, distinct aesthetic values are precipitated and art is institutionalised as a culturally differentiated activity. The argument here is that, on the one hand, aesthetic values do not stand still at beauty and the sublime, but instead, "with regard to value enhancement in the aesthetic domain, the idea of progress fades into that of renewal and rediscovery, an innovative revivification of authentic experiences."<sup>43</sup> On the other hand, though, as aesthetic innovation (the twentieth century) replaces beauty (the eighteenth century) and sublimity (the nineteenth century), the rise of market-driven bourgeois cultural affirmations of conventional identities and experiences calcifies popular understanding of the arts at a now superseded stage. This locks the avant-garde into the negative posture of a protest movement, and modernism into increasing hermeticism, so that expert judgements on aesthetic innovation are at odds with mass expectations of aesthetic beauty.<sup>44</sup>

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For Habermas, the Renaissance begins the process of the secularisation of art through the emergence of commercial theatres and publishing, and this comes with the recognition of aesthetic beauty as something that is only articulated to truth and goodness, rather than indissolubly bound to them in a unity. With the Enlightenment and then Romanticism, aesthetic beauty acquires conceptual independence and the sublime emerges alongside it as an aesthetic value, something that is institutionalised in the republic of letters (literary public sphere) and official museums. By the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, however, art-for-art's-sake (aestheticism) and then modernism break definitively with ethical requirements on the artwork while catalysing the emergence of counter-cultural movements oriented by a hedonistic renunciation of bourgeois lifestyles. Habermas characterises this as a protest on behalf of the victims of bourgeois rationalisation and a rejection of instrumental rationality that, however, cannot have structure-forming effects on society because of its lack of institutionalisation. Instead, both modernism and realism are institutionalised as high art within the increasingly isolated enclosure of museum cultures and a literary public sphere polarised between elite artefacts and popular entertainment. In this context, the twentieth century witnesses the emergence of the desperate strategies of the avant-gardes, together with the development of mass cultural alternatives to autonomous art in the entertainment industries of the mass media.<sup>45</sup> These empirical developments make Habermas sceptical toward the capacity of autonomous art to bring about in practice the shifts in motivational dispositions that it is theoretically capable of achieving.

## THE EXPRESSIVE DIMENSION OF COMMUNICATIVE ACTION

From the theoretical perspective, of course, the crucial question is whether autonomous art can *in principle* promote the post-traditional motivational dispositions that are the affective component of what Habermas calls a mature ego identity. To summarise, in relation to art, in the essays and books that develop the positions eventually systematised in the theory of communicative action, Habermas had inflected the basic Frankfurt School aesthetic tradition in a Weberian direction and linked this to a reading of psychoanalysis as a depth hermeneutic rather than a science of libidinal energies and quasi-biological drives. The result is a striking position on autonomous art that argues that increasingly reflexive aesthetic movements contribute to the cultural knowledge developed in the aesthetic cultural sphere through “value enhancement,” that is, by developing a progressive sequence of distinct artistic values. These reflect an experimental logic whose referent is the subjective world of inner nature, so that by mapping cultural need-interpretations in increasingly reflexive terms, art movements make an irreplaceable contribution to modern subjectivity. Specifically, artistic knowledge reflects a reflexive relation to cultural traditions in the interpretation of feelings and desires, so that self-reflexive art potentially develops a post-traditional set of motivational dispositions in modern individuals. Habermas's reconstruction of modern art history in terms of a dialectic of autonomous art had led him to express reservations about the ability of these highly developed aesthetic movements to actually break through reified cultural conditions. And nothing in the lead up to the theory of communicative action had suggested *theoretical* reservations about art's ability to influence the lifeworld. But in *TCA*, Habermas *does* express theoretical reservations about whether institutionalised art can generate social learning processes that lead to post-traditional motivational dispositions.

