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Barnett Newman and the Anarchist Sublime

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ABSTRACT

Often overlooked in histories of abstract expressionism is the role that anarchism as a philosophy played in the art of postwar American painters like Barnett Newman. For Newman, anarchism was not merely a programme for revolutionary action but an experimental way of life that, much like painting itself, sought to imagine a life lived free from coercive authority. Through his signature painting style, which featured vertical stripes painted on coloured canvases, Newman put forth a radical political theology based on the writings of Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza and Russian anarchist Peter Kropotkin. In his art, Newman presented what might be called an anarchist sublime, an aesthetic experience that opened up viewers to the expressive capacity of being itself.

Keywords: *Barnett Newman, sublime, abstract expressionism, Baruch Spinoza*

In 1968, at the height of the turmoil in America surrounding the Vietnam War, Horizon Press issued a reprint of Russian anarchist Peter Kropotkin's *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*, his 1899 autobiographical account of his turn to anarchism as a revolutionary philosophy and his efforts to overthrow the Tsarist government in Russia. The Horizon edition of *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* also contained an introduction to Kropotkin's thought by activist Paul Goodman, who had spent the 1960s promoting anarchism as an alternative to Cold War liberalism and Soviet communism, and a foreword by American painter Barnett Newman, who professed the importance of Kropotkin's work to his own intellectual development. Both contrasted Kropotkin's principled stand in the late nineteenth century against 'all dogmatic systems' to the politics of the 'New Left' in the 1960s, which had, despite the movement's language, 'already begun to build a new prison with its Marcusian, Maoist, and Guevara walls'.[1] While Goodman's introduction reflected his long-

time advocacy of anarchism, Newman's foreword, especially to those with only a passing familiarity with his artwork, was a surprising confession of political faith. Indeed, most art historians, even today, have failed to recognise the role that his politics played in his aesthetic project overall, despite the artist's frequent statements.[2] 'Almost fifteen years ago Harold Rosenberg challenged me to explain what one of my paintings could possibly mean to the world', Newman explained in 1962; 'My answer was that if he and others could read it properly it would mean the end of all state capitalism and totalitarianism. That answer still goes'.[3]

Regardless of such comments, historians of abstract expressionism such as Irving Sandler, Serge Guilbaut, and Michael Leja have generally ignored Newman's politics as well as those of his fellow painters Mark Rothko and Clyfford Still who professed anarchist beliefs too.[4] Instead, historians have offered two contradictory interpretations of the importance of one of the major American art movements. For decades, abstract expressionism was portrayed as a cultural rebellion of a handful of brave American artists against the staid conformity of the post-war years, artists splattering or slashing paint in trademark styles onto their canvases and heroically struggling to express their inner anguish.[5] Under this interpretation, abstract expressionism, whether in the form of Jackson Pollock's drip paintings or Willem de Kooning's chaotic abstractions, appeared as the prime example of what critic Harold Rosenberg termed 'action painting', an existential exploration of the deep recesses of the human psyche through the physical act of painting.[6] However, this conventional narrative about the heroism of the so-called New York School of painters has been challenged by claims that, despite the bravado of their language, abstract expressionists were complicit in furthering U.S. foreign policy aims during the Cold War.[7] Abstract expressionism was appropriated by politicians as a tool in the Cold War, used as one of the cultural exports sent by the U.S. government to Western Europe in the 1950s as symbols of American commitment to intellectual freedom in the face of Soviet oppression. Under this interpretation, American artists, forced to choose sides in an escalating Cold War, threw their support to the U.S. government, thereby domesticating the rebellious side of American modernism.

In many ways, these conflicting interpretations of abstract expressionism are part of a larger debate about the relationship between modernism and politics. Modernism as a cultural movement in the twentieth century was divided among those who flirted with fascism, remained committed communists, or turned to conservatism, a divide symbolised by the divergent paths of Ezra Pound, Pablo Picasso, and T.S. Eliot, for instance. Recently, however, some historians like David Weir and Allan Antliff have offered a new narrative about the history of

modernism, stressing the influence of anarchist ideas in the larger cultural revolt against class divisions, sexual repression, religious orthodoxy, and other forms of oppression.[8] Emerging from the remnants of Romanticism in the nineteenth century and promoting the creative freedom of the artist, modernism upended artistic conventions by experimenting with narrative forms, collage techniques, and other radical innovations to depict the fragmented nature of modern experience in the nightmarish landscape of modernity. Much like anarchism, modernism championed a revolt against political and social norms, emerging in the early twentieth century after the repression of anarchism as a political movement in the United States, Europe and Russia. As Weir and Antliff have argued, anarchism as a political philosophy never vanished in the twentieth century, although it was eclipsed in importance by the rise of communism and fascism across Europe after World War I. Instead, anarchism found new importance within the emerging modernist culture and helped to usher in radical forms of expression in literature, painting, and poetry.

In the early twentieth century, modernist artists as varied in their interests as Francis Picabia and Marcel Duchamp were energised by the language of anarchism, which served to challenge cultural elitism and to channel revolutionary energy away from totalitarian movements into artistic innovations.[9] Often overlooked, however, was the importance of anarchism to the modernist project of those artists who came of age during the Second World War. In the midst of the horrors unleashed in Europe and elsewhere, anarchism appeared as the only alternative to the failed utopian visions that had led to such catastrophes. This was particularly true in the United States, which not only had dropped the atomic bomb but had begun an equally terrifying conflict against the Soviet Union shortly after. Countless American writers and artists, including Mark Rothko, Clyfford Still, John Cage, Allan Kaprow, Allen Ginsberg, Norman Mailer, Kenneth Rexroth, Jackson Mac Low and Donald Judd, recast post- war modernism along anarchist lines, dispensing with stale debates about Marxism and formalism and carving out an anarchist aesthetics.[10] Obviously the fissures within anarchism as a political philosophy, for instance, between the conservative, collectivist vision of P-J Proudhon and the radically individualist stance of Max Stirner, were replicated in the various forms of anarchist modernism in post-war America, but nonetheless anarchism, broadly defined as a revolt against coercive authority in all forms, flowed into American modernism. Anarchism, like modernism, spoke to the dream of a life lived outside the dictates of state or institutional control, both maintaining *la promesse de bonheur* in the face of the turmoil of the Second World War and the rise of the national security state.[11]

