

Art as a Complex, Dynamic System

Christian Fuchs and Franziska Holzner

Christian Fuchs

Unified Theory of Information Research Group
Center for Information and Communication Technologies
& Society
University of Salzburg
christian.fuchs4@chello.at

Franziska Holzner

Interdisciplinary Study Group
on Philosophical Problems of Foundation
University of Kassel
fh.design@web.de

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In this paper we want to give possible answers to questions such as: What is art? How is art related to society? How does art develop? We consider art not as static, but as dynamic and complex, it permanently changes, interpretations of artworks permanently (re-)emerge, new artworks emerge, etc. In the first section we will discuss different conceptual approaches of art theory. In section 2 we introduce a dynamic concept of art that is based on processes of cognition (2.1.), communication (2.2.), and co-operation (2.3). In section 3 we discuss the historical development of art as a dynamic process, in section 4 we take a look the idea of the autonomy of art in society and the relationship of art and society, in section 5 we outline the role of art in capitalism and communism. Methodologically we advance from the abstract to the concrete, we first discuss what the essence of art is on a more abstract level, then we outline informational aspects of cognition, communication, and co-operation of the artistic production process. The analysis of the dynamic evolution of art and of the autonomy of art introduces an already more concrete level of analysis where the role of art in society is discussed. Finally we discuss the role of art in the societal formation that we live in – capitalism – and possible future developments of art in society. Hence we reach a concrete level of analysis that describes the present and points towards the future.

1. Conceptual Approaches

Different types of cultural theories can be identified: subjectivistic, objectivistic, dualistic, and dialectical ones (Fuchs 2005). Subjectivism considers culture as cognitively constructed domain in the form of opinions, ideas, beliefs, and a state of mind (*culture as cognitive attribute*), objectivism as material symbolic artefact (*cultural products, cultural works*) or structure that exists outside of human subjects (*culture as symbolic material thing or as collective ideas, values, world-views, and practices*), dualism considers culture as existing in two independent forms: 1. as a cognitively constructed domain, 2. as a material symbolic artefact or collective ideational system (*culture as two independent subjective and objective domains*), dialectical approaches see culture as a meaningful process and reflective relationship that combines subjective and objective aspects (Fuchs 2005). This typology can be applied to art as the aesthetic subsystem of culture.

Subjective approaches consider art as having practical human goals and as fulfilling a certain cultural role in society. Whereas objective theories consider art as a higher form of existence that represents divine or natural values that transcend humans and society, subjective theories see art as (a system of) human practice. Aristotle e.g. saw art as beautiful practice. In subjective aesthetical theories art is part of human culture and the human lifeworld, art is considered as playing certain historical roles in societal formations. Such approaches see a critical and utopian function of art in society, they argue that art should display a world that creates human interest in reason and freedom. Art would display ideas of alternative forms of existence. Art is considered as a form of education and critique.

Friedrich Schiller considered art as the portrayal of free reasonable practice in situations of heteronomy (cf. Gethmann-Siefert 1980; 1995: 159-183). The cultural function of art would be an educative one aiming at humanity and reason. Art would have the role of creating the idea of a humane world and of a successful life in a disrupted society. For Schiller art is a combination of joy and the education of morality. Schiller spoke of the autonomy of art as “he-autonomy” (Heautonomie), an autonomy given to the object by a subject. With this concept Schiller wants to express that in aesthetic practice the human subject gives rules to itself and constitutes autonomy within a heteronomous society (Lingner 1993). Art wouldn't be a reflection of society as it is, it would produce beauty and hence would confront the existing world with its counterpart. Art for Schiller is beautiful semblance (schöner Schein), art would be the appearance of freedom (but not its realization) in society. Beautiful difference would be an ideal and hence different from reality. For Schiller the utopian and critical function of art doesn't point to the future, but to the past of Greek art.

For Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel art is a human cultural practice, it would be a historical expression of culture, each historical epoch of society would have its own art¹. Hegel stresses the historical character of art. Art would be the realization of beauty, beautiful semblance (schöner Schein) of the Idea². For Hegel art connects reality and the world of ideas, art as the world of semblance has the function of placing the Idea in reality. Art as beautiful semblance of the Idea is for Hegel a product of human activity and of human world interpretation, i.e. the unity of labour and interpretation. Art would make truth sensually perceivable (Hegel 1832-45: 139f). Hegel opposed the idea that art is an imitation of nature (as e.g. put forward by Baumgarten), for him Beauty in art (das Kunstschöne) is a higher form of existence than Beauty in nature (das Naturschöne) because the human spirit would have a higher form of existence than nature (Hegel 1832-45: 14f, 48f). Hence for Hegel art is a cultural and human form. Hegel on the one hand is an objective Idealist in the sense that he sees art besides religion and philosophy as a realization of the Absolute Spirit and of divinity (Hegel 1830: §§ 553-577, Hegel 1832-45: 20f, 127-144), but on the other hand he stresses the practical role of art in society. Art would be connected to worldviews of a historical culture, it would display ideas about the ideas of an epoch. It would be a real appearance of the Spirit of a certain culture. Art would put forward certain options for and alternatives of human practice. Hegel stresses the cultural difference of art within an overall constant cultural social character of art. Art would have practical relevance in the sense that it is related to education in such a way that it enables the human being's selection from alternative practices. Art would make suggestions for action. For Hegel art has a double function in society: it should 1. evoke emotions, feelings, desires, imagination, and possibilities, and it should 2. purify passion, tame instincts and desires, educate and instruct human beings in order to reach moral perfection (Hegel 1832-45: 64-82). Art should reconcile the contradiction between instinct and reason (ibid.). The artist for Hegel must have on the one hand a natural talent, on the other hand genius would also require education and practice (Hegel 1832-45: 45-47). For Hegel an artwork is not a product of nature, but of human practice, it exists for the human being and the senses of the human being, and has a purpose (Hegel 1842-45: 44ff). Hegel's aesthetic is dominated by Christian morality (sexual desires are considered as evil, his philosophy is anti-hedonistic) and conservatism, but nonetheless the important aspect is that Hegel stresses the practical relevance of art in society.

¹ „Auf der anderen Seite aber scheint die Kunst aus einem höheren Triebe hervorzugehen und höheren Bedürfnissen, ja zuzeiten den höchsten und absoluten, Genüge zu tun, indem sie an die allgemeinsten Weltanschauungen und die religiösen Interessen ganzer Epochen und Völker gebunden ist“ (Hegel 1832-1845: 50).

² „Das Schöne bestimmt sich dadurch als das sinnliche Scheinen der Idee“ (Hegel 1832-45: 151).

Based on Hegel's aesthetical theory and by turning Hegel's aesthetic off its head and placing it upon its feet, Herbert Marcuse (1977) formulated a neo-Marxist theory of art. He argues that the practical dimension of art is its revolutionary potential. Not the content of art would be revolutionary, but its form would transcend capitalist society by visualizing the horizon of potential change. An artwork would represent reality by the formal denouncement of this very reality, by rebellion, and hope. It would oppose the reality that it represents. For Marcuse art is a form of protest against capitalist society because it transcends that which is. Art wouldn't be revolutionary by considering the working class, Communism, etc. as topics on the level of content, but as revolutionary form that becomes content.

For Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling (1800) art is the perfect real image of the Absolute in the ideal world. For Schelling Beauty is a form and realization of the Absolute that can be perceived. One could consider Schelling's philosophy of art as an objective approach because he argues that the artwork is a realization of the Absolute and that the Absolute transcends the individual artist and his artwork. But for Schelling the Absolute and Objectivity are represented in art by unintended aspects of the artwork. For Schelling an artwork is an unity of conscious and unconscious human activity. Hence Schelling stresses also art as a human production process that has both intended and unintended aspects and hence is endless/infinite in the sense that there can be infinite interpretations and that the possibility for such an infinity is contained in the artwork and produced unconsciously by the artist. Hence similar to the aesthetic philosophy of Hegel that also considers art as a human realization of the Absolute, but stresses that art is a human production process, Schelling's approach should better be considered as a subjective approach.

Schelling's theory of art in his "System of Transcendental Idealism" (1800) should not be seen as the final point of his philosophy of art. Decisive are his basic conceptions of art, the artist, and the artwork that are closely related to his conception of nature. Schelling doesn't see art like nature as dead, but as alive, self-producing, and self-creating. Artistic production is for Schelling an unity of conscious labour (the artist decides that he produces art und also knows during the production process that he produces) and unconscious activity (the artist feels impelled to produce art and the artwork is more than the sum of the conscious activities of the artist). At the end of the production process the opposition of conscious and unconscious activity is sublated. The feeling of an endless fulfilment goes along with the end of production because all contradictions that have impelled the artist's activities are sublated.

Although the artist consciously decides to produce, the unity that evokes these feelings is accredited to nature as a voluntary favour. The unknown that harmonically unites conscious and unconscious activity is termed the Absolute by Schelling. The Absolute stands outside of production and adds the Undesigned (das Absichtslose). Schelling also calls the Undesigned the immovable Identical that can't gain consciousness and is reflected in the products. He compares the essence of the immovable Identical to destiny. Because what for action is destiny would be the Identical for production, i.e. a dark unknown power that adds perfection and objectivity to the patchwork of freedom³.

Schelling infers from the assertion of all artists that they feel impelled to produce artworks that all aesthetic production is based on a contradiction of activities. This drive stems from the

³ „eine dunkle unbekannte Gewalt, die zu dem Stückwerk der Freiheit das Vollendete oder das Objektive hinzubringt“ (Schelling 1800: 286).

feeling of an inner contradiction. This contradiction totally affects the artist and the roots of his whole being (Schelling 1800: 287). For Schelling within the artist the immovable Identical has fully uncovered itself and retroacts immediately on things. It can only be the contradiction of Consciousness and Unconsciousness within free action that impels the artist to produce. And it is only art that can resolve this ultimate inner contradiction.

Aesthetical production stems from a feeling of an apparently unresolvable contradiction and ends in a feeling of endless harmony. That this feeling of harmony is accompanied by emotion shows that the artist doesn't consider the total resolution of the contradiction as his own act, but as a grace of nature, i.e. nature produces and resolves the contradiction. Just like the artist is impelled to produce, objectivity is added without any efforts on his part. In comparison to other human beings the artist for Schelling is effected by a power that compels him to represent things that he doesn't himself fully see. But the artist shouldn't be considered as a puppet that produces somnambulistically. This power is a driving force, but the artist is conscious of his production. Art accomplishes the Impossible: The sublation of an infinite contradiction (conscious – unconscious) in a finite product.

A specific aspect of Schelling's philosophy of art is that he stresses the creative process, production as such. He gives an answer to the question what art is and what makes up its essence. He shows characters and qualities of the artworks that distinguish the latter from other production as well as qualities of aesthetical production and the essence of the artist. When he says that objectivity in an artwork emerges without the effort of the artist, that it is contained, but not intended in an artwork, he talks about the essence of art. There are many examples in the history of art for the relationship of art and philosophy as conceived by Schelling: Art practically realizes that about which philosophy is talking. What Schelling has written about in his "System of Transcendental Idealism" (1800) has been practically realized in all artworks insofar as they are true artworks. Particular importance has been given to concepts such as infinity, objectivity, or unconsciousness in 20th century art. Art styles that have particularly stressed the unconscious are Dadaism and Surrealism, Dadaism more picks out the unconscious in the act of production as a central theme, Surrealism more the unconscious as such. One could be arguing that the works of some Surrealist are painted meticulously and in a perfect technique and that they have an exactly composed symbolism deny that the unintended aspects of the production process appear in these works. It is more easier to grasp by taking a look at an Action Painting of Jackson Pollock who spattered paint wildly across the canvas with such heavy gestures that it was impossible to plan or foresee the form of the artwork. Nonetheless objectivity appears in all works of art, no matter if they are exactly composed or expressive-abstract. It can be experienced and can't be explained. E.g. one feels in pictures of the Pittura Metafisica that there is more than an empty Italian piazza, just like one can experience the finite representation of the infinite in the pictures of Piet Mondrian. This makes up the pure amazement and the fascination that we experience when we are really impressed and moved by an artwork. Such an amazement is not due to a good style of painting, but because the painted form expresses something that we can't conceive in another way, but that we can only immediately experience in the observation of art and the contemplative attitude that the "unfathomable profundity" of a true artwork evokes.

Niklas Luhmann (1995) sees art as a form of communication and a process of observation. Art production would be observation, the artist would have to observe the artwork. Both art production and consumption would be observation processes, the difference would be that the first only takes place once, the second repeatedly. An artwork would be the manifestation of observations of the artist, consuming art would be an observation of observations. The recipient would be a second order observer. The communication process of art would be

rather arbitrarily insofar as there would be no automatic understanding, art would be inherently ambiguous (Luhmann 1995: 72). Artworks would contain directives for observation, but they could be interpreted by observers very differently. The unity of the different forms of art would be that they all enable observation of observations that have been materialized by the artist in a certain form. Luhmann considers all things as art that are embedded into communication processes of art, for him art is that which is communicated as being art. Art would be a self-referential, autopoietic social system because communication about art would always produce further communications about art. For Luhmann the elements of the art system are not artworks, but communications that center on the topic of art. The dynamic self-organization of art would be based on second order observations and on the binary code beautiful/ugly⁴. Art would be a process where a permanent communication process about whether something is beautiful or ugly takes place.

