

“The world has changed less since the time of Jesus Christ than it has in the last thirty years.”

Charles Peguy (1913)

Quote found in Robert Hughes book: The Shock of the New

“Constant change is here to stay.”

Rush – New World Man

“Signals”

# The Emerging Crises of the 21 Century

- Education: Accelerating rates of change and information at our fingertips  
– What is worth knowing? The cutting edge move so fast, much information becomes obsolete in the time it take to understand it.
- Extreme fragmentation of canon and authority, instant access to multiple frameworks: What is the value of received knowledge? How does one evaluate creative work in this environment? Does the concept of Art still have any meaning?
- Physiological: The Multiverse, life from scratch, custom life forms, human computer hybrids, The “Post-Human Condition”, highly intelligent machines, catastrophic nanotechnology, extraterrestrial life, robots rights  
– who are we and what is our place in the universe (or multiverse)?
- Extreme breakdown and/or fragmentation in religious frameworks and high-level consensus narratives in which we formally found meaning and context for our lives.

Learning from the past, while building the future.

# Einstein and the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

- Einstein (Quantum Mechanics): “On a Heuristic Point of View Concerning the Production and Transformation of Light.” 1905
- The end of determinism? Probability.
- Special (1905) and General Relativity (1915): Overturning Newton and absolute time and space. The end of the ether. Time as the fourth dimension. Temporal space.
- Quantum Mechanics

“For nearly three centuries, the mechanical universe of Isaac Newton, based on absolute certainties and laws, had formed the psychological foundation of the Enlightenment and the social order, with a belief in causes and effects, order, even duty. Now came a view of the universe, known as relativity, in which space and time were dependent on frames of reference. This apparent dismissal of certainties, an abandonment of faith in the absolute, seemed vaguely heretical to some people, perhaps even godless. “It formed a knife,” historian Paul Johnson wrote in his sweeping history of the twentieth century, *Modern Times*, “to help cut society adrift from its traditional moorings.”

-Einstein by Walter Isaacson

“For the essence of the early modernist experience, between 1880 and 1914, was not the specific invention – nobody was much affected by Einstein until Hiroshima; a prototype in a lab or an equation on a blackboard could not, as such, bear on the man in the street. But what did emerge from the growth of scientific and technical discovery, as the age of steam passed into the age of electricity, was the sense of an accelerated rate of change in all areas of human discourse, including art. From now on the rules would quaver, the fixed canons of knowledge fail, under pressure of new experience and the demand for new forms to contain it.”

Robert Hughes in *The Shock of the New*

“Cage was the first to enter a new and largely uncharted area of musical experience, where literally anything seemed permissible and where, as a consequence, the composer faced an apparently unrestricted range of choices... In fact, perhaps Cage’s most far-reaching perception in the 1950s was his assumption that there were no longer any shared guidelines, that each composer had to make entirely personal – and thus essentially ‘arbitrary’ – choices.”

Robert P. Morgan in *Twentieth-Century Music*

# John Cage

He was born in Los Angeles on September 5, 1912.

Spent a year in Europe exploring various arts.

In his early twenties, he studied with Henry Cowell and Schoenberg.

Schoenberg inspired Cage to devote his life to composition.

In a 1937 talk entitled, “The future of Music: Credo,” Cage stated that music is an “organization of sound” and that the “present method of writing music, principally those which employ harmony and its reference to particular steps in the field of sound, will be inadequate for the composer, who will be faced with the entire field of sound.”

