



What are the Functions of Art on the Basis of Metaphysics?

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Introduction

“Do you believe in reality?” (Latour, 1999).

I had been baffled when faced with the question: “Do you believe in reality?” Still am incredibly curious actually. Simply put, “yes” would be categorized as realism, to discover facts in the outside world free of the mob—conversely, “no” is assigned as relativism, that fact is merely an irrational agreement that needs to be explained. Admittedly, I hadn’t considered the position of *both* modernist realism and postmodernist relativism before applying philosophy of science to art and introspection through art objects.

Art and its materiality is a hybrid entity that influences and keeps records of how we experience reality through a series of translations that made the transformation from tangible objectivity to abstract subjectivity attainable.

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Research Questions

What are the functions of art on the basis of metaphysics?

What art movements and experiences aided in the advancements of science? Contrariwise, what events in the sciences influenced certain art periods?

How do we experience the uniting of objectivity and subjectivity through relation to independent objects and introspection?

How have artists influenced and reflected the way previous generations experienced reality?

How do we currently experience reality?

Background and Literature Review

Latour’s compiled essays in *Pandora’s Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies* (1999) and his example known as the “pedocomparator”—a suitcase that carried soil in small separate units from different locations—causes us to reevaluate our relationship with the “outside world” and the ontological gap. He described this tool as a “hybrid entity” because it was an object, a wooden box filled with dirt. Whilst at the same time, it was a concept that these various soils concealed bits of information carefully packed away into the suitcase—making the forest mobile.

Along with the combination of Pirsig’s *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: An Inquiry into Values* (1974) and Winterson’s *Art Objects: Essays on Ecstasy and Effrontery* (1995), which causes meditative questioning of the self and quality—validating that art too has the potential to be metaphysical through introspection and a process of transformation.

In addition, making use of the texts *Art in Theory 1900-1990: An Anthology of Changing Ideas* (Harrison & Wood, 1992) and *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art: A Sourcebook of Artists’ Writings* (Stiles & Selz, 2012) to investigate and employ a first-hand study of the individual artists I believe to have identified metaphysical art and their statements.

Acknowledgements

Tremendous thanks to all who encouraged my fascination in how we experience reality and made this research possible—including Dr Suditi Gupta for guiding me through the research process, the Honors Research Librarian, Tim Held for assisting me in navigating the Library Databases, and the CSU, Stanislaus Honors Program for this opportunity. Special thanks to my research mentor, Professor Jacob Weigel for the direction and support with my investigation into the philosophy of science studies and art. Thank you CSU, Stan for inspiring me to continue creating.

Methods

Through in-depth exploration and understanding of the subjective phenomenological experiences to examine specified artists’ realities—as well as the objective historical events that wrought how our current society in the Western world views reality. I want to work with both science and art to demonstrate that they support the growth and development of the other, while strengthening the knowledge on how mankind has come to perceive reality while evolving information and culture.

By using primary and secondary resources with in-depth exploration of the essays by artists and art critics—as well as the several examples applied in philosophical inquiries about realism, relativism, and perception—I aspire to create a well-informed dialogue and connection between metaphysics, philosophy in science studies, art, and cognition.

I will begin my qualitative research by exploring the archival statements directly by the particular artists, Giorgio de Chirico, René Magritte, Maurits C. Escher, etc.—along with rhetorical criticism and content analyses of expert reviews to comprehend the reactions of their art. The aforementioned will be investigated in joint to introductions of other art movements that I recognize to have demonstrated metaphysical translations in perception, including Impressionism and Cubism. Once I’ve exhibited why particular art pieces are metaphysical by causing us to relate to neutral objects and challenge our own selfhood through translations, I will explain the importance of comparing them to the philosophy of science studies—including the work of Bruno Latour and Robert M. Pirsig, and their inquiries in reality.

