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Some Traits of Cognitivism
in American Ruminations on Visual Arts

Abstract: Originating in the theoretical and aesthetical controversies whipped up by the overall iconoclastic rejections of traditional aesthetic canons in avant-garde art, the very question concerning the refinement of cognitive adventures and the plural meanings of aesthetic experiences has continuously fuelled the American ruminations on visual arts. Due to the impactful role of technology in the artistic realm and the outburst and dissemination of visual arts around the midcentury (e.g., the overarching impact of Hollywood industry and the boldness of abstract expressionism), American professionalized aesthetics has started to mirror the more and more complex artistic occurrences and their plethora of meanings. Broadly inspired by an opuscule of Ludwig Wittgenstein, the first conceptual investigations of the arts in the United States have been incited by the interrogation of the cognitive status of aesthetics (i.e., the autonomy of artistic idioms and/or the essentialism/ anti-essentialism debate regarding the languages of the arts). By and large, the role of cognition about the visual arts has gradually expanded to include the critique of art philosophies and traditional aesthetics, the questioning of aesthetic categories and predicates, the rejection of formalism and essentialist definitions, the reexamination of intentionality and perception, the subject – object dichotomy, etc. Moreover, cognitivism about the arts has fundamentally reconsidered its very instruments: description, interpretation, meaning and representation. The present paper attempts to unveil the most recent dimensions of cognitivism about the visual arts, especially focusing on its instantiations in contemporary American aesthetics.

Keywords: aesthetic cognitivism, aesthetic experience, aesthetic theories, essentialist definitions, pluralism.

§1. Wittgenstein's way. Resurrecting the American thinking on the relevance, role and modalities of cognitivism about the visual arts might seem unproblematic if only considering the first half of the twentieth century, but intricate and pluridimensional when considering its second half. Indeed, excepting two notable contributions in the field bringing to mind the post-Hegelian idealist tradition, i.e., those of George Santayana around the turn of

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the century (1896, 1906) and John Dewey's *Art as Experience* (1934), the American incipient meditation on both the connections between art and knowledge, on the one hand, and art and aesthetics, on the other, remained rather feeble. By and large, the post-Hegelian art thinkers in the United States mainly emphasized the vital function of cognition about the arts through straightforward artistic experiences and, consequently, the possibility of transcending the artistic experiences towards the objectification of certain aesthetic values (such as beauty). Arguably, Ludwig Wittgenstein fuelled and stirred both the debut and the heterogeneity of American thinking on visual arts, first by a 1938 series of lectures at Cambridge (Wittgenstein 1978), and then through some of his disciples who inaugurated the philosophy of language tradition. Broadly speaking, several divergent cognitivist stances in American contemplation of the arts in the second half of the twentieth century have originated in Wittgenstein's thoughts and suggestions: the post-1940s analytic tradition (Bender and Blocker 1993; Lamarque and Olson 2004), the postwar criticism on the concept of 'open art', the role and logic of ordinary language in arts and aesthetics, the theoretical and linguistic criticism (or the New Criticism) of the arts, the late 1970s – and beyond – cognitive pluralism and relativism; other more recent cognitive approaches include the institutional theory of arts, the cognitive narrativist discourse about the arts, the pragmatic cognitivism about the arts, and the ethical turn of the cognitive discourses about the arts in the 1990s (Devereaux 1997). This paper aims at examining the development and transformations of the most important cognitive rapports with the visual arts according to various post-1950 American thinkers.

§2. Ordinary language analysis, 'open art' and the problem of cognitivism. Probably not by accident, the postwar reexamination of the arts' cognitive dimensions had been centered around an intellectual polemic concerning not only the dismissal of traditional theories of aesthetics, but also the new horizons of understanding and evaluation of artworks. The Wittgensteinian idea of 'family resemblance' (1969) had been inspirational for the acknowledgement of various instantiations of visual arts, opening new paths of conceptual criticism; characteristically, folowing the Wittgensteinian theory of 'language games', the doctrine of family resemblance substantially 'opened' new possibilities of cognition about and through the arts by merely requiring the simplification of traditional theories and concepts of aesthetics so that the level of artistic cognition could be determined by the appropriate use of concepts in our language. Moreover, the concept of open art required the abandonment of general concepts and their replacement with precise and adequate ones in our everyday ordinary language. The polemic had been carried out by three disciples of Wittgenstein: Morris Weitz and Paul Ziff, on the one side, and Maurice Mandelbaum, on the other. First, in a scholarly article, Morris Weitz (1953) denies that any art theory could have ever contribute to a cognitive definition of art and rendered any such theory inefficient when it came to its use in clarifying art; in fact, Weitz argued, the arts have certain specific objects and