Now, in the theory of communicative action, Habermas grounds the process of cultural rationalisation (the separation of cultural value spheres) in a typology of dimensions of communicative action, because the systematic intention behind *TCA* is to legitimate modernity as a (potentially) rational society. In light of the way that the architecture of *TCA* is connected with the broad intention of a defence of modernity, Habermas's reservations about the potential of autonomous art to generate “structure-forming effects” in the lifeworld is an extremely serious problem. The opposition between system and lifeworld, strategic action and communicative reason, that frames *TCA* is intended to analytically separate reification and rationalisation, whilst diagnosing the social pathologies that colonisation of the lifeworld by the system, and one-sided cognitive-instrumental rationalisation, have introduced into cultural modernity. That claim stands or falls on the idea that the rationality potentials of well-rounded cultural rationalisation *could*—were it not for an imbalanced relation between system and lifeworld—produce rationality gains. This, in turn, depends on the relationships in each

of science, morals, and art, and their referential world, dimension of communicative action, validity claim, institutionalised learning process, and the structure-forming effect in the lifeworld that all of this has. Because this is complex and abstract, but susceptible to schematised simplification, let me at once represent it as a table (dropping law, which Habermas later repositions in *Between Facts and Norms* (1996)):

REFERENTIAL WORLD	DIMENSION OF COMMUNICATIVE ACTION	VALIDITY CLAIM AS PART OF COMMUNICATIVE REASON	CULTURAL VALUE SPHERE = INSTITUTIONALISED LEARNING PROCESS	STRUCTURE-FORMING EFFECT OF EXPERT KNOWLEDGE
Objective	Cognitive	Truth	Science	Decentred cognition (formal-operational hypothetical attitudes to objective nature)
Social	Normative	Rightness	Morality	Normative universality (post-conventional moral discourses on the social world)
Subjective	Expressive	Truthfulness	Art/criticism	?

Given that clearly, according to my reconstruction of Habermas, what belongs in the final box is “post-traditional motivations (reflexively critical relation to cultural need-interpretations),” *why is there a question mark in the crucial box?*

It is, of course, *Habermas’s* implied question mark, and it arises for one, central reason: the validity claims constitutive of communicative reason must be capable of yielding a *rationally-binding universal agreement*, so that the institutionalisation of these validity claims in distinct cultural spheres can produce a social learning process with the potential to be disseminated to all members of a lifeworld. Simply, but devastatingly, Habermas is not confident that the validity-claim of truthfulness can generate intersubjective agreements that are either rationally binding or that extend beyond particular communities.

This must not be conflated with a lack of confidence in the ability of aesthetic attitudes to promote learning processes that have a structure-forming effect on the lifeworld, say, because the dialectic of autonomy leads to hermetic modernism or because evanescent counter-cultures only express a hedonistic protest against bourgeois rationalisation. Habermas *does* say that counter-cultural social movements “do not form structures that are rationalisable in and of themselves, but are parasitic in that they remain dependent on innovations in the other spheres of value,” which means only that these derive from aesthetic vanguards.<sup>46</sup> More confusingly, Habermas thinks that the “expressive attitude” to the subjective world is the province of erotics (and therefore of psychotherapy), whereas the same attitude to the objective world yields art (and therefore also art criticism).<sup>47</sup> *That* is inconsistent with what I take to be the basic architectural intention of the theory of communicative action, which should state that both art and erotics spring from an expressive attitude toward the subjective world—and are, in fact, not entirely distinct. But it is in any case difficult to tell whether that is an aberration on part of Habermas, or his explication of Weber, because this point in *TCA*, which has considerably exercised the critics,<sup>48</sup> is a critical exposition of Weberian sociology. At any rate, the difficulty in institutionalising the

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validity claim of truthfulness is an *intrinsic* problem to do with the way that the aesthetic cultural value sphere is conceptualised, rather than an *extrinsic* problem of the effects of reification on the lifeworld.

What is it, then, about the expressive dimension of communicative action that makes it seem flaky as a bearer for the major intentions of Habermas's defence of modernity? The expressive dimension dramatises for the social world the subjective world of the speaker, something that arises in speech pragmatics when actors implicitly relate action proposals to a value-consensus and common interests.<sup>49</sup> In terms that develop the argument of the essay "Moral Development and Ego Identity," Habermas characterises the subjective world of the speaker in terms of "the two sides of a partiality rooted in needs," namely, beliefs and intentions, and desires and feelings.<sup>50</sup> The implicit claim to the truthfulness of a speaker's representation of their interior states is redeemed through arguments about the sincerity of the speaker (their truthful representation of beliefs and intentions) and the authenticity of their needs (the interpretive legitimacy in light of communally accepted value standards of the desires and feelings they seek to realise through the proposed action).<sup>51</sup>