This was particularly true in the case of Barnett Newman who blended anarchism and modernism in his role as an 'artist-citizen'.[12] Born in New York City in 1905, Newman grew up sensitive to the political and economic inequality plaguing the United States. His father's clothing business, for instance, was forced into bankruptcy during the Great Depression, which wiped out the family's savings and forced Newman to abandon his fledgling art career for more stable employment. In the midst of such turmoil, he understood the appeal of radical movements. 'This truth, felt and understood by many intellectuals', he explained in 1933 'has driven them in what they feel to be their only possible recourse as solution and protest, to the support of the Socialist and Communist parties'.[13] Unlike many of his fellow artists, however, Newman never joined the Communist Party nor any fellow-travelling organisations during the heyday of left-wing radicalism, refusing to reduce his art to political propaganda or to ideological demands. Yet Newman did not reject radical politics in general. Instead, Newman drew inspiration from the works of Alexander Herzen and Peter Kropotkin as a challenge to the 'shouting dogmatists, Marxist, Leninist, Stalinist, and Trotskyite alike'.[14] Anarchism, as Newman explained later in life, 'is the only criticism of society which is not a technique for the seizure and transfer of power by one group against another, which is what all such doctrines amount to – the substitution of one authority for another'.[15] Newman even ran for the office of the mayor of New York City in 1933 on a campaign platform with anarchist tones, including calls for free publically funded cultural institutions. Newman also challenged chauvinistic and xenophobic politics, such as when he lambasted isolationist sentiment in the United States, which he saw as a façade for Nazi sympathy, at the start of the Second World War.

For Newman, however, anarchism was not merely a political critique or a programme for revolutionary action but a 'creative way of life' that, much like painting itself, sought to fashion more liberating forms of existence and to imagine a life lived free from coercive authority.[16] In contrast to many modernists and anarchists, however, Newman did not put forward a negative conception of freedom that promoted a radical form of autonomy outside any social grounding. Borrowing language from the Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza and from Russian anarchist Peter Kropotkin, Newman presented an ontology of immanence, one in which all forms of political and religious authority based on some transcendent source were levelled in favour of an image of the universe as one single substance in a constant state of flux. Through his signature painting style, which featured vertical stripes (or what he called 'zips') painted on coloured canvases, and through his frequent artistic statements, Newman put forth a radical political theology that overturned strictly mechanical or materialist conceptions of the world. Painting for Newman

did not exist to represent the world but to challenge any form of representation that sought to capture the world or to present a permanent state of affairs. His art presented instead what might be called an anarchist sublime, a form of aesthetic experience that, unlike traditional understandings, tried to open up individuals to the expressive capacity of being itself. Challenging traditional notions of the sublime, which either, following Edmund Burke, reduced the experience to a feeling of powerlessness and fear, or, echoing Immanuel Kant, translated it into an intellectual experience, Newman drew upon Spinoza and Kropotkin to present the sublime instead as an empowering experience that extended the boundaries of the self while simultaneously reaffirmed the power of individual expression. In this way, Newman blended modernism and anarchism, presenting an artistic vision that had little in common with the retrograde politics of the U.S. State Department and with simplistic notions of art as merely a therapeutic practice.

FROM TRANSCENDENCE TO IMMANENCE

In 1966, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York City, as part of their retrospective on the work of Barnett Newman, presented his recently completed series, *The Stations of the Cross: Lema Sabachthani*. Composed of fourteen paintings, each comprised of vertical stripes of white and black paint on unfinished canvases, Newman's series represented, according to him, the 'emotional complexity' of the Passion story, reflecting his long-time interest in religious themes from the Judeo-Christian tradition.[17] Born into an immigrant Jewish family in New York City, Newman received his religious education as a young boy at the National Hebrew School in the Bronx and also from his father, Abraham, whose own religious leanings were shaped by a commitment to Zionism.[18] Although he rarely spoke of his religious beliefs, Newman borrowed heavily from Talmudic, Kabbalistic, and Christian sources to explain his aesthetic project and to title his works, including for instance, *Cathedra* (1951), *Uriel* (1955), and, most obviously, his *Stations of the Cross* series. Eschewing any literal representation, Newman translated the liturgical narrative of Christ's crucifixion into a series of expressive zips –some as razor-sharp black verticals, some as faint white verticals, and some as negatively formed bands of empty canvas between two fiery painted areas. Newman's title borrowed from the Gospel of Matthew ('My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?'), thus focusing not on the entirety of the Passion story but specifically on Christ's cry of dereliction on the cross. As Newman explained, 'the cry of *Lema* – for what purpose? – this is the Passion and this is what I have tried to evoke in these paintings', and he hoped his series conveyed the spiritual pain of the event itself.[19]

In part, Newman's reference to the story of Christ wavering in his faith at the moment of his death was prompted by the anguish Newman felt in the aftermath of World War II, and much of his early artwork was an expression of a world in despair. Although Newman had a long-time interest in painting, taking courses at the Arts Student League in the 1920s and working as an art teacher in the 1930s, he only took up painting professionally toward the end of the war.[20] Borrowing themes from Native American traditions and Greek mythology, Newman, in his paintings from the mid-1940s, translated the terror of a world on the brink of annihilation into a series of canvases replete with images of the existential void at the centre of human existence, which he described as 'the hard, black chaos that is death, or the greyer, softer chaos that is tragedy'.[21] In *Pagan Void* (1946), for instance, which features a black circular void at the centre of an abstract, organic form, Newman referenced that cataclysmic power of the atomic bomb. In other early works such as *Gea* (1944-45) and *Genetic Moment* (1947), Newman presented, in Kierkegaardian terms, the 'void from which and around which life emanated', what he saw as the profound emptiness that the war had revealed.[22] But Newman quickly dropped his existential moaning, prompted in part by the fortuitous artistic advancement he made in 1948. In his studio that year he had prepared a canvas with a layer of reddish brown paint and then applied vertically a piece of adhesive tape down the centre, over which he applied thick reddish orange paint. Originally Newman had planned on removing the tape and using the background to begin a different painting, but he was struck by the effect he had serendipitously produced. According to Newman, he had started working on the canvas on his birthday and 'lived with that painting for almost a year trying to understand it'.[23] Eventually titling the painting *Onement I*, Newman recognised that he had moved beyond trying to depict some cosmic void that reflected the tragic human condition or trying to imagine some spiritual rebirth from the darkness. Instead, his new painting, with its reference to the Jewish notion of atonement, was wholeness itself, a vertical stripe that filled the surface of the canvas instead of, as he had done in his earlier paintings, emptying it. As he explained, the zip 'does not cut the format in half or in whatever parts, but it does the exact opposite: it unites the thing'.[24] From that moment, Newman radically shifted his aesthetic thinking, replacing the 'hated' void with an entirely different ontology.[25]

Instead of painting the void, he sought to paint fullness, a project that culminated with his *Stations* series. Newman had no interest in traditional readings of the Seven Words of Jesus on the Cross or in Christian liturgical practices associated with those words. His paintings 'can exist without a church', he explained.[26] Salvation was not his goal, for Newman saw a different message in the Passion story.