only through the use of specific concepts, one could possibly achieve artistic knowledge; consequently, the 'openess' of art would be consistent with circumstantial cognitive descriptions of artworks through specific concepts. Exemplifying the instrumental role of specific concepts in cognition, Paul Ziff (1953) explained how seven particular criteria applicable to one particular painting of Poussin could be used in order to achieve a cognitive evaluation of that work of art, pointing at the Wittgensteinian anti-essentialist rejection of general criteria and definitions. Precisely directed against the relevance of the-above mentioned Wittgensteinian doctrine in the field of aesthetics, the criticism of Maurice Mandelbaum (1965) disclosed the fact that the new concept of 'open art' exactly achieved what it had previously refuted: Mandelbaum's admonishment to Wittgenstein was that 'language games' theory contradicted his credo regarding the fiasco of essentialist definitions in art cognition; to both Weitz and Ziff, Mandelbaum objected that their concept of 'open art' concealed in fact their contention towards a new theory of visual arts, hence towards neo-essentialism. Later on, responding to Mandelbaum, Weitz (1977) argued that his explanations on how to use aesthetic concepts departed from any theoretical velleity; moreover, the 'open art' concept would hint at critique and evaluation, against any proclivity towards general theories effectively useful in art cognition.

First and foremost, the analysis of art language became conditional to any possibility of genuine knowledge about the visual arts and Wittgenstein's followers (i.e., analytic philosophers of language) preeminently aimed at dismantling the metaphysical vocabulary about the arts and adjusting it to the cognitive logic of ordinary language. Stating that the anti-metaphysical agenda of Ludwig Wittgenstein did not explicitly leave room for a comprehensive philosophy of ordinary language (Wittgenstein 2006), Stanley Cavell argued that the objectivity of aesthetic knowledge through the use of ordinary language would be tantamount to reaching significant cognition about the arts by analyzing the meaning of our artistic perceptions and sensibility. In other words, the artistic cognition happens in the process of moving from what we directly experience through the use of our senses (what we can say) to whatever objective meaning our experience has (what we mean by what we say) (Cavell 1976). In its turn, aesthetic knowledge further objectifies the artistic cognition through art criticism, interpretation, art history and/ or aesthetic discourse (91-96). In a book dedicated to the ontology of film, Cavell argues that the objective meaning of aesthetic facts is a form of logical cognition, not psychological, implying solidarity and public presence (i.e., intersubjective acceptance or acknowledgement) (Cavell 1979).

§3. The New Criticism and cognition as perception. At the end of the 1950s, the cultural and aesthetic movement of the New Criticism attempted to move beyond the post-Wittgensteinian linguistic analysis of traditional aesthetic concepts by highlighting the essential phenomenality of aesthetic language. Resulting from the dichotomy between the intentional error of the author and the affective error of the interpret

(Beardsley 1986), aesthetic facts are fundamentally ambiguous, so that three possible aesthetic strategies could close the gap between the work of art and the viewer: descriptions (unmediated and non-normative access to the work of art), interpretation (illustrating a kind of semantic relationship between the work of art and something meaningful outside the work itself) and evaluation (normative and critical towards the work of art) (Beardsley 1981). According to Monroe Beardsley, aesthetic phenomenalism would be about postulating meaningful statements regarding works of art with the purpose of clarifying the modalities of their presentation to our senses (54). In this case, aesthetic cognition is the process of transforming real aesthetic objects into objects of aesthetic perception having in mind the following postulates: i) aesthetic objects are perceivable objects; ii) aesthetic perception is purely subjective; iii) the traits of the aesthetic objects can not be exhaustively perceived; iv) perception may be veridical or illusory, and v) when two distinct perceptions refer to one and the same aesthetic object, one of them is illusory (46-48). In brief, the New Criticism seizes the phenomenality of the arts as a modality of veridical correspondence between the aesthetic object and the aesthetic perception.

§4. Saving aesthetic cognition: from analyticity to pluralism. As far as cognition in general is concerned, in the United States, there has been a gradual transition from the esteemed and rigorous criteria established by the analytic school of logical pozitivism to the pragmatic use of language in all cognitive processes. Slowly but firmly, analytic philosophers themselves have abandoned foundationalism, essentialist definitions and logicism in order to embrace pragmatic, pluralist and even relativist stances. Nelson Goodman and Arthur Danto were the most illustrative figures who took the above-mentioned path of transition in their approaches of the meanings of aesthetic cognitivism.