Luhmann due to his Constructivist epistemology considers the interpretations that are related to artworks as arbitrarily, he doesn't take into account that the social and societal contexts of art condition a number of possible interpretations. Luhmann's position is idealistic and subjectivistic, in his approach there is no objective dimension of art and beauty, only systems as subject communicate about beauty, they permanently construct definitions of beauty and ugliness. Art is not simply an observation process, observation is only a foundation of production, an artist observes parts of reality and produces forms that contain meanings, a recipient or a community of art critics observes an artwork and produces meanings in active interpretation processes. The constructivist concept of observation doesn't grasp the productive moments of art.

Constructivist theories of art consider art as pure subjective interpretation processes, art becomes an arbitrary and accidental spiritual construction. They don't take into account that society structures, enables, and constrains artistic practices and creates a certain level of necessity that shapes the chance of artistic practice. E.g. Hans Dieter Huber (1998) argues that the main hypothesis of a Constructivist aesthetical theory is that the brain is an autonomous autopoietic system and that hence the interpretations and cognitive activities that an artwork causes in an observer couldn't be predicted. The experience of artworks would be double contingent, there would always be alternative possibilities in the selections of the artist and the observers. One couldn't predict who will observe an artwork, what will be observed and not observed, and which cognitive changes of state will be caused⁵. Such assumptions see the experience of art as purely individualistic and arbitrary, they fetishize chance and don't see that social structures enable and constrain the production and consumption of art and hence that there is neither an arbitrary nor a mechanically determined space of socially determined possibilities for art production and consumption that is characterized by relative/conditioned chance, i.e. a dialectic of chance and necessity.

There are two type of subjective theories of art: Constructivist ones that consider art as an individualistic and arbitrary observation process. And other subjective theories of art that see subjectivity of art in the sense of art as a human practice. The danger in considering art as close to social practices is that it can become an ideology that serves dominant interests and

⁴ „Die abstrakte Codierung, die Operationen dem System der Kunst zuordnet, unterscheidet bereits einen positiven und einen negativen Wert – in traditioneller Terminologie: Schönes und Hässliches“ (Luhmann 1995: 328).

⁵ „Wir können also, vom Kunstwerk aus gesehen, zunächst überhaupt nicht vorhersagen, erstens wer das Werk sehen wird; zweitens, was an diesem Werk beobachtet werden wird und was übersehen werden wird; drittens zu welchen möglichen Zustandsveränderungen im kognitiven Gleichgewicht eines Beobachters die jeweilige ästhetische Erfahrung führen wird“ (Huber 1998).

hence loses its relative autonomy. Socialist Realism and Nazi art are examples for art as ideologies where political processes determined form and content of art and art was conceived as being close to the lifeworld. Hence the practical relevance of art should be formulated in such a way that the difference between art and other societal subsystems can be maintained.

Objective approaches consider art as a good that embodies high forms of ideas that transcend society and the human individual. Art is considered as a mode of perception of eternal, endless, absolute ideas that exist beyond and independent of the historical status of society. Plato considered Beauty as a combination of the Good and Truth. Beauty is a culmination of Ideas, art as the realization of the Idea of Beauty for Plato is connected to the Good and Truth. For Plato Beauty is the Beauty of nature, nature would express the Idea of Beauty. Art would be an imitation of reality, and hence not as important as the Idea and nature. For Plato the Idea or Form of Beauty is important. A Form for Plato is an abstract entity that exists independently of the sensible world. A beautiful flower would be an imitation of the universal Idea of a flower and of beauty. The physical flower would already be one step removed from the world of ideas. A picture of a flower would then be two steps removed from the world of Forms. Things such as a beautiful flower, a beautiful person, a beautiful mountain, a beautiful sunset, or a beautiful garden would be beautiful things, but not Beauty itself. Each would be beautiful and participate in the idea of Beauty. Beauty itself would be a Form that exists in addition to all the particular beautiful things. Particular beautiful things would share the Form of Beauty, this would make them beautiful. For Plato forms are organized hierarchically, the Good would be the highest ultimate Form. The Good would neither be knowledge nor pleasure, but a combination of both. There would be several instances of the Good that Plato orders by values that he attaches to them: measure, beauty, mind, science, pure pleasure. Beauty, symmetry, and truth would be closer to knowledge than to pleasure. For some objectivists (like Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten or Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz) art is in a Platonic view the imitation of nature or divine creation.

Objectivists have frequently tried to formulate objective criteria for good taste. Such arguments are based on the idea that true art has existed at certain points of history and that the arts of these periods should be imitated. Baumgarten (1750) has defined the Beautiful as that which appeals to the senses, but this wouldn't be based on an individual arbitrary choice of taste, but on objective rational criteria that determine good and bad taste. Right aesthetical judgements could only be made by an expert, by a connoisseur who has been educated in making aesthetical judgements and has a sense of Beauty. Fine taste would be a matter of education. For Baumgarten art represents objective ideas in the sense that it doesn't represent the world as it is, but it represents the best and absolute form of the world, it would portray the world in perfection. For Leibniz the existing world is a creation of God and hence he argues that it is the best of all possible worlds and that the task of art is the imitation of the world and hence of divinity. Baumgarten shares this idea and argues that art is a reflection of a world and a nature created by God. Art would not be an imitation of nature, but an imitation of the idea of a perfect nature created by God. Beauty in nature is considered as more important than the Beauty of human works because the first is seen as a divine creation.

Whereas Baumgarten's approach represents a version of a rationalistic aesthetic that argues that there are rational metaphysical criteria for Beauty, David Hume (1757) is a representative of an empiricist aesthetic. Hume argues that emotions are more important than rational judgements. He says that there are general rules of art that are not based on rationality, but on experience and on the observation of the common sentiments of human nature. Aesthetical knowledge would be derived inductively by sensual experience, the museum would be the laboratory for the experience of art. The rules of art would be defined by the aestheticus who

possesses strong sense and delicate sentiment that are improved by practice and perfected by comparison and are cleared of all prejudice. The joint verdict of such critics would be the true standards of taste and Beauty. Hume's aesthetic is not objective in the sense that there are metaphysical divine characteristics that define art, but it is objective in the sense that he identifies an elitist group of experts that agrees on standards of taste and beauty. For Baumgarten the objective dimension of art is based on rational judgements by experts, for Hume it is based on the sensual experiences of a group of experts.

Immanuel Kant (1790) tried to bridge the gap between rationalism and empiricism. For Kant taste is the capability to make a general judgement about what is beautiful. Beauty would have to do with that which evokes pleasure or dislike. The Beautiful would be liked by everyone, it wouldn't demand everyone's agreement, but it would suggest such an agreement. A general aesthetical judgement would be possible in a community of aesthetical experts. Beauty would not be based on personal judgements, but on general judgements. And what can generally be considered as Beauty could only be decided by a community of experts. For Kant the objective dimension of art is given by intersubjective judgements. He wanted to put aesthetic objectivity on a subjective foundation. For Kant there are things that are not subjectively considered as beautiful, but that are considered as beautiful by all, i.e. he defines an objective and general dimension of Beauty. Hence the judgement of Beauty would not be referring to the subject, but to the object. Not everyone would automatically agree with general Beauty and good taste, but everyone should agree. There would be certain rules of taste such as symmetry, harmony, and clarity. These rules would exist a priori to experience, but good taste as such could only be defined a posteriori to experience by the community of experts. There would be no general rules of aesthetical judgements, only certain rational guidelines. For Kant there is a difference between intuitive rules that enable sensitivity, experience, and discursive rules that define taste and Beauty. The true connoisseur would not only possess a sensibility for the Beautiful, but also a sensibility for the Good. Hence art would also have moral aspects, Beauty in art would be a symbol for morality. For Kant the Ideal is a combination of the Beautiful and the morally Good, the community of experts has both empirical and rational aspects, aesthetical norms would on the one hand be based on empiricism and would hence be culture-specific, on the other hand classical Greek art would define certain rational standards of Beauty, the Ideal of Beauty. Greek art would be a model of art because it would in form of the human being put forward natural forms of Spirit (as in Greek sculpture). Kant has both an empirical and a rational idea of Beauty. Also nature would be a symbol of morality. Hence perfect art would be a perfect imitation of nature. Talent and brilliancy would be ways of how nature gives rules to art. Talent would be given by nature, the transformation of a talented human into a genius could only be achieved by activity.

Objectivists who consider art as a product that imitates nature and divinity reduce art to nature and divine ideas, or they reduce art to certain historical models and periods of art such as Greek classicism. Art is not considered historically and dynamically, but is defined in elitist, metaphysical, and transcendental ways. There is no historicity of art in objectivistic approaches. An objectivist aesthetic leaves out the fact that different interpretations that produce meanings of artworks are possible, and that interpretation is a contested social process.

Dualistic approaches consider art as having two independently existing domains: a cognitive one and an objective-material one. E.g. Karl Popper (1981) argues that artworks are a form of objective knowledge that together with other cultural objects form a world ("the world of objective contents of thought, especially of scientific and poetic thoughts and of works of art", Popper 1981: 106) that exists independently of human actors. The world of individual human

thought that also contains interpretations of artworks would exist in a separate autonomous world. Popper strictly opposes subjective and objective aspects of art and society, dualistic approaches can't show how categories are related and produce each other.

Dialectical approaches consider artworks as sensually perceivable forms that are products and producers of a certain state of society, of meaningful interpretations, and worldviews. Art is seen as having both subjective and objective aspects that produce each other, the objectification of the subjective and the subjectification of the objective are at the heart of a dynamic that constitutes permanent aesthetic changes on a subjective and an objective level of art that are related and produce each other. Art is neither purely subjective nor purely objective nor are there two separate domains of art. The concept of self-organization allows a dynamical and dialectical concept of art. We will now outline such an approach.

Type of Approach	Art conceived as...
Subjectivistic (individualistic) approaches	Art as an aesthetic human practice that has an educative function in society or as an observation process of beauty
Objectivistic approaches	Art as an aesthetic product that transcends society and the individual and embodies eternal ideas
Dualistic approaches	two independently existing forms: 1. individual aesthetic ideas 2. products that contain objective aesthetic knowledge
Dialectical approaches	a meaningful aesthetic process of cognition, communication, and co-operation that has both subjective and objective aspects (<i>art as process and reflective relationship</i>)

Tab. 1: Typology of approaches on art

2. The Self-Organization of Art

Social self-organization is a self-referential (re-)creative process where human actors and social structures are mutually related and produce each other (Fuchs 2003b). Social self-organization is a threefold knowledge process, a process of cognition, communication, and co-operation (Fuchs/Hofkirchner 2005). Each human being forms a unity that has specific structures, states, and dynamics (cognition), by interacting with the help of symbolic forms humans exchange ideas, this exchange results in a differentiation of cognitive states (communication), by creative social interactions synergies can arise that result in the emergence of new qualities of a system that are due to the synergies that arise from the interactions and that can't be reduced to individual actions (co-operation). Communication and co-operation are at the heart of the dynamic development of social systems, social systems permanently change, i.e. by processes of communication and co-operation new qualities of a social system that are due to interactive synergies and can't be reduced to individual activity permanently emerge and re-emerge and the social system permanently re-creates itself.

Applying these ideas to art as a social system means that art can be described as a dynamic self-organization process of cognition, communication, and co-operation.

2.1. Art and Cognition

The artist is influenced by the social structures of society, i.e. by the times he lives in. Hence society enables and constrains artistic practice. The artist forms world-views and aesthetic ideas that he brings into a form, i.e. he objectifies cognitive ideas by forming objects. Based on the combination of specific elements an artwork emerges that is a material form that embodies and objectifies subjective ideas.

Art is an aesthetical product, it must be sensually experienced and interpreted. In its production process art has both mental and manual aspects, i.e. it is a result of mental and manual labour. Each artwork is an objectification of subjective knowledge, experiences, and feelings of the artists, this objectification is an expression and representation that doesn't follow fixed rules such as non-artistic labour. The mental conception of an artwork is the foundation for the objectification of knowledge that is accomplished by making use of certain techniques. The conceptual phase can take place either prior to or at the same time as or even after the objectification process. Hence one can distinguish between more spontaneous, unintentional and more intentional planned forms of art. Artworks are an objectification of subjective ideas, the practice of artistic production means an objectification of the subjective.

The perception of an artwork is not a direct perception of a natural or social reality, an artwork consists of symbols that represent reality, it is a symbolic system that becomes itself a sensually perceivable reality. Artworks are made up of signs that stand for world-views that interpret reality. Charles W. Morris (1939) in his semiotic analysis of aesthetic signs argues that artworks are sign systems and are considered as values/valuable by human beings. He defines an aesthetic sign as an iconic sign (a sign is iconic if it resembles the object that it represents, e.g. images) that designates a value. He argues that in the case of Abstract Art (which doesn't resemble actually existing sensually perceivable objects) there is designation without denotation, i.e. there are symbols, meanings, and values, but there is no object that the artwork refers to. The symbols form a reality of their own, one that is not directly relating to actually existing objects.

Artworks are emergent totalities/wholes that are made up of elements/moments that interact and produce emergent qualities. E.g. a painting is made up of various coloured surfaces, a piece of music is made up of sounds, the elements of a poem or a novel are words, the elements of a play are words and sentences. The artist combines these elements in such a way that they interact and form a coherent whole that is more than the sum of its parts. The emergent quality of an artwork is its aura that enables the sensual experience of culture and amazement. The aura emerges from the interaction of elements that are meaningfully consciously or unconsciously combined by artists and meaningfully interpreted by the audience. Hence the aura of an artwork is not static, it is a dynamic process because it must be permanently re-actualized in active production processes. Meaning is produced by the artist consciously and/or unconsciously (i.e. the artwork is a space of possible interpretations that includes interpretations and possibilities that have not been consciously planned by the artist) as well as in reception processes. Walter Benjamin (1935) defined the aura of an artwork as a unique phenomenon of a distance, however close it may be, i.e. the experience that the artwork enables is a singularity for the observer that can be re-experienced, this singularity is the experience of a distance from everyday life and from society as it is, hence the aura is the experience of the non-identity of art.

