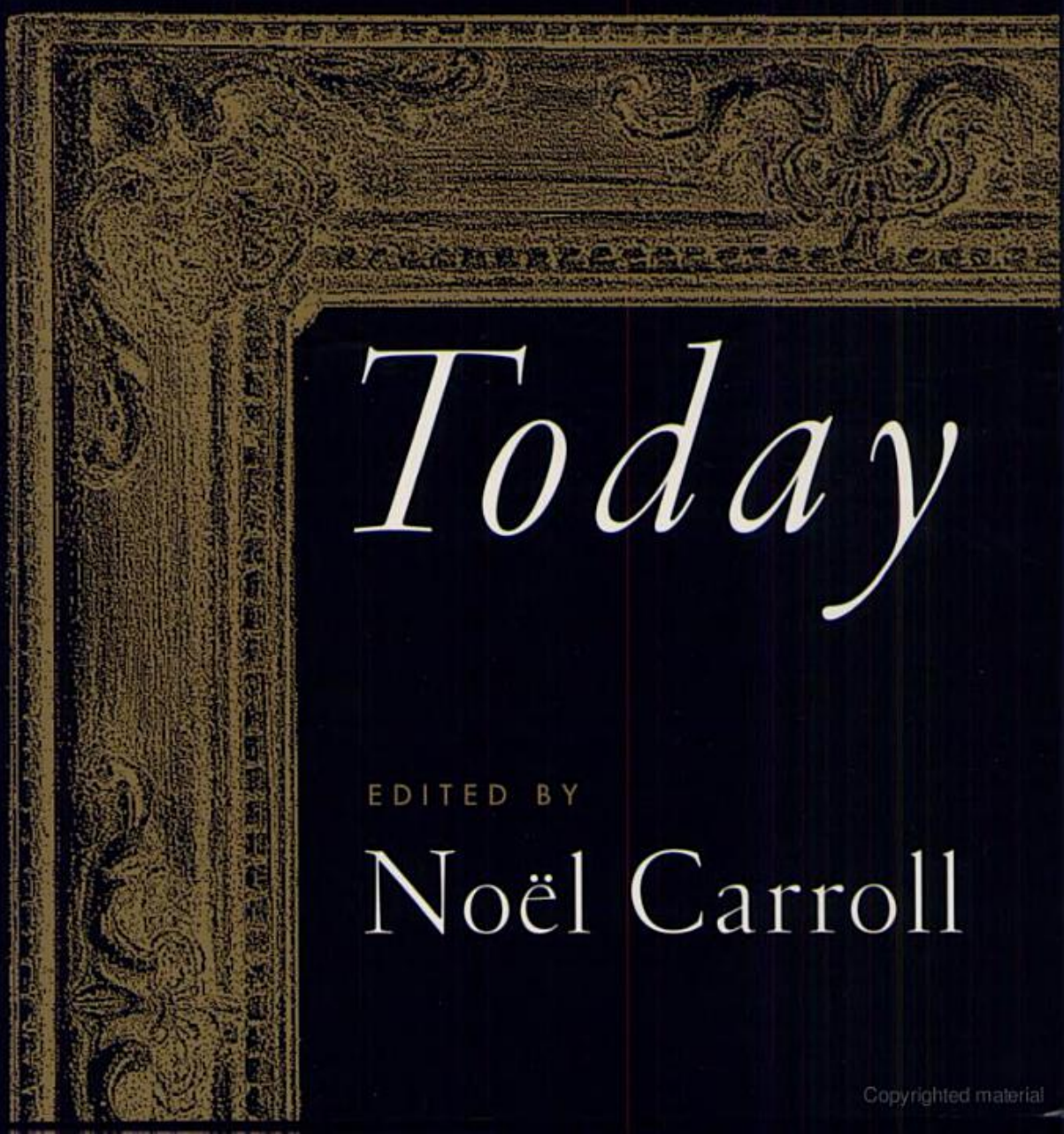
Theories of ART *Today*



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Introduction

NOËL CARROLL

According to the canonical account of the history of the analytic philosophy of art, a great deal of twentieth-century aesthetics has been preoccupied with defining art. In the earlier half of this century, various formalist and expression theories (aka definitions) flourished, perhaps most notably those of Clive Bell and R. G. Collingwood. By mid-century, often under the influence of Wittgenstein, a series of arguments were advanced—by Morris Weitz and William Kennick, among others—that attempted to demonstrate that a definition of art (in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions) was impossible. As a result of these "neo-Wittgensteinian" considerations, a de facto moratorium on definitions held sway for nearly a decade, though its influence has lasted even longer. For example, when Monroe Beardsley published his landmark treatise *Aesthetics* in 1958, it contained no definition of art, leading many to speculate that maybe he felt no pressure to supply one, given the prominence of the neo-Wittgensteinian dispensation.[1]

The neo-Wittgensteinian brief—that art cannot be defined—seemed fairly conclusive initially. But as is the way of all philosophical arguments, it was soon contested. Arthur Danto's seminal article "The Artworld" appeared to argue that artworks have at least one necessary condition—that they be enfranchised by art theories.[2] Then George Dickie developed the notion of the artworld with a different emphasis, and this resulted in the formulation of various versions of his institutional theory of art, culminating in his theory of the art circle.[3] The theories of Dickie and Danto, and, in a related vein, the work of Richard Wollheim and Joseph Margolis, reopened the prospects for defining art, generating a large literature in the seventies and into the eighties. Certainly during that period, articles on this topic were among the most abundant in the literature of the philosophy of art.

Many of these articles were critical, enumerating various alleged flaws

in the theories of Dickie and Danto. But inasmuch as the theories of Dickie and Danto appeared to put to rest the strongest objections of the neo-Wittgensteinians, Dickie and Danto paved the way for others to try their hand at defining art. Marcia Muelder Eaton, Monroe Beardsley, Terry Diffey, Harold Osborne, Jerrold Levinson, Jeffrey Wieand, Richard Eldridge, Lucien Krukowski, Susan Feagin, James Carney, Richard Lind, William Tolhurst, and Robert Stecker, among others, began to field definitions of art, many of which are summarized and carefully examined in Stephen Davies' admirable book *Definitions of Art*.[4]

Since the early nineties (and perhaps earlier), interest in the question "What is art?" has slackened somewhat. It no longer commands the dominant position that it held in the relevant journals in the seventies through the eighties. Other topics, such as the philosophy of music, have come to rival and maybe to surpass it. But even if the question of the definition of art is no longer the biggest game in town, it is still a very lively one. Refinements and criticisms of existing approaches continue to be produced at a regular pace, new theories are being formulated even now, and a better sense of what is involved in the debate is continually evolving. Though no view commands the field at present, progress on the problem is being made.

It is in this context that the present volume came to be. In it, I have assembled original contributions by some of the major players and by representatives of the leading positions in the ongoing conversation about the definition of art. But in this anthology the authors do not simply rehash old theories. In addition to refinements and adjustments of received views, the reader will also find new topics addressed—such as the relevance of feminism and tribal art to the definition of art.

Not since Lars Aagaard-Mogensen's *Culture and Art* has an anthology like this one—devoted to theories of art—been published.[5] This volume, however, differs from *Culture and Art*. Whereas that book heralded the rebirth of the issue of defining art as a pressing topic for philosophical research, this volume continues a well-established discussion. Now, more than twenty years later, what was at stake in the debate dramatically posed by *Culture and Art* is becoming gradually more focused. The dialectical arena has become more complicated. With the great benefit of hindsight, more precise distinctions are being drawn, subtler conceptions of the project of definition are being proposed, and more detailed arguments are afield. The progress in evidence in this volume is incremental rather than monumental. But it is to be hoped that in its own way, *Theories of Art Today* will provide the solid footing for the next step in the debate.

SOME DIALECTICAL BACKSTORY: THE NEO-WITTGENSTEINIAN CHALLENGE

As already indicated, the issue of the definition of art takes shape in large measure as a reaction to that species of mid-century skepticism that I have called neo-Wittgensteinism. Art theory of the end of the century is still laboring in the shadows of the fifties, since had it not been for the neo-Wittgensteinians the temptation to define art might never have appeared so inviting. For nothing taunts a philosopher so well as the claim that something is impossible. It quickens the philosophical mind, turning dogmatic slumber into insomnia.

According to thinkers like Morris Weitz, William Kennick, and Paul Ziff, art could not be defined.[6] Various considerations were cited on behalf of this view, for example the past failure of previous theories of art and the fact that artworks belong to such diverse genres that the effort to find a common feature among them seems either futile or likely to come up with something vacuous. However, that past attempts failed does not guarantee a similar fate for future ones. Moreover, though the diversity of art may tax the wit of prospective definers, that in nowise shows that the task is beyond human ingenuity. No one can pronounce the race over before the last candidate is assessed and found faulty.

Nevertheless, deeper considerations than these were also suggested. And, since I think that these were most forcefully articulated by Morris Weitz in his classic, much-reprinted article "The Role of Theory in Aesthetics," it is to this essay that I turn in order to adumbrate the neo-Wittgensteinian arguments mounted against art theory.[7]

On Weitz's view, art theory in the first half of the twentieth century, including his own, was primarily concerned to define art (by which Weitz meant: to provide necessary conditions that are conjointly sufficient for calling something an artwork, i.e., to provide a real definition of art). When Clive Bell identified art with significant form or when Susanne K. Langer claimed that an artwork is a form of feeling, they were, according to Weitz, proposing a real definition of the conditions required of anything that is called artwork in the classificatory sense. But, Weitz argued, it is impossible to compose successfully a real definition of art.

Weitz offered, it seems to me, two major arguments in favor of this conclusion: the open concept argument and the family resemblance argument. Regarding the open concept argument, Weitz wrote:

> "Art" itself is an open concept. New conditions (cases) have constantly arisen and will undoubtedly constantly arise; new art forms, new movements will emerge, which will demand decisions on the part of those interested, usually professional

critics, as to whether the concept should be extended or not. Aestheticians may lay down conditions but never necessary and sufficient ones for the correct application of the concept. With "art" its conditions of application can never be exhaustively enumerated since new cases can always be envisaged or created by artists, or even nature, which would call for a decision on someone's part to extend or to close the old or invent a new concept.

What I am arguing, then, is that the very expansive, adventurous character of art, its ever-present changes and novel creations makes it logically impossible to ensure any set of defining properties.[8]

What Weitz appears to be arguing here is that art—the practice of art—is always, at least in principle, open to revolutionary change. This is not to say that art *must* always be expansive. Some artistic traditions will value stasis over change—a classical Chinese painter may be valued more for his approximation of a preexisting, traditional paradigm than for his innovations. In fact, innovation may be discouraged in certain traditions. Art is not required to be original in order to count as art. Nevertheless, the practice of art—or our concept of the practice—is such that it must accommodate the permanent possibility of change, expansion, or novelty. But if this is so, Weitz argues, then the attempt to arrive at a set of necessary conditions that are conjointly sufficient for determining art status is incompatible with a conception of the practice of art as that which affords the permanent possibility of change, expansion, or novelty (since conditions, presumably, place limits on the range of innovation).

Setting out Weitz's argument as a *reductio ad absurdum,* we may interpret it roughly in the following way:[9]

1. Art can be expansive.
2. Therefore, art must be open to the permanent possibility of change, expansion, and novelty.
3. If something is art, then it must be open to the permanent possibility of change, expansion, and novelty.
4. If something is open to the permanent possibility of change, expansion, and novelty, then it cannot be defined.
5. Suppose that art can be defined.
6. Therefore, art is not open to the permanent possibility of change, expansion, and novelty.
7. Therefore, art is not art.