Newman refused to accept the convoluted logic that the death of Christ, God's only begotten son, was necessary to redeem humankind, a sacrifice that seemed perverse given the supposed omnipotence of God. Like Christ himself, whose cry marked his questioning of God's divine plan, Newman argued that the significance of Christ's sacrifice had nothing to do with delivering humankind from evil or helping humanity atone for sin. Instead, the Incarnation heralded God's descent to the realm of humanity through His son – stepping down from His throne, becoming a part of His own divine creation, and participating in the suffering of humanity. In this sense, the Incarnation marked the transition from the transcendent God-the-Father to the immanence of the Holy Spirit. According to such a reading, Christ's death ended the cycle of legal retribution for the sins of humanity by calling into question the entire system of justice established by the Abrahamic tradition. As Newman explained, 'the cry, the unanswerable cry, is world without end', that is, a world not supported by divine authority.[27] Newman refused to lapse into nihilism, however, although he was aware of the existential anguish expressed by Christ's cry of abandonment. Instead, he welcomed the end to any notion of a divine authority and sought, however overwhelming, the experience of immanence.

The *Stations* series was based not only on Newman's interpretation of the Passion story but on his reading of the works of Baruch Spinoza, the seventeenth-century Dutch philosopher whose writings represented a challenge to the religious authority of the Judeo-Christian tradition. Spinoza taught the same lesson that Christ on the cross did – that human beings were no longer subservient to any transcendent authority, religious or otherwise. Newman was introduced to the philosophy of Spinoza while an undergraduate philosophy major at the City College of New York in the 1920s, and he composed his first artistic manifesto based on Spinoza's ideas after he and his fellow classmates were denied viewing access to the paintings of the Barnes Foundation in Pennsylvania in 1926. Throughout his career, Newman borrowed themes from Spinoza's philosophy and filled his personal library with many volumes, including Spinoza's *How to Improve Your Mind*, R.H.M. Elwes's translation of Spinoza's major political works, Andrew Boyle's translation of Spinoza's *Ethics*, and Rudolf Kayser's 1946 biography, *Spinoza: Portrait of a Spiritual Hero*, as well as several shorter works by the Dutch philosopher. Newman saw Spinoza as an alternative to Hegelian and Marxist philosophies, offering a radical political theology that challenged traditional notions of God as a transcendent being, overturned all forms of dialectical and teleological thinking, and trumpeted a dynamic ontology of immanence.

In his posthumously published *Ethics*, Spinoza challenged any philosophy of transcendence that posited two ontologically distinct substances, one more

privileged than the other. Pointing to the God of the Judeo-Christian tradition who transcends human experience or to the Platonic notion of a world of forms separate from the world of appearances, Spinoza argued against any concept of a universe with two different substances, unable to find any convincing explanation for the relationship between the two. In contrast, Spinoza posited a concept of substance monism, arguing for the existence of one substance or self-contained, self-generated being that did not require something else for its existence. Substance, seen as God or Nature, was not some transcendent power separate from the world but was immanent to the world itself, an indivisible being that expressed itself through and was implicated in everything. 'Whatever is, is in God,' argued Spinoza, 'and nothing can be or be conceived without God'.[28] No longer a transcendent being, God was found only in the expression of the universe itself, a creation that was the same as its creator. According to Spinoza, God or substance expressed itself through an infinite number of attributes that constituted the essence of substance and through which substance was understood, of which thought and extension were the two attributes known to human beings. The world as such was constituted in part by thinking things and extended things and by an infinite number of other unknown attributes through which substance emerged. In this sense, thought and extension were not attributes of two different substances but were dynamic expressions of one single substance. Similarly, all particular states of attributes were modes of that attribute in the sense that specific bodies were modes of extension and individual minds were modes of thought. Substance was not the transcendent but the immanent cause of all extended or thinking things, irreducible to any particular mode.

The importance of Spinoza's ontology for Newman was this notion of God as *natura naturans* (a permanent process of self-creation and expression) as opposed to *natura naturata* (a finished creation). Spinoza rejected any anthropomorphic notion of a God who directed the world toward a specific end, challenging the foundation of all Abrahamic traditions. In asserting the immanent relationship between God, humanity, and the world, Spinoza freed human beings from subservience to any transcendent being. 'The Passion', as Newman explained, 'is not a protest but a declaration' of a new ontology of immanence.[29] Instead of a world subjected to endless hierarchies and divisions, Spinoza presented a world in a constant state of becoming, part of the endless expression of substance through the appearance and disappearance of the individual modes of particular attributes. Such modes, according to Spinoza, were not properties of a transcendent being but the expressive unfolding of substance in a particular fashion. 'God is the efficient cause', explained Spinoza, 'not only of the existence of things, but also of their essence'.[30]

Accordingly, Spinoza declared the radical equality of all modes and the attributes through which they were expressed. In so doing, Spinoza presented a dynamic ontology, one of multiplicity and unity, substance and modes, that demonstrated the vitality, not the void, at the heart of existence.

THE DARWINIAN LESSON

Newman found in Spinoza's works a philosophical basis for the anarchist ideas he had developed. In his *Ethics*, Spinoza outlined an ontology that levelled distinctions between beings and that undercut transcendent foundations for state power or other forms of authority, which paralleled Newman's own dream of 'the possibility of an open society, of an open world, not of a closed institutional world'.[31] Exhausted by the stale debates in American radical circles in the 1940s about the nature of the Soviet Union, Newman used Spinoza to chart an alternative based on anarchist ideas. The Dutch philosopher offered a challenge to the teleological visions of Marx and Hegel, which had reduced history to a predetermined path or to the dictates of some Universal Spirit. Like Spinoza, Newman tried to imagine the possibility of a society no longer founded on appeals to some metaphysical foundation outside human development, and he remained committed to a world continually unsettled by the unexpected modifications of God's attributes. As he argued, 'Hegel's 'science' of history and all his widespread spawn of historical interpretations have about as effectively delineated history [as did Greek astrology]. And if any book should have been burnt in our time, it should have been his'.[32] In order to better understand the importance of immanence, Newman buttressed his reading of Spinoza with the work of Peter Kropotkin who, in *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* (1902), turned to evolutionary science as a way to challenge the abstract logic of Hegelian philosophy. In Kropotkin, Newman found a political framework for his Spinozian philosophy.