Artworks are not pure material forms, in their form a spiritual dimension appears. The Spirit of art is the objectification of mental labour in a material form. The content of art is mental and has an objectified formal expression, the form of art conveys something about its content. The content of art appears in its form, the formal appearance of art is non-identical with its content, but it is medium and objectification of the mental content of art. Adorno argues that only in its spiritual/mental dimension art is the negation of empirical reality (Adorno 1970: 137). This dimension of art is permanently becoming because art is in need of permanent redefinition and (re-)interpretation. Art has a dynamic character. The Spirit of art is not transcendental, it is constituted and permanently re-constituted in social and individual interpretation processes. Artworks are a product of mental labour that is externalized and objectified by manual labour (the technological aspect of art). In order to be sensually perceivable, art must become alienated and externalized from mind, but in the process of reception the recipient produces mental ideas about material forms, he transforms art from matter into mind (Hegel 1832-45: 27f). Hence art as a process is based on labour that transforms mind into matter and matter into mind. Art has an inner and an outer dimension, the inner dimension (content, meaning) appears in an external form⁶. In order to be perceivable, ideas must take on a sensual form. Art achieves this by a production process that combines mental and manual labour. Nature exists in a sublated (aufgehoben) form in artworks, material objects are meaningfully combined in order to produce an emergent form, this requires human reflection, i.e. mental labour. The artwork mediates between nature and culture, it is neither pure material existence, nor pure interpretation, it is idea and matter/form, interpretation/meaning and object⁷.

The material form of art can be sensually perceived by human beings, this requires processes of human perception and cognition. But cognition of the formal moments is only a first step in forming an interpretation, a second step is the production of the Spirit of art by the observers of art, i.e. art requires mental reflection, comparison with other artworks and the history of art and society. On the one hand there are purely subjective interpretations of artworks by recipients, on the other hand there are also art discourses that discuss the possible meanings of artworks in relation to the history of art and society.

The artistic production process is an interpretation process of the world that results in objective aesthetic forms that embody aesthetic knowledge that represents ideas of the artist about the world as it is and as it could be that are not immediately accessible for the observers of art. Hence art requires permanent interpretations by observers/recipients, they form ideas about artworks that represent the materialization of the artist's ideas. Hence aesthetic practices include both the artistic production processes and interpretation practices. The latter take place both on an individual and a social level: On the one hand individual recipients consume art in museums or in mediated forms (books, mass media, pictures, Internet, etc.) and form interpretations of artworks, on the other hand communities of art critics discuss possible meanings of artworks. Hence the interpretation of art is both an individual and a social process.

⁶ „Dieser Auffassung nach haben wir also als die Elemente des Schönen ein Inneres, einen Inhalt, und ein Äußeres, welches jenen Inhalt bedeutet, charakterisiert; das Innere scheint im Äußeren und gibt durch dasselbe sich zu erkennen, indem das Äußere von sich hinweg auf das Innere hinweist“ (Hegel 1832-45: 37).

⁷ „[...] das Kunstwerk steht in der Mitte zwischen der unmittelbaren Sinnlichkeit und dem ideellen Gedanken. Es ist noch nicht reiner Gedanke, aber seiner Sinnlichkeit zum Trotz auch nicht mehr bloßes materielles Dasein, wie Steine, Pflanzen und organisches Leben, sondern das Sinnliche im Kunstwerk ist selbst ein ideelles, das aber, als nicht das Ideelle des Gedankens, zugleich als Ding noch äußerlich vorhanden ist“ (Hegel 1832.45: 60).

The self-organization of art as a system is based on a productive mutual relationship of art practices and art structures: Artworks and aesthetic institutions such as museums enable and constrain aesthetic practices. This is a process of top-down-emergence where aesthetic structures produce aesthetic practices. These aesthetic practices include production processes of artists (hence all artistic practice is based on older, prior artworks that influence the artist) and individual and social interpretation processes. The aesthetic practices of artists and observers of art produce and reproduce aesthetic structures, i.e. there are permanent processes of bottom-up-emergence where new artworks emerge and meanings are attached to existing artworks. An artwork that exists as a material form is a dynamical structure because it is permanently observed by human beings, i.e. different meanings are given to it. Hence the artwork has not only a material form, but also a distributed form because meaning is attached to it by different human beings. Hence artworks are meaningful structures, but this meaning is not fixed in the structure, it permanently changes and is re-constituted in observation processes. Art is based on a dialectic of subject and object, human subjects produce aesthetic structures, the latter produce subjective aesthetic practices: “An *objet d'art* creates a public that has artistic taste and is able to enjoy beauty – and the same can be said of any other product. Production accordingly produces not only an object for the subject, but also a subject for the object” (Marx 1857: 624).

Art is relatively open for interpretation, but art critics try to produce a certain form of objective meaning by discussing artworks within the context and history of art and society and identifying a number of possible interpretations. The dynamic of art as a system is on the one hand based on the permanent emergence of interpretations of artworks and on the other hand on the permanent emergence of new artworks. Artworks are immanent storages of history (Adorno 1970: 132), they are a product of societal mental labour. Artworks are complex storage mechanism of society, they don't like a history book describe a period of society directly as it is, but they indirectly are a manifestation of world-views and the ways of life of a historical social period. Museums are institutions that collect artworks and enable permanent interpretation processes. Due to the fact that artworks are aesthetic knowledge storage mechanism, one can say that museums are meta-storage mechanisms of knowledge because they store artworks that can be considered as aesthetic knowledge.

Rainer Zimmermann (1999) distinguishes ontologically between Nothingness (the impossible, what is not and cannot be), Non-Being (possibility) and Being (actuality). If something has become actual, then it must have been possible in the first place. There can be no *creatio ex nihilo*. The foundation of Being is not Nothingness, but Something: it is, what is not, but can be. It is possibility. This is in line with the thought of Schelling and Bloch who stressed Becoming instead of Being and understood philosophy also as speculation about what could be. Zimmermann also speaks of the necessity of a Transcendental Materialism that goes beyond the existing totality and takes Potentiality, Non-Being and Not-Yet-Being into account⁸. Art can deal with Nothingness, and it can also as a production process that creates beauty and deals with the Beautiful advance an image of a Not-Yet (Zimmermann 2000), i.e. Beauty in a social world that is dominated by the ugliness of exploitation, domination, and heteronomy. By portraying the Not-Yet art transcends capitalist society and anticipates a social world of beauty and happiness. Art promises that which is not or Not-Yet, it is the appearance of Possibilities of Being. Artworks as figures of Being produce images of Non-Being and Not-Yet-Being, they are the appearance of Non-Being and the Not-Yet in

⁸ „Dass aber die Kunstwerke da sind, deutet darauf, dass das Nichtseiende sein könnte. Die Wirklichkeit der Kunstwerke zeugt für die Möglichkeit des Möglichen“ (“That artworks exist is an indication that Non-Being could be. The reality of artworks is evidence of the possibility of the Possible”) (Adorno 1970: 200, cf. also p. 347).

existence. Ernst Bloch (1959) has stressed the utopian function of art, art would be able to construct actually possible landscapes of desire (Wunschlandschaften), it would be the shining-forth (Vorschein) of possible futures and happiness (Bloch 1959: 242-250, 929-981). Aesthetical appearance (Schein) would not simply be illusion if it is a shining-forth (Vorschein) of possibilities, in such a case it would be a cry for perfection of society, a laboratory of possibilities that can only be realized by society, and a foreshadow of future freedom (Bloch 1959: 247-250)⁹. Art is the sensually perceivable foreshadow and shining-forth of freedom in an unfree world. Herbert Marcuse argues that art represents Non-Being as Being (Marcuse 2000: 81). Wassily Kandinsky in his Idealistic philosophy of art stressed that art should be oriented on the future by saying that “art, which has no power for the future, which is only a child of the age and cannot become a mother of the future, is a barren art” (Kandinsky 1912: 30).

The different types of art depend on the media and systems that they make use of. Literature and poetry are based on the eyes and the mouth, on rhythmic sounds, language, and fiction. Music is based on the ears and the sounds produced by instruments and the mouth, i.e. on audibility (cf. Hegel 1832-45: 121f). Painting and the visual arts are based on the eyes and seeing (visuality) (cf. Hegel 1832-45: 120f). Painting and theatre are both mainly based on vision/visuality. But the specific character of theatre as a performing art is based on fictive social actions that make use of vision (eyes, seeing), the ears (hearing), the mouth and language (speaking). Music, performing arts such as theatre, literature, and art films have the duration of time at their disposal, they are art forms that make use of the unfolding in time. They are more temporally processual than paintings and the visual arts that “can present to the spectator the whole content of its message at one moment” (Kandinsky 1912: 59).

2.2. Art and Communication

Art is a communication system, i.e. a system of the production and reception of knowledge. By creating the artwork as a medium of communication the artist communicates with himself in a process of auto-communication. He expresses his self in the artwork and the artwork in turn shapes his self. This self is an expression of the social structures of feeling – to use a term coined by Raymond Williams (1961, 1977) – of a period, i.e. the subjective knowledge of the artists that he expresses in the artwork is socially coined. By communicating with himself in the artistic production process via the artwork as a medium the artist as a social actor can express and change his state of mind and feeling.

Artworks are an asynchronous medium of communication that can transcend spatial, temporal and historical borders. When a recipient takes a look at an artwork, the artist communicates with the recipient, hence art transcends the individual existence of the artists and the historical social time he lived in. Concerts, readings, and theatre performances, i.e. manifestations of music, literature, and theatre, are social events that create a direct dialogue between artist and audience. Whereas frequently communication in art is an invisible, indirect process, art events are direct forms of communication where artist and audience are physically spatially and temporally co-present. Art is a system that transcends co-presence and hence is based on a

⁹ „Künstlerischer Schein ist überall dort nicht nur bloßer Schein, sondern eine in Bilder eingehüllte, nur in Bildern bezeichnbare Bedeutung von Weitergetriebenem, wo die Exaggerierung und Ausfabelung einen im Bewegt-Vorhandenen selber umgehenden und bedeutenden Vor-Schein von Wirklichem darstellen, einen gerade ästhetisch-immanent spezifisch darstellbaren. [...] Kunst ist Laboratorium und ebenso ein Fest ausgeführter Möglichkeiten, mitsamt den durcherfahrenen Alternativen darin, wobei die Ausführung wie das Resultat in der Weise des fundierten Scheins geschehen, nämlich des welthaft vollendeten Vor-Scheinens. [...] Und überall dort, wo Kunst sich nicht zur Illusion verspielt, ist Schönheit, gar Erhabenheit dasjenige, was eine Ahnung künftiger Freiheit vermittelt“ (Bloch 1959: 247+249f).

spatio-temporal difference and disembedding of artist and audience, the sociality of art frequently is an indirect one, art events and discussions form a level of direct communication.

Artworks store knowledge about past experiences and historical periods, they are an aesthetical knowledge storage mechanism. Art does include the intentions, skills and knowledge of the artists and a sometimes diffuse and vague knowledge about a social period, but it also includes the recipient as a meaning-producing human being. Art as a communication system is never finished, it has an open character that is finished every moment when a recipient interprets an artwork. Artworks not always have an asynchronous character where producer and consumer are not co-present, but distanced in time-space, there are also synchronous forms of art where production and consumption take place at the same time at the same place (e.g. theatre performances, artistic performances). With the help of technological media (picture, video, audio, multimedia) synchronous artworks can be technologically reproduced and hence stored and conserved. Modern artforms such as happenings require a strong element of communication in order to exist, they are an open endeavour that require direct social intervention.

Art as a communicative process includes the objectification, i.e. encoding, of meaning by the artist and the decoding of meaning by the recipients. Hence art is a communicative process of encoding and decoding of meanings that aesthetically signify certain aspects of Being, Not-Yet-Being, or Nothingness.

In Peircian terms art is the attempted communication of meanings. There is not one single meaning of cultural objects, meaning is contested and formed in social processes and in multidimensional class struggles. Hence meanings are relatively open, there can be different parallel or opposing/conflicting interpretations of cultural artefacts. Meanings are social and historical, they are determined by the social context of the production and use of sign systems, they change along with the historical and social change of society. Hence different meanings can be assigned to an artwork by different individuals and groups in different historical periods. If discourse is considered language in social use and a terrain of social struggle, then culture is “the constant circulation and recirculation of discursive currents, [...] [the] constant process of discursive circulation, recirculation, and countercirculation, [...] the generation and circulation of meanings” (Fiske 1999: 7f+121). The struggle of alternative or opposing meanings in the cultural realm of modern society is a double movement, a dialectic of containment and resistance (Hall 1981), homogenization and difference (Fiske 1987). Art like all types of culture is a contested social practice that constitutes symbolic struggles about the meaning of artworks. Meaning is not immanent in a produced form, but it is produced in the constantly changing cultural field of force of the practical relations of cultural power and domination. Symbolic cultural systems are not determined by their production process, both production and use are of importance and determining their significance. Meaning is not imposed, but it is multidimensionally produced in contested social struggles, hence signification is not a consumption process, but itself an active production process. “Because the production of meaning/pleasure occurs in the consumption as well as the production of the cultural commodity the notion of production takes on a new dimension that delegates it away from the owners of capital“ (Fiske 1987).