Moreover, since premise 5 appears to be the culprit in eliciting the contradiction here, let us infer that (5) is false. In other words, the supposition that art can be defined is incompatible with the concept of art.

In addition to the open concept argument, Weitz has another arrow in his quiver. As William Kennick points out, we are able to tell art from non-

art in the ordinary course of affairs. How do we do this?
is that we possess a definition (a theory) of art, if only implicitly, that enables us to sort the art from the nonart. Here, supposing that we have such a definition has explanatory value—it explains how we go about classifying some things as art and others as nonart. So one argument in favor of there being a definition of art is that it has explanatory power. One might endorse the notion that art possesses a definition on the grounds that it is a hypothesis to the best explanation.

But is it a good explanation at all and/or are there better explanations? For if it is an implausible explanation and/or if there are better explanations to be had, then the case for postulating that there is a definition of art will be undermined. This is where the family resemblance notion enters the picture.

Kennick points out that not all concepts are ruled by real definitions, as does Weitz with his allusions to Wittgenstein's analysis of "game." So, why then suppose that the use of "art" is governed by a definition? And if it is, why is the definition so persistently hard to articulate? Surely, it cannot be a very reliable hypothesis that we sort the art from the nonart by means of a definition, if no one can convincingly formulate what the definition is. Moreover, if the application of "art," like so many other concepts, can be explained without resorting to the dubious hypothesis of a definition, why not opt for the superior explanation?

But what is the superior hypothesis? Citing the authority of Wittgenstein, Kennick and Weitz talk about family resemblances. When confronted with a new case about which we want to know whether it is art or not, we consider it in light of things already adjudged to be art and ask whether or not the new candidate appreciably resembles paradigmatic examples of what we are already convinced are artworks. Is Spalding Gray's *Swimming to Cambodia* like *The Tempest* (and other paradigmatic artworks) and in how many respects? And, likewise, does Yvonne Rainer's *Trio A* appreciably resemble Fokine's *Les Sylphides* (and other paradigms)? If the points of similarity in cases like these mount, we are inclined to decide to categorize the new works as artworks. This is putatively how many concepts function. This is how Weitz and Kennick hypothesize "art" works. Moreover, this approach segues nicely with the desideratum that art is an open concept—that is, open to the permanent possibility of change, expansion, and novelty.

The family resemblance approach differs sharply from the definitional approach. For there are no similarities between new candidates and the paradigms (and descendants of the paradigms) that are necessary and/or sufficient for counting a candidate to be an artwork. Furthermore, the similarities relevant to calling one candidate an "artwork" may be differ-

ent from the similarities that form the basis for calling another candidate an "artwork." *Swimming to Cambodia* may be an artwork because, like *The Tempest,* it involves acting and a narrative, whereas we may decide that *Trio A* is art because, like *Les Sylphides,* it compels intense concentration on movement for its own sake. Thus, in contrast to the real definition approach, Weitz maintains:

> If we actually look and see what we call "art," we will also find no common properties—only strands of similarities. Knowing what art is is not apprehending some manifest or latent essence but being able to recognize, describe and explain those things we call "art" in virtue of these similarities.[10]

That is, the definitional approach rests on tracking uniquely common properties. The family resemblance idea depends upon noticing strands—discontinuous but interweaving strands—of resemblances. The family resemblance approach reveals how it is possible for us to sort the art from the nonart without invoking the putative, but arguably unavailable, notion of uniquely common features.

In the past, the open concept argument and the family resemblance argument have seemed formidable to many. However, subjected to scrutiny, they appear less persuasive today than they did in the fifties. Moreover, it is the waning of these arguments that has made the contemporary interest in defining art historically possible.

A major problem with Weitz's open concept argument appears to be that throughout his discussion of traditional theories of art, Weitz is talking about the attempt to craft necessary and sufficient conditions for what counts as an *artwork;* but to show that this is impossible, he then adverts to the *practice* of art, the very concept of which he says must be open to the permanent possibility of expansion. Thus, Weitz is arguing that a closed concept of *artwork* is incompatible with an open concept of the *practice* of art, that is, with our practices of creating artworks over time—from generation to generation, so to speak. But here the levels of generality of the two concepts of art ("art" as artwork, "art" as practice), though related, are hardly the same. Why must an allegedly closed concept of art in the first (artwork) sense be incompatible with the putatively open concept of art in the second (practice) sense? Weitz doesn't really say explicitly. Moreover, his failure to keep these two concepts of art apart suggests that an equivocation may be afoot in his argument.

One way to pinpoint the problem may be to refer back to my partial quasi-formalization of Weitz's open concept argument. The conclusion is that art is not art. But "art" is not being used univocally here, so there is no genuine contradiction at issue. No real incompatibility is being demonstrated.

In premise 3, when we say that something is *art* only if it is open to the permanent possibility of change, expansion, and novelty, we are talking about the *practice of art*. But in premise 5, when we suppose, in accordance with the context of Weitz's article, that *art* can be defined, we are talking about artworks (i.e., the issue is whether the concept of *work of art* can be defined). So, if we apply this insight to the conclusion of the argument, removing the ambiguity in Weitz's text and our earlier interpretation thereof, there is no formal contradiction in (7). For there is no inconsistency in saying that an artwork is not the practice of art—or that the concept of art is not the concept of the practice of art. The conditions that differentiate artworks from nonartworks may differ consistently from the conditions that differentiate the practice of art from other practices (like religion).

Why suppose, as Weitz does, that there is any real tension here? Let us grant that the practice of art is open to the permanent possibility of change, expansion, and innovation. What does that have to do with the conditions requisite for the status of artwork? Talk of the permanent possibility of expansion makes sense only with reference to the practice of art; it makes no sense to say of completed artworks that they need to be open to the permanent possibility of change and innovation. If anything is open in Weitz's sense, it is the practice of art. In general, it would be a category error to maintain that completed artworks must be open to change (save perhaps in the special case of environmental-process artworks). Thus, the open concept argument fails because it equivocates on the relevant concepts of art in play—it fails to find a logical connection between definitions of art and of the concept of the practice of art.

This is an abstract counterargument. Some may remain unpersuaded, haunted by the residual suspicion that somehow if we "lay down" necessary and sufficient conditions for artworks, we may be stipulating limitations on the kinds of things that artists can do—on the kinds of experiments and innovations they may introduce into the practice. But there is no reason in principle to suppose this. That artworks might possess defining properties does not logically preclude the invention of new works that instantiate the relevant conditions in innovative, unexpected, and unforeseeable ways. A definition of science would not preclude innovative, unexpected, and unforeseeable research.

Moreover, this logical point is borne out in the theories of art that have been proposed by Arthur Danto and George Dickie. For although they propose definitions of art, their definitions are compatible with artists presenting any kind of thing as an artwork. For them, artworks can be indiscernible from their real-world counterparts. Anything could be transfigured into an artwork in the proper circumstances, given their theories. This is not to agree that their theories are true, but only to make the logi-

cal observation that if anything—any kind of thing—can be an artwork and their (Dickie's and Danto's) theories are real definitions of art, then it is hard to see logically how the mere suggestion of necessary and sufficient conditions for the concept of *work of art* can limit the practice of art or the scope of artistic activity and imagination. Thus, a real definition of art, *pace* Weitz, is compatible with the putative openness of the practice of art to change, expansion, and novelty. The examples of the theories of Dickie and Danto have shown at least that.

Still, it might be argued that necessary and sufficient conditions must place certain limits on what can be an artwork even if no limits are placed on the *kind* of thing that can be an artwork. Several points need to be made here. Necessary and sufficient conditions are not incompatible with an immense latitude for expansion and innovation. Moreover, though the concept of art (in the practice sense) may be open, it is not wide open—not everything can be art at any time for just any reason. After all, even if we agree that the practice of art is open to change and expansion, the relevant changes and expansions must be related to what precedes them, or they would not be changes and expansions *of the practice*. That is, the phenomena in question cannot be utter non sequiturs.

Thus, Dickie and Danto might argue that the only expansions their conditions block are putative "innovations" of the utter non sequitur variety. But this is not a problem since the proposition that any kind of thing can be art for the right reason is just as liberal and as open as anyone should want it to be. Their conditions (and other possible conditions) in no way threaten the creativity of artists, since they allow that artists can traffic in any kind of thing, from urinals and bottle racks to rams with tires round their bellies, blocks of lard, and sections of sharks floating in formaldehyde.

Moreover, approaching the open concept argument historically rather than logically, as the preceding dialectic suggests, the art theories of Dickie and Danto can be construed as growing out of a response to Weitz's argument, insofar as their theories are, in effect, veritable counterexamples to Weitz's position. Both concretely exemplify that there need be no inconsistency between defining art and respecting the permanent possibility of artistic expansion and creativity. Furthermore, at the same time, the lineaments of the theories of Dickie and Danto can also be seen as dialectical responses to the family resemblance argument. In order to appreciate this point, it is instructive to review some of the pitfalls of the family resemblance approach.

According to the family resemblance approach, the way in which we go about identifying artworks—the way that we sort the art from the nonart—is by looking for similarities between works already regarded as artworks and new candidates. Ideally, the process begins by establishing a flexible

set of paradigmatic artworks—works everyone agrees are unquestionably artworks. On the basis of these, we then decide about the art status of further works. At any given time, then, we will have in our possession a set of artworks composed of paradigms and descendants of paradigms. If, in the present moment, we are perplexed about the status of a new work, we are instructed to look at the body of works already adjudged to be artworks and to see whether the new work in question bears appreciable similarities with the items in our existing set of artworks. Perhaps the new work is similar to *Tristam Shandy* in its possession of an elliptical narrative structure, like *Oedipus Rex* in its capacity to raise pity and fear, and resembles Beethoven's Ninth Symphony in its sublimity. As these correspondences accumulate, we decide to classify the new work as an artwork, though no established numerical criterion determines how many correspondences are required here. Rather, we reflect on the resemblances and make an all-things-considered judgment.

But the problem with this method is that the concept of similarity upon which it relies is too slack. For it is a truism of logic that everything resembles everything else in some respect. An alien carburetor from another galaxy will resemble Rodin's *Gate of Hell* at least in respect of being a material object, as well as probably in a number of other ways. Thus, for any candidate work, it will resemble the paradigms in some ways, and, if we consider the descendants of the paradigms in addition, the number of similarities between *anything* and the items already counted as art will be compounded. That is, applying the family resemblance method today, we will be able to declare that everything is art by tomorrow, if not sooner. This is far too inclusive.

It is more inclusive than the theories of Dickie and Danto, since, whereas they countenance the possibility that any kind of thing might be art under certain conditions, on the family resemblance approach we can arrive at the conclusion that everything is art now. Or, to put the matter differently, using the family resemblance model we will have to concede that everything is art, since everything is like everything else in some respect. Thus, the family resemblance model is not a viable competitor for explaining how we sort art from nonart because using the family resemblance method, there would be no sorting at all. But since Weitz and Kennick suppose that we can sort art from everything else, the family resemblance explanation must be flawed on its own terms.

Of course, this argument may dispose friends of the family resemblance approach to object that not just any resemblances count when we are deciding what to count as art. Only resemblances in pertinent respects should count. But what respects are pertinent respects—*art*-pertinent respects—and which are not? Here the intrusion of condition-talk seems unavoidable.