A geographer and a zoologist, Kropotkin based his revolutionary politics on his reading of evolutionary theory. Rejecting both Jean-Baptiste Lamarck's notion of evolution as a pattern of steady advance and Thomas Huxley's vision of evolution as an agonistic, Hobbesian process, Kropotkin put forward a theory of evolution that rethought the role of both cooperation and selfishness in the development of individual species. Kropotkin argued that mutual aid was just as much a driving force of evolutionary development as competitive struggle, claiming that the traits of cooperation and support helped species to flourish. As Newman explained, Kropotkin 'used all his scientific knowledge and ability to disprove the theory of the survival of the fittest as the valid law of nature'.[33] Instead, Kropotkin followed

the lead of Darwin by stressing the unpredictable, open-ended nature of the evolutionary process. In so doing, Kropotkin echoed Spinoza's contempt for meta-narratives of human development. Through the study of Darwin's theories, 'the idea of force governing the world, pre-established law, preconceived harmony, disappears to make room for the harmony that Fourier had caught a glimpse of'.[34] In so arguing, Kropotkin challenged the dominant ethos of capitalism, which posted self-interest as the foundation for historical progress. He put forth an ethical vision that dispensed with Hegelian abstractions and with references to basic immutable instincts. Instead, Kropotkin posted an ecological development to human nature and human values that he believed had centred over time on feelings of community and mutual aid. 'Humanity is not a rolling ball, nor even a marching column', he argued in Spinozian language, 'It is a whole that evolves simultaneously in the multitude of millions of which it is composed'.[35] Kropotkin offered Newman, as did Spinoza, an ontology of immanence, one in which human beings were tied neither to the sovereignty of God nor to some teleological end but to an endless process of evolutionary becoming.

Like Kropotkin, Newman had to learn what he referred to as the 'Darwinian lesson'.[36] Newman had a lifelong interest in the natural sciences, taking classes in the 1940s at the Brooklyn Botanical Garden and graduate courses in botany and ornithology at Cornell University and spending much time throughout his career reading the latest research in those fields. Newman developed an aesthetic theory based on this notion of the world in a constant state of development, and he heavily criticised other artists such as the Dutch painter Piet Mondrian for their limited visions. Mondrian had emerged in the early twentieth century as the figurehead of abstract art, reducing his pictorial language, in a manner first charted by Cubist painters, to straight lines, primary colours, and grid patterns.[37] Mondrian described his non-representational paintings as a form of neoplasticism, his term for art that had reduced painting to pure abstraction. In part, Mondrian based his aesthetics on theosophy, the nineteenth-century occult movement that, borrowing themes from Gnosticism, sought to discover the deeper spiritual reality beyond the realm of appearances. Theosophy stressed that the historical development of humanity was part of the larger evolution of the universe in both its spiritual and material dimensions that led to the overcoming of all divisions (positive and negative, masculine and feminine, et al.) and the emergence of a harmonious higher reality. Mondrian believed his art was part of this development.[38] He turned to abstraction to open up a visual experience no longer tied to representational forms, reducing his paintings to a series of vertical and horizontal lines that were interspersed with blocks of primary colours. According to Mondrian, 'Non-figurative art shows ...

that "art" is not the expression of the appearance of reality such as we see it, nor of the life which we live, but that it is the expression of the true reality and true life … indefinable but realizable in plastics'.[39] Mondrian saw his paintings as planes of equivalence, a balance between lines and colours that gave expression to the harmonious union of elements that he believed was the teleological end of the evolutionary process.

Newman followed Mondrian in turning to abstraction as an expression of a larger evolutionary development, but he chafed against the idealism inherent in Mondrian's theosophical, almost Hegelian, vision. In response to a retrospective of Mondrian's work by the Museum of Modern Art in 1945, Newman contrasted the Dutch painter's neoplasticism to his own developing style, which he referred to as *plasmic*. Although Newman had not yet developed his mature painterly approach and was still wedded to themes borrowed from surrealism, he had already rejected Mondrian's 'bad philosophy' that had reduced abstract painting to the purity of plastic elements in a failed search for spiritual transcendence.[40] Years later, Newman was even more direct, arguing that '[Mondrian's] horizontals and verticals moved in relation to, you might say, Platonic essences about the nature of the world', a 'utopian idea' that subjected human beings to a rigid narrative of development that reeked of totalitarianism.[41] Mondrian's art abandoned the natural world for a transcendent order that bore no connection to individual human desires and was therefore inherently violent. In contrast, Newman defined his plasmic style as an effort to use the abstract forms that Mondrian had developed to dig into, not transcend, the immanent 'world-mystery'.[42] Plasmic art did not utilise geometrical forms in an effort to reduce the world to universal forms but instead gave expression to the dynamic yet immanent power of substance that continually disrupted any static forms.

In a 1947 review of American artist Theodoros Stamos's one-man show at the Wakefield Gallery, Newman outlined the theory of immanence he had learned from Spinoza. Like Newman, Stamos had begun his artistic career painting abstract biomorphic images based on his interest in the natural sciences but soon turned to muted colour abstractions. For Newman, Stamos succeeded in conveying the complexity of the world because, unlike other modern artists, Stamos sought neither to transcend nature in the search for spiritual purity nor to merely worship nature by making it 'the object of romantic contemplation'.[43] Instead, Stamos had absorbed the Spinozian lesson that nature was a productive force, full of the activity of modes that were an expression of substance. '[Stamos] redefines the pastoral experience as one of participation with the inner life of the natural phenomenon', explained Newman; 'One might say that instead of going to the rock, he comes

out of it'.[44] Newman too tried to paint this Spinozian vision of immanence. Prior to his artistic breakthrough in 1948, Newman had made clear his rejection of Mondrian's project. In *Euclidian Abyss* (1946-47), Newman referenced the founder of geometry and mocked his 'pure world of esoteric mathematical truth', which Newman compared to Mondrian's plastic forms.[45] Transcendence of the natural world, whether spiritual or mathematical, was in reality, according to Newman, an abyss, and he found his artistic response to this 'systematic theology' a year later with *Onement I*.[46] Newman redefined art as an expressive force, not in the sense of a representation of the world or of the artist's personality or dreams, but as a modal expression of a dynamic world. The stripe or zip of *Onement I* was such an expression, 'an organic thing that can contain feeling'.[47] The zip, according to Newman, was actualised difference, the expression of God's attribute of extension through a particular mode that emerged from the painted background of his canvas. In this sense, Newman's zip was not a metaphor or an abstract representation of a real figure. Similarly, the zip was not a gap, a line, a division, or, more pointedly, a void. Instead, the zip was a modal expression of the ceaseless folding, unfolding, and refolding of substance itself and, like all modes, possessed divine power.