Art is a communication system that has an open character in the sense that there are no fixed readings and correct interpretations of artworks. Hence there is no absolute identity between encoded and decoded meaning. This non-identity of communication is characteristic for all communication processes in all subsystems of society. The difference between communication in the arts and other forms of communication is that the latter aim at creating

or approaching an identity between encoding and decoding, whereas in the arts the non-identity of encoded and decoded meaning is a constitutive feature of the art process itself. By reconstructing the living conditions of the artists and the social sphere he lived in, one can speculate about his intentions and subjective meanings. Art critics try to impose dominant readings of artworks by reconstructing the context of production of an artwork. Art is creative not only in the sense that it is an expression of the creativity of the artist, but also in the sense that the recipient needs to accomplish a mental production process in order to produce an interpretation of an artwork, i.e. the consumption process of art is a production process of meaning. Hence the reception of art requires imagination and fantasy, i.e. creative mental labour.

Stuart Hall (1999) has pointed out that a certain degree of determinism in the form of hegemonic meaning as well as a certain degree of indeterminism in the form of negotiated meaning and oppositional meaning is present in the cultural reception and meaning-production process. Dominant meaning means that “there exists a pattern of ‘preferred readings’; and these both have the institutional/political/ideological order imprinted in them and have themselves become institutionalised” (Hall 1999: 513). Negotiated meaning is decoding that “contains a mixture of adaptive and oppositional elements” (ibid.: 516), oppositional meaning means “to decode the message in a globally contrary way, [...] within some alternative framework of reference” (ibid.: 517). The main achievement of Hall is that he has shown that in the communication process there is no necessary correspondence between encoded and decoded meaning. This means that there are certain dominant readings of artworks that are put forward by the history of reception of that work, but there are also alternative and negotiated interpretations that reflect the social experiences and feelings of groups and individuals at certain periods of time in society. An aspect of the freedom of art is that it allows the human being to creatively produce interpretations of the artwork that reflect his own individual history of experiences in society. Art production and consumption is not guided by strict rules, but allows a certain degree of mental, creative and interpretative freedom. This freedom is to a certain extent nurtured by permanent “misinterpretations”, there are no correct and incorrect interpretations of artworks, art is a realm of social existence that is guided by the free play of open interpretations. Art critics try to produce an objectivity of the meaning of art by reconstructing the context of production and reception, but this objectivity can’t be one that implies true and false interpretations, only one that helps the recipients in finding meanings, hence art critics guide and simplify, but don’t objectively strictly determine the reception process.

That artworks are different from societal reality and are not a mechanical reflection of society constitutes dynamic processes: artworks are not, they are permanently Becoming, they permanently produce non-identity. This dynamic production of non-identity requires permanent social interpretation processes, hence the identity of art as a social system must permanently be reproduced by producing the non-identity of artworks in social interpretation processes. The difference of art and society is permanently reproduced by art participating in society and by the reproduction of art as a social system where interpretation takes place.

Artworks are in need of permanent interpretations, meaning-production is an essential operation in art. Interpretation requires reflection by critics and observers. Critics judge and reflect about artworks in relationship to both the history of art and the societal context of art. Art critique is not homogenous, it is a contested social process, a struggle of different possible interpretations. This critical discourse about art produces objectivity and truth, the truth of artworks derives not from their form or their content, but from social interpretation processes that produce artistic meanings. The truth of artworks derives itself from reflective

communication about art. These interpretation processes reflect dominant and oppositional meanings that are characteristic for a society, hence artistic meaning is an expression of societal values, struggles about the definition of values, and value-conflicts. The truth of artworks can't be immediately identified, there is a difference between truth and intention in artworks, artistic truth like scientific truth requires social processes, critical reflective discourses, i.e. philosophical thinking about art. Truth in art is based on critique and sociality. Another dimension that artistic truth requires is that it goes beyond facticity by strengthening imagination and giving ideas of that which could be. Art is based on imagination processes of both the artist and the audience¹⁰.

2.3. Art and Co-operation

Traditionally art has been mainly based on cognition and communication, i.e. the artist creates ideas that he objectifies as material forms and observers observe artworks and form meanings of artworks, i.e. there is an indirect communication process between the artist and the audience. Modern art forms such as happenings and art in the information society, i.e. art that makes use of computer-mediated communication, have enabled a more direct form of social communication and of co-operation, where the audience becomes a direct part of the artwork and co-produces it. Hence art in the information society has developed into a full process of cognition, communication, and co-operation.

Art is connected to the development of the productive forces. Technological and aesthetical development are structurally coupled in such a way that new organizational and technological features of society can (and frequently indeed do) influence the development of art. The computer and the Internet as co-operative technologies enable the advancement of the co-operative character of art. Hence technology and art are connected on the one hand, but they are also different because technology is purposeful in the sense that it is a means that is used by humans in order to transform nature in such a way that it functions according to human needs, interests, and goals, whereas art is a negation of existing interests and purposes. Technology is purposeful, whereas art negates the purposes of modern society. This situation of identity and difference of technology and art enables the development of new forms of art that is based on new technologies.

Co-operation in a broad sense is a social process where human actors jointly produce a new quality of a system (Fuchs 2003c). Traditional art has more been a process of cognition and communication than of co-operation. Both the artist and the recipient cognitively produce meaning of an artwork (the artist also produces the material form), this establishes an indirect communication process between them that transcends time and space. Exceptions are theatre and art films where co-operation of human actors takes place on stage/screen. Since the 1960s happenings, fluxus, and performance art have introduced human co-operation in public places as a new social quality of art. These movements have increased public participation in art and have extended art to the public space, they have considered art as social action. With the rise of the Internet, art gains a new dimension of co-operation.

Some important characteristics of the Internet are:

- Interactivity: Users can change the state of Internet applications by entering commands via interfaces and by using input devices.

¹⁰ „Endlich ist die Quelle der Kunstwerke die freie Tätigkeit der Phantasie, welche in ihren Einbildungen selbst freier als die Natur ist“ (Hegel 1832-45: 18).

- **Multimedia:** Based on digitization the Internet combines text, sound, images, animation, and video in one medium that integrates all senses.
- **Hypertextuality:** The World Wide Web as one part of the Internet is based on a network of interlinked texts, each node represents a digital content that can contain links to other nodes that can be followed by the user with the help of a browser software that displays Web pages.
- **Globalized communication:** The Internet advances the spatio-temporal disembedding of social relationships and communication
- **Many-to-many-communication:** Due to the decentralized structure of the Internet, each receiver/consumer of information is a potential sender/producer of information.
- **Co-operative production:** In comparison to traditional mass media such as telegraph, telephone, radio, television, books, or newspapers, the Internet is not just a communication medium, but also a system that enables co-operative working processes. With the help of the Internet human beings can form social system, share information, and they can jointly produce digital content without spatio-temporal co-presence (examples are open source projects, open theory, wikis)
- **Decontextualization:** In the Internet the context of digital information (authorship, time and place of production, the physical location of the server that stores the digital content, etc.) gets lost, Web information frequently is an emergent whole that is made up of many decontextualized pieces of information.
- **Derealization:** The Internet blurs the boundaries between reality and fiction, it creates a virtual reality where fictive and real information become intermixed.

With the introduction of Virtual Art, Digital Art, or Web Art these characteristics of the Internet have changed the form of modern art (for a comprehensive overview of these developments cf. Lovejoy 2004).

The Internet questions traditional forms of representation that consider an artwork as an unique work that is authentic and exists only once. The “aura” of artworks has first been questioned by the invention of photography (or maybe even earlier by the printing press). Later Andy Warhol subverted the difference between original and copy with his factory concept that was based on the industrial mass (re)production of artworks. Pop Art posed questions such as: What’s the difference between a copy and an original? When does a copy become an original? How can industrial technologies be used in art? How does art define its relationship to the categories individuality and mass? In Digital Art and Web Art the artwork has no fixed place, it is dynamically produced and floats in cyberspace. Whereas traditional reproduction media allowed the copying of artworks, the Internet on the one hand allows the digital reproduction of artworks in such a way that images of artworks can be globally accessed, indexed, and searched (this poses new opportunities and risks for museums that have been discussed with the help of concepts such as the digital museum or the virtual museum), and on the other hand it allows the dynamic existence of artworks in cyberspace that are never finished, permanently change their form by database inputs and inputs generated interactively by users that become co-producers. Hence co-operation becomes a central aspect of Web Art.

Web Art is an emerging new art style, representatives include e.g. Adaweb, Roy Ascott, Giselle Beiguelman, Maurice Benayoun, David Blair, Douglas Davis, Wayne Dunkley, Mary Flanagan, Kit Galloway, Alex Galloway, Emily Hartzell, Audreia Harvey, Lisa Jevbratt, Eduardo Kac, Yael Kanarek, John Klima, Andreja Kuluncic, Tina LaPorta, Greg Lock, Antonio Muntadas, Mark Napier, Robert Nideffer, Lorie Novak, Josh On, W. Bradford Paley, Scott Paterson, Nancy Paterson, Sherrie Rabinowitz, Ben Rubin, Paul Sermon, Nina Sobell,

Helen Thorington, Victoria Vesna, Marek Walczak, Martin Wattenberg, Maciej Wisniewski, Adrienne Wortzel, Marina Zurkow.

Traditionally artworks have been considered as unique objects that are only accessible for an elite and are different from mass culture and popular audiences. The latter two have often been associated with a commercial culture that is different from high culture. Internet Art extends audience participation and opens up a co-operative dimension of art where consumers become co-operative producers of art. Does this development from elitist art to an art that uses a mass medium threaten the autonomy of art? We don't think that this is automatically the case because the autonomy of art doesn't derive itself from an elitist character of art that limits participation to a few educated people, the autonomy of art derives itself rather from the functionless character of art in society that negates the logic of commodities. Hence audience participation via the Internet doesn't destroy the autonomy of art insofar as Web artworks have a functionless form that differs from the commodity logic and from instrumental rationality. The Internet is both a sphere of commerce and a sphere of the free sharing of information. The second tendency can benefit art by giving it a potentially democratic character that is based on audience participation and the idea of the consumer as producer, but for doing so Web art must remain a distance from the first tendency.

Co-operative Web art is different from traditional visual art because it doesn't exist as a fixed form in a fixed place, it is a dynamic process, it re-emerges permanently in different forms, i.e. it changes its form, and this change is based on user interactions and co-operative processes where consumers of art become co-producers of art. An artwork is generally never finished, it is open and requires (re)interpretations. Hence the computer and interactive media seem to be ideal tools that can extend the openness of art and produce a new quality of artistic co-operation. The Web artist is no longer a pure creator of uniqueness, he creates systems that allow the dynamic production and re-emergence of art by the activity of prosumers (producer+consumer). In traditional art the consumer could only produce or co-produce an ideational content of art, now he can also (co-)produce artistic forms. The viewer becomes the author, the consumer the producer. The computer as a co-operative medium allows the emergence of co-operative forms of art.

A number of artists such as Toni Dove, Perry Hoberman, Brenda Laurel, Jeffrey Shaw have experimented with Virtual Reality (VR) systems as forms of art. Humans are fully immersed into an artificial space where they can change the state of the application by making inputs by body movements that are measured by devices such as a data glove or a data suite. The senses are shut off from outside reality, there is an immediate experience of the visualization of the dynamic changes of the system with the help of a head-mounted display. With VR the border between art and computer game seems to collapse. Are all VR applications automatically artworks? They certainly are not because artworks have a certain degree of autonomy from society. Hence a VR application that serves dominant interests (such as the VR environment of a warplane) isn't an artwork. VR art is only art insofar as it has a functionless and complex, non-identical character. Web Art as a functionless form of usage of the Internet that requires co-creation and co-operation challenges the commercial model of the Internet and puts forward the idea of a sphere of participatory communication and grassroots democracy.

Web Art combines information from different sources, it is based on multi-user inputs that stem from different contexts and are transmitted and integrated into the artwork in real time, art becomes an interactive, participatory, and co-operative process where authorship is shared. Web Art makes use of the World Wide Web in order to set in motion an interactive dynamic and an evolving artwork that changes itself by audience participation. Web Art engages

human beings as contributors, it fosters agency, and produces a form of collectively shared and produced artistic knowledge, it is a form of Collective Intelligence (to use a term coined by Pierre Lévy, cf. Lévy 1997).