While sincerity claims are redeemed non-discursively, through an examination of the consistency of the speaker's behaviour with their represented beliefs and intentions, authenticity claims are redeemed discursively through debates about the cultural legitimacy of their represented desires and feelings, together with reflexive argumentation about the appropriateness of the value standards at work in this cultural process of interpretation.<sup>52</sup> The truthfulness claim—as "authenticity"—is thoroughly intersubjective and presupposes not just an accurate reflection of the speaker's subjective world, but also a reflective relation between the speaker and their own interiority (the desires and feelings are not self-deceptions, and, the desires and feelings are either culturally legitimate, or the speaker has good reasons for proposing a new standard of evaluation). Indeed, Habermas proposes that "we call a person rational who interprets the nature of his desires and feelings [*Bedürfnisnatur*] in the light of culturally established standards of value, but especially if he can adopt a reflective attitude to the very value standards through which desires and feelings are interpreted."<sup>53</sup>

## ART/CRITICISM AND VALIDITY CLAIMS

Habermas, then, has articulated his arguments about aesthetic values, need interpretations and motivational dispositions in terms of the validity claim of authenticity. Art and criticism, on this account, arise through specialisation in the logic of the articulation and redemption of the validity claim of authenticity, freed from pragmatic constraints and protected from the intrusive predominance of the validity claims of cognitive truth and normative rightness. That means two things. First, against a misconception that vitiates David Colclasure's interpretation of literary rationality, artworks do not raise pragmatically binding action proposals<sup>54</sup>—they are not a form of communicative action, but a part of communicative reason (i.e., a part of reasoned argumentation). Second, art and criticism *together* articulate and redeem authenticity claims—specifically, artworks non-propositionally articulate such claims, and criticism redeems these claims argumentatively.

What prevents Habermas from stating the matter in precisely these terms are his reservations about the non-binding and non-propositional nature of judgements of taste. Although aesthetic critique involves the disclosure of silenced needs through a critical evaluation of conventional value standards, Habermas insists that even the post-traditional "cultural values do not appear with a claim to universality, as do norms of action—at most, values are candidates for interpretations, under which a circle of those affected can ... normatively regulate a common interest."<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, the perception of a work as an aesthetic experience involves a virtuous circularity, whereby the artwork itself can promote acceptance of the very standards it is taken to be an "argument" for.<sup>56</sup>

The problem, in other words, is that reflexive judgements seem to happen within particular communities in ways that claim only subjective universality, and that therefore cannot command universal agreement.

For this reason, Habermas proposes a distinction between the non-universal or non-binding character of aesthetic (and ethical and therapeutic) *critique*, and cognitive, normative and explicative *discourse*, in which “the meaning of the problematic validity claim conceptually forces participants to suppose that a rationally motivated agreement could in principle be achieved.”<sup>57</sup> It is this discourse/critique distinction that blows a hole in the conceptual architecture of the theory of communicative action and leads me to place a problematic question mark in the box (above) that represents the structure-forming effect of aesthetic specialisation on the lifeworld.

But is it really necessary to deny the institution of art and criticism the ability to achieve a universal agreement?

First of all, Habermas does not mean by discourse “logical demonstration.” Discourse refers to an informal, pragmatic logic of rational argumentation,<sup>58</sup> which can be characterised:

From the process perspective, by the intention of convincing a universal audience and gaining general assent for an utterance; from the procedural perspective, by the intention of ending a dispute about hypothetical validity claims with a rationally motivated agreement; and from the product perspective by the intention of grounding or redeeming a validity claim with arguments.<sup>59</sup>

I fully agree that artworks *alone* cannot do this. But Habermas misses a major opportunity by not following up on his insight into the discursive character of explicative claims, that is, claims to the coherence of symbolic constructs.<sup>60</sup> Although coherence claims can be raised in a formal sense in relation to any discourse, the specific nature of the critical interpretation of artworks is understood by Habermas in terms of an understanding of what is said, not just of the formal properties of how it is said. The interpreter of a literary work, for instance, discloses the meaning of a text “against the background of the cognitive, moral, and expressive elements of the cultural store of knowledge” forming the work’s horizon of expectations. But “the interpreter cannot understand the semantic content of the text if he is not in a position to present to himself the reasons that the author might have been able to adduce in defence of his utterances under suitable conditions.”<sup>61</sup> What that means is that explicative claims in relation to literary texts are not just discussions of the formal properties of interpretations. (Are they logically consistent?) Instead, they are *reconstructions of the legitimacy of the validity claims implicit in the work, in terms that can demand a more general assent than that which the author themselves might have aimed at*. Centrally, in the contemporary context, that must mean the claim to have identified in a work an innovative presentation of a post-traditional need-interpretation.