Goodman's *Languages of Art* (1976), probably one of the most salient works in American aesthetics, acknowledges the importance of symbolic idioms regarding the analysis of both formal and content elements of the arts. According to Goodman, symbolic languages of the arts are constitutive in defining aesthetic experiences as cognitive experiences. Aesthetic cognitivism has both linguistic and processual dimensions and depends on a symbolic message of the artwork and its precise reference (in order to symbolize). The types of valid linguistic references specifying relations of correspondence with wannabe aesthetic objects are denotation, exemplification and expression. Nelson Goodman was harshly criticised as a rigid nominalist because of his referentialist and correspondentialist understanding of aesthetic cognitivism (Wollheim 1970). But for his processual understanding of aesthetic cognitivism, Goodman turned to a pragmatic posture (Cometti 237): after establishing what a work of art symbolizes, the symbol as such has to be integrated into one system of fabricated symbols (Goodman 240), which is a timely process validated in experience and which accounts for the cognitive value of the artwork. Goodman made one final step further from his nominalism and pragmatism, respectively, adopting a type

of robust relativism concerning his approach on aesthetic cognitivism (Elgin 684), precisely by postulating the plurality of integrative symbolic systems; moreover, his cognitivism was not guided by a foundationalist search for the essential nature of artworks, but by questioning the proper time when the object is integrated into one of these plural systems as an aesthetic object (Goodman 57).

Having the same analytic background, Arthur Danto's prolific career in aesthetics and philosophy of art started from a pluralist hypothesis regarding the possibility of aesthetic cognitivism in the 1960s, evolved towards a foundationalist attempt to restore both the identity of art and substantial aesthetic cognitivism (1981, 1986) and returned to a kind of pluralist pessimism which saved cognitivism about the arts through aesthetic representations (1999). Danto's methodology of narrative explanation (1965) reveals pluralism as the only possible cognitive conduct, resulting from the impossibility of pushing forward the traditional metanarrative evoking the past spiritual meanings of the art. Contemporary cognition about the arts is "profoundly pluralist" (1992) because of the absence and/ or the invalidation of any meaningful and defining historical evolution of the arts. Art history leaves behind a chaotic post-historical pluralist era. Danto's early works in the field of aesthetics stand for certain foundationalist attempts to re-habilitate and re-enfranchise both the arts and genuine aesthetic knowledge by the use of two main theoretical strategies: the retrieval of an essentialist definition of the arts (1981) and the postulation of the method of 'indiscernables' (1964). But starting with the last decade of the twentieth century, Danto steadily abandoned his metaphysical search for essentialist definitions and firm cognitivism in order to adopt a rather resigned representationalist approach: accordingly, aesthetic representations would satisfy future cognitive ambitions by establishing real connections between aesthetic facts and 'structures of the world' (1993). Cognitively, representations are true when they are caused by something external, so that representation becomes the semantic vehicle connecting its cause to a real entity of the world which makes it true (Danto 1999).

§5. 'Institutionalizing' aesthetic cognition. Additionally, Danto was the first to postulate the institutional theory of art in the United States (Danto 1964); the artworld encapsulates an institutionalized system of both artistic facts and theoretical knowledge validated by temporal resistance across their historical evolution. Consequently, what guarantees meaningful aesthetic cognitivism is a set of relevant aesthetic predicates which institutionalize and discern genuine aesthetic objects from their ordinary counterparts. Later, George Dickie (1969, 1974) aimed at expanding and completing Danto's suggestions, grounding the institutional theory of art on five fundamental elements: i) the artist and the artworld are semantically interconnected by the fact that the artist acknowledges the already institutionalized meanings of his/ her artistic productions; ii) the work of art adresses to certain cognitive expectations of a qualified artworld public; iii) the public is constituted of persons who understand the meanings of artworks; iv) the artworld encompasses the totality of its subsystems, and v) a subsys-

tem of the artworld refers to a general integrative context which enables the encounter between the artist and the artworld public (Dickie 1997). George Dickie finally reaches to a comprehensive definition of the institutional theory of art as one of the explanatory forms of the cultural milieu in which the work of art is produced and becomes functional and which ascribes a variety of cultural roles to its participants (Dickie 2004). Accordingly, aesthetic cognitivism would be instantiated by the acknowledgement of both the cultural environment enclosing the artworld and the cultural function of each participating actor.