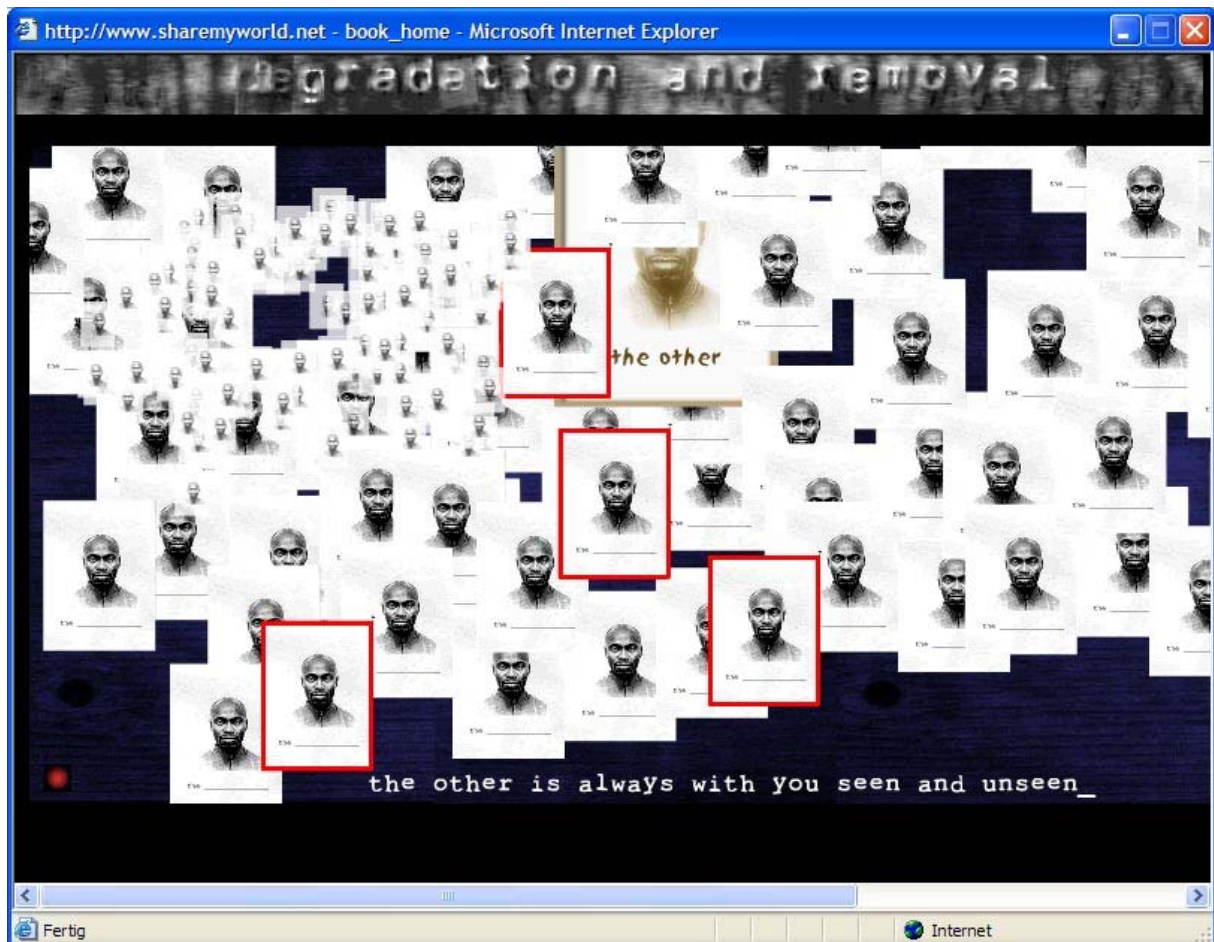


Fig. 1: Wayne Dunkley “The Degradation and Removal of the/a Black Male”
(<http://sharemyworld.net>)

Wayne Dunkley’s “The Degradation and Removal of the/a Black Male” is a Web artwork that allows users to input stories about acts of racism that occurred to them. The artwork is dynamically evolving, it combines users’ stories with Dunkley’s pictures and stories and aims at building an online community of storytelling.



Fig. 2: Mark Napier, “Riot” (<http://potatoland.org/riot>)

Mark Napier’s “Riot” is a Web artwork that combines interactivity, Web browsing functions, and the decontextualization of information characteristic for the Internet. It works like a normal Web browser software, the user can enter URLs. However, the software displays a mixture of elements taken from the history of visited webpages. Hence it builds on decontextualization and the disruption of territorial boundaries. The artwork’s form depends on the user’s input and the current state of the webpages, it combines user interaction, decontextualization, and emergent re-embedding of decontextualized pieces of information in order to comment on the power of images and logos and the distributed nature of information in the information society.

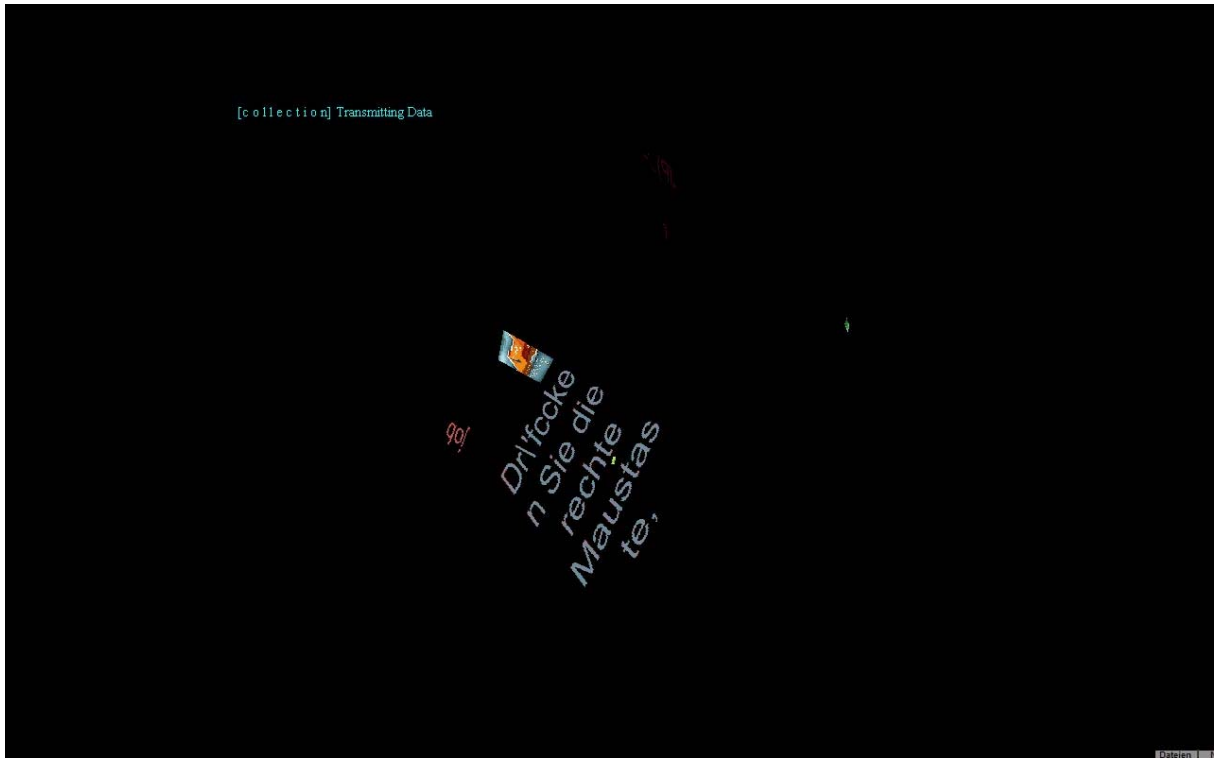


Fig. 3: Mary Flanagan, “Collection” (<http://www.maryflanagan.com/collection.htm>)

Mary Flanagan’s “Collection” is a networked computer application that gathers digital data from various users’ computers, transmits them, and collects them on a server. Such elements are dynamically combined and visualized. Flanagan shows that Web Art has a dynamic and collective character and critically comments on the public character of private matters that is advanced by computer-supported forms of surveillance. “Ineffable” by Mary Flanagan and Andrew Gerngross collects chronological information, time between emails, length of correspondence, and most importantly, the kinds of phonetic sounds used by a correspondent in his or her writing and generates a sonification and visualization of this content. The visualization and sonification of portions from emails touches on the role of language in social relationships and computer-mediated communication.

Warren Sack’s “Conversation Map” system analyzes the content and the relationships between messages submitted in Internet communication and then uses the results of the analysis to create a graphical interface. With the graphical interface, a participant can see the social and semantic relationships that have emerged over the course of the discussion. The Conversation Map system computes and then graphs out who is "talking" to whom, what they are "talking" about, and the central terms and possible metaphors of the conversation.

Artworks are individual expressions of creativity, but they are not completely different. Artworks that share certain assumptions about their form or content and hence share a certain generality and universality form a distinct style of art. Artistic style is an abstraction of concrete artworks in such a way that similar aspects are subsumed.

Art requires novelty. The introduction of novelty into the art system creates discontinuities where dominant styles are questioned. Where does this novelty come from? Novelty in art stems from the questioning of dominant styles by artists who want to establish themselves by introducing innovative ideas and forms that produce a difference in the art system. The history of art is based on dynamic development processes. In certain phases of instability, new styles that question old ones are introduced. The development of art is based on contested relationships between dominant and non-dominant styles, once new styles are introduced they don't necessarily become dominant, but they question the dominance of other styles. Art is dynamic in the sense that the system demands of itself that it creates surprise and amazement. Hence one can expect that as soon as a style becomes dominant and institutionalized, artists might perceive a vanishing of the novelty and surprise factor and will demand from themselves that they create novel forms that advance the surprise and amazement factor of art. The emergence of new styles creates a difference in the system that questions those general qualities that artworks of a certain style have in common and try to introduce forms that are opposed to these qualities and should be perceived as being innovative. Hence new styles introduce a difference between new and old, they label dominant styles as outdated and old in order to produce a change in artistic hegemony. Changes in artistic hegemony are changes in the artistic materials, techniques, topics, etc., i.e. they concern both form and content of art. Art is not imitation, but invention, imitation doesn't create novelty, whereas invention is an expression of creativity that creates novelty. New artists introduce discontinuity, non-identity, disorder, and difference into the art system.

Pierre Bourdieu (1999) argues that art in modern society is a field with relative autonomy that is shaped by the general capitalist logic of accumulation. Artists would compete for reputation and prestige, hence there would be competition for the accumulation of artistic capital. These struggles would have both a material and a symbolic dimension. Avantgarde artists would be their own market, they would abominate the logic of money capital and would consider the economy as being alien to artistic production. Commercial artists would produce for an economic market and aim at the accumulation of money capital by producing art for a mass audience. Commercial artists would frequently also accumulate symbolic profits by being recognized by society as important artists, they try to convert material profit into symbolic artistic profit. There would be an antagonism between the autonomous and experimental avantgarde art and commercial art in all types of art. The first would aim primarily at symbolic profit (reputation), the second at economic profit. This antagonism could also be described as one between pure production and mass production, these would be two subfields of the artistic field that constitute principles of internal and external hierarchization of the art system. Avantgarde artists would consider economic capital as heteronomous and alien to art, they would try to accumulate artistic capital by pure artistic performance. Commercial artists would try to convert economic capital that stems from the selling of art as a commodity into artistic capital. Newcomers in the art system would aim at increasing their reputation and hence would question the dominant artists and their works, label themselves as new, original, innovative and their opponents as outdated, old, etc. Labels such as names of artistic schools and groups (Pop Art, Minimal Art, Concept Art, Fluxus, Nouveau Realisme, etc.) function as symbolic capital and signs in artistic struggles that allow classification and produce

distinctions that distinguish certain styles from others. Artistic struggles would be struggles of definition by artists and audiences that try to define “true art”.

Bourdieu shows that art in modern society is based on a logic of accumulation of artistic capital (reputation, prestige) and on a logic of distinction that results in artistic struggles. This logic shapes the development of art. If certain artists, schools of artists or representatives of a certain style are able to accumulate artistic capital (and to transform this symbolic capital into economic capital), they will have a hegemonic position that will be questioned by others who try to introduce novelty. Hegemonic artists can more easily convert artistic capital into economic capital because they have a reputation that attracts a certain audience. Hegemonic artists will try to defend their position by making use of their accumulated capital, hence artistic struggles whose outcomes are not determined and are conditioned by external economic, political, and cultural influences will unfold. Such artistic struggles are going on all the time in the art system, they are a source of novelty. Hence continuity in the art system produces discontinuity, the emergence of a dominant style as a certain form of continuity of specific forms and contents that share some general qualities produces novelty that questions the accumulation of artistic capital by certain styles. Bourdieu shows also that the permanent emergence of new symbolic forms in the art system is based on immanent artistic struggles and an internal logic of the art system. However, the outcome of artistic struggles is also conditioned and influenced by external forces such as political power, media presence, public presence, and money capital. Hence artistic struggles in modern society are both influenced by internal and external forces. Bourdieu (1999) argues that artistic revolutions are frequently most successful when there is both an internal influence by the emergence of a new form of art (avantgarde) that questions dominant styles and external influences such as political transformations, revolutionary crises, or the emergence of new consumer groups.

Formulated in the language of system theory we can say that artistic struggles for the accumulation of reputation and prestige that function by introducing novelty and difference into the art system that distinguish themselves from established artistic forms create disorder and discontinuity in the art system. Such disorder questions dominant forms and styles, artistic struggle as a form that creates difference sooner or later will result in the emergence of a new paradigm and hence in a change of stylistic paradigms, i.e. new order is created in the sense that there is a change in hegemony, new dominant styles can establish themselves, will again be questioned, and result in new struggles. Hence art is a dynamic process where novelty is introduced by symbolic struggles. This is a dialectical development process in the sense that new styles sublate old styles, they on the one hand have new qualities, but on the other hand they also carry the whole history of art with them. Each artwork is based on the whole history of art that precedes it, marks of earlier periods, styles, and influences of art can frequently be found in pieces of art. Hence the emergence of a new style is a sublation of old styles, it eliminates and preserves old styles. E.g. Pluralism as an important style of art that has shaped art at the end of the 20th century combines different styles and techniques from the history of art in order to produce emergent wholes.

Radical social changes can bring about changes in art and artistic styles, but they don't determine these changes. Changes in styles can be caused by the immanent laws of development of art and/or by social changes stemming from the outside of the art system. Art and society are structurally coupled in complex, non-linear ways, there are interactions between those system, but no determining relationships.