Over the course of his career, Newman formed his zips in a multitude of ways. Sometimes Newman applied adhesive tape to the canvas first before he painted the surrounding field in order preserve a strip of bare canvas for the zip; others times he painted the zip directly on top of the completed background; or occasionally he painted the zip first between two pieces of tape and then applied colour to the field. Through these various methods, Newman was able to vary the style of his zips – some had sharp edges, some bled into the surrounding fields, and others wobbled down or across the canvas. Newman also frequently changed his painterly style when creating his zips, experimenting with differences in colour, texture, and sheen in order to create variations. In *Abraham* (1949), for instance, a vertical black zip running slightly offset from the centre of the canvas is distinguished from the greenish-black background by the subtle colour difference and sheen of the zip itself. In *Joshua* (1950), by contrast, the scarlet red zip running down the far left side of the canvas bleeds into the black background, its jagged edges formed not by tape but by a palette knife. Through these subtle variations, Newman ensured that the figure-ground relationship between the zip and the coloured field is never resolved, as the two or more elements of the work continue to vacillate. The zip as an extended thing remains perceptually a part of the larger field, safeguarding the wholeness of the entire abstraction instead of separating the elements.[48] In this regard, Newman saw his canvases an expression of the unity of substance and the plurality of its modes.

To invoke this sense of immanence, Newman titled his paintings with references to the Abrahamic tradition, not as a form of exegesis but as a gesture to the divine power expressed by his zips. 'I try in my titles,' he explained, 'to create a metaphor that will in some way correspond to what I think is the feeling in them and the meaning of it'.[49] Many of his titles were taken directly from the Bible (*Abraham*, *Covenant*, and *Eve*, for example), but most were infused with this Spinozian language of immanence. Examples include *Day One*, *Here I*, *Moment*, and *New II*, all of which reflected this idea of a universe in a constant state of becoming. Art for Newman was an expression of the infinite capacity of the universe to exceed any given expression, and, as a result, he continuously referenced the divine power inherent to humankind. In a 1947 essay, 'The First Man Was an Artist', Newman argued, in a moment of anthropological speculation, that the human impulse to create art existed prior to any other. He pointed to the Genesis story of Adam, which, according to Newman, provided a 'key to the human dream'.[50] In so arguing, Newman rewrote the Biblical story of the Fall of Man. For him, the Fall had been incorrectly interpreted as a tragedy when in fact the Fall was a form of salvation, which was revealed in full by Christ's cry of dereliction on the cross. Christ's death did not redeem humankind for the act that Adam had committed but instead repeated it. As Newman explained, 'Adam, by eating from the Tree of Knowledge, sought the creative life to be, like God, "a creator of world"'.[51] Through his cry of dereliction, Christ revealed the impotence of God-the-Father and gave humankind the possibility to empower themselves through participating in the immanent power of the Holy Spirit. Consequently, after he completed his *Stations* series, Newman added one more work with the simple title *Be*. His paintings, as 'an act of defiance' against any juridical authority, conveyed a political message.[52] For Newman, the anarchist revolution was already present throughout the endless folding and unfolding of substance that constituted the dynamic ontology Spinoza outlined.

THE ANARCHIST SUBLIME

Newman's zip paintings were part of the larger turn to abstraction in American art in the post-war years. The key moment that marked this transition was the 1950 protest led by Newman and other abstract artists over the exhibition, *American Painting Today 1950*, at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which did not feature any examples of abstract expressionism. Challenging an institution that was 'hostile to advanced art', the so-called Irascibles, a group formed by Adolph Gottlieb, Mark Rothko, and other abstract artists working in New York City, penned an open

letter to the Met that was published in the *New York Times* and then featured the following year in a *Life* magazine article.[53] Indeed, the Irascibles protest was part of a larger defence of abstract art. Throughout the 1950s, for instance, art critic Clement Greenberg defended its importance, arguing that the radical nature of the movement stemmed from the abandonment of any effort to portray external reality and from the subsequent reduction of painting to the relentless experimentation with the effects of paint on a canvas.[54] Modern painters, according to Greenberg, respected the flatness of the picture plane and thereby stopped reducing their medium to merely a mirror for the outside world, creating instead layered compositions of colour and form. As Greenberg explained, modern painters 'render every element, every part of the canvas equivalent', creating textured compositions woven 'into a tight mesh whose principle of formal unity is contained and recapitulated in each thread'.[55] In particular, Greenberg championed Jackson Pollock who had asserted the 'ambiguous flatness' of the painting canvas by creating 'all-over' compositions of 'enamel paint and blotches that he opened up and laced, interlaced, and unlaced'.[56] Accordingly, Pollock had pointed the way to the 'formal essence' of painting by making the aesthetic effect of his painting, through the 'relations of color, shape, and line' on his canvases, 'optical rather than pictorial'.[57] In doing so, Pollock had successfully separated painting as a visual experience from other artistic mediums.

Greenberg, moreover, saw a pointed political purpose to abstract art. He had followed the path of many American intellectuals in the 1930s, starting as a fellow traveller and then drifting to Trotskyism and finally Cold War liberalism as the crimes committed by Stalin became more apparent. Like other post-war intellectuals such as Dwight Macdonald and Lionel Trilling, Greenberg was scarred by his own intellectual journey and worried that the turmoil that had paved the way for authoritarianism in Europe and elsewhere had likewise begun to breed fanaticism in America. 'Industrialism', explained Greenberg, 'throws up problems that are as unprecedented in the cultural as in the economic and political sphere, and which demand solutions that cut to even deeper roots'.[58] Greenberg fretted about both the appeal of utopian illusions put forth by left-wing political movements and the waning psychological strength and emotional maturity of ordinary individuals in the face of such pressures. Staunchly anti-communist, Greenberg argued that the origins of mass political movements rested in the intolerable asphyxiation produced by the recent dislocations in American life, ranging from economic catastrophe to total war and other pressures. As Greenberg argued, 'advances in culture, no less than advances in science and industry, corrode the very society under whose aegis they are made possible'.[59] Group psychology had supposedly become the norm, as frightened

individuals who were unable to comprehend the world around them gave themselves over, both mentally and physically, to the party apparatus. The end result was the abdication of personal responsibility and subservience to a political movement that dispensed systematic certainties and committed murderous atrocities.