In order to halt the "here comes everything" effect, the proponent of the family resemblance approach will have to introduce the notions of either necessary similarities (conditions)—or of a disjunctive set of necessary similarities—or of sufficient conditions or sets thereof. But that is just to become engaged again in the project of defining art, the project that neo-Wittgensteinians claim is impossible. Thus, the neo-Wittgensteinians appear caught on the horns of a dilemma. If they persist in an unadorned version of the family resemblance model, the explanatory value of their approach looks worthless, while if they start adding constraints to the approach, they will find themselves back in the defining business again, designing conditions, and, thereby, undercutting their central claim that art cannot be defined.

A related way of seeing the latter problem is to recall a famous argument of Maurice Mandelbaum's.[11] Mandelbaum charged that people like Weitz illicitly appropriated the notion of family resemblance for their camp. Real *family* resemblances—say, the similarity between your hair and your father's, or your nose and your mother's—are not *mere* resemblances, mere correlations of features. Even if my eyes are exactly the same color as Gregory Peck's, they do not bear a family resemblance to Gregory Peck's for the obvious reason that, no matter how great the similarity between my eyes and Peck's, we are not members of the same family—not members of the same gene pool. For resemblances to be genuine *family* resemblances, there must be some underlying mechanism—such as genetic inheritance. If a similarity is to count as a family resemblance, it must have been generated in the appropriate manner. If Bill Clinton resembles a big teddy bear in certain respects, that is not a family resemblance, since presumably Clinton and the teddy bear don't belong to the same gene pool. Though they may look alike, the resemblance is not a case of family resemblance.

In other words, family resemblances, properly so-called, are governed by conditions. It is a necessary condition of authentic family resemblances that they require a genetic foundation. Thus, the proponents of the so-called family resemblance approach reached for the label too quickly. For their procedure trades in mere resemblances, not family resemblances. If they had really hoped to exploit the analogy with family resemblances, they would have had to acknowledge the need for certain necessary parameters—certain necessary conditions—for the application of the concept of art. But this would have been antithetical to their aims, since it would have put them, by their own lights, back in the definition game.

It is, of course, the lack of the kind of conditions that the analogy to family resemblance requires that brings about the "here comes everything" effect outlined above. The way to avert that effect would have been to take

the *family* resemblance analogy seriously. But that, of course, would incur a reversion to the project of defining art.

Mandelbaum's criticisms of the family resemblance model not only disclosed a disturbing oversight in the rhetoric of Weitz and Kennick. It also suggested a way in which intending art theorists might negotiate the gauntlet thrown down by the neo-Wittgensteinians. Echoing Wittgenstein, Weitz and Kennick maintained that in order to identify an item as an artwork, one just needed to look and see—look and see whether a candidate resembles the paradigms or descendants therefrom in terms of their manifest features. But Mandelbaum's discussion of genuine family resemblances alerted philosophers to the possibility that the relevant common features for defining art might not be manifest at all but rather underlying, nonmanifest properties (in the way that it is genetic inheritance that makes for real family similarities and not just glancing ones).

That is, just as genesis plays the crucial role in defining family membership, perhaps genesis is also the key to defining art. Dickie and Danto can be seen to be exploiting this possibility in different ways: Danto, in many writings, argues that art status depends on the genesis of artworks in art theories and art narratives, while the genetic mechanism that accounts for art status on Dickie's view is the institution of art, later rechristened the art circle.

Dickie has been quite explicit about his indebtedness to Mandelbaum. He observes that Mandelbaum suggested that on Weitz's view of past art theorists, philosophers considered only manifest properties of an item—such as expressive properties—that were perceptible in the item in isolation from its historical, social, or cultural contexts as relevant to the project of defining art. These manifest properties are often described in the literature misleadingly as nonrelational, though it would be more accurate to call them "decontextualized."[12] And even the family resemblance approach attends to only the manifest, decontextualized properties of its objects of comparison.

But perhaps this alleged oversight in both the traditional approach to definition and the family resemblance approach is that they "look" in the wrong place. Instead of searching for the common thread or threads between artworks along the dimension of the manifest, decontextualized (relational) properties of the works in question, maybe the solution to the problem of identifying art, Dickie suggests, rests in exploring the nonmanifest, context-informed (relational) properties of the relevant works. This is the moral that Dickie derived from Mandelbaum. An artifact is a work of art, for Dickie, just in case it possesses a certain nonmanifest property—that it emerge from the social context of an artworld in the right way.[13]

The rudiments of Danto's position were formulated before the publication of Mandelbaum's argument. However, Danto's sentiments clearly run parallel to Mandelbaum's. If nothing else, Danto's slogan that art is not something that the eye can descry is a pithy way of encapsulating the idea that identifying arthood is not an affair of manifest decontextualized properties—not a matter to be determined by eyeballing an item in isolation from its origins (in isolation from an artworld).

Moreover, Danto's use of the method of indiscernibles—his presentation of pairs of objects like Warhol's *Brillo Box* versus Procter and Gamble's—concretizes Mandelbaum-type worries about the overreliance on manifest properties in the neo-Wittgensteinian agenda. For if we look at the pertinent pair of indiscernibles, insofar as they are indiscernibles, we will find nothing to look at and see that will account for the difference between Warhol's boxes (which are artworks) and Procter and Gamble's (which are not art objects). Or, to put the point the other way around, if we employ the family resemblance method, we will have no way of differentiating ordinary Brillo boxes from Warhol's. The indiscernibility problem, in other words, shows that the family resemblance model is completely inoperable and for the very reason Mandelbaum articulated—because of its dependence on manifest, decontextualized properties of the works in question.

Like Dickie, Danto realized that this shortcoming in the approaches from Plato through Weitz at least suggested a productive line of rethinking the issue of defining art. Whereas Dickie attempted to work out this possibility in a way that might be called sociological—limning the social context requisite for creating art—Danto has emphasized the importance of art history and art theory for identifying art.[14] If Danto's artworld is a world of ideas, Dickie's is a world of people, of artists and their publics.

Whether the founding insights of Danto and Dickie are ultimately irreconcilable—whether or not their disagreements are finally over matters of detail—it is, I think, nevertheless true that the move they both made away from emphasis on the manifest, decontextualized properties of art and toward the importance of nonmanifest, context-dependent (historico-social) features set the stage for subsequent developments in art theorizing. The parade of approaches to art theory that we have seen since Danto and Dickie initiated their response to the neo-Wittgensteinians—which approaches include cultural, historical, intentionalist, and neo-institutional theories (and combinations thereof)—have proceeded through the breach in the neo-Wittgensteinian argument spearheaded by Dickie and Danto. Even various recent aesthetic theories of art, which might appear to involve nothing but a return to the kind of theory that exercised Weitz, have profited from the example of Dickie and Danto. For not only did these two embolden aesthetic theorists to rejoin the project of definition, they lent

aesthetic theorists the clue that nonmanifest properties—such as artistic intentions—might be the secret to solving the problem.

Most of the positions defended in this anthology are not aesthetic theories. Many show the influence of the more contextualized approaches of Dickie and Danto (and Margolis and Wollheim). These theories are direct beneficiaries of the reactions I have sketched to neo-Wittgensteinism. It is a commonplace of philosophy that you don't really understand a position (including your own) until you have a sense of that to which it is a response or a reaction. To follow what is going on in a philosophy, you need some grasp of its rivals. In a profound sense, the deepest rival to *most* of the views in this volume is neo-Wittgensteinism. Had there been no neo-Wittgensteinian interlude, it is doubtful that most of the chapters to follow would have whatever urgency they possess.

Of course, the story of rivals did not end with the confrontation with neo-Wittgensteinism, since even philosophers united in their skepticism about the open concept argument and the family resemblance approach remain divided among themselves about how to advance in the wake of neo-Wittgensteinism. Alternative definitions abound, as do new alternatives to the definitional approach. And with these new alternatives come new rivalries and new debates, whose crossfire is too intricate to narrate in a brief introduction like this one.

Moreover, luckily, there is scant reason for such a narrative, since most of the contributors to this volume make unmistakably clear what their agons are and why. I have spent so much time elaborating the neo-Wittgensteinian episode and its immediate vicissitudes simply because it provides the pervasive challenge which animates contemporaries to arrive at an account of how we go about identifying art. Contemporary attempts in this matter—whether they be definitional or not—must heed the lessons to be learnt from the philosophers who advanced neo-Wittgensteinism and those who resisted it.

WHAT IS IN THIS BOOK

Each chapter in this book is an original attempt to deal with issues that arise from the problem of defining art. There is no common viewpoint shared by all the contributors. Some of the authors are explicitly at odds with others. However, it is fair to suggest that they all share a common problematic and a common conversation. Like many conversations, however, this one is marked by different perspectives and by dissension.

In " 'Art' as a Cluster Concept," Berys Gaut returns to the philosophy of Wittgenstein in order to explore certain neglected resources for characterizing art. He points out that in emphasizing the notion of family

resemblance, neo-Wittgensteinians, like Weitz, ignored another alternative for identifying artworks that was available in Wittgenstein's philosophy of language—namely, the notion of a cluster concept. Thus, though refutations of the family resemblance model defeat one kind of Wittgensteinian approach to the concept of art, they do not foreclose the possibility of a Wittgensteinian model of the concept altogether, since "art" may turn out to be a cluster concept.

On Gaut's view, a cluster concept comprises a list of criteria such that if a candidate meets all the criteria, then that is sufficient for identifying it as an artwork, though something may also be counted as an artwork if it meets certain subsets of the relevant criteria. At the same time, cluster concepts may involve no individually necessary conditions, though the concept possesses disjunctively necessary conditions, insofar as some of the criteria must apply if a candidate falls under the pertinent concept. For Gaut, "a cluster account is true of a concept just in case there are properties whose instantiation by an object counts as a matter of conceptual necessity toward its falling under the concept." But Gaut stresses that a cluster concept account is not a definition in the sense of setting forth a set of necessary conditions that are conjointly sufficient, because a genuine cluster concept need not comprise a set of necessary requirements all of which are conjunctively sufficient.

Some of the criteria that Gaut suggests might be relevant to art status include: the work's possession of positive aesthetic properties; its being expressive of emotion; its being intellectually challenging; its formal complexity; its capacity to convey complex meanings; its exhibition of a point of view; its being an exercise of the creative imagination; its being a product of a high degree of skill; its membership in an established artistic genre; its being the product of an intention to make a work of art. Gaut admits that this list may be open to criticism, but he emphasizes that his primary purpose is not to establish a specific list of criteria, but to defend the cluster concept approach to characterizing art, which he regards as a viable alternative to approaches that advocate defining art.

In his "Is It Reasonable to Attempt to Define Art?" Robert Stecker addresses a question that cuts to the heart of this anthology, since for many years—at least since the 1950s—it has often been argued that it is impossible to define "art." Yet, as Stecker points out, the project of defining art has been pursued with renewed energy for the last three decades. Moreover, Stecker contends that there is an emerging consensus about the elements that need to be included in any adequate definition of art. These involve reference to the history and function of art, to artistic intention, and to the institutional context of the artworld. Furthermore, Stecker maintains that

these ingredients will have to be incorporated in definitions of art that are structured disjunctively.

Thus Stecker believes that, though no one has so far developed a fully satisfactory definition of art, we do have a good sense of the shape and content that any such theory is likely to take. Consequently, Stecker claims, it is reasonable to attempt to define art.

Against recent skeptics, Stecker argues, on the one hand, that their anxieties are easily disposed of, or on the other hand, that several of them, such as David Novitz, frequently presuppose implicitly the sort of art theory already prefigured by what Stecker regards to be the emerging consensus. Stecker, for example, maintains that Gaut's cluster concept approach converges on this consensus, even though Gaut denies that he is defining art. According to Stecker, the most robust skepticism available nowadays with respect to defining art ironically confirms the prospects for devising a definition of art, since it converges on the emerging consensus. Nevertheless, even though Stecker is unmoved by contemporary reservations about defining art, he does concede, provocatively, that there may be more than one adequate definition of art.