4. Art, Society, and Autonomy

The problem of the autonomy of art concerns the question of the relationship of art and society, i.e. the relationship of art to other social systems (such as polity, economy, technology, etc.). There are four possible ways of relating art and society: reductionism, projectionism, dualism, and dialectics.

Reductionist approaches argue that certain social systems determine form and content of art, i.e. art is reduced to a certain part or state of society. In such approaches art is e.g. considered as a mechanical reflection of the state of the economy, i.e. the productive forces and the relationships of production, or of the state of the political system. E.g. Georg Lukács (1954) argues that reality exists objectively and independently of consciousness, cognition would be a reflection of reality. Philosophy would have to be connected to human practice, hence philosophy and also a philosophy of art and art itself would have to understand objectivity in the sense of partisanship. Art would have to be a true reflection of the totality of reality, it would have to give a picture of reality where the opposition between essence and appearance of reality is sublated in a spontaneous unity, each artwork would have to be a closed universe that advances a more complete and more lively reflection of reality than the recipients have, it would have to seize the shiftiness and inexhaustibility of reality. For doing so art wouldn't have to portray individual persons and situations, but typical characters under typical conditions. Art would have to convey a rich expression of the experiences of life, for doing so it would require a propaganda character (Lukács 1954: 277) and would have to educate the masses. Lukács agrees with Stalin that the artist would have to be an "engineer of the soul". Lukács uses terms that stem from Social Darwinism in order to describe art that doesn't correspond to the dogma of Socialist Realism that art must portray history, life, and ideas of the working class, e.g. he describes 'art pour l'art' as "parasitic" because it would detach art from life, he talks about hostile ideologies, struggle for annihilation, and liquidation. Art would have to be connected to concrete practice and would have to give a true picture of practice and society.

Whether art glorifies capitalism or Stalinism doesn't make a difference for art itself because in both cases it becomes an ideology, it destroys its autonomous distance from society. Art that is propaganda in any case loses its autonomy, it becomes a mechanical reflection of society. Lukács reduces the function of art to producing realistic pictures of life and interests of the working class. Socialist Realism as the ideology of art under Stalinism had a very narrow concept of art, it limited art to realistic portraits of heroes of the Soviet Union, of revolution, and the life of peasants and the working class. It is an ideology that deprives art of phantasy and transforms it into a totalitarian reflection of dominant interests. The fact that Lukács agrees with Stalin that the artist should be an engineer of the soul shows that he shares the view that art shall manipulate. The mechanistic and technological diction that this phrase uses (engineering...) shows that "Socialist Realism" aims at mind control and instrumental reason. Socialist Realism used the hypothesis of the discontinuity between capitalism and "actually existing Socialism" in order to argue that art as such is progressive in a Socialist society. Developments in art are reduced to societal developments, it is claimed that society is progressive and that hence art must also be progressive. Socialist Realism reduced the plurality of art styles, it declared Realism as the only true style of art, all other styles of art would be regressive.

Theodor W. Adorno (1958) argues that in the philosophy of Socialist Realism philosophy becomes a means for domination, that Lukács' arguments are a form of vulgar and mechanical materialism, that they are undialectical and dogmatic. Lukács would glorify a society where injustice exists although it claims that it has been abolished. The philosophy of Socialist Realism would be ideological because it wouldn't see that art must maintain a

difference from reality in order to be true and autonomous. Lukács would simply repeat the catechism of Stalinism and consider knowledge as a mechanical mirror image of reality. Art as propaganda would like all ideology have the function in Stalinism to convince the people that society is progressive although it is still heteronomous and repressive. Herbert Marcuse (1964: 129-135) notes that Soviet Realism would accept the existing societal reality as final artistic content and wouldn't stylistically or essentially transcend this reality. Soviet Realism would assume that a state of society is reached where art couldn't give an impression of an ideal state of society because such an ideal would have already been reached. Hence Soviet art would have to "reflect" Soviet reality. The Soviet regime would eliminate the transcendence of art, Soviet Realism would be an instrument of societal control. Soviet Art would be a romantic and realistic glorification of Soviet life, its refusal of dissonance, abstraction and its focus on harmony would resembles Plato's Idealistic dictum that only simple and harmonic forms are beautiful,

The dogmas of Fascist Realism in National Socialism reduced art to a form of ideology and propaganda that glorifies Hitler and the National Socialist regime. It produced the myth of a new society, its topics were homeland, family, hard work, the countryside, warfare, and German heroes. Art was subordinated to and controlled by the Nazi state. Modernism was eliminated in art and considered as "degraded art" (Entartete Kunst). By considering art as propaganda, it was reduced to society and lost its autonomy. André Breton and Diego Rivera (1938) note that the regime of Hitler "has reduced those who still consent to take up pen or brush to the status of domestic servants of the regime". The autonomy of art is a feature that transcends that which exists, in totalitarian countries this surplus of art is eliminated, art is determined by the existing totalitarian relationships of power.

Friedrich W.J. Schelling's (1800) aesthetic philosophy shows that the artist produces in his artwork things and possible interpretations that he doesn't himself fully consciously realize. The artwork is a representation of infinity that can't be developed by finite reason. Each true artwork can hence be infinitely interpreted because it represents an infinity of intentions. This doesn't mean that interpretations of an artwork must be diffuse and irrational. It rather means that there is an infinite realm of unintendedness that is anyhow set. It contains meanings that have not been consciously produced by the artist. In an untrue artwork, i.e. an artwork that for Schelling merely represents hypocrisy, the intentions and rules are superficial. They are not infinite, but finite. The untrue artwork is hence an imprint of the fully conscious intentions of the artist. It can be an object of reflexion, but not one of outlooks because the latter's characteristics are immersion and that it rests on infinity. Each true artwork distinguishes itself from an untrue one by being an absolutely free aesthetical product. For Schelling the artist is impelled to produce the artwork by a contradiction, but this contradiction is an inner one. Untrue artistic production is caused by contradictions that stem from outside of the producer. Examples of such outside influences that destroy the autonomy of art are e.g. art in totalitarian systems (Stalinist Realism, Nazi art, etc.) or commercial art and art markets. Hence such artworks serve exterior purposes. But the independence from outside purposes is the sacredness and immaculateness of art (Schelling 1800: 293)¹¹. This autonomy goes as far as one can say that art is unrelated to realms of pure sensual pleasure, instrumentality, and morality. Schelling's concept of the infinity of true artworks that constitutes an immanent logic that is independent from outside purposes seems to be closely related to Hegelian concepts of the autonomy of art as they can e.g. be found in the works of Adorno and Marcuse.

¹¹ „Heiligkeit und Reinheit der Kunst“(Schelling 1800: 293).

Wassily Kandinsky's concept of Abstract art (as outlined philosophically in his writing *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, Kandinsky 1912) stresses the possibility of an abstract and non-representational character of art. Concerning artistic aspects Kandinsky opposed realism and hence the abstraction from reality characteristic for this form of art introduced a new stylistic paradigm. Philosophically Abstract art for Kandinsky represents a "spiritual revolution" (Kandinsky 1912) against Materialism, abstraction for Kandinsky stands for Spirit. The objects that Abstract art represents would be non-material spiritual entities, for Kandinsky the principle of Abstract painting functions as a dissolution of matter and creation of a spiritual inner nature. Abstract art would represent the inner spiritual world, not an outer reality. Although Kandinsky's Idealistic conception of art doesn't see that art is always material in the sense that artworks have a material form, that its spiritual content is a complex transposition of social reality (i.e. social matter), and that art affects society just like society affects art, the importance of his approach lies in the fact that he has shown that art is not a simple mechanical portrayal of nature or society, but that it abstracts from society and nature by going beyond that which exists and giving people an idea of Beauty in a destructive world that is imprinted by the ugliness of exploitation and the results that the latter manifests. Kandinsky's Abstractionism reminds us of the fact that art is only critical if it is independent from the logic of domination and creates laws and realities in itself and for itself. Abstractionism is a substantiation of the autonomous character of art and hence it is not surprising that totalitarian regimes have opposed this style of art.

Projective approaches see art as a determining factor of society, they consider it as an especially important system that determines the function, structures, and practices of other social system. Art is considered as a system that represents absolute values that transcend society. Traditional objective theories of art (as e.g. the ones of Baumgarten and Leibniz) have seen art as the Ideal of Beauty that represents divinity and hence is autonomous in the sense that Beauty is an endless, transcendental, absolute value that is independent of human values, everyday life, human practice, and human interests. Art here is considered as the highest or one of the highest forms of the existence of ideas, i.e. it is considered as a system that has an upper position in a hierarchy of social system. Art is considered as a quasi-religious system that rises above human beings and their practices.

Dualistic approaches consider society as functionally differentiated, i.e. they argue that each subsystem of society has its own logic and laws of functioning and hence is an autonomous system. Hence art would be functionally autonomous. In Niklas Luhmann's (1995) dualistic approach art is an operationally closed system and operatively autonomous, there would be no other system in society that does what art does¹². Each system in society would fulfil an unique function. The function of art in modern society would be that it includes perception into communication and that it construct a fictive/imaginary reality that can be observed (Luhmann 1995, chapter 4, pp. 215ff). For Luhmann each subsystem of modern society deals with a specific function and doesn't have any functions that go beyond its own role. Each system would be operationally autonomous. Artworks would program themselves, they would give themselves their form, i.e. they decide what is part of them, what is possible in the artwork, and what remains excluded. For Luhmann the evolution of art is fully determined by its own logic, there would be no external influences.

Such a dualistic approach doesn't recognize that art does play a critical and utopian role in society and that art is indirectly political insofar as it provides a sphere that distances itself from the immediate political and economic relationships. For Luhmann the question of

¹² „Die moderne Kunst ist in einem operativen Sinne autonom. Niemand sonst macht das, was sie macht“ (Luhmann 1995: 218).

autonomy is one of operational functions, not one that sees art as a specific system that criticizes domination by its mere existence. Luhmann simply gives a description of modern society as it is, he is not interested in criticizing society, he sees that which is as the best possible order that should be maintained and hence he simply tries to describe art as a system that shows how reality is (Luhmann 1995: 499), not as it could be. For Luhmann the autonomy of the art system is not different from the autonomy of other systems, autonomy is not considered as the nature of art in modern society, but as a characteristic of all systems in modern society. Autonomy is a neutral concept for Luhmann, he deprives it of all its critical potential. Whereas for Adorno the autonomy of art is an autonomy from society within capitalist society, for Luhmann the autonomy of art is only a functional autonomy within society that is characteristic for all subsystems of modern society.

A satisfactory solution of the problem of the autonomy of art is given by dialectical approaches that consider art as a social subsystem of society that interacts with other subsystems and has a certain relative autonomy. Such dialectical relationships between art and society have e.g. been described by Theodor W. Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, and Pierre Bourdieu.

Adorno argues that art goes beyond empirical reality and produces a world that is opposed to empirical reality (Adorno 1970: 10). Art would be a 2nd order existence because it is different from empirical reality (14), the critical element of art would be its immanence (386). Art as beautiful semblance would on the one hand deceive humans if they identify with art, but on the other hand it would have a social function of enlightenment in so far as it is non-identical. Art in capitalism would have a double character of alienation and truth. Art would have the function of the denunciation of alienated reality and the anticipation of a happy world, at the same time it would also be affirmative because it constitutes a sphere of escape. Art would be connected to the reflection about non-being (129). For Adorno art has a double character in capitalism: On the one hand it is a societal fact, part of society, shaped by society, and a reaction to the form of society, on the other hand it constitutes a specific form of autonomy in so far as it is distanced from reality and gives itself its own laws. Art would negate and criticize society by its mere existence (335), its social function would be that it is functionless (336f)¹³, it would be intentionless (19, 47), and it would be a societal antithesis to society that can't be deduced from the latter (19). Art would become social by its counter-position to society (335), it would have a utopian function in society (55f). The functionless character of art would be its form of protest against the capitalist world of instrumental reason. Objects would become beautiful in their movement against that which is (82). For Adorno the rationality of art is critical rationality: Art criticizes the irrationality of the rationality of capitalism (86ff), it constitutes a sphere that is autonomous from profit and exchange value (337).

Herbert Marcuse (1977) argues that art can only be a societal factor as autonomous art. Art would be a part of society, but one that transcends capitalist society by constituting an autonomous sphere of aesthetical forms that transcend capitalism. The Beauty of art is not a portrayal of society as it is, but a metaphor for society as it could be. Art would have a radical potential if it transcends its societal context and subverts experience. It would be part of that which is and could only oppose capitalist existence as part of this very existence. Art would not be a mere ideological reflection of an economic base as argued in orthodox Marxism, it would be an indirect critique of capitalism in so far as it constitutes a relative autonomous sphere of existence that transcends the sphere of capital accumulation. By being different

¹³ „Soweit von Kunstwerken eine gesellschaftliche Funktion sich präzisieren lässt, ist es ihre Funktionslosigkeit“ (Adorno 1970: 336f)

from the material production process, art would be able to demystify the reality reproduced by material production. Art would oppose capitalist reality by producing a reality that is more real than real. The autonomy of art wouldn't be constituted by appealing to exploited masses, but to an anonymous subject by producing its own laws that are different from capitalist production processes. In late capitalism art couldn't appeal to revolutionary masses because the masses wouldn't be revolutionary, but integrated, one-dimensional, and assimilated, hence the revolutionary character of art in capitalism would be that it can subvert experiences (Marcuse 2000: 129-149). Marcuse (1977) argues that art isn't a transformation of society, but it can contribute to a transformation of the consciousness and drives of human beings who can change the world. Art would transfigure and translate society, it would constitute liberation as an alternative form of reality, art would necessarily be alienated from capitalist society and only such an alienated sphere would constitute the autonomy of art (Marcuse 1972). Only in Communism art would lose its elitist character because individuals would be able to become freely associated, well-rounded individuals. For Marcuse art on the one hand is estranged from empirical reality and hence unrealistic (Marcuse 2000: 51). But by constituting an autonomous sphere art would have a utopian function, it would anticipate a free society and remind humans of freedom although they live in a totality of repression (Marcuse 2000: 65). Hence art would also be more real than reality (Marcuse 1977, 2000: 49f, 51f, 139f). Art could indirectly illuminate the political goal of a free society (Marcuse 2000: 52). Similar to Adorno who considers art as both social fact and autonomous, for Marcuse art has a double function of affirmation and negation of society (Marcuse 2000: 99).