In this sense, Greenberg promoted aesthetic formalism not just to safeguard art from the corrupting hands of radical movements but to fashion a psychological defence against the lure of authoritarian thinking that had supposedly plunged the world into darkness. For Greenberg, the optical experience provided by abstract art was a therapeutic one that softened the domineering ethos of the modern world. In a 1959 *Saturday Evening Post* article, 'The Case for Abstract Art,' Greenberg described the proper way to approach formalist art, which, as he explained, provided a form of aesthetic experience that preserved certain humanist values in a rationalised society. He described the experience of modern art as a form of mimesis in which the viewer mentally imitated the internal dynamics of an artwork, following visually the contours of the brushstrokes and the rhythms of the abstract forms. As a form of 'disinterested contemplation,' this optical experience bore no relationship to experience garnered from any cognitive processes.[60] Instead, the viewer abandoned himself or herself, if only for a moment, to the particularities of the painting. 'You become all attention', explained Greenberg, 'which means that you become, for the moment, selfless and in a sense entirely identified with the object of your attention'.[61] By providing a temporary moment of abandonment, the aesthetic experience served to temper the hostile tendencies of the self through the temporary weakening of the rigid cognitive faculties that structured the world in strict categories. The viewer supposedly became less aggressive and less vulnerable to the retrograde temptations of the outside world and therefore less committed to the despotic ideologies of the twentieth century.

While Newman too fretted over the rise of totalitarian movements and accepted the understanding of the aesthetic experience of modern art as a transformative one, he bristled at the conservative approach of Greenberg, which he saw as limiting the affective capacity of art to merely the optical and as smothering, rather than enhancing, the viewer's sense of self. For Newman, art was designed to elevate the impulses of the self, not to temper them. Borrowing once again from Spinoza, Newman linked the phenomenological to the cosmological, hoping to use the affective properties of art to intensify the individual's relationship to and participation in the expressive capacity of the world. In 1947, Newman penned a response to a review by Clement Greenberg of the work of Adolph Gottlieb in which the critic, despite his high regard for recent American art, worried that the more 'metaphysical' connotations of the paintings of Gottlieb, Newman, and others

had taken priority over the more formal qualities. Newman argued that Greenberg had failed to recognise the decisive break that he and Gottlieb had made with European abstraction, which sought to convey 'the nature of mathematical law'.[62] In contrast to such 'established notions of plasticity,' Newman claimed his goal was 'to bring out from the nonreal, from the chaos of ecstasy something that evokes a memory of the emotion of an experienced moment of total reality'.[63] Newman searched for a vocabulary with which to describe the aesthetic experience he hoped his work evoked, and, by the time he painted *Onement I*, began to speak of the sublime nature of modern abstraction.

By invoking the concept of the sublime, Newman challenged the formalist notion of opticality. Newman, however, was not referencing traditional theories of the sublime. He did follow Edmund Burke in distinguishing between the beautiful and the sublime, the former referring to those objects of experience that produced a sense of pleasure due to their qualities of balance and delicacy and the latter referring to those objects that evoked a feeling of terror due to their vastness. Burke's understanding of the sublime was important because he was one of the first philosophers to focus less on the experienced object itself and more on the phenomenological experience of the subject. But Burke had little to say in support of the sublime experience itself, which he saw as overpowering in nature and as eliciting feelings of tension in frightened viewers. As Newman explained, Burke 'reads like a surrealist manual'.[64] But Newman also had little interest in Immanuel Kant's theory of the sublime either, which served as the foundation for formalist readings of abstract art. Like Burke, Kant focused on the subject of experience but, as per his philosophical project, shifted the focus away from the sensuous to the intellectual experience of the sublime. According to Kant, the experience of an expansive object overwhelmed the capacity of human sensibility to comprehend such magnitude, but such an experience in turn evoked the power of human reason to present an idea of the infinite in response. For Kant, then, the sublime referred to the expansive powers of the mind to move beyond phenomenological experience and to comprehend, through its super-sensible faculties, the mind's own autonomy. Kant's 'confusion' about the sublime, as Newman explained, was inherent in his philosophy overall, as Kant disconnected human freedom from any dependence on the empirical world.[65] In contrast, Newman put forward a theory of the sublime that both restored the fullness of bodily existence denied by Kant and translated affective experience into something more than the passivity imagined by Burke.

Once again, Newman relied on Spinoza in order to understand the importance of affect to art and to the human experience in general. In his *Ethics*, Spinoza

argued, following the logic of substance monism, that the mind as a mode of the attribute of thought and the body as a mode of the attribute of extension were parallel expressions of substance, both following from God's nature. Thought and extension, however, were inherently separate from one another, causally independent attributes of substance that expressed the nature of the same reality in parallel fashion. As Spinoza explained, 'each attribute of a substance must be conceived through itself'.[66] Ideas of the mind as modes of thought were independent from but of the same order and connection as physical bodies as modes of extension. But the fact that there was no causal interaction between these two attributes did not mean there was no correspondence, and Spinoza pointed to human beings, who were an expression of both thought (the mind) and extension (the body), as examples of this complexity. According to this notion of parallelism, every specific idea must by necessity have as its object a corresponding material thing, and in the case of human beings, the mind must have as its object the body. As such, what constituted the individual human being was the fact that the ideas of the mind were always of what happened to the body. Accordingly, the power of thinking paralleled the power of acting, as any bodily affect was accompanied by an idea of that affect in the mind.

By establishing this parallelism between mind and body, Spinoza rejected the Cartesian notion of the human body as a machine animated by an immaterial soul and affirmed the importance of bodily experience. As he explained, the human body as an extending thing continually encountered other bodies, which impacted or modified it, leading to a corresponding change of the idea of the body in the mind. The complexity of the human body, capable of both acting on other bodies and being acted upon, accounted accordingly for the complexity of the human mind. Such bodily encounters were what Spinoza described as affects. 'By affect', he explained, 'I understand affections of the body by which the body's power of acting is increased or diminished, aided or restrained, and at the same time, the ideas of these affections'.[67] According to Spinoza, affects were either passive or active. In some situations, the human body was subject to chance encounters and overwhelming forces, which produced a state of powerlessness. Lacking any adequate knowledge of the true causes of such forces, the individual was subject to passions such as sadness and hope that left each passive. Conversely, in more agreeable and understandable encounters, the individual experienced joy that led to an increase in the power to take self-directed action. Thus, affects were either driven by external or internal causes, resulting in either states of passivity or activity. Spinoza referred to the latter state as the drive for self-preservation or *conatus*, that is, the effort to transform passions into actions

by maintaining joyful encounters. 'We strive to affirm', explained Spinoza, 'concerning ourselves and what we love, whatever we imagine to affect with joy ourselves or what we love'.[68] Spinoza was not promoting some sterile form of autonomy but instead linking the capacity to act with the increased capacity to be affected in positive ways.