# John Cage

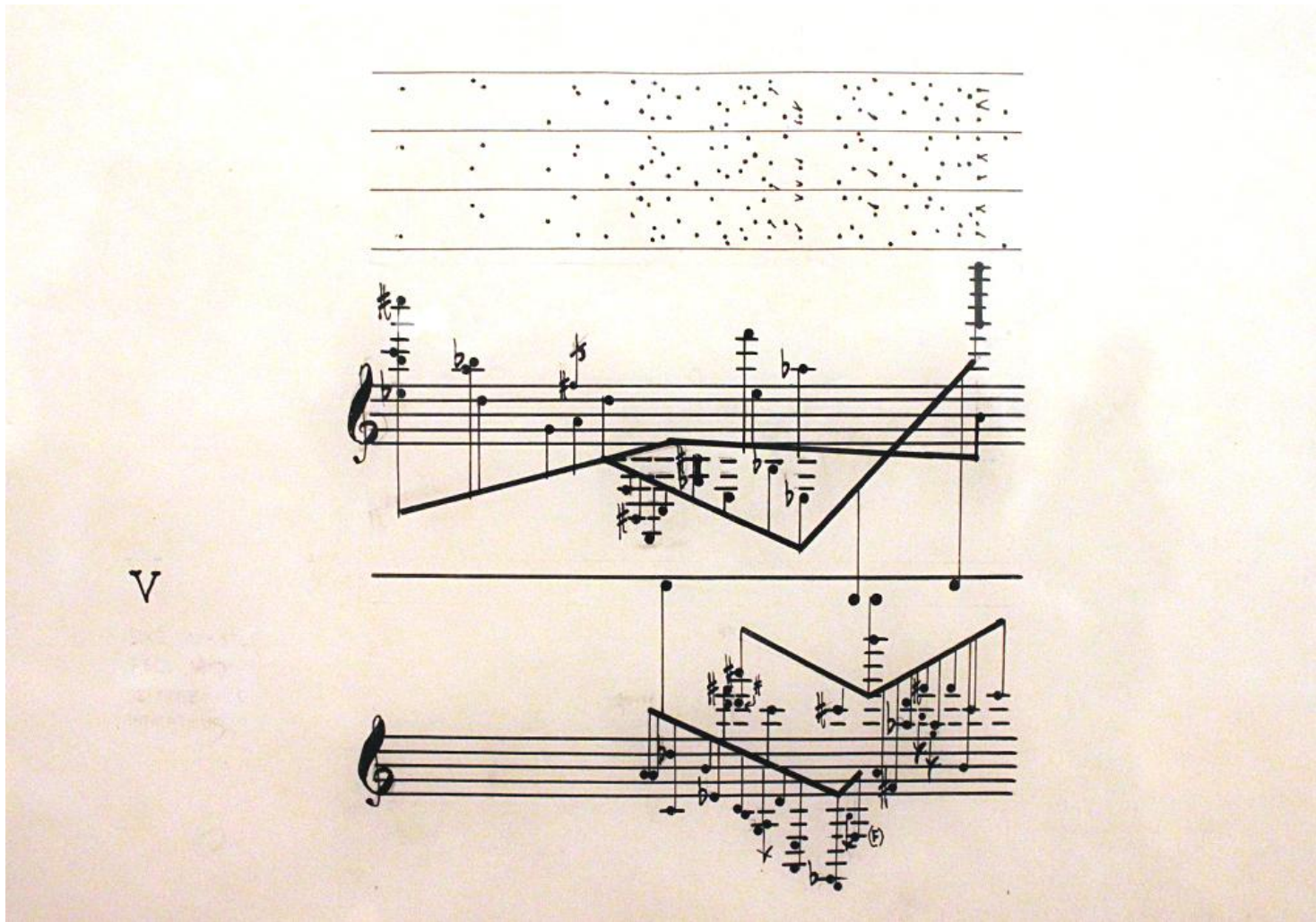
- Cage conceptualized musical form as a container in which he could insert whatever sounds he wished.
- Cage believed that silence was just as usable as sound.
- “I have nothing to say and I am saying it and that is poetry as I need it.”
- Each sound existed on its own. It did not emerge from the sound that preceded it, nor implied the sound that followed it.
- Cage: The composer must “give up the desire to control sound, clear his mind of music, and set about discovering means to let sounds be themselves rather than vehicles for man-made theories or expressions of human sentiments.”
- By 1951, Cage decided that the best way to achieve this, was by using indeterminacy to remove the control of the composer.

# Cage and Visual Art

- Cage's graphic notations were considered visually interesting enough to be displayed in a New York Museum.
- In the early 1940s Cage began to collaborate with modern dancer, Merce Cunningham. Cage frequently toured with Cunningham's dance company and was its musical director.
- [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NLOWy3ys8Ag&feature=player\\_detailpage](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NLOWy3ys8Ag&feature=player_detailpage)
- Cage blurred the distinction between music and theater. (John Cage – Water Walk)
- [http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_detailpage&v=SSulycqZH-U](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=SSulycqZH-U)
- In the early 1950, Cage, and associates (Morton Feldman, Earle Brown, and Christian Wolff) decided that they could learn more from visual artists (primarily abstract expressionist in New York) than from other composers.
- In the final decade and a half of his life, Cage began applying indeterminacy to printmaking, drawing, and painting (John Cage: Every day is a Good Day).



75 Stones, aquatint on smoked paper, 1989



Page 18 of Solo for Piano from Concerto for Piano and Orchestra 1958