My position, then, is that art criticism argumentatively redeems the authenticity claim that artworks implicitly (“mutely,” Adorno would say) articulate, by exhibiting these before a potentially universal audience as well-formed and intelligible instances of cultural need-interpretations, whose legitimacy potentially transcends this or that particular community.

Once the artworks in question themselves articulate post-traditional need interpretations, then the interpretation of these works as symbolically coherent and culturally legitimate has directly universal implications, because it points to (1) the context-transcending force of the implied claim of the work through (2) the decentred and unbound character of the subjectivity promoted by the aesthetic experience.

The contemporary form of the authenticity claim that art criticism redeems is therefore the claim that a symbolic construct:

1. Innovatively presents a post-traditional need interpretation, which;
2. Everybody can potentially feel, irrespective of cultural background.

Aesthetic modernism, then, really does shake the foundations of conventional methods of representation and structures of subjectivity—rigid ego identities, Habermas would say—because it stakes a claim to artistic

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truthfulness with universal implications for both aesthetic techniques and motivational dispositions.

Now, this way of thinking is not completely alien to Habermas's own. He proposes that art criticism conforms to the pragmatic logic of argumentation and then adds that:

There is an unmistakable indicator for the fact that a certain type of 'knowing' is objectified in artworks, albeit in a different way than in theoretical discourse or in legal or moral representations. ... Art criticism has developed forms of argumentation that specifically differentiate it from the argumentative forms of theoretical and moral-practical discourse.<sup>62</sup>

Unfortunately, though, Habermas insists that the learning process in question is exclusively in the works themselves and not the critical debates, for only the artworks are the locus of "directed and cumulative transformations" in "those aesthetic experiences which only a decentered, unbound subjectivity is capable of."<sup>63</sup> Furthermore, and equally regrettably, Habermas thinks that value enhancement in a cultural sphere must involve the exclusion of other sorts of validity claim altogether, and so he speaks of "the purification of the aesthetic from admixtures of the cognitive, the useful and the moral."<sup>64</sup> That is why Habermas claims that "art becomes a laboratory, the critic an expert, [and] the development of art the medium of a learning process" that is not an accumulation of epistemic contents but instead "an aesthetic 'progress' ... a concentrically expanding, progressive exploration of a realm of possibilities opened up with the autonomisation of art."<sup>65</sup>

## AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE AND ART CRITICISM

My contention, then, is that Habermas unnecessarily cuts himself off here from a productive statement of his own position by insisting that the learning process is exclusively concentrated in the artworks. He also maintains that aesthetic rationality excludes consideration of cognitive and normative questions, which implies that the artistic cultural value sphere is an isolated silo, and that criticism is a parasitic activity that supervenes upon aesthetic learning processes. But a learning process devoid of epistemic contents is no learning process at all. It is an experience of unrestricted play that exercises—but does not form—flexible ego identities. That can only mean that the theory of aesthetic rationality as part of communicative reason is incorrect:

The aesthetic 'validity' or 'unity' that we attribute to a work of art refers to its singularly illuminating power to open our eyes to what is seemingly familiar, to disclose anew an apparently familiar reality. This validity claim admittedly stands for a potential for 'truth' that can be released only in the whole complexity of life-experience; therefore, this 'truth-potential' may not be connected to (or even identified with) one of the three validity-claims constitutive for communicative action, as I have previously been inclined to maintain. The one-to-one relationship which exists between the prescriptive validity of a norm and the normative validity claims raised in speech acts is not a proper model for the relation between the potential for truth of works of art and the transformed relations between self and world stimulated by aesthetic experience.<sup>66</sup>