Spinoza encouraged human beings to dwell fully within affective experiences that restored a sense of individual power, and Newman hoped his artworks offered such an experience. Reflecting on his *Stations* series, Newman used Spinozian language to describe his own experience with his paintings. 'Just as I affect the canvas', he explained, 'so does the canvas affect me'.[69] Newman, like Spinoza, dispensed with traditional accounts of individual agency offered by liberalism that posited freedom as the possession of autonomous individuals. If the mind was only aware of the body through the ideas of changes to the body, then the capacity to know oneself was dependent upon the capacity to be affected by other bodies. Agency, in this sense, was a process through which the conative strivings of the individual were strengthened through positive affective encounters with other extended things. Affects, therefore, were not fleeting or immediate sensations but emotional responses that served to orient the affected individual toward the world in a certain way and to help or hinder any active response. As Newman explained, 'my concern is with the fullness that comes from emotion, not with its initial explosion, or its emotional fallout, or the glow of its expenditure'.[70] When such affects were positively understood and enjoyed, the result was an increase in the conative power of the individual. For Newman, as for Spinoza, the amelioration of suffering occurred not through divine intervention but through the intensification of a productive relationship with the world.

This notion became the basis for Newman's understanding of the aesthetic experience. Newman rejected notions of the picture plane as a field into which the gaze of the viewer penetrated (as was the case with traditional representational painting) or as a visual field where the viewer mimetically traced the undulations of the all-over composition (as with abstract painting). Instead, Newman saw the aesthetic experience as an encounter between the viewer and the painting as a distinct object. As he noted in relationship to the artistic breakthrough he had made with *Onement I*, 'the painting itself had a life of its own'.[71] Newman borrowed an example from Spinoza to explain this aesthetic principle. Spinoza described an active encounter as one between two human beings who experienced a general sense of agreement or openness between them that produced a feeling of joy in both, which in turn aided in their power of action. Newman argued his paintings as objects to be encountered functioned

the same way. 'It's no different really, from one's feeling a relation to meeting another person', he described; 'One has a reaction to the person physically'.[72] The aesthetic experience of his paintings was designed to be an affective one in which viewers were not drawn into the canvas but instilled with the positive affects of joy and pleasure that restored their awareness of their own bodies and their own sense of self. Freedom, in this sense, was found only through encounters with others, which undermined any claim to some pure autonomy but which served nonetheless to empower the self.

To help realise such an encounter, Newman gave specific instructions to his viewers as to the proper mode of address. In his one-person show at the Betty Parsons Gallery in 1951, Newman posted instructions. 'There is a tendency to look at large pictures from a distance', he explained to visitors; 'The large pictures in this exhibition are intended to be seen from a short distance'.[73] In a famous photograph from 1958, Newman and a friend posed in front of his painting *Cathedra*, standing within several feet of the expansive work. From this position, the viewer, according to Newman, was in the proper position to encounter and to be properly affected by his work. Newman's zips served to unify his canvas and to ensure that the viewer was not visually swept away by the coloured expanses of his paintings. Instead, the zips, as a form of extension, asserted the solidity of the painting itself. In this way, Newman offered a different kind of visual experience than that proffered by Greenberg. Newman's vertical zips served to stop the viewer's gaze from merely wandering around the horizontal expanse of the canvas (in contrast to the visual experience, for example, of Pollock's web-like compositions) and instead to make his or her gaze move both longitudinally up and down the zip and latitudinally as the zip emerged from the surrounding field. As he explained, 'my painting should make one feel, I hope, full and alive in a spatial dome of 180 degrees going in all four directions'.[74] For Newman, the aesthetic experience was a dynamic one in which the viewer established an affective and empowering relationship with the painting.

Such an experience had political import for Newman as well. Like Greenberg who aligned his formalism with Cold War liberalism, Newman linked his own aesthetic vision with his politics too. Reflecting his reading of Spinoza, Newman offered a theory of the sublime as an aesthetic experience that was tied to his anarchist principles. In a 1948 essay, 'The Sublime Is Now', Newman argued that the 'sublime content' of modern art stemmed from 'our relationship to the absolute emotions', his translation of Spinoza's notion of affect.[75] For Newman, the sublime did not refer to the creative power of a transcendent God or the grandeur of a world separate from human existence. Moreover, the sublime was

neither an isolating experience as Kant maintained nor a self-shattering experience in the Burkean sense. Instead, the sublime contributed to humankind's 'sense of being aware'.[76] The affective encounter of art was not a transportive or transcendent one but, if anything, an empowering one. As Newman explained, 'I hope that my painting has the impact of giving someone, as it did me, the feeling of his own totality, of his own separateness, of his own individuality, and at the same time of his connection to others, who are also separate'.[77] In this sense, the sublime experience that Newman described was closer to Spinoza's notion of intuition. Instead of encouraging the flight from bodily existence, Newman, like Spinoza, argued that affective experience helped to increase the power of the individual to act and, equally important, to recognise, as a form of intuitive knowledge, that the individual self, like all extended beings and all thinking things, was a mode of substance.[78]

Newman's sublime affirmed the two key principles of anarchist thought he had garnered from Spinoza and Kropotkin. Art, according to Newman, was not a form of confession or representation. Instead, art was a modal expression of substance that revealed the plenitude of being. Newman demonstrated this most forcefully in his 1950-51 painting *Vir Heroicus Sublimis*, an eight-by-eighteen foot canvas that features five thin vertical stripes against an expansive red field. Like his other paintings, the zips serve to anchor the viewer against the intensity of the red paint in order to prevent the viewer's gaze from being absorbed by the colour. Newman was not trying to draw the viewer visually into his canvas but to give the experience of the infinite power of expression that constituted the essence of substance and of which humankind was a part. As he explained, 'the *fullness thereof* is what I am involved in'.[79] Moreover, he was also linking, like Spinoza and Kropotkin had done, freedom to the outcome of positive affective encounters (man, sublime). Newman refused to tie liberation merely to state functioning, utopian planning, or religious doctrine. Instead, he tied it to the creativity of social forces and forms of mutual aid and affection. In this way, Newman's anarchist sublime pointed toward a form of solidarity that did not extinguish the boundaries or activity of the individual self. Over the years, the anarchist aesthetic outlined by Newman would influence the work of later American artist such as Donald Judd and Allan Kaprow who, albeit in very different ways, borrowed Newman's notion of art as an affective experience that increased the conative striving of the individual and that challenged authoritative modes of being. This history, however, one that links post-war American modernism to anarchist thought, has yet to be written.