§6. Finding the truth in stories: cognitivism and interpretative narratives. The institutional theory of art is just one of those conceptual transformations denying the metaphysical assumptions of meaningful aesthetic knowledge and the reductionist approaches of essentialist definitions. Departing in this way from the logical and theoretical presuppositions of analytic philosophy, some former members of the analytical school in philosophy have started to conceive the status of the arts and the problem of cognitivism as dynamic systems and/ or ingredients of culture. For instance, in his first works, Joseph Margolis abandoned any attempt of analytic foundationalism and moved towards embracing the late views of post-Hegelian historicism, according to which the ontological status of the arts and the meanings of aesthetic forms of cognition could only be established within a precisely determined horizon of cultural and historical context; during the intermediate phase of his career, Margolis' thought has evolved towards the endorsement of pragmatic arguments on the topic, in the context of acknowledging the impact and theoretical premises of cultural relativism; finally, probably frustrated with the precarious theoretical consequences of cultural relativism, Joseph Margolis has endeavored to postulate a honorable escape in the formula of robust relativism based on the hermeneutical and pragmatic concept of interpretation (Shusterman 2009). According to Margolis, only interpretative language through narrative texts could save the objectivity of aesthetic cognitivism and the status of the arts, and simultaneously avoid the analytic error of objective naturalism (Margolis 1996, 1998).

Questioning the future resources of aesthetic cognitivism, David Carrier (1989) is more optimistic about the effectiveness of historical interpretation of the arts; pinpointing at the seemingly larger consensus among art historians regarding the objectivity of aesthetic cognitivism in comparison to the circumstantial understanding of artistic practices as cultural phenomena, Carrier seems to agree with Margolis that interpretative historical narratives could safeguard cognition about the arts; more recently (Carrier 2008), Carrier introduced a conditional further remark for his assumption to become plausible: in order to avoid radical discontinuities and contradictions with the canon of traditional master narrative, future historical interpretations should expand and amend the traditional limits of canonical understanding of the art, in order to include the present diversity of artistic manifestations and to accommodate the multicultural dimensions of contemporary arts to post-canonical cognitive aspirations regarding artistic phenomena.

§7. The 'de-aestheticization' of artistic cognition. Cognitive narrativism has been detrimental to the effectiveness of any theoretical endeavor in the field of aesthetics especially starting with the last decade of the twentieth century; moreover, the academic field of aesthetics has been deemed non-responsive in confronting the plural manifestations and challenges of contemporary arts. Noël Carroll (1999) rebuked the discipline of aesthetics as being inadequate and obsolete because of two main reasons: first, traditional aesthetics has remained blind and dismissive in what concerns the necessary integration of technologies and media resources in the realm of arts; second, Carroll has gradually become profoundly skeptical about the possibilities of aesthetic experiences to evaluating the arts. The unprecedented diversity of contemporary arts requires, according to Carroll, radical reconsiderations of the correlations between arts and cognition, arts and morality, and arts and theory, respectively. In fact, as Carroll concedes, the rebuttal of traditional aesthetic theories become explanatory for the severe reorientation of the connections between art on the one hand, and cognition and morality, on the other. The theories of representation, expression and/ or aesthetic formalism have become gradually redundant, as the explosive evolution and ramification of performative arts have disenfranchised (following Danto's conceptual connotation of the term) and undermined the theories' cognitive potentialities (1999). Chronologically, the art of photography, post-avantgarde abstract arts and various performative arts (e.g., choreography, theatre and cinematography) have dismantled the cognitive traits of the traditional theory of representation (i.e., mimesis); the canonical theory of representation has been drastically amended by neo-representationalist theories which have introduced – in order to cope with the new challenges of performative arts specifically – additional criteria, such as referentialism (i.e., aboutness) (Danto 1981). The theory of expression, alternative to the theory of mimesis, was proposed at the end of the 18th century by romanticism and endured until the last aesthetic achievements of post-impressionist art. In its turn, the theory of expression which valued the most diverse expressive modalities has been exclusivist because sentimentalism and emotions could not possibly convey the multidimensional references of contemporary arts (Carroll 58-106). The most critical overtone of Carroll is directed against the cognitive pretensions of aesthetic formalism; postulating the primacy of formal values which predetermine both intentionality and content of the arts and dissolve the subject-object distinction, formalism has been defended as sublimating all artistic specificities and oppositions into a regulative and normative canon guiding cognition and recognition of all artistic facts. Carroll denies that formal analysis of artworks would be generative of cognition about significant forms; the cognitive meanings of the arts are not necessarily formal in nature, as they could be explicitly incorporated into artistic contents. Moreover, neoformalist criticism has emphasized on the fact that form is inseparable from content, so that only their synthesis could guarentee significant cognition of aesthetic objects (Carroll 107-152).