What this means is that communicative reason must be restricted to cognitive truth and normative rightness. Although Habermas elsewhere acknowledges that art criticism is discursive and that it translates the decentred experiences of autonomous artworks into the prosaic language of the modern lifeworld,<sup>67</sup> these insights are connected to a completely different understanding of art. Unfortunately, there is widespread critical agreement that Habermas's latest understanding of art and literature, as institutions that "administer capacities of world-disclosure" through the articulation and criticism of poetic language, is entirely unsatisfactory.<sup>68</sup>

What Habermas is seeking to do justice to in shifting position is not only the problematic status of aesthetic critique, but also the fact that when aesthetic experience is integrated into the narrative of a life history, it goes beyond "renewing the interpretation of needs that colour perceptions." Rather, "it reaches into our cognitive interpretations and normative expectation and transforms the totality in which these moments are related to



each other.<sup>69</sup> That means, Habermas argues, that the illuminating power of art relates to the totality, rather than to reflexivity, so that “modern art harbours a utopia” only insofar as it is a mimesis of the desire for “a balanced and undistorted intersubjectivity in everyday life” that remains to come.<sup>70</sup> Acknowledgement of this situation, Habermas thinks, means that Albrecht Wellmer is right that:

Neither truth nor truthfulness may be attributed unmetaphorically to works of art, if one understands ‘truth’ and ‘truthfulness’ in the sense of a pragmatically differentiated everyday concept of truth. We can explain the way in which truth and truthfulness—and even normative correctness—are metaphorically interlaced in works of art only by appealing to the fact that the work of art, as a symbolic formation with an *aesthetic* validity claim, is at the same time an object of an experience, in which the three validity domains are unmetaphorically intermeshed.<sup>71</sup>

In other words, Habermas thinks he must decide between art as mimesis of life in its totality and art as an exploration of need interpretations alone.

Actually, though, there is no need to make this decision, and hence no need for his concession. For Habermas does not in fact hold that aesthetic rationality exists in a hermetically sealed cultural silo marked “explorations of inner nature only.” As David Ingram points out, Habermas’s advocacy of the post-avant-garde is predicted on this art movement’s ability to integrate cognitive and normative developments into aesthetic experimentation.<sup>72</sup> The clear implication is that cultural value spheres form around the *predominance* of a validity claim, not the *exclusion* of all else, which is why, for instance, “nonobjectivist approaches to research within the human sciences bring viewpoints of moral and aesthetic critique to bear, without this threatening the primacy of questions of truth.”<sup>73</sup>

To be certain, when aesthetic experience illuminates an individual’s life history and problem situations in the way that Habermas mentions, we are dealing with a holistic relation to reality, which can indeed best be described as a “truth potential” rather than a differentiated validity claim. But what is surprising—or problematic—about that? The individual whose identification with an artwork is sufficiently strong to have integrated its implications directly into their subjectivity has simply “jumped the gun” on the process of aesthetic debate that is mediated by the apparatus of professional criticism. Without waiting for intersubjective validation of the cultural need-interpretations that inflect the cognitive and normative elements of reality, as represented in the artwork, the individual has gone ahead and drawn all of the necessary conclusions at a personal level. That is an important and legitimate process, one that necessitates a hermeneutics of aesthetic experience if we are to fully understand the process of reception. But it is, after all, only a restatement of the difference between art appreciation by individuals, and the discursive and intersubjective process of art criticism through public debate. A salient example of the mediating role of art criticism and its difference from popular appreciation is the debate on modernism sparked by the obscenity trials of Lawrence and Joyce, where public reception was mostly negative, whereas professional critics supported these works on grounds of their literary excellence.<sup>74</sup> Perhaps, we might speculate, Habermas’s over-riding concerns with truth as warranted assertion and with the normative foundations of social theory meant that his own art theory did not receive the full attention that it deserved.