In constructing his notion of an emerging consensus, one type of art theory that Stecker does not include is the aesthetic theory of art. However, this sort of theory does recur regularly in the literature. Though most recent attempts at defining art have favored institutional or historical solutions, James C. Anderson propounds a sophisticated approach to defining art aesthetically in his "Aesthetic Concepts of Art."

For Anderson, the key to the aesthetic definition of art is the notion of aesthetic appreciation, which he maintains occurs when someone regards his or her experience of an object or a performance as possessing intrinsic value. Unlike formalist versions of the aesthetic approach, the requirement that the relevant experience here be regarded as possessing intrinsic value places no limitation on the content of such experiences and, therefore, represents an advance over notions such as Bell's idea of aesthetic emotion.

Anderson argues for *two* concepts of art, a descriptive concept and an evaluative concept, both of which are aesthetic in nature, since they rely upon the notion of aesthetic appreciation. According to the descriptive conception, an artifact is art if it is created with the intention of being an object of aesthetic appreciation, while, according to the evaluative conception, an artifact is art if it functions to provide for aesthetic appreciation. Using two concepts—or two aesthetic definitions of art—Anderson believes that he can avert many of the problems that have beset past aesthetic theories of art.

In this volume, a number of the pioneering figures in the debate about

art—including George Dickie, Joseph Margolis, Arthur Danto, and Marcia Muelder Eaton—revisit their earlier theories in order to clarify points of interpretation, confront recent criticisms, and refine their positions.

As recounted earlier, the neo-Wittgensteinian arguments of philosophers like Weitz and Kennick discouraged attempts to formulate definitions of art. Perhaps the leading voice reacting to the arguments of the neo-Wittgensteinians was George Dickie. Among other things, Dickie showed that one could frame a definition of art in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions in a way that entailed none of the liabilities that Weitz predicted. In his contribution to this volume, "The Institutional Theory of Art," Dickie reviews the different stages of his theorizing about art, explaining the adjustments that he has made along the way, setting out his motivations for alternative constructions of his theory, and clarifying at length the various component definitions that compose his theory of the art circle—Dickie's present considered view of the structure of the artworld.

In his chapter, Dickie also intends to correct what he argues are long-standing misinterpretations of his theory. After confronting persisting criticisms of his institutional theory of art, Dickie then goes on to challenge recently developed criticisms, and he concludes with the suggestion of a taxonomy for theories of art in terms of those which regard art making as a natural-kind activity versus a cultural-kind activity.

If, as Dickie proposes, theoretical approaches to art can be classified as naturalist as opposed to culturalist, then Joseph Margolis's program represents an extreme form of culturalism. In his chapter, "The Deviant Ontology of Artworks," Margolis defends a view for which he has become well known—namely, that artworks are culturally emergent entities that are identified and individuated in the course of the historized drift of our ongoing interpretive activities.

Central to Margolis's view is that it is a mistake to attempt to treat artworks reductively on the model of physical objects. Instead, artworks are enculturated objects; their properties and their identity are imparted to them through our consensual linguistic practices. We understand—or should understand—the nature of artworks relative to our practices, notably our interpretive practices. These practices are not algorithmic, but marked by what Margolis calls consensual tolerance. Thus, he surmises, if we model our conception of art in a way that is sensitive to or suitable to our interpretive practices, then the ontology of art, like our interpretive practices, will commit us to a species of relativism, which he calls robust relativism.

It is here that Margolis's conclusions are most radical, and perhaps most distinctive. For though the majority of authors in this volume think of art as fundamentally social and, with suitable adjustments, are willing to accept

some form of the doctrine that artworks are culturally embodied entities, few, if any, are willing to embrace Margolis's view that the nature of art—the social nature of art—entails relativism or even robust relativism.

Along with the work of George Dickie and Joseph Margolis, Arthur Danto's contributions have been seminal to the evolution of art theory in the second half of the twentieth century. His introduction of the indiscernibility problem, discussed earlier, presented a decisive challenge to the family resemblance approach to identifying art. At the same time, Danto has deployed the indiscernibility method to generate a theory of art comprising two necessary conditions. Danto argues that x is an artwork only if (1) x is about something, and (2) x embodies its meaning (i.e., what it is about). "Embodiment" in this context means that the work in question presents whatever it is about in a form appropriate to its meaning (whatever it is about). In his chapter, "Art and Meaning," Danto iterates this theory of art and defends his view against recent objections.

The first objection is that "aboutness" is not a necessary condition of art, since there are supposedly obvious examples of artworks that are not about anything, such as nonobjective painting. Danto, however, responds that when one attends to actual cases of so-called nonobjective paintings, one cannot find genuine examples of paintings that are about nothing. Indeed, Danto issues a challenge to would-be counterexamplers: for any real historical example, Danto bets that he can always show that it is about something.

The second objection that Danto confronts involves the charge that his two necessary conditions fail to do what Danto has always maintained is the burden of a philosophy of art: to distinguish between artworks and real things. The problem here is that Danto's theory allegedly fails to distinguish between two of his favorite examples—Warhol's *Brillo Box* and real Brillo boxes. Both will turn out to be art according to Danto's theory, since both are about something (albeit different somethings) and both embody their meanings appropriately. In response, Danto concedes this pair of examples may not have been as paradigmatic as he had hoped because of the problem of commercial art versus fine art, and he suggests that the way in which to get at the relevant distinction between different sorts of Brillo boxes here might be to look closely at the type of criticism suitable respectively to Warhol's boxes and Procter and Gamble's.

Like Arthur Danto and George Dickie, Marcia Muelder Eaton, in her chapter in this volume, "A Sustainable Definition of 'Art,'" is involved in defending the core insights of a definition of art that she advanced some time ago. In 1983 in her book *Art and Nonart: Reflections on an Orange Crate and a Moose Call,* Marcia Muelder Eaton argued that something is an artwork if and only if it is an artifact *and* it is discussed in such a way that

information concerning the history of its production directs the viewer's attention to properties that are worthy of attention.[15] Though remaining committed to the outline of this proposal, in retrospect Eaton now wants to emend or adjust her theory in several important ways.

First, she wants to correct what she takes to be her Eurocentric bias in regarding it to be an essential feature of artworks that they be objects of discussion. In other cultures, artworks may not be discussed at all. Thus, Eaton suggests that we drop the terminology of discussion and say instead that something is an artwork if and only if it is an artifact that is *treated* (rather than discussed) in such a way that someone fluent in the culture is thereby led to direct attention to properties of the artifact worthy of attention.

However, this formulation itself remains somewhat vague about the properties toward which the relevant sort of serious treatment directs attention. These are, of course, aesthetic properties, but what exactly are those? Eaton proposes that something is an aesthetic property of an object if and only if it is an intrinsic feature of the object and it is culturally identified as a property worthy of attention (perception and/or reflection). This yields Eaton's revised definition of art, which maintains that

> x is a work of art if and only if (1) x is an artifact and (2) x is treated in aesthetically relevant ways, that is, x is treated in such a way that someone who is fluent in a culture is led to direct attention to intrinsic properties of x considered worthy of attention (perception and/or reflection) within that culture, and (3) when someone has an aesthetic experience of x, he or she realizes that the cause of the experience is an intrinsic property of x considered worthy of attention within the culture.

Eaton's definition is social, since on her view art does not exist outside communities, communities that determine what kinds of features of artworks are worthy of attention. These communities are made up of artists and audiences, of creators and experiencers who act, react, and interact with each other in complex and mutually informing ways. This is a community with roles and responsibilities where artworks call for interpretations and interpretations enrich artworks. Moreover, since the artwork sits within a framework of social roles and responsibilities, determining whether or not something is art is not idle, since so nominating a candidate invites certain kinds of appropriate responses from us—such as preparedness to explore a work interpretively for its possible point or meaning.

Like Marcia Muelder Eaton, George Bailey also talks about responsibilities to artworks. His chapter "Art: Life after Death?" falls squarely in the tradition of social conceptions of art. On his view, an artwork is the focus of certain rights and responsibilities that evolve within the context of social practices. For example, the work of an artist bears certain rights,

such as the claim to be taken seriously, which, for Bailey, involves in large part being understood historically. Bailey maintains that a primary function of an artwork is to engender consent (to its art status—to its claim to be taken seriously) for the right reasons (where the relevant right reasons will be determined by historical narratives—be they historically accurate ones or merely virtual). The test of the viability of these narratives, and of the reasons they advance, is ultimately whether they enable art to survive. For the function of art, given Bailey's account, seems to be to endure, and the narratives that abet this are said to track the right reasons for acknowledging art's claim on viewers, listeners, and readers.

Though many recent theories of art, like Bailey's, emphasize the importance of history and social context, Peg Zeglin Brand argues in her controversial chapter, "Glaring Omissions in Traditional Theories of Art," that the reliance of such theories on past artistic practices may in fact perpetuate traditional prejudices against the art of women and persons of color. Where theories of art depend on historical precedents for their paradigms of production and reception, they are apt, Brand conjectures, to be restricted to a male, indeed a white male, perspective in such a way that attention to what is valued by other perspectives will remain ignored and even discounted.

For this reason, Brand agitates for what she calls an unconventional feminist theory of art which, among other things, recognizes that the past has been dominated by a particular agenda, that authority roles in the artworld have no basis in objective fact, that art history is not linear, that sexist and racist assumptions have permeated philosophical aesthetics from the beginning, and that race and gender are part of the artworld context. This sort of theorizing is necessary, Brand contends, if the artworld is to become truly democratic.

The art of "the other" is also at the center of the chapters by Stephen Davies and Denis Dutton. In "Non-Western Art and Art's Definition," Stephen Davies addresses a wide range of issues, and provides, among other things, a characterization of non-Western art. This characterization helps explain the ability of outsiders, including Europeans and Americans, to recognize non-Western art as art.

To this end, Davies argues that there is a transcultural aesthetic, rooted in aesthetic properties that command the interest of and appeal to humans in general. These transcultural interests, in turn, give rise to what might be called small *a* art, in contrast to the High Art of imperial cultures like our own. Whereas such High Art is often alleged to be for contemplation rather than for use, small *a* art—such as pottery—may be useful so long as it is also possessed of aesthetic properties that are integral to the work in the sense that the aesthetic character of work is essential to its function. Tribal art often meets this condition, as does much of the traditional and

folk art of the West. It is all small *a* art, and its emphasis upon integrally possessed aesthetic features accounts for its nearly universal, cross-cultural recognizability.

Davies' chapter not only makes an instructive contribution to the theory of tribal art, but also offers an interesting hypothesis about the relation between the functional identification of artworks, on the one hand, and procedural and/or historical definitions, on the other hand. Though the artworks in advanced artworlds may require enfranchisement on procedural and/or historical grounds, artworlds themselves may be identified functionally in virtue of their production, in their early stages, of artifacts notable for their integral possession of aesthetic properties.[16]

Davies writes:

> Initially if not always, artworks in all cultures are projected for aesthetic regard—that is, for consideration of the aesthetic achievements they are created to display, where these effects concern the whole and are essential to the function the article is designed to serve. This is to say, there is a historically primary regard for which at least some artworks in all artworlds are intended. And this is such a striking feature of art making, viewed across the spread of human cultures, that it explains how we can perceive all cultures as art-making ones and, hence, as having artworlds.