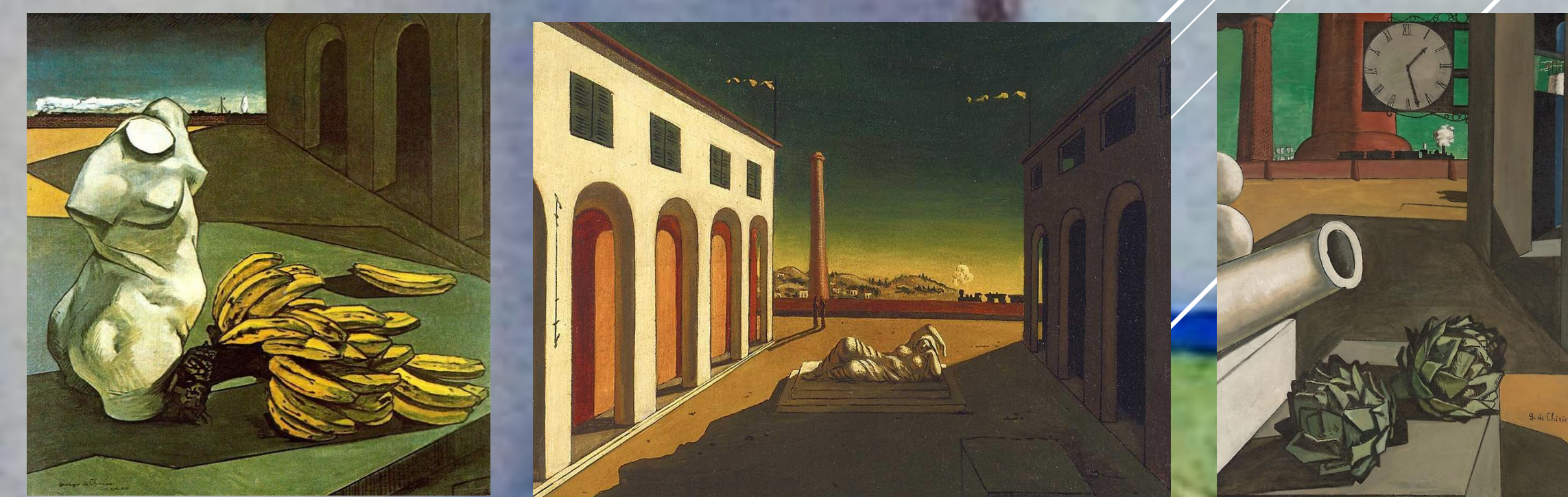


Figure 1: Giorgio de Chirico's examples of metaphysical art

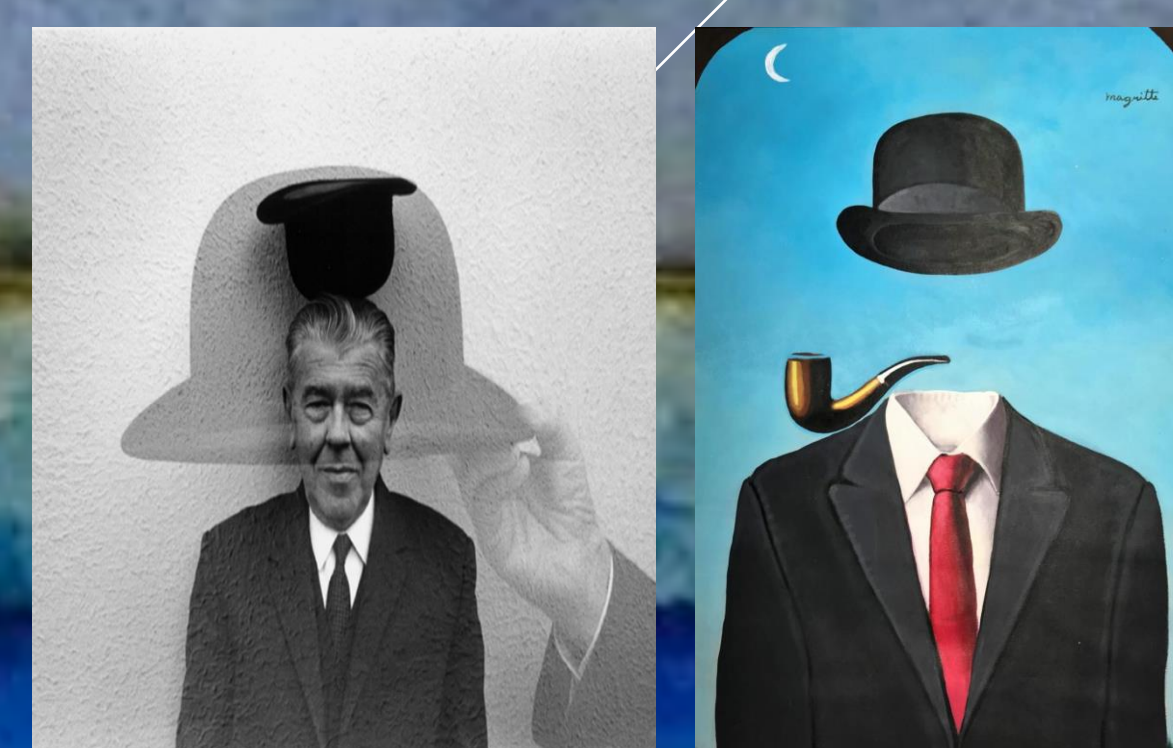


Figure 2: René Magritte and his use of symbolism and relation through independent objects