For Adorno and Marcuse the social function of art in capitalism is that it puts forward an aesthetical formal alienation from society because of the alienation of the human being in capitalism.

Pierre Bourdieu (1999) argues that art is not critical if it is social art that directly engages politically, but if it maintains its own laws independently from money and power and functions as *l'art pour l'art*. For Bourdieu the artist is an intellectual who possesses authority that derives from the relative autonomy of art from religious, political, and economic interests. Intellectuals could effectively influence political processes by making use of this authority. The autonomy of art would today be in danger because the world of money would increasingly permeate the world of art. The further existence of an avantgarde market that functions autonomously from economic market logic would be threatened.

An artwork is an expression, representation and objectification of certain subjective feelings and aspects of the artist and of aspects of the social times he lives in. The social, political, economic, and cultural structures of a certain period and mode of social development shape the life and works of an artist, an artwork is a complex nonlinear reflection of society and the social environment of the artist. Artworks don't reflect pure unhistorical feelings and knowledge, they are a reflection of society and the artist's experience of society.

Art is not intentionally oriented on society and the times the artist lives in. Nonetheless it is automatically part of society because the artist's worldviews are shaped by society. Art is a product of society. Many artworks are possible, but which forms of art and concrete artworks become actuality is conditioned by the societal context of art. The Impossible is per definition not possible, i.e. it can't be or become. But art can deal with the Impossible and give an idea of it. Art is only immanently innovative. Art is partly non-intentional, it doesn't solve social problems with its means. Hence artistic innovation refers to the development of art itself. E.g. when Picasso produced his first collage or Duchamp his first object (*objet trouvé*) innovation in art emerged. Art can't change society, but it can give ideas that strengthen imagination and

hence help human beings in escaping the dominant logic of one-dimensional thinking. Art is not political in the sense that it directly creates a better or more beautiful world, it is not itself a political practice, but it can strengthen our imagination of a beautiful society and give us images of a better future. But to create a beautiful and good future is not a practice of art, but a social and political practice in the real social world. Hence art is not directly political, it is only political and critical in an indirect way insofar as it is the definite negation of the dominant logic of accumulation and competition that shapes modern society in all its realms.

Art has a historical character, it tells us something about the time and historical social period where it has been produced. Wassily Kandinsky noted in this respect: “Every work of art is the child of its age and, in many cases, the mother of our emotions. It follows that each period of culture produces an art of its own which can never be repeated” (Kandinsky 1912: 25). This historical character of art concerns both content and technology. Art captures the social moment and period of its production, it expresses this social context of production in the content it contains and the techniques it makes use of. E.g. Andy Warhol’s Factory Art is an expression of life in the Fordist capitalist development model that dominated society after 1945 and was based on mass production and mass consumption. The techniques employed by Warhol reflect life in the standardized world of the factory dominated by assembly lines, the content of his art is a reflection of the emerging popular culture of Fordist consumer capitalism. Also Digital Art is a reflection of social changes and social differentiation towards what can best be called knowledge-based capitalism or global informational capitalism (cf. Fuchs 2002, 2003a, Castells 1996, 2001). The Internet has become a central medium of the knowledge-based society, in the arts it is both used as a medium of production and presentation and as a topic that artists deal with.

Hence certain dominant forms and schools of art are neither coincidental nor determined by the economic and political structures of a period, but the social structures of a historical period of social development condition possible forms of art, there is never only one possible form of reflection of a certain state of development of society in art, but multiple ones. Some of these are actively realized by artists as social groups that form dominant currents and competing styles of art. The dominant styles of art of a period can’t be deduced from the dominant social structures, but they also don’t exist in an unhistorical social vacuum. Art has a relative autonomy in society.

Artworks are a social product that reflect the social relationships and the culture of a certain period of society. But art ever since the emergence of modern society has developed a special position as a relatively autonomous system, one can’t deduce the forms and contents of artworks from the relations of production and power of a social formation. This is what Adorno has called the non-identity of arts (Adorno 1970). The aesthetical dimension of arts goes beyond the facticity of society (that which is), it can anticipate possible futures of a beautiful, fair, and just society. Aesthetical forms go beyond the alienation of modern society and anticipate a happy and beautiful society. The arts can strengthen the creativity and imagination of human beings that are necessary for designing our systems in a co-operative and participatory manner. Art is a generalized medium that has the ability to reflect human endeavours and picture the latter in different ways. Although art is primarily an aesthetical medium, it always carries a more or less explicit ethical dimension. So the aesthetics of arts can have an ethical dimension.

The question of the autonomy of art must be seen historically. In different societal formations art does have different degrees of autonomy. In the Middle Ages art primarily served religious and political interests. It was the function of art to portray divine and royal sovereignty. Hence

art had an ideological character, the forms and contents of artworks were heavily influenced by dominant social groups (aristocracy, religion), art was structurally coupled to religion and the political system in such a way that the latter two system had a very strict influence on the art system. With the Enlightenment that finally resulted in the rise of modern capitalist society the situation changed: art markets emerged and artists started to compete for selling artworks and accumulating reputation. Hence with the rise of capitalism the art system has become relatively autonomous from religion and polity and has been structurally coupled to the economy. The economy both has enabled and constrained the autonomy of the art system: on the one hand it has reduced the political and religious influence on art, on the other hand art in capitalism must itself try to defend a certain level of autonomy against the dominant economic logic and its autonomy is threatened by the danger of being permeated by economic logic that transforms artworks into pure commodities that serve the interest of the accumulation of money capital. The structural coupling of art and the economy has enabled a level of the autonomy of art (i.e. the freedom of artists to choose the form and content of their artworks) that is larger than the autonomy of art in pre-modern times, however at the same time capitalist logic also threatens the autonomy of art. One can imagine a full autonomy of art only in a Communist society where all humans are well-rounded, self-determined individuals that have various fields of activities, where everyone is an artist, wage labour and hard work have due to the development of the productive forces have come to an end, and activity is self-chosen and free from external alienated influences. Only in such a society art becomes a thing-in-and-for-itself and can free itself from external interests and forces. In capitalism art is autonomous in so far as it can distance itself from the logic of commodities and constitutes a sphere of meaning that doesn't fulfil societal functions that are externally determined. In the Middle Ages art was ideological in the sense that it was expected to imitate that which is, i.e. dominant interests. A decisive criterion for the autonomy of art is that it is not an imitation of nature and society, but that it transcends that which is and strengthens the imagination of that which could be or is Not-Yet. The nature of the autonomy of art is not imitation, but invention, i.e. the creation of novelty.

How is art related to reality? Art is neither a mechanical reflection of reality, nor completely different. Art has both a material and an imaginary, symbolic, and fictional dimension, i.e. it exists in material forms (as actors performing in a play, sound waves that transmit musical sounds, objects that form an art object, paper and printing ink in the case of a novel, etc.) that are perceived and mentally interpreted. Art exists both in a material and a cognitive form, it is both matter and idea. Each level of the reality of art depends on the idea, there can be no ideas about art without a material form, and the material form doesn't make sense without being interpreted by society and individuals. Art constitutes a specific sphere of societal reality, it is a specific form of reality. Herbert Marcuse (2000: 139f) argues in this context that the reality of art is neither the reality of everyday life nor a purely imaginative reality. It would be real insofar as it represents the activities, feelings, dreams, and thoughts of humans as possibilities for humans and reality. The reality of art would be a reality that is qualitatively different from actual reality. The unreal character of art (fictive reality) constitutes a reality that is more real and truer than reality because Beauty is a promise of possibilities, a promise that reality can be other than it is, that reality is not fixed, but becoming and reality-in-possibility. Art doesn't mechanically reflect society as it is, but is a complex, non-linear transposition of society, i.e. the reality of art is not arbitrary, each artwork and style of art is an expression of the economic, political, and cultural relationships of a certain epoch of society. An artwork is a reality in itself that has a symbolic and material dimension and is a complex and nonlinear transposition of society. One can't deduce the form of art from the state of the economy, polity, or culture. Money, power, and dominant values and the social relationships that these structures are embedded into condition the state of art, but they don't determine them. There

are numerous, endless ways of how art can “react” to a certain state of society, it is undetermined how it will react, however it is determined that there will be some type and form of artistic expression of a historical epoch of society. Hence the relationship of the reality of society and the reality of art is complex and non-linear, it is a relationship of interaction. Artistic production creates a non-identical reflection of society that goes beyond that which is and requires imagination. Art influences other social systems insofar as there are e.g. public and political debates about art and artists make direct comments about the state of society. But the influences of the art system on other systems of society are rather small because art is trying to maintain its autonomy by closing off its universe from the world of money, power, and ideology. There is also a political influence of society on art when politicians give subsidies to artists in order to enable or constrain the autonomy of the art system or when the political system in totalitarian societies tries to censor art. Art aims at distancing itself from society, it tries to minimize the influence of other subsystems on its own functioning. Art is functionless also in the sense that society doesn’t require an art system in order to exist, one can imagine a society without artworks and artists. The participation in the art system is not compulsory (as it is e.g. in the capitalist economy where human beings must participate at least as wage labourers in order to be able to exist and produce a living), material production is a necessity for society, artistic production is a voluntary practice that can only truly be free in a society where necessity has ended and freedom has become the norm, i.e. a society where everyone has time and possibility to become an artist.

Society has an economic base, i.e. the human being must firstly produce its immediate existence (food, shelter, etc.) before it can reach political decision and become an artist. The base is formed by those systems of society that are necessary for its immediate existence, whereas superstructural systems are only indirectly necessary. Society consists of interconnected subsystems (ecology, technology, economy, polity, culture). Culture is the subsystem of society where meaningful structures that signify a whole way of life and struggle are constituted practically (Fuchs 2005). Art is besides science, education, the mass media, and systems of physical recreation (sports, medicine) a subsystem of the cultural subsystem of modern society. Art is not mechanically determined by the base, it is not a linear consequence of other systems. The base is a precondition, a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for superstructural systems like art, the base is a complex, nonlinear creative reflection of the superstructure, superstructural systems like art are complex, nonlinear creative reflections of the base. The base (as well as other systems like polity and the other subsystems of culture) sets limits and exerts pressure on art, it enables and limits the variety of art.

Marx and Engels didn’t reduce superstructural forms to economic production as has been and still is assumed by many. For them the base is more fundamental than the superstructure, but both realms of societal existence interact. “Political, juridical, philosophical, religious, literary, artistic, etc., development is based on economic development. But all these react upon one another and also upon the economic base. It is not that the economic position is the *cause and alone active*, while everything else only has a passive effect. There is, rather, interaction on the basis of the economic necessity, which ultimately always asserts itself” (Engels 1894).

Marx speaks of the possibility of an uneven development of base and artistic superstructures. This possibility is due to the relative autonomy of art from society (i.e. other subsystems of society). This means e.g. that a crisis of society doesn’t imply fundamental changes of the art system, and that fundamental changes in art can take place without fundamental changes of society. “In the case of the arts, it is well known that certain periods of their flowering are out

of all proportion to the general development of society, hence also to the material foundation, the skeletal structure as it were, of its organization. For example, the Greeks compared to the moderns or also Shakespeare. It is even recognized that certain forms of art, e.g. the epic, can no longer be produced in their world epoch-making, classical stature as soon as the production of art, as such, begins; that is, that certain significant forms within the realm of the arts are possible only at an undeveloped stage of artistic development” (Marx 1857: 640).

Must the content of art be politically neutral? Does art lose its critical character and autonomy if it is political art? Art certainly becomes identical and ideological if it glorifies domination such as in Nazi art or Socialist Realism, but also in religious paintings and portraits of monarchs that dominated art in the Middle Ages. Such art loses its autonomy because it doesn't go beyond that which is, it is not directed towards the future, its oriented on Being, not on Becoming and the Not-Yet. Art is political if its form and content is non-identical and hence negates the logic of domination and exploitation. Hence non-political content of art does have a political character in society. If the content of art is directly political, does it lose its autonomy? Political art is a specific form of art, it is non-ideological, non-identical, and autonomous if it gives a picture not only of the world as it is, but as it could be, if it is oriented on possibility. Political art is more concrete than other forms of art, it frequently directly comments on society. This does not automatically destroy the autonomous character of art.

5. Art, Capitalism, Communism

Art in capitalism as a sphere of mental production that is different from the world of wage labour anticipates a Communist society where wage labour is sublated and mental labour becomes part of the free development of the faculties of all human beings. Art opts for a sphere of existence beyond labour. Communism is a society where human beings can be themselves in such a way that they are not forced to produce for others and to follow economic and political commands by others, they have time and freedom for self-determination and for collective decision and production processes that are based on grassroots democracy. Hence in Communism there is not a logic that defines human beings as means for the ends of the accumulation of economic money capital and political power and that constitutes alienation; human beings can define and self-determine their own purposes, human life is not a purpose for other external interests, it is a purpose in and for itself. The missing of alienated purposes is characteristic for a free society, the logic of art already today to a certain extent resembles the logic of Communism insofar as it can maintain a certain level of autonomy.