Like Davies, Denis Dutton also believes that art theorizing should pay attention to tribal art. However, he is worried that there is a way in which such discussions can go wrong. In debates about the concept of art, it is often charged that cultures other than our own either lack a concept of art or lack our concept of art. Furthermore, it is often supposed that these putative lacunae somehow compromise attempts at characterizing art.

In his chapter " 'But They Don't Have Our Concept of Art,' " Denis Dutton confronts these misgivings head-on, arguing that such claims exaggerate cultural differences, are often based upon false or inappropriate comparisons, and fail to appreciate the range of art and art theory available in Western culture.

Dutton maintains that "often when it is said that some other culture has a 'different concept of art' from ours, there is implicit in the claim an extremely circumscribed and historically specific definition of the art denoted as 'our' "—indeed, a definition more narrow and less representative than the friend of difference indicates. Dutton further suggests that "the notion of 'a different concept' is stretched beyond intelligibility in most such contexts, and I have yet to see it used validly in connection with art."

Against the school of difference, Dutton believes that diverse practices of art can be related by analogues and homologies, and he defends a list of characteristic features which he says does a serviceable job of demarcating the domain of tribal, nonliterate art (perhaps, we might add, after the fash-

ion of what Gaut calls "cluster concepts"). Dutton's article, like Davies', is important for bringing analytic aesthetics in contact with the discourse on non-Western art that is so pervasive in enclaves of the humanities outside philosophy.

The chapters in this volume, then, are diverse. They march to no single drummer. In fact, a number of them belong to different armies, and several are at war with each other. At the same time, the authors are aware of one another's work, and this impels them to a high level of precision in clarifying what is distinctive about their own positions. Because the conceptual terrain is occupied by so many different theoretical redoubts, there are few new sweeping maneuvers here likely to radically reconfigure the field. The advances and retreats are careful in nature. The work in this volume may not be thought of as altogether revolutionary. Perhaps it is an example of ordinary philosophy (to draw an analogy with Kuhn's notion of ordinary science). But it is necessary nonetheless. For without deliberate, patient spadework, there can be no philosophical progress—no great revolutions in thought.

NOTES

1. Monroe Beardsley, *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism,* 2d ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1981). This book was originally published in 1958.

2. Arthur C. Danto, "The Artworld," *Journal of Philosophy* 61 (1964): 571–84.

3. For example: George Dickie, *Art and the Aesthetic: An Institutional Analysis* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1974), and *The Art Circle: A Theory of Art* (New York: Haven, 1984).

4. Stephen Davies, *Definitions of Art* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991).

5. Lars Aagaard-Mogensen, ed., *Culture and Art* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1976).

6. Morris Weitz, "The Role of Theory in Aesthetics," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 15 (1956): 27–35; William Kennick, "Does Traditional Aesthetics Rest on a Mistake," *Mind* 67 (1958): 317–34; Paul Ziff, "The Task of Defining a Work of Art," *Philosophical Review* 62 (1953): 58–78.

7. The version of Weitz's "The Role of Theory in Aesthetics" that I am citing can be found in *Contemporary Philosophy of Art: Readings in Analytic Aesthetics,* ed. John W. Bender and H. Gene Blocker (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1993), 191–98.

8. Weitz, 196.

9. It must be stressed that this reconstruction of Weitz's argument is my own interpretation of Weitz's text. It seems to me that an interpretation is called for here,

since Weitz's own statement of the argument is rather opaque. Some readers may question my reinterpretation on the grounds that Weitz does not explicitly use the concept of a contradiction. However, Weitz does write that "aesthetic theory is a logically vain attempt to define what cannot be defined. . . ." The phrase "logically vain" is obscure, but I do not think that I am stretching things by thinking that he has in mind a contradiction at this point, especially since he follows the phrase with a contradiction—the idea of defining what cannot be defined. In what follows, I attempt to sharpen what I take to be Weitz's underlying point in a manner more logically perspicuous than the original statement of it.

10. Weitz, 195.

11. Maurice Mandelbaum, "Family Resemblances and Generalizations concerning the Arts," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 2 (1965): 219–28.

12. These properties are not nonrelational, since representational properties, expressive properties, and formal properties are response-dependent. When they are called "nonrelational," I think commentators really mean that they are decontextualized—i.e., properties considered apart from the causal, social, functional, and historical circumstances that give rise to them. Weitz cannot really be taken to be talking about nonrelational properties because the properties of the items that attract his attention are features that objects share, and similarity is a relation.

Also there are some problems with the way in which the couplet "manifest/nonmanifest" properties is often employed in the debate. The charge of reliance upon manifest properties of works is often used to point to the limitations of the admonition to "look and see" by proponents of the family resemblance approach. But it is not clear that this charge can be extended to all previous approaches to identifying art, since, for example, expression theories of art and the aesthetic definition of art often invoke intentions which are nonmanifest. Often where commentators like Dickie refer to the issue of nonmanifest properties, they are really referring to socially emergent properties that can only be identified by attending to the cultural context of an artwork.

13. Again, the use in this paragraph of "manifest" and "nonmanifest" with reference to traditional approaches to defining art may not get at what is really at issue. What Dickie is really charging both the traditional approach and the neo-Wittgensteinian approach with here is a lack of attention to the properties of works that they possess in virtue of their sociohistorical context. I have, however, continued to use the "manifest/nonmanifest" couplet, since that is the language in which Dickie and others frequently state this point.

14. Here, for purposes of exposition, I am discussing Danto's approach prior to the publication of his book *After the End of Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996). In that book, Danto appears to have dropped the requirement that artworks be enfranchised by art theories as a necessary condition of art status.

15. Marcia Muelder Eaton, *Art and Nonart: Reflections on an Orange Crate and a Moose Call* (Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1983).

16. A similar view is developed in note 12 of Noël Carroll, "Art, Practice, and Narrative," *Monist* 71 (1988): 155–56.

2

"Art" as a Cluster Concept

BERYS GAUT

The story of philosophers' attempts to define the concept of art has not been a happy one. Theories we have in plenty: functionalist definitions, institutional definitions, historical definitions, and various hybrids of these have been proliferating of late.[1] Less evident is any agreement about which of these radically different analyses is the correct one. Some will see in this failure of convergence yet another sign of the bankruptcy of analytic philosophy, and indeed if it be the sole aim of analytic philosophy to produce definitions, then the enterprise is deeply insolvent and in imminent danger of foreclosure. The history of post-Gettier attempts to define "knowledge" amply illustrates the difficulty of securing correct analyses, and if analysis has foundered on the notion of knowledge, what hope is there of securing success with so disputed and amorphous a notion as that of art?

The thought that "art" cannot be defined is not of course a new one: it was the central claim of several aestheticians in the 1950s who drew in varying ways on Wittgenstein's notion of family resemblance to support their case.[2] Yet their negative claim that art cannot be defined, in the sense of giving individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions that uniquely specify it, has with few exceptions been denied,[3] while their positive claim that a correct characterization (rather than definition) of the concept is in family resemblance terms has been even more widely rejected.[4] The reasons for this are familiar: if we characterize works of art as those which resemble certain paradigms, then, first, the account is incomplete (it needs to state which objects are paradigm works), and, second, the notion of resemblance is sufficiently vacuous (anything resembles anything in some respect or other, since it shares some property with it) that the characterization would count anything as art. Nor were the arguments the Wittgensteinians advanced for their position particularly compelling: the failure to find a definition might be explained by the attempt to define "art" in in-

trinsic, rather than relational, terms (hence the subsequent popularity of institutional and historical theories), while the claim that "art" resists definition because art is fundamentally creative fails because practices can be pursued in original ways yet be definable (chess and physics are examples), or it might be part of the definition of "art" that its products be original.[5]

Yet the subsequent failure of relational definitions to secure general assent ought to revivify the thought that "art" has not been defined because it cannot be defined, and a spirit of caution ought to encourage the thought that a view of art rooted in a philosophy as powerful as Wittgenstein's cannot be so simply dismissed. I shall argue here that it is not a resemblance-to-paradigm construal, but a cluster concept construal, of family resemblance that gives the correct characterization of art, and that the argument for this construal rests not on the importance of originality in art, but chiefly on an inspection of what we would say about actual and counterfactual cases of putative art objects.

THE LOGICAL FORM OF THE ACCOUNT

Wittgenstein as part of his discussion of family resemblance develops a cluster account of the meaning of proper names: "By 'Moses' I understand the man who did what the Bible relates of Moses, or at any rate a good deal of it. But how much? Have I decided how much must be proved false for me to give up my proposition as false?" Based on this account, Searle also defended a more detailed and explicit cluster account of the sense of proper names.[6] These examples bring out the main features of cluster accounts. There are multiple criteria for the application of such concepts, though none of them are necessary. There is also a great deal of indeterminacy in how many of these criteria must apply if an object is to fall under the concept, though at the extremes there are clear cases where it does and clear cases where it does not. We can formulate the view more carefully as follows.

A cluster account is true of a concept just in case there are properties whose instantiation by an object counts as a matter of conceptual necessity toward its falling under the concept. These properties are normally called *criteria,* but it is important not to associate all the connotations which this term has acquired with its use here: a criterion is simply to be understood as a property possession of which counts as a matter of conceptual necessity toward an object's falling under a concept. (Nothing would be lost by referring to these properties as *characteristics,* giving a *characterization* of an object, rather than as criteria.)[7] There are several criteria for a concept. How is the notion of their *counting toward* the application of a concept to

be understood? First, if all the properties are instantiated, then the object falls under the concept: that is, they are jointly sufficient for the application of the concept. More strongly, the cluster account also claims that if fewer than all the criteria are instantiated, this is sufficient for the application of the concept. Second, there are no properties that are individually necessary conditions for the object to fall under the concept: that is, there is no property which all objects falling under the concept must possess. These conditions together entail that though there are sufficient conditions for the application of a cluster concept, there are no *individually necessary and* jointly sufficient conditions. Third, though there are no *individually* necessary conditions for the application of such a concept, there are *disjunctively* necessary conditions: that is, it must be true that some of the criteria apply if an object falls under the concept. This clause is required, for otherwise we will merely have shown that there are sufficient conditions for a concept to obtain, rather than showing it to be a cluster concept.

Take the case of art. Suppose we can construct some set of properties, for instance, of being beautiful, being expressive, being original, and being complex and coherent. And suppose it can be shown that if various subsets of them obtain, then an object is art, that none of these properties has to be possessed by all artworks, but that all artworks must possess some of them. Then we cannot define "art" in the sense of giving individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for it, but we can offer a characterization of it—an account of what it is in terms of criteria or characteristics. Note that this account allows a great deal of indeterminancy in whether the obtaining of a particular subset of properties is sufficient for something to be art: there will be many cases where it is not clear whether this is so; what is important is that there are some subsets the obtaining of members of which is sufficient for something to be art.

There is an important difference in logical form between cluster accounts and resemblance-to-paradigm accounts. Whereas the latter specify the relevant features in terms of resemblance to some particulars, the former specify them by general properties. In the case of art, a cluster account refers to properties such as those referred to above, whereas a resemblance-to-paradigm view would hold that something is a work of art if and only if it resembles at least one of some specified paradigmatic works of art. Cluster theories thus avoid the first difficulty with the resemblance-to-paradigm view, there being no incompleteness in the account, since no appeal is made to paradigms. And they also avoid the second objection. Resemblance is a matter of properties being possessed in common, and is consequently vacuous without further specification: cluster theories make substantial claims by specifying *what* the properties are that are relevant to determining

whether something is art. Failure to distinguish these two distinct construals of the family resemblance approach—a failure of which even some of its supporters have been guilty[8]—has led to a too swift dismissal of the view.