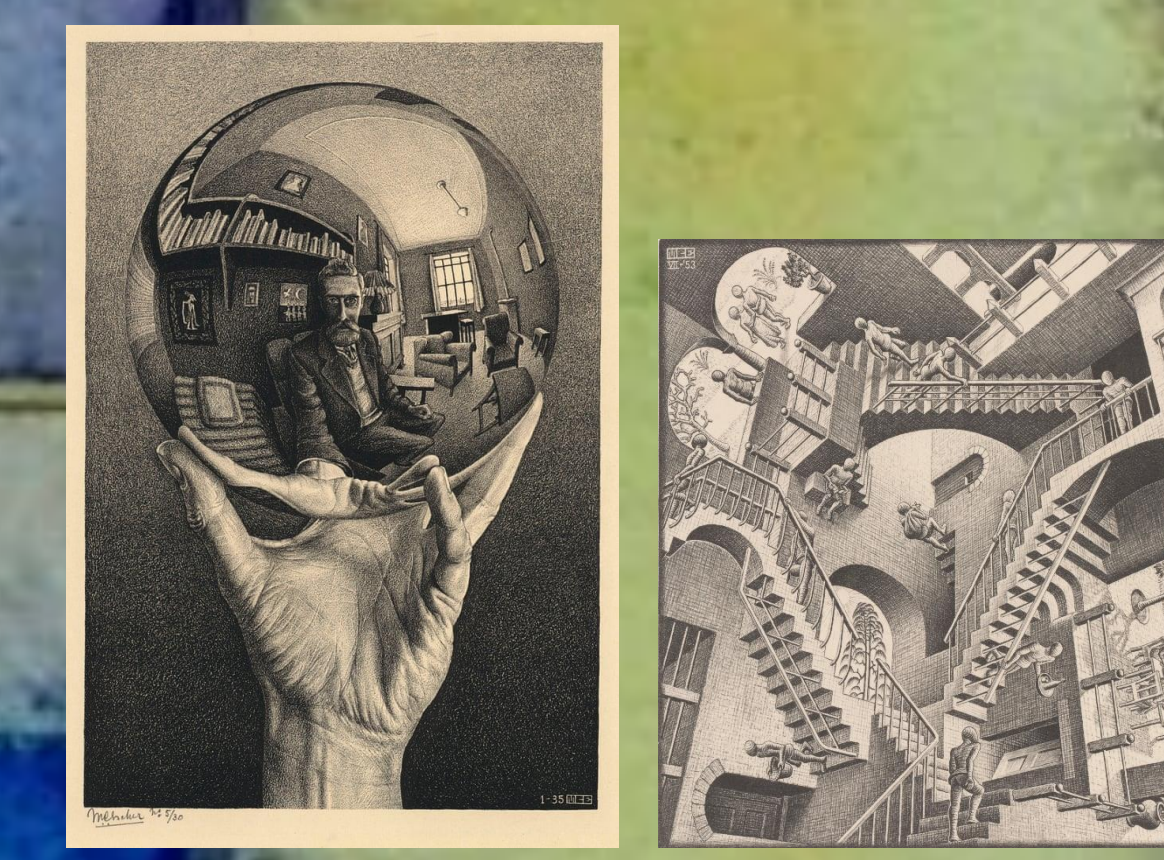


Figure 3: M.C. Escher's examples of meta-perspective art

Expected Results

If we concede what we believe about reality, perhaps we can allow the understanding of more. The data and information our senses intake involves a series of translations in order to decipher what contrives the “outside world” into concepts more oriented for the “brain-in-the-vat” to interpret. Reality unfolds from the outer and inner details, supporting that “human” and “non-human” entities form a corporate body.

Art is metaphysical in the sense that it translates how former and concurrent eras experience reality while also causing self-scrutiny and reflection. We continuously practice this when attempting to fit ourselves onto another’s canvas, within writing, through music, whatever it may be—convincing that art is capable of being multiple concepts simultaneously. In the end, perhaps to genuinely acknowledge the uniting of objectivity and subjectivity, we must first recognize the quality that precedes both through introspective meditation by asking: *Who am I and what do I care about?*

Significance

We don’t need to leap across one side of the ontological gap to reach the other, in fact, metaphysical art shows that combining elements from both sides of the gap and taking a series of steps makes the transition conceivable.

Effectively investigating the essays and artworks with detailed examinations of intercrossing art entities that display the transition between subjectivity and objectivity, we can establish the phenomenological experiences of reality with historical events that aided in the advancements of both art and science, and how we currently view reality.

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