According to Carroll, the value of cognitive essentialist definitions of arts is invalidated by various contextual modalities of gaining significant cognitions about the arts: interpretation, intentionality, historical narratives and/ or the moral dimensions of aesthetic facts stand for complex cognitive instantiations denying the oversimplifying postulation of aesthetic experience as the only relevant cognitive approach. For instance, interpretation is cognitively meaningful even outside of any type of pragmatic or alegorical experience, while intentionality is limitative upon the unrestricted perceptions of subjective aesthetic experiences due to ostensive auctorial creative premisses; by reducing the cognitive force of aesthetic experiences to restrictive external guiding criteria, Carroll defends a deflationist concept of aesthetic experience (Carroll 2003). Carroll gives a special consideration to the cognitive value stemming from the moral evaluation of artworks, by dismantling the traditional categories of arguments which minimized moral cognitivism. First, Carroll denounces the epistemic argument according to which moral evaluation of artistic facts can not substantially enrich the core of human moral judgements; then, the rebuttal of the ontologic argument consistent to asserting the existence of moral components within the overall content of an artwork; finally, Carroll rejects the aesthetic argument according to which the moral cognition and/ or evaluation is irrelevant to genuine aesthetic assessments of artworks. In the last case, the aesthetic argument could be simply nullified by the auctorial moral intentionality founding the cognitive meaning of the artwork.

Carroll's quasi-pluralist view on the arts could not be complete in the absence of his ontological considerations in regard to the overarching impact of technologies and media upon cognitive revolutionary changes. This is tantamount to moving beyond considering technologies as merely instrumental for the production of artistic works; in fact, to a large extent, technologies are constitutive to certain artistic productions, such as video arts, photography and performative arts. In addition, the most popular media vehicles (television and internet) have not only impacted upon new cognitive challenges, but also generated the ontologic concept of mass art. The ontology of mass art is centered on a twofold set of requirements: i) the aesthetic object has to be the multiplication of one original aesthetic fact, and ii) the aesthetic object has to be produced and disseminated through mass media technologies and intentionally designed in order to be accessible and adressed to large audiences with minimum effort (Carroll 1997). Arguing that every artistic fact is constitutively (in)formed by various and complex media technologies, Carroll endorses an ontological essentialist concept of media representation capabilities (Carroll 2008). Transcending simplistic material denotations, contemporary media vehicles stand for – as well – the cognitive identification of formal components within the general content of artistic phenomena; in the case of film, for instance, the formal elements with relevant cognitive value are space, motion, temporality and its narrative structure (Carroll 1996).

§8. The pragmatic redemption of cognition through aesthetic experience. Last but not least, conceptual difficulties of accomodating the plurality of present time aesthetic experiences to the traditional dogmas of the academic discipline of aesthetics have been endemic to almost all endeavors aiming at rejuvenating aesthetic cognition, regardless of the artistic form of manifestation. In the particular case of American aesthetic theories, there has been a constant dichotomy between naturalist epistemic dogmas and contextualist approaches (Shusterman 2001). Inside this principled epistemological antagonism, aesthetic cognitivism has been saved, in different ways, either by naturalist and/ or pragmatic efforts or by the postulation of descriptive theories bearing semantic value. The crucial difference was that, while naturalist and pragmatic approaches understood that only authentic aesthetic experiences encapsulated the very possibility of aesthetic cognition, analytical descriptivism and contextualism attempted to minimize and gradually discredit the impact of aesthetic experiences upon rigorous cognition. Unfortunately, in the end, aesthetic experience has been sacrificed to the detriment of rehabilitating aesthetic cognitivism. What really happened, according to Shusterman, was consistent with a kind of theoretical transfiguration of the concept of aesthetic experience: on the one hand, the essentially internalist dimension of aesthetic experience has been progressively rebuked by the analytic tradition and reconsidered within a descriptivist post-Wittgensteinian vocabulary; on the other, in the most favorable approaches, if it were to validate any cognitive role of aesthetic experiences, it would necessarilly be semantic in nature and not phenomenological. In brief, as the analytical tradition in the United States has suggested, the concept of aesthetic experience, if more rigorously specified through descriptive conceptual analysis, would reveal itself as mere interpretation (Shusterman 1999). Following a strictly analytical conceptual investigation, meritous aesthetic experiences, already delineated from other types of experiences, should pave the way to meaningful cognitive acts to the detriment of their poor limitations to mere perceptions (Shusterman 2008).