How do we decide what properties are part of the cluster? Wittgenstein says, "Don't think, but look!"[9] This is *not* an injunction to count only visible or intrinsic properties as part of the cluster, as has sometimes been supposed by critics of the family resemblance approach: it is a plea to see how the concept in question is used in the language. Thus, we make a distinction between art and entertainment; so art must give more than just pleasure, must be in some way challenging or exploratory. We tend to regard things in certain genres such as painting or music as artworks, because these art genres are well established. On the other hand, if an object, even if outside these genres, excels in beauty or creative originality, then that gives us reason to judge it to be art ("that dress is a work of art"). And, conversely, we tend to regard the absence of features such as skill as counting against something's being art ("my child could do that!"). Many of these criteria have been adopted by the would-be definers of art (in terms for instance of the expression of emotion, or of creative imagination), and are thus familiar in aesthetics. The novel point about the cluster theory is that it accepts them as criteria, without holding them exhaustively to specify the notion of art. A particularly useful source for discovering what are the criteria for art springs from examination of disputes about whether objects (for instance, Duchamp's readymades) are works of art, since in such cases disputants are most explicit in giving their reasons for judging something to be art or not.

Here are some properties the presence of which ordinary judgment counts toward something's being a work of art, and the absence of which counts against its being art: (1) possessing positive aesthetic properties, such as being beautiful, graceful, or elegant (properties which ground a capacity to give sensuous pleasure);[10] (2) being expressive of emotion; (3) being intellectually challenging (i.e., questioning received views and modes of thought); (4) being formally complex and coherent; (5) having a capacity to convey complex meanings; (6) exhibiting an individual point of view; (7) being an exercise of creative imagination (being original); (8) being an artifact or performance which is the product of a high degree of skill; (9) belonging to an established artistic form (music, painting, film, etc.); and (10) being the product of an intention to make a work of art. Some of these properties are themselves specified in terms of art, and the account thus exhibits a degree of circularity. But there is nothing amiss with circular accounts (nor even with circular definitions),[11] provided they are informative, and the account is informative not only because of the presence of noncircularly specified properties, but also because there are substantive constraints on the application of the circular criteria—we can

know whether someone intends to make a work of art by consulting him, and if he does not, that counts against the object's being art.

Clearly, one may wish to dispute these particular criteria, or add others. My main aim here is to defend the cluster account of art per se, rather than any particular theory about which properties should be part of the cluster. However, these criteria are good prima facie candidates for those which should appear in a cluster account, and I will defend the form of the account in terms of these specific features.

The form of the account requires one modification. An artwork is the product of an action, preeminently of a making (an artifact), or a performing (a performance). It is art*works* that are involved here, since something is in each case done. Hence being the product of an action is the genus of the artwork and is thus a necessary condition for something's being art. It might be thought that this is denied by those who acknowledge the existence of found art, but in fact it is not. Such art is selected, and selection is an action. Selection adds to the range of properties that can be possessed by objects, and thus alters them, even if not physically. A piece of driftwood in nature cannot express despair, nor can it be about anything (since it lacks even derived intentionality), but when selected for display in a gallery it can express desuetude and be about failure and decay. Being the product of an action is, however, a very thin generic condition, which does not distinguish artworks from any of the other products of action (philosophy papers, chairs, pay freezes, angry words, etc.). Thus the modified cluster account holds that there is one necessary condition for something's being an artwork, but that is because of the notion of a work (the product of action), rather than because of the notion of art. I shall take this modification to be understood in all subsequent references to "art" as a cluster concept.

It might be supposed that the substantiality of the generic condition can be enhanced: the action must be part of a social practice, such a practice being a kind of complex cooperative activity, employing skills and knowledge, characterized by an evolving and developing tradition, with its own internal goods, reasons, goals, and evaluative standards.[12] It is certainly true that all art-actions known to us are undertaken as part of a cultural practice. And this is an important truth about art, from which we can hope to learn a great deal, by seeing to what extent it shares features in common with other cultural practices, in respect of their openness or resistance to multiple interpretations, the ontological peculiarities of their products, their relationship with the associated practices of using their products, and so forth. But for the notion of a cultural practice to be part of the generic condition, it must be not merely a contingent truth but a necessary one that any action of producing an artwork is undertaken as part of a practice. And that is not so: consider a possible world in which there is no art, except one

day an individual goes off on her own and models in wood an elephant, paying attention to the beauty, elegance, and grace of the work, using her creative imagination to enhance the complexity and coherence of the design, skillfully putting in details to create interesting textural and color effects. She tells no one of this, and neither she nor anyone else ever does this kind of thing again. Has she produced art? It seems so; and if so, it is not necessary that an art-action be part of a cultural practice (unless we trivialize the notion by holding that one action can constitute a cultural practice). So while it is an important fact about the activity of art that it is part of some cultural practice or other, it is a contingent, not a necessary fact.[13]

One final point should be noted about the theory. "Art" has two distinct, but related, meanings: it is used as a mass noun for artworks ("there is a lot of art in this room") and also to refer to a kind of activity ("art is a demanding career"). The cluster account proposes that artworks are the products of actions, which products possess some indeterminately large number of the listed properties. And it holds that art as an activity is the producing of such artworks.[14]

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

So far I have merely explicated the cluster account and argued that it avoids the problems to which the resemblance-to-paradigm account succumbs. But why should one believe it? To answer this question, we need to determine first what are the constraints on the adequacy of an account, that is, a purported definition or characterization, of some concept; then we can determine whether the cluster characterization meets these constraints.

First and most obvious, the account of the concept should be *adequate to intuition.* That is, it must agree with our intuitions about what we would say about actual and counterfactual cases: if the account claims that some object satisfies the concept, but it intuitively doesn't (or vice versa), then that is one strike against the account. Particularly important test cases here are those that are problematic for rival accounts of the concept, since a proposed account should at least be an improvement on its rivals. And if there are some objects to which the application of the concept is genuinely, irresolubly, indeterminate, then the account should reflect this too, rather than simply stipulating that the concept applies, or stipulating that it does not.

Second, and related to the first constraint, the account must be *normatively adequate*. The process of matching the account to intuitions is unlikely simply to leave all intuitions as they stand. Our linguistic intuitions about particular cases may be flawed in resting on confusions, on ignorance about the language, or on many other factors. Thus some intuitions

that do not fit the proposed account may be rejected: there will be a reflective equilibrium between the account and intuitions, just as there is between principles and intuitions in moral and political philosophy. To avoid begging the question, this normative dimension must include a *theory of error:* some account must be offered of why people have the mistaken intuitions they do, of why these intuitions seem plausible to them. Ideally, this theory of error should also explain why rival accounts of the concept have enjoyed some popularity. This normative dimension is particularly important when there is a degree of interpersonal disagreement about whether a concept applies to particular cases, since the price of failing to adjudicate the dispute is likely to be that each disputant has to be ascribed a different idiolect, and hence it would follow that, contrary to their understanding of the dispute, they are not really disagreeing.

Finally, any proposed account should have *heuristic utility:* that is, it should be such as to figure in true or at least promising theories about the object to which the concept applies. This is particularly evident for scientific concepts, where definitions are formulated so as to figure in true theories of the relevant phenomena. In such cases it is often stipulative definitions that are at issue. But the claims of heuristic utility also apply, though less demandingly, to concepts in common usage, since these will also figure in explanations in the relevant domain. Hence any account of a concept should ideally fit into a larger heuristic package about the domain concerned.

ADEQUACY TO INTUITION

The simplest and most direct way to argue for the cluster account is to show that our candidate properties do indeed count toward an object's being art, that is, that they are adequate to our linguistic intuitions. Recall, however, that these properties are offered only as candidates: if objections are raised to what follows it may be possible to substitute other criteria for the ones offered in order to circumvent them. What mainly matters here is to give the cluster account itself some plausibility, rather than to defend an account of which particular criteria are involved.

Earlier we saw that three conditions must be satisfied for a concept to be a cluster one. I begin with a defense of the second condition, that the criteria are not individually necessary for something to be art. (1) Not all works of art are beautiful, elegant, or graceful: some twentieth-century art pursues "anti-aesthetic" policies, uninterested in sensuously pleasing, but deeply interested in challenging, provoking, scandalizing, using ugliness and discord as a disruptive strategy (Picasso's *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* is, I would argue, such a painting). (2) Not all art is expressive of emotion:

1960s hard-edged abstraction is interested in formal relations between color properties (e.g., Josef Albers's *Homage to the Square* series), not in the expression of emotion, and an interest in the combinatorial possibilities of patterns of movement characterizes much of Merce Cunningham's work, rather than a striving after emotional effect. (3) Not all art is intellectually challenging: traditional religious art is chiefly concerned, for instance, with representing well-known religious views, rather than with seeking to probe, question, or extend them. (4) Not all art has a complex and coherent form: some of Malevich's paintings, for instance, *Black Square on a White Ground,* have an extremely simple form, as do some Cycladic sculptures; some modernist films pursue a deliberate strategy of incoherence (e.g., Buñuel and Dali's *Un Chien Andalou*), and art has been at times concerned with a movement toward greater simplicity (e.g., early Baroque music with respect to Renaissance polyphony). (5) Not all art has a complex meaning: Aesop's fables and the allegorical structure of *A Pilgrim's Progress* come to mind here. (6) Not all art has been concerned with originality: most artworks are derivative, and if a tradition is to continue most *have* to be fairly derivative; and some traditions, such as the ancient Egyptian, eschew originality. (7) Not all artworks express an individual point of view: the ancient Egyptian case is relevant here too. (8) Not all artworks are the products of a high degree of skill: Duchamp's readymades were not a product of such skill (certainly not on his part, at least), nor are Alfred Wallis's pictures the products of great pictorial skill. (9) Not all artworks are in established art genres: indeed, they could not be, for if they were, no new art genres could have emerged. (10) Last, not all artworks are the products of an intention to make art: "primitive" societies tend not to have anything like our concept of art, but we accept some of their products as art, and probably much that we now accept as "folk art" was never intended by its makers as art.

It may be objected in general to these claims that if none of these conditions are necessary, that is only because they are irrelevant to an object's being art: it would be as if I should list as a criterion, "being a granite block," and then triumphantly proclaim that this is not a necessary condition, since not all artworks are granite blocks. Perhaps the irrelevance of some of the criteria might be argued for: but could they *all* be irrelevant—could there be a work of art lacking all of these properties? Inspection of possible cases strongly suggests that there could not be: we can make sense, for instance, of a piece of minimalist painting as art, even though it lacks expressive content, because we recognize it as being in an established artistic genre (painting), as being the product of artistic intention, perhaps as being beautiful. There is no evident way that an object lacking all of the criteria could be a work of art; and even if a plausible counterexample could be produced, the friend of the cluster account could respond by adding what-

ever seems the relevant criterion to the cluster—that is, she can respond by modifying the content of the account, rather than its form. Hence there is reason to think that the listed criteria, or some extension of them, are disjunctively necessary for an object to be an artwork—that is, that the third condition for the application of the cluster account to art is true. Far from undermining the cluster account, this objection to the second condition actually provides the basis for considerations favoring the third condition.

A more pressing objection is that some of the criteria really are necessary. Many of the examples given were drawn from modernist art, or from early art. But many lay people object to counting the more hyperventilating modernist efforts as art, and some anthropologists reject talk of the products of the societies they study as art. Some philosophers, such as Beardsley and Hanfling, have similar objections or doubts about counting conceptual works as art.[15] If these kinds of examples were disallowed, several of the criteria would be converted into necessary conditions, and we would be striding confidently toward a definition of art.