In any case, within a few years of *TCA* and its subsequent revision, Habermas had shifted position again, this time through an acknowledgement of the existence of a world-disclosing aspect of language that is supplementary to the three dimensions of communicative reason already mapped out. Because of the problematic status of aesthetic rationality—and perhaps also in order to contain the implications of this new position in relation to the still extant cognitive and normative positions—world-disclosing language is represented by Habermas in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (1985) as a specification of poetics. Pieter Duvenage, JM Bernstein, and Nikolas Kompridis have drawn attention to the major problems with this position.<sup>75</sup> As Duvenage points out, if poetic language-use is an aspect of everyday speech, and speech acts are the bearers of rationality, then there

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is a world-disclosing aspect to reason itself. There are no grounds for restricting this world-disclosing aspect of reason to artworks alone and describing it as aesthetic rationality, as if this “aesthetic” aspect to reason only happened in a small domain. Consideration of Duvenage’s superbly cogent proposal for “the reciprocity of world-disclosure and discursive language,” however, would take this discussion too far afield.<sup>76</sup> For now, it is sufficient to note that the discursive/communicative reason, which world-disclosure is complementary to, can indeed *include* aesthetic rationality, considered under its aspect of intersubjective debates on cultural need-interpretations.

### CODA

There is a lot to criticise in Habermas’s position. We might start with three major ones: the retreat from a prolongation of the democratic socialist intentions of the first generation of the Frankfurt School to a mere species of political liberalism; the preference for ego psychology, with its anti-Freudian reinstatement of the ego as the core of human being, over every other programme in psychoanalysis; and the notion that system processes in economics and administration represent norm-free zones of strategic activity. But there is also a lot to learn from: the post-metaphysical perspective on philosophy and the intersubjective turn, and the foundations of a theory of intersubjectivity in language pragmatics; and the construction of an emancipatory social theory that nonetheless acknowledges that system complexity means the end of revolutionary utopias and also the end of the notion that politics constitutes society. In the midst of all this, I have argued, there is also a restatement of the Frankfurt School aesthetic tradition—that art is all about human needs—in post-metaphysical terms. According to this perspective, modern art stakes a claim to truthfulness that cannot and should not be ignored—that is a position worth extending and defending.

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## NOTES

1. Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 132-34.
2. Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 134
3. Raymond Williams, *Problems in Materialism and Culture* (London: Verso, 1980), 31-49.
4. Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume One: Reason and the Rationalisation of Society*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), 177 (hereafter, *TCA 1*); Jürgen Habermas, *On the Pragmatics of Communication*, ed. Maeve Cooke (Malden: Blackwell, 1999), 414.
5. Jürgen Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (London: Heinemann, 1979), 93.
6. Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, trans. Fredrick Lawrence (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987), 207.
7. For the centrality of Habermas's intention to reply to the neoconservatives to his entire programme, compare the following: Jürgen Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1975), 78-86.; Jürgen Habermas, *TCA 2*, 392-403.
8. Martin Jay, "Habermas and Modernism," in *Habermas and Modernity*, ed. Richard Bernstein (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1985); Shierry Weber-Nicholson, "Aesthetic Experience and Self-Reflection as Emancipatory Processes: Two Complementary Aspects of Critical Theory," in *On Critical Theory*, ed. John O'Neill (New York: Continuum, 1976).
9. Jürgen Habermas, *On the Pragmatics of Communication*, trans. Maeve Cooke (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), 412.
10. *TCA 1*, 392-97.
11. Jonathan Culler, "Communicative Competence and Normative Force," *New German Critique* 5(1985): 133-44; John B Thompson, "Universal Pragmatics," in *Habermas: Critical Debates*, ed. John B Thompson and David Held (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1982), 116-33.
12. Jay, "Habermas and Modernism," 125-39; David Ingram, "Habermas on Aesthetics and Rationality: Completing the Project of Enlightenment," *New German Critique* 53 (1991): 68-75.
13. Jürgen Habermas, "Questions and Counter-Questions," in *On the Pragmatics of Communication*, ed. Maeve Cooke (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999), 414.
14. Jürgen Habermas, "Modernity - an Incomplete Project," in *Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (London: Pluto Press, 1985).
15. Jürgen Habermas, "Consciousness-Raising or Redemptive Criticism: The Contemporaneity of Walter Benjamin," *New German Critique* 17 (1979): 49.
16. Habermas, "Consciousness-Raising", 58-59.
17. Habermas, "Consciousness-Raising", 57.
18. Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume Two: Lifeworld and System*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), 398. Hereafter *TCA 2*.
19. *TCA 2*, 398.
20. See Rosalind Krauss, *Cindy Sherman: 1975-1993* (New York: Rizzoli, 1993), Benjamin Buchloh, Hans-Ulrich Obrist and Julia Peyton, *Richard Hamilton: Modern Moral Matters* (Köln: Walther König, 2010), Paul Maltby, *Dissident Postmodernists: Barthelemy Coover, Pynchon* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991).
21. Habermas, "Consciousness-Raising or Redemptive Criticism: The Contemporaneity of Walter Benjamin," 43.
22. Habermas, "Consciousness-Raising", 49.
23. Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*, 86.
24. Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*, 78.
25. Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*, 85.
26. Habermas, "Modernity Versus Postmodernity," 10.
27. Habermas, "Modernity Versus Postmodernity", 10.
28. Habermas, "Modernity Versus Postmodernity, 11.
29. Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, 69-94.
30. Habermas, *Communication*, 93.
31. Habermas, *Communication*, 91.
32. Habermas, *Communication*, 91.
33. Habermas, *Communication*, 84.
34. Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, trans. Jeremy Shapiro (London: Heinemann, 1972), 252.
35. Habermas, *On the Pragmatics of Communication*, 427.
36. Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, 70.
37. Habermas, *Communication*, 93.
38. Habermas, *On the Pragmatics of Communication*, 427.
39. Habermas, *Pragmatics*, 428.
40. Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, 93.
41. Franz Kafka, *Letters to Friends, Family and Editors*, trans. Richard Winston and Clara Winston, (New York: Schocken, 1978),