A special ocurrence of aesthetic facts calling for the urgency of reinvigorated aesthetic experiences is pop art. According to Shusterman, the cognitive force of pop art productions has been unquestionably and wrongfully dismissed for various reasons, including its limits in generating authentic aesthetic experiences, its modesty in meeting profound intellectual needs, its shortcomings when it comes to creativity and inovation in the arts, and/ or its lack of distinct aesthetic autonomy. Pop art has not satisfied at least some intense aesthetic pleasures, not to mention its programmatic disregard of formal characteristics of artworks (Shusterman 2009). Consequently, the resurgence of pragmatism in aesthetics would not only be consistent with a meliorist approach of the present day status of the arts, but would also consist of reigniting certain conceptual opportunities in order to restore the cognitive respectability of the pop art movement (Shusterman 2000). Due to certain pragmatic conceptual assumptions (i.e., the rejection of traditional incompatibility between the contemplative and the practical, the assertion of functional roles of the arts for life, the postulation of the meliorist principle according to which the arts contribute not only

to understanding reality, but also to its transformation, the promotion of inclusive and democratic conceptualizations of the arts), the pragmatic turn in aesthetics would eventually redeem the aesthetic experiences' lost prestige (480-483). In regard to this last pressuposition, Richard Shusterman emphasizes that invigorating the concepts of 'corporality' and 'embodiment' would be substantial to a more comprehensive understanding of aesthetic experiences (Shusterman 2008).

§9. Coda: fighting to escape relativism. The present paper has mostly considered the analytic and post-analytic quest for certainties in regard to the problem of aesthetic cognitivism. The exclusion of other philosophical inquiries and complementary intellectual traditions in confronting both the appraisal and criticism of cognitivism in visual arts is, first and foremost, a matter of scope and precisely oriented focus. Still, there is more than invoking the scope or defending an arbitrary intellectual hipocrisy; the fact is that, probably more than most, analytical and post-analytical philosophers in the Anglo-American tradition have been keen in their attempts to defending, founding, and criticizing past misachievements and reaccrediting the importance of cognitivism about the arts. However, it must be said that their efforts have not necessarily resulted in definitive elucidations and unquestionable solutions. Oscillating between the neo-positivist dogmatic tribulations of logical rigorism and rigid foundationalism, on the one hand, and the pluralist compromising solution resulting from linguistic criticism of the traditional vocabulary of aesthetics, philosophical narrativism and/ or pragmatic views, on the other, the analytical and post-analytical traditions of thought have remained programmatically consensual on the issue of cognitivism defense pertaining to the cultural field of arts. Several generations of Wittgenstein's disciples have found their ways – sometimes contradicting concurrent analytic alternatives – to safeguard cognitivism and, simultaneously, avoid the phantom of relativism. Wittgenstein himself drastically changed his views, from his fundamentalist logicism in the *Tractatus* to the neo-pragmatic and linguistic considerations in *Philosophical Investigations*. Accordingly, summarizing the most relevant instantiations and transformations of the concept of cognitivism regarding the visual arts, there were several pivotal moments. The first analytical thinkers aimed at purifying aesthetic cognitivism from the speculative, metaphysical and idealist assumptions of post-Hegelian philosophers using the counteroffensive of logical positivism (i.e., epistemological foundationalism and/ or conceptual essentialism). Following the rather syncretic and obscure approach of John Dewey who attempted to elevate the pragmatic stance of aesthetic experience in idealist terms, the post-1950s thinkers' proposal of the concept of 'open art' expanded the understanding of cognition in order to include linguistic criticism of the arts and the associated aesthetic vocabulary and descriptive tools explanatory for the use of ordinary language in art cognition. All these suggestions 'opened' new possibilities for the conceptualization of aesthetic cognitivism, in terms of pluralism, narrativism and neo-pragmatism. And all these rejuvenating moments in defense of cognition had the one and only enemy of relativism.

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