This objection is interesting, since it throws into relief the extent to which developments in the twentieth century have rendered a cluster account of art plausible: the acceptance of anthropological objects as works of art, and the wide variety of art-making practices in the twentieth century have created an explosion of diversity in art objects that glaringly illuminates the problematic status of definitions. However, modernist and "primitive" examples are not needed to show that the conditions are not necessary, as can be seen by reconsidering those criteria where such examples alone were given. So, (1) an ugly nineteenth-century painting may still be a work of art, though likely not a very good one; (2) much of architecture and music is not concerned with the expression of emotion; (7) the lack of an individual point of view is evident in much of the great mass of derivative art that languishes in museum basements and some of that which glowers on their walls; (8) consider the possibility of a fluke masterpiece, that is, a work of great value produced by an artist of little skill, who happened to strike it lucky; and (10) an artist might do some practice sketches, in order to keep up his skills or record a view, with no intention to make art, but they may be of sufficient merit for us to count them as art;[16] or consider early pioneers of a new medium, who may not intend to produce art, but merely think of their work as technical experiment or entertainment, but who produce work of sufficient merit that we judge it art (Georges Méliès's work in cinema seems to be of this kind).

There are also other reasons to think that a criterial approach was needed well before this century to capture the notion of art. In a classic article Paul Kristeller argued that the notion of the fine arts, covering the arts of painting, sculpture, architecture, poetry, and music, coalesced only

in the early part of the eighteenth century, receiving its first unequivocal statement by Charles Batteux in 1746.[17] What before had been regarded as very diverse kinds of art were now separated off from the other arts and grouped together as the fine arts. But while Batteux's grouping was widely accepted, it was not at all obvious what all these different objects had in common that made them art. Certainly, Batteux's test of the imitation of beautiful nature is inadequate, signally failing to cover much of music and architecture. And it should be evident that appeal to beauty on its own can not differentiate the fine arts from the others, since there are beautiful craft products. Appeal to their function of giving pleasure and not being useful won't do either, since the arts have many uses (for instruction, for ethical improvement, for conveying a sense of dignity and civilization, for swelling national pride, for helping people to work in time together, simply for living in, and so on). The cluster account can explain this state of affairs easily: different arts were grouped together as fine arts on the grounds of several overlapping considerations, rather than by one principle which could be formulated in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions. Hence it came to seem obvious to most that the fine arts belonged together, although it was mysterious what grounded this commonalty. The history of the concept of art after this period, with its various inflections in the hands of the Romantic movement and later theorists, deposited more conceptual residues, further extending the criteria for counting something as art.[18]

Finally, does the first condition apply—is the instantiation of fewer than all the listed criteria by an object sufficient for it to be a work of art, that is, is obtaining the members of a proper subset of the complete set of properties sufficient for an object to be art? Certainly, it is not true that the obtaining of any subset of the complete set is sufficient: a philosophy paper may be intellectually challenging, have a complex and coherent form, a complex meaning, and be original, but it is not (sadly) thereby a work of art. But the cluster account does not claim that the obtaining of simply any subset is sufficient for something to be art. Yet there are several subsets that are sufficient, as should be made evident by considering objects that lack only one of the criteria mentioned. To take just one example, a painting which lacked a complex meaning, being a simple celebration of a country scene, but which was the product of an artistic intention, was graceful and elegant, and possessed the other criteria mentioned, would be a solid example of a work of art. There are even plausible examples of sufficient subsets which lack several criteria. Consider again ancient Egyptian art: it lacked a concern with individuality and originality, was not the product of an artistic intention in the modern sense of "artistic," nor was it intellectually challenging (that would have been political or religious subversion), but we count it as art because of its great beauty, its use of forms that are like our artistic

forms (painting, sculpture, architecture, etc.), its considerable expressive force, complex and coherent form, complex meaning, and the great degree of skill involved. And, on reflection, the obtaining of these last-mentioned six criteria seems sufficient for making an object art. If we came across objects which had these six properties on some alien planet, it would be hard to see why one should deny that we had discovered that the aliens had art. But suppose that we did find a case where the obtaining of the criteria was insufficient to make something art; then we could again change the content of the account, rather than abandon it: we could add to our present criteria the criteria which were sufficient to make the object art. The expanded set would still have a subset lacking at least four criteria, a subset which would be sufficient to make something art. (Note that challenging the content of the account [the particular criteria used] need not show that the form of the account [the appeal to criteria per se] is incorrect.)

An important part of showing adequacy to linguistic intuition is showing that a proposed account of a concept can avoid the problems to which its rivals succumb. The cluster account easily sidesteps pitfalls into which functional, institutional, and historical definitions stagger and stumble. To simplify greatly, a leading problem with functionalist definitions is that the functions of art are of too great a variety and too open-ended to be captured by a definition. Functionalists have generally responded by seeking to identify one master function, normally in terms of the provision of aesthetic experience, pleasure, or interest.[19] But these terms have themselves proved notoriously resistant to definition, and however much one weakens their content, it will not cover Duchamp's readymades. The cluster account, in contrast, actually stresses the plurality of factors that make something art, so is unembarrassed by the variety of art's functions. Institutional definitions of art hold (roughly) that what makes something art is its having its status as art conferred on it by some member of the artworld, a concrete social institution.[20] Besides the problem of whether there really is such an institution with appropriate powers, such definitions face a crippling dilemma: if representatives of the artworld have good reasons for conferring art status on some object, then it is whatever grounds those reasons—notably, the object's having certain properties—that justifies the claims of the object to be art, and hence the institutional conferring of status drops out as irrelevant. Or, alternatively, if representatives of the artworld have no good reasons for conferring the status on the object, then we have no good reason to recognize this conferral, in which case their conferral powers are also irrelevant.[21] The cluster account avoids these problems by avoiding use of the notion of an artworld institution, and also by citing criteria giving grounds for the object's being art. Historical definitions, again very roughly, define art objects in terms of some art-historical relation to

some epistemically privileged art objects. They thus are structurally similar to resemblance-to-paradigm accounts, in having to account for how we identify the epistemically privileged art objects, and thus are subject to similar challenges. More pressingly, their account of an art-historical relation is insufficiently projectable: there could be art objects which are recognizable as such, but which stand in no art-historically significant relation at all to any of our art. On a distant planet we could dig up objects which looked very much like our art and had similar functions, but which were produced by a long-dead civilization that never interacted with our own. Depending on how the art-historical relation is specified, historical definitions have either to count them not as art, or to hold that the aliens could not know that they were making art.[22] The cluster account allows us to count such objects as art, since it does not appeal to the notion of an art-historically significant relation. (And even if it did, since such a relation would be just one criterion, we could still count the alien objects as art.) Hence the cluster account avoids with ease the problems that the current leading candidates for definitions encounter.

Finally, it is worth noting one further support for the linguistic adequacy of the account: the cluster account explains why some activities (such as cookery) seem to lie somewhere near the borders of art without being clearly art, since they share several properties of art (being the exercise of individual creativity, having a capacity to give sensuous pleasure), while also lacking other relevant criteria (since they have difficulty in expressing emotion and conveying complex meanings, and are not generally the product of an artistic intention). It is a signal advantage of the cluster account over the more straightforward definitions of art that it can preserve the hardness of such cases, and allow us to explain what it is that makes them hard; such cases can be shown to be genuinely borderline and indeterminate.

NORMATIVE ADEQUACY

The second condition for adequacy is the normative dimension. The appeal to linguistic intuition has already involved reflective equilibrium, testing principles against intuitions, and rejecting those intuitions possessed by some people that modernist and "primitive" art are not really art. Such rejections, if they are not to be question-begging, must be grounded, as we saw, on an adequate theory of error.

As noted already, one role of a theory of error is to explain why rival definitions are attractive. The cluster account can explain very simply why many definitions of art have enjoyed their appeal: they fasten onto a par-

ticular criterion and inflate it into a necessary and sufficient condition. Expressivist definitions treat the criterion of the expression of emotion in this manner; formalist definitions so treat the criterion of complex and coherent form; functionalist definitions that appeal to aesthetic experience draw upon the first criterion. More indirectly, the cluster account can explain the appeal of the institutional and historical definitions as arising out of a perception of the inadequacy of previous attempted definitions, and trying to make room for the greater variety of factors that the cluster account directly acknowledges.

I noted earlier that there is a fair amount of disagreement over what things are art: the claims of "primitive" art, of conceptual art, and of popular music, for instance, are disputed. The cluster account can give a simple explanation of this fact of disagreement: at least one side in the dispute is misapplying the concept of art by converting criteria into necessary conditions. (Compare someone denying that solitaire is a game—to use Wittgenstein's original example—because all games involve at least two participants: here what is perhaps a criterion for gamehood is incorrectly converted into a necessary condition.) The cluster account can also explain the particular nature of the disagreements in each case. Because there is a plurality of criteria, conversion of different criteria into necessary condition yields conflicting judgments about what objects are artworks. Those who deny the claim of readymades or found objects to be art may claim as a necessary condition the use of great skill, or the obtaining of significant aesthetic properties. Those who deny that "primitive" art is art may claim the necessity of the intentionality criterion, noting that tribal cultures lack the concept of art. Those who deny that rock or dance music is art may also stress intentionality as a necessary condition (many of these objects are meant simply as disposable accompaniments to dancing), or formal complexity and coherence. In all three cases, supporters of the arthood of these objects deny that the features mentioned are individually necessary conditions, and can hold them to be merely criterial. Thus the cluster account can explain both the existence and the structure of disagreements in such cases. Perhaps sufficiently complex and open-ended definitions of art, such as historical ones, may also be able to explain these disagreements, but they would have to do so in more indirect ways, such as by appealing to different ways in which to understand a narrative thread in the history of art. But in any case, the cluster account passes this test.

Besides explaining why the different sides disagree, an adequate theory of error must be able to show that at least one of the sides is wrong (that is, it has to be a theory of *error,* not merely of disagreement). Yet it may be thought that a cluster account cannot possess this normative dimension:

for in countenancing a plurality of criteria, must it not render each side to the dispute unassailable, able to rest its judgments on some of the criteria in the set?

The cluster theory does, however, have adequate normative bite.[23] The opponents of conceptual art, "primitive" art, and popular music, as we saw, hold that the relevant criteria are really necessary conditions. This assumption can be challenged by appeal to other, less contentious examples. To take some of the examples given earlier, those who insist on the necessity of the skill criterion can be challenged by the case of the fluke masterpiece, those who support intentionality as a necessary condition can be challenged by consideration of the artistic status of an artist's practice sketches, of the case of Méliès, and so forth. Thus the cluster account has the resources to argue that in certain cases one side in disputes about art is in error.

SOME OBJECTIONS

First, any account that draws on Wittgenstein's and Searle's cluster account of the sense of proper names faces an obvious worry: since Kripke is widely regarded as having demolished these accounts, do the same arguments undermine a cluster theory when applied to art?[24]

The answer is a firm negative. "Art" is not a proper name, nor does it name a natural kind (indeed art may be the preeminent example of something that is *not* a natural kind). So Kripke's arguments about proper names and natural kinds do not directly apply. Nor can analogues of his arguments be applied successfully to art. Thus, it is true that Aristotle might not have been the teacher of Plato, nor have been born in Stagira, nor have had any of the other identifying characteristics which a cluster account of the sense of his name might draw on. And it is also true that gold might not have been yellow, and so forth. But we have already seen that it isn't clearly imaginable that an object could lack all the criteria of art mentioned above and still be art; and as also noted, if some plausible counterexample might be made out, the cluster account could respond simply by augmenting the criteria.