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NOTES

1. Barnett Newman, 'The True Revolution Is Anarchist!', in *Barnett Newman: Selected Writings and Interviews*, John P. O'Neill (ed.), (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p50, p45, hereafter, *BN:SWI*.
2. See, for instance, the essays in *Reconsidering Barnett Newman*, Melissa Ho (ed.), (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2005).
3. Newman, 'Interview with Lane Slate', in *BN:SWI*, p251.
4. See, for example, Michael Leja, *Reframing Abstract Expressionism: Subjectivity and Painting in the 1940s*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).
5. See, for instance, Meyer Schapiro, 'The Liberating Quality of Avant-Garde Art', *Art News* 56, no. 4 (Summer 1957): 36-42; and Irving Sandler, *The Triumph of American Painting: A History of Abstract Expressionism*, (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970).
6. Harold Rosenberg, 'American Action Painters', in *The Tradition of the New,* (New York: Horizon Press, 1959).
7. See Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War*, Arthur Goldhammer (trans), (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983); and Frances Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters*, (New York: The New Press, 2000).
8. See David Weir, *Anarchy and Culture: The Aesthetic Politics of Modernism*, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997); and Allan Antliff, *Anarchist Modernism: Art, Politics, and the First American Avant-Garde*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).
9. See Allan Antliff, *Anarchy and Art: From the Paris Commune to the Fall of the Berlin Wall*, (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2007).
10. On postwar artists and anarchism, see Tyrus Miller, *Singular Examples: Artistic Politics and the Neo-Avant-Garde*, (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2009).
11. I am referring to those avant-garde forms of modernism that, according to Peter Burger, sought to overcome the division between art and life that characterised the institutional forms of high modernism associated with T.S. Eliot and others. See Peter Burger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).
12. Newman, 'Open Letter to William A.M. Burden', in *BN:SWI*, p39.
13. Newman, 'On the Need for Political Action by Men of Culture', in *BN:SWI*, p8.
14. Newman, 'The True Revolution Is Anarchist!, p44.

15. Ibid, p45.
16. Ibid.
17. Newman, 'The Fourteen Stations of the Cross, 1958-1966', in *BN:SWI*, p190.
18. On Newman's background, see Thomas Hess, *Barnett Newman*, (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1971), pp19-29.
19. Newman, 'The Fourteen Stations of the Cross, 1958-1966', p190.
20. See Hess, p33.
21. Newman, 'The Ideographic Picture', in *BN:SWI*, p108.
22. Newman, 'Frontiers of Space', in *BN:SWI*, p249.
23. Newman, 'Interview with David Sylvester', in *BN:SWI*, p255.
24. Newman, 'Interview with Emile de Antonio', in *BN:SWI*, p306.
25. Newman, 'Frontiers of Space', p249.
26. Newman, 'The Fourteen Stations of the Cross, 1958-1966', p189.
27. Ibid, p190.
28. Benedict de Spinoza, *Ethics*, Edwin Curley (ed. and trans), (New York: Penguin Books, 1996), p10.
29. Newman, 'The Fourteen Stations of the Cross, 1958-1966', p190.
30. Spinoza, p18.
31. Newman, 'Interview with Emile de Antonio', p308.
32. Quoted in Richard Shiff, 'Newman's Time', in *Reconsidering Barnett Newman*, p161.
33. Newman, 'The True Revolution Is Anarchist!', p51.
34. Peter Kropotkin, 'Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Ideal', in *Anarchism: A Collection of Revolutionary Writings*, Roger N. Baldwin (ed.), (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 2002), p117.
35. Ibid, p142.
36. Newman, 'The True Revolution Is Anarchist!', p51.
37. See Carel Blotkamp, *Mondrian: The Art of Destruction*, (London: Reaktion Books, Ltd., 1994).
38. Mondrian outlined his aesthetic and religious philosophy in 'Plastic Art and Pure Plastic Art', in *Plastic Art and Pure Plastic Art and Other Essays*, (San Francisco: Wittenborn Art Books, 2008).
39. Ibid, p21.
40. Barnett Newman, 'The Plasmic Image', in *BN:SWI*, p141.
41. Newman, 'Interview with David Sylvester', p256.
42. Newman, 'The Plasmic Image', p140.
43. Barnett Newman, 'Stamos', in *BN:SWI*, p109.
44. Ibid.
45. Newman, 'Plasmic Image', p141.
46. Newman, 'Interview with David Sylvester', p256.

47. Barnett Newman, 'Remarks at Artists' Sessions at Studio 35', in *BN:SWI*, p241.
48. Newman, 'Interview with Emile de Antonio', p306.
49. Newman, 'Interview with David Sylvester', p258.
50. Barnett Newman, 'The First Man Was an Artist', in *BN:SWI*, p159.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid, p160.
53. 'Eighteen Painters Boycott Metropolitan', *New York Times*, (May 22, 1950).
54. On Greenberg's aesthetics, see Caroline Jones, *Eyesight Alone: Clement Greenberg's Modernism and the Bureaucratization of the Senses*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).
55. Clement Greenberg, 'The Crisis of the Easel Picture', in *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume 2*, John O'Brian (ed.), (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), p224.
56. Clement Greenberg, 'American-Type Painting', in *Clement Greenberg, Volume 3* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p225.
57. Clement Greenberg, 'Abstract and Representational', in ibid, pp190-1.
58. Clement Greenberg, 'The Plight of Our Culture', in ibid, p144.
59. Clement Greenberg, 'Towards a Newer Laocoon', in *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume 1*, John O'Brian (ed.), (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), p22.
60. Clement Greenberg, 'The Case for Abstract Art', in *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume 4*, John O'Brian (ed.), (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p75.
61. Ibid, p81.
62. Barnett Newman, 'Response to Clement Greenberg', in *BN:SWI*, p163.
63. Ibid.
64. Barnett Newman, 'The Sublime Is Now', in *BN:SWI*, p171.
65. Ibid.
66. Spinoza, p6.
67. Ibid, p70.
68. Ibid, p83.
69. Newman, 'The Fourteen Stations of the Cross, 1958-1966', p189.
70. Newman, 'Frontiers of Space', p248.
71. Newman, 'Interview with David Sylvester', p256.
72. Ibid, p259.
73. Newman, 'Brief Statement', in *BN:SWI*, p178.
74. Newman, 'Frontiers of Space', p250.
75. Newman, 'The Sublime Is Now', p173.
76. Newman, 'Interview with David Sylvester', p258.

77. Ibid.
78. On the relation between art and affective experience, see Charles Altieri, *The Particulars of Rapture: An Aesthetics of the Affects*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003).
79. Newman, 'Frontiers of Space', p249.