Art can't be consumed like a commodity, it demands mental labour in the reception process. It is not a private property because the knowledge about society that it contains can't be materially possessed like money or an object. However, in late capitalism art to a certain extent becomes a commodity, the culture industry tries to sell artworks on markets. Mechanical reproduction of art enables a market for art prints, an artwork is no longer a singular piece in a museum, it appeals to the masses in a reproduced form that is exchanged with money and hence becomes a commodity. Marx has pointed out the fact that art can be subsumed under capital or autonomous from capital, it can either be productive or unproductive labour depending on whether it produces surplus value for capital or not: “E.g. Milton, who did the *Paradise Lost* for £5, was an *unproductive worker*. But a writer who does factory labour for his publisher is a *productive worker*. Milton produced *Paradise Lost* for the same reason as a silkworm produces silk. It was an expression of *his own* nature. Later on he sold the product for £5. But the Leipzig proletarian of literature who assembles books (such as

compendia of political economy) under the direction of his publisher is a *productive worker*, for his production is from the outset subsumed under capital, and only takes place so that capital may valorise itself. A singer who sells her songs on her own account is an *unproductive worker*. But the same singer, engaged by an impresario, who has her sing in order to make money, is a *productive worker*. For she produces capital.” (Marx 1863: 377).

Art as a commodity can especially be found in literature and music because books and music can easily be reproduced industrially, whereas paintings and plays frequently are connected to the idea of a direct original experience that can't be reproduced or can only be reproduced in a form that doesn't allow an original experience. Especially since the rise of Fordist capitalism, art has become more and more a commodity. Mass production, mass consumption, technological reproduction, and the logic of economic accumulation resulted in the emergence of a cultural industry (Horkheimer/Adorno 1944) that popularizes art in order to sell it as a commodity and to accumulate economic capital. As a result forms of “popular culture” that reach mass audiences emerged. Does art as commodity lose its autonomy? The commodity form frequently does destroy the autonomous character of art, but this is not simply due to the fact that art is reproduced and sold. An artwork is a piece of art if one takes a look at it in a museum, but it is also still a reproduction of a piece of art if one looks at it on a poster at home. As long as the form of an artwork is complex, non-identical, requires reflection and interpretation, and strengthens imagination, an artwork is different from the dominant capitalist logic of instrumental rationality and hence is autonomous. This can be the case also if artworks are sold as commodities, the commodity form doesn't automatically destroy the autonomy of art. But frequently commercial popular culture becomes a trivial form of consumption that is close to the logic of instrumental reason, it is one-dimensional. Such forms of popular culture are close to the dominant economic logic of capitalism, they should be considered as commercial, non-autonomous cultural products/commodities. Popularity as such doesn't automatically destroy complexity and autonomy, but the question arises if trivial forms of popular culture should be considered as art or not. If an artwork is considered as a process, a criterion for the autonomy of the artwork could be the non-identity of its form, i.e. an authentic artwork is a form that is itself a development process that contains novelty, spontaneity, continuity and discontinuity, emergent qualities, and surprises.

An artwork is both a material and a symbolic form. Its value as a product is not determined by the law of value, i.e. its economic value is not the amount of labour hours spent by the artist. The economic value of an artwork is normally higher than its labour value, i.e. the ideational dimension of the artwork, the meanings that society give to it, and especially the reputation of the artist create an additional economic value of the artwork. The symbolic value of an artwork, i.e. the amount of reputation that it creates within the art system, can be different from its economic value, i.e. not those pieces of art that reach a mass audience are necessarily those that are mostly recognized within the artistic community as representing precious values of art. Symbolic value can be internally created in the art system and can be transformed into economic value, i.e. the accumulation of reputation of an artist can increase his audience. Marcel Duchamp's ready-mades (such as “Roue de Bicycleette” 1913 (wheel and bicycle), “Egouttoir” 1914 (bottle rack), “In Advance of the Broken Arm” 1915 (snow shovel), “A Bruit Secret” 1916 (ball of twine in metal plates), or “Fontaine” 1917 (pissoir)) where simple objects of everyday life are presented as pieces of art show that the artistic and economic value of an artwork is heavily influenced by the reputation of an artist in the art system and society. The economic value of a work of art is produced by the whole social context of art, not by the labour time the artist invests, and by the reputation that the artist can achieve in the artistic field and in society. An artwork is considered only as economic and artistic value if it is recognized by society as being an important work of art. Hence also the symbolic value of

art, its artistic value, is not generated by the artist himself, but by the whole universe of critics, scientists, politicians, museums, publisher, galleries, collectors, academies, audiences that socially produce the meaning of an artwork.

Art is the practice of producing and consuming aesthetical works, it is a system that is oriented on a binary code that draws a distinction between aesthetical beautiful (aesthetic)/aesthetical unbeautiful (unaesthetic). Hence art has a contested character, not in the sense that there are artworks that are not art or are uncultured, but in the sense that individuals and groups in modern society have different aesthetical preferences and tastes that compete and constitute relationships of symbolic struggle oriented on distinctions between what is “good art” and “bad art”. The social structure of society conditions different competing tastes. Pierre Bourdieu (1986) has stressed that capitalism is not a purely economic system of capital accumulation, but a social formation that is based on divisions into social groups that compete for economic (property, money, commodities), political (power, social relationships), and cultural (qualification, education, knowledge) capital. The class structure of modern society is based on the unequal distribution of economic, political, and cultural capital, dominant classes accumulate capital at the expense of other groups. Dominant groups try to stabilize the class structure by engaging in material and symbolic class struggles. Symbolic struggles are fights over symbolic capital and tastes that shall establish distinctions between classes in order to ideologically secure the domination of certain groups. Symbolic capital is a form of capital that draws distinctions between classes and produces differences that distinguish social classes. By accumulating status symbols that are considered as precious dominant social classes try to defend their status and dominated classes try to gain status. Art in capitalism produces tastes that are used by dominant classes in order to distinguish themselves from dominated classes. New aesthetic styles and tastes are acquired in order to symbolize the superiority of dominant classes. Artworks like other cultural manifestations are used as symbols of class distinction. Art in capitalism fulfils in its consumption process a social function of legitimatizing social differences. Hence art in capitalism is antagonistic: On the one hand it constitutes a sphere that is relatively autonomous from the dominant economic logic, i.e. a functionless sphere that negates instrumental reason, on the other hand this autonomy is based on an elitist character of art that makes art into an ideology that symbolically reproduces the distinctions between dominant and dominated classes. Bourdieu (1986) has argued that there is a relation between taste and the distribution of capital in society. He has empirically shown that dominant classes prefer highly sophisticated forms of art that require complex interpretations, whereas dominated classes prefer simpler forms of popular culture that can be easily understood and have direct meanings that don't require much interpretation work. “Thus one finds that the higher the level of education, the greater is the proportion of respondents, who, when asked whether a series of objects would make beautiful photographs, refuse the ordinary objects of popular admiration – a first communion, a sunset or a landscape – as ‘vulgar’ or ‘ugly’, or reject them as ‘trivial’, silly, a bit ‘wet’, or in Ortega y Gasset’s terms, naively ‘human’; and the greater is the proportion of respondents who assert the autonomy of the representation with respect to the thing represented by declaring that a beautiful photograph, and a fortiori a beautiful painting, can be made from objects socially designated as meaningless – a metal frame, the bark of a tree, and especially cabbages, a trivial object par excellence – or as ugly and repulsive – such as a car crash, a butcher’s stall (chosen for the Rembrandt allusion) or a snake (for the Boileau reference) – or as misplaced – e.g., a pregnant woman” (Bourdieu 1986: 35). Capitalism denies dominated classes the cultural, economic, and social capital that is needed in order to fully participate in the art system.

Art is a system that is different and relatively autonomous from the logic of capital accumulation and wage labour. Late capitalism is characterized by a very antagonistic character of labour: The development of the productive forces and the emergence of productive technologies such as the computer that automate human activities have created a situation where the total amount of socially necessary labour permanently decreases, but where labour is not distributed in such a way so that all human beings work less hours than in prior periods of social development and hence have more free time. The result is a fragmentation of the world of labour: unemployment increases, many people have precarious jobs, more and more people are poor although they work, a small elite of highly qualified workers that earn high wages is opposed by an increasing class of working poor and unemployed people that struggle in order to exist. The “end of labour” hasn’t produced more freedom and free time, but more exploitation and slavery. The development of the productive forces objectively conditions the possibility for Communism, i.e. a society where wage labour and hard work have been abolished, where due to technological productivity compulsory working time can be reduced to a minimum, and people have a maximum of self-determined activities. The productive forces today bear the possibility for a society that is a realm of freedom and mental labour and that transcends manual labour and wage labour. Communism means the liberation of subjectivity from the bonds of capital, the development of free subjects with the help of highly socialized productive forces. The productive forces today have a more and more co-operative character, but capitalist society negates co-operation and is still based on competition and exploitation. Art in capitalism is not democratic, there is only a small elite of artists and art consumers, these are people who can afford the luxury of investing much time in aesthetic enjoyment. But there is an increasing class of human beings that is confronted with misery and poverty and must invest most of its time for trying to survive. They are deprived of the time and education that is needed for engaging in art. Hence art in capitalism is necessarily elitist and undemocratic. Only in a Communist society where humans have become well-rounded individuals that have a maximum of free time everyone can be an artist and a critical observer of art. Communism abolishes the distinction between classes and hence also the distinction in different tastes that is characteristic for a heteronomous society, in Communism everyone can freely produce art and does have a level of education and the ability of critical reflection necessary for professional thinking and discourse about art.

For Marx Communism is a society of well-rounded individuals who don’t have separate singular activities, but plural fields of creative practice : ”For as soon as the distribution of labour comes into being, each man has a particular, exclusive sphere of activity, which is forced upon him and from which he cannot escape. He is a hunter, a fisherman, a herdsman, or a critical critic, and must remain so if he does not want to lose his means of livelihood; while in communist society, where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticise after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, herdsman or critic” (Marx/Engels 1846: 33).

Based on such well-rounded individuals art in Communism would be a democratic and pluralistic endeavour, the separation between artist and audience and between connoisseur and philistine that arises from the division of labour in heteronomous societies would come to an end: “The exclusive concentration of artistic talent in particular individuals, and its suppression in the broad mass which is bound up with this, is a consequence of division of labour. Even if in certain social conditions, everyone were an excellent painter, that would by no means exclude the possibility of each of them being also an original painter, so that here

too the difference between “human” and “unique” labour amounts to sheer nonsense. In any case, with a communist organisation of society. There disappears the subordination of the artist to local and national narrowness, which arises entirely from division of labour, and also the subordination of the individual to some definite art, making him exclusively a painter, sculptor, etc.; the very name amply expresses the narrowness of his professional development and his dependence on division of labour. In a communist society there are no painters but only people who engage in painting among other activities” (Marx/Engels 1846: 379).

In the *Manifesto for an Independent Revolutionary Art* André Breton and Diego Rivera (1938)¹⁴ under the impression of German fascism and Stalinism argue that art must be independent in order to be revolutionary. “True art is unable not to be revolutionary, not to aspire to a complete and radical reconstruction of society” (Breton/Rivera 1938)¹⁵. Freedom for art would mean the free choice of themes of art by the artist and the absence of all restrictions on such choices. The Manifesto demands: “The independence of art – for the revolution. The revolution – for the complete liberation of art!” (ibid.). Breton’s concept of the independence of art, Schelling’s notion of the infinity of art, and the idea of the autonomy of art by Hegelian-Marxist scholars such as Adorno and Marcuse reflect the idea that art criticizes domination by constituting a sphere that is autonomous from the logic of domination and hence anticipates a society that is liberated from exploitation and domination and where individuals can freely associate themselves and determine themselves.

In a debate about the freedom of the press Marx analyzed the role of journalism in capitalism and anticipated the idea of the critical autonomy of art: “The writer, of course, must earn in order to be able to live and write, but he must by no means live and write to earn. [...] he writer does not at all look on his work as a *means*. It is an *end in itself*, it is so little a means for him himself and for others that, if need be, he sacrifices *his* existence to *its* existence. [...] *The primary freedom of the press lies in not being a trade*” (Marx 1842: 70f). These statements can be generalized for the role of art in capitalism. Hence one can say that the artist must in capitalism sell his artworks in order to exist, but the essence of his being does not have to be the selling of artworks. Here Marx already formulated the insight of the critical autonomous function of art by saying that a true artwork is a thing-in-itself and not primarily a business.

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¹⁴ The Manifesto was signed by Breton and Rivera, but it is believed that it was written by Leon Trotsky and André Breton.

¹⁵ Herbert Marcuse in his letters to the Chicago Surrealists (Marcuse 2000: 109-128) cited this key passage of the Manifesto (Marcuse 2000: 123) in order to argue that art is not revolutionary by appealing to the working class and bringing the masses onto the streets because in a one-dimensional capitalist society the working class would be manipulated, hence only the form of artworks could be revolutionary by subverting instrumental reality and strengthening imagination. In other writings Marcuse says that revolutionary literature can’t be proletarian in a society where the proletarians are non-revolutionary (Marcuse 1972: 121) and that art is not revolutionary if it is made for the working class, but that revolutionary art is oriented on the form of art (Marcuse 1977: 197).

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