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42. *TCA* 2, 397.
43. *TCA* 1, 178.
44. For corroboration of this claim, see the following empirical documentation of popular responses to scandalous modernist literary works: Rosa Eberly, *Citizen Critics: Literary Public Spheres* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000).
45. Habermas, "Modernity Versus Postmodernity."
46. *TCA* 1, 238-39.
47. *TCA* 1, 238.
48. Ingram, "Habermas on Aesthetics and Rationality: Completing the Project of Enlightenment," 79; David Colclasure, *Habermas and Literary Rationality* (London; New York: Routledge, 2010), 33.
49. *TCA* 1, 20, 91.
50. *TCA* 1, 92.
51. *TCA* 1, 17-20.
52. *TCA* 1, 20, 91.
53. *TCA* 1, 20.
54. Colclasure, *Habermas and Literary Rationality*, 36-44.
55. *TCA* 1, 20.
56. *TCA* 1, 20.
57. *TCA* 1, 42.
58. *TCA* 1, 22.
59. *TCA* 1, 26.
60. *TCA* 1, 23.
61. *TCA* 1, 132.
62. Habermas, *On the Pragmatics of Communication*, 412.
63. Habermas, *Pragmatics*, 412.
64. Habermas, *Pragmatics*, 412-13.
65. Habermas, *Pragmatics*, 413-14.
66. Habermas, *Pragmatics*, 415.
67. Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, 207.
68. E.g., JM Bernstein, *Recovering Ethical Life: Jürgen Habermas and the Future of Critical Theory* (London; New York: Routledge, 1995), 197-234; Nikolas Kompridis, *Critique and Disclosure: Critical Theory between Past and Future* (Cambridge, MA; London: MIT Press, 2006), 110-11 and 78-79; Duvenage, *Habermas and Aesthetics: The Limits of Communicative Reason*, 127-33.
69. Habermas, *On the Pragmatics of Communication*, 414-15.
70. Habermas, *Pragmatics*, 415.
71. Habermas, *Pragmatics*, Wellmer cited 415.
72. *TCA* 2, 398; David Ingram, *Habermas: Introduction and Analysis* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2010), 318-19.
73. *TCA* 2, 398.
74. See, for instance, Rosa Eberly, *Citizen Critics: Literary Public Spheres* (Urbana: University of Chicago Press, 2000) and Elisabeth Ladenson, *Dirt for Art's Sake: Books on Trial from Madame Bovary to Lolita* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), for the public and critical reception of these authors.
75. Bernstein, *Recovering Ethical Life: Jürgen Habermas and the Future of Critical Theory*; Duvenage, *Habermas and Aesthetics: The Limits of Communicative Reason*; Kompridis, *Critique and Disclosure: Critical Theory between Past and Future*.
76. Duvenage, *Habermas and Aesthetics: The Limits of Communicative Reason*, 120-41.