Second, there are two senses in which one can talk of art: the evaluative and classificatory senses. Distinguish these senses, and it seems that the sense of "art" we have been considering must be the classificatory sense, since some of the examples used against the claim that "art" can be defined are instances of bad art (e.g., the ugly Victorian painting). As used in the evaluative sense, "art" is a term of commendation, so in this sense all art is good. Perhaps defining "art" in the classificatory sense is hopeless: but for all that has been shown so far, defining "art" in the evaluative sense isn't.

However, the assumption that there are two senses of "art" is badly

grounded. Consider the notion of health: someone may be in good or bad health, just as art may be good or bad, but "health" is still an evaluative concept. So the mere fact that we can call some art good, and some bad, does not show that there is a distinct, classificatory sense of "art." We can thus hold that the only notion of "art" is an evaluative one. The cluster theory is consistent with this, since the cluster of properties relevant to establishing something as art includes evaluative properties, such as being beautiful, and being the exercise of creative imagination. For instance, an artwork can be bad, but still be art, since it possesses the other criteria relevant to establishing whether it is an artwork. But the notion of art is evaluative, since the question of whether these good-making features are possessed is always relevant to the question of whether something is art. So the cluster theory, far from being challenged on this point, helps to free us from the illusion that there are two distinct senses of "art."

Third, it may be held that the cluster account is vacuous. For I have said that if objections are advanced to the particular criteria put forward, then the cluster account has the option of substituting others in their place to render it more adequate to intuition. But if this is so, then there are no possible counterexamples to the account, so it is empty of content.[25]

This is not so. There are possible counterexamples to cluster accounts: they are successful definitions of art. By giving a set of individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for something to be art, one could show that the cluster account is mistaken: if successful, institutional, historical, or functionalist definitions are counterexamples to the cluster account. So the cluster account is not vacuous. Further, the point of the earlier remarks about the flexibility of the cluster account was to distinguish between the form of the account, and the particular distinct contents it may possess. The form is given by the existence of criteria for a concept, construed in the way laid out in the second paragraph of the first section. The content proposed involved ten particular criteria: the important point is that rejecting this particular account of content need not undermine the correctness of the form of the cluster account. Of course, I have also suggested that these ten criteria are correct, and in so doing I have made a further substantive claim about content, as well as a substantive point about form.

Finally, it may be objected that the cluster account is in fact a definition. Not all definitions are given in terms of individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions: there are disjunctive definitions too. For instance, Robert Stecker has given a historical functionalist account of art that involves disjunctive conditions, and he calls this account a definition.[26] This being so, it may seem that at best I am sailing under false colors, having in

fact given a definition while claiming I am not, or at worst that the entire cluster account is based on a contradiction, since it holds that one cannot define art, even though it itself is a definition of art.

What is at issue here is partly merely a verbal dispute. If one wants to call disjunctive accounts, as well as conjunctive accounts, "definitions," then there is perhaps no great point in insisting that only the latter are really definitions. The substantive point for which I have argued here would, however, be left untouched by such a concession: the substantive point is that one cannot give a definition of art in terms of individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions, and one must instead use a disjunctive account of the form specified (whether or not one decides to call this cluster account a definition). Thus one could recast the main contentions of the chapter without settling the dispute about what is correctly called a definition, and certainly there is no contradiction involved in holding that conjunctive accounts of art are inadequate and only cluster accounts are successful.

However, in a somewhat less concessive spirit let me add that a conjunctive account seems to be what philosophers generally have in mind when they are after a definition (think for instance of the dispute about the third conjunct required to define "knowledge" that dominated epistemology in the immediate aftermath of Gettier's paper). And further, as the number of disjuncts required in a cluster account increases, the plausibility of thinking of the account as a definition decreases. The general discussion in the third section, and particularly the examples sketched or suggested of sufficient conditions involving fewer than all the criteria, give reasons to think that an adequate cluster account of art will be highly disjunctive. So the intuitive pull of claiming that the result is a definition is it seems to me weak. Hence even on the largely verbal point, there is reason to think that the cluster account is not aptly classified as a definition.

CONCLUSION: HEURISTIC UTILITY

What I have attempted to show here is not that art is beyond all doubt a cluster concept, but rather that by distinguishing the cluster account from the resemblance-to-paradigm account one can sidestep the established objections to Weitz's position, and also that the cluster account is adequate to our linguistic intuitions, subject to some degree of normative critique. Since the cluster account can cope with some central counterexamples to the currently most influential definitions of art, it is a promising characterization of art.

Since all claims that one cannot define "art" invariably produce a flurry of would-be definitions in response,[27] it would be well to close by pointing out the attractions a cluster account possesses as a guide for philosophical

aesthetics. In other words, we need briefly to consider the question of heuristic utility to round out the defense of the cluster account.

Much of the best work in aesthetics has not been concerned with the question of definition, but has attempted to understand the diverse capacities that art possesses: we have several important studies of representation, of expression, of symbolic systems, for instance.[28] Representational, expressive, and symbolic capacities are possessed not just by artworks, but by language, by bodily gestures, and by mental states. Thus a great deal of the best work in aesthetics has been concerned not with what uniquely specifies art, but with exploring what art has in common with other human domains and with examining the connections between aesthetics and the philosophies of mind, action, and language. The cluster theory both explains why this approach should be fruitful, and also fosters it, for what makes something an artwork is a matter of its possessing a range of properties that are shared with other human domains. The theory also naturally fosters greater attention to the diversity of properties that go toward making something an artwork, and so renders plausible a view of interpretation as comprising a diverse set of activities, concerned with ascribing a wide variety of properties to objects, where these properties may have different criteria of ascription. I think on independent grounds that such a patchwork theory of interpretation is correct, and the cluster account here fits smoothly with that theory of interpretation.[29] And it also sits naturally with a view of the value of art as consisting in a set of diverse values, rather than one single kind of excellence, a view in favor of which there is also much to be said.

The cluster account of art, then, encourages aestheticians to examine connections between philosophical aesthetics and other branches of philosophy, and at the same time justifies a greater sensitivity to the diversity of art forms and artistically relevant properties. Both of these research programs for aesthetics are independently attractive and promising; the cluster theory explains why this should be so, and also justifies the view that both are likely to continue to be fruitful.

The failure to give a definition of "art" is indeed a failure for that myopic view of analytic philosophy which takes it to be concerned largely with the giving of definitions, in the sense of giving individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for the application of concepts. But the contrasting view of analytic philosophy that sees it as an attempt at high-level theorizing is not called into question by that failure, and the cluster theory is an example of how analytic philosophy of art can still be fruitful, even when it forswears the pursuit of definitions. If the cluster account offered here is correct, the project of definition that has been a central concern of recent philosophical aesthetics is doomed to failure. And that project has been pursued, even though an attractive alternative to it has been available

since the early 1950s, an alternative whose power was overlooked because of a failure to distinguish between two distinct forms it could take. Once we distinguish those forms, we can see the true power of the cluster view. In the early 1950s the philosophical fly was given its chance to get out of the fly bottle, but didn't take it. Maybe this time it will.[30]

NOTES

1. Functionalist definitions include: Monroe Beardsley, "Redefining Art" in his *The Aesthetic Point of View: Selected Essays,* ed. Michael J. Wreen and Donald M. Callen (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1982); M. W. Rowe, "The Definition of 'Art,'" *Philosophical Quarterly* 41 (1991): 271–86; and Oswald Hanfling, "Art, Artifact and Function," *Philosophical Investigations* 18 (1995): 31–48. Institutional definitions include: George Dickie, *Art and the Aesthetic: An Institutional Analysis* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1974); and T. J. Diffey, "The Republic of Art" in his *The Republic of Art and Other Essays* (New York: Peter Lang, 1991). Historical definitions include: Jerrold Levinson, "Defining Art Historically" in his *Music, Art, and Metaphysics* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1990); and James Carney, "The Style Theory of Art," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 72 (1991): 272–89. An example of a hybrid theory is the historical functionalism defended in Robert Stecker, *Artworks: Definition, Meaning, Value* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), part 1.

2. Morris Weitz, "The Role of Theory in Aesthetics," in *Philosophy Looks at the Arts,* ed. Joseph Margolis (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987); Paul Ziff, "The Task of Defining a Work of Art," *Philosophical Review* 62 (1953): 58–78; and W. E. Kennick, "Does Traditional Aesthetics Rest on a Mistake?" *Mind* 67 (1958): 317–34.

3. The exceptions include, for the case of music, Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), chap. 4; and for art in general, Noël Carroll, "Historical Narratives and the Philosophy of Art," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 51 (1993): 313–26. Goehr holds that "musical work" is an "open" concept, i.e., not susceptible to definition in the sense specified above, and Carroll holds the same for "artwork."

4. Carroll for instance claims that it "was subjected to a number of decisive criticisms." "Historical Narratives," 315.

5. For a useful discussion of the standard criticisms, see Stephen Davies, *Definitions of Art* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991), chap. 1.

6. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations,* trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978), part 1, 79; and John Searle, "Proper Names," in P. F. Strawson, ed., *Philosophical Logic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967).

7. "Criterion" has acquired several additional, vaguely specified, and perhaps inconsistent meanings, and worries about these are not relevant to the cluster ac-

count. For an attempt to sort out some of the vagueness in the idea of a criterion as used by philosophers in other contexts, see William G. Lycan, "Noninductive Evidence: Recent Work on Wittgenstein's 'Criteria,'" *American Philosophical Quarterly* 8 (1971): 109–25.

8. Weitz, "Role of Theory," seems largely to have the resemblance-to-paradigm approach in mind on p. 149, and the cluster approach in mind on pp. 150–51. The main thrust of Weitz's position seems to be toward the latter, and if this is correct, then the standard attacks on him are based on a misconstrual. Wittgenstein also seems largely to support the cluster construal of family resemblance. Note that the resemblance-to-paradigm view if further worked out collapses into the cluster view, for if we are asked to say *in what respect* something resembles the paradigm, then we have to refer to a general property, and when we do so, there is no further need to refer to the paradigm.

9. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations,* part 1, 66.

10. Note that the concept of the aesthetic appealed to here is a narrow one: roughly, beauty and its subspecies.

11. For instance, subjectivist definitions of color (e.g., necessarily, something is red iff it looks red to normal observers under normal conditions) are circular but informative, provided one can specify the conditions and observers other than simply as those under which or to whom red things look red.

12. Compare Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (London: Duckworth, 1981), 175f.; Nicholas Wolterstorff, "Philosophy of Art after Analysis and Romanticism," section 5, in *Analytic Aesthetics,* ed. Richard Shusterman (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989); and Noël Carroll, "Art, Practice, and Narrative," *Monist* 71 (1988): 140–56, at section 2. Note that a practice should not be characterized as an *established* kind of activity, as MacIntyre defines it, since then the first artworks cannot be counted as artworks, for they are not part of a practice that is established at that point.

13. The contingency claim seems to be held by Wolterstorff ("Philosophy of Art," 52), but both Carroll and MacIntyre seem to think that being a part of a cultural practice is a necessary condition for an action to be an art-action.

14. Note that "product" here has to be construed in a broader sense than normal not just to include an entity that can logically survive the termination of the actions that originate or alter it (artifacts and selected objects), but also to cover the totality of those actions themselves (the case of performances). "Producing" has also to be construed in a similarly broad fashion.

15. See Beardsley, "Redefining Art," 313, for his doubts about some conceptual art; Hanfling, "Art, Artifact and Function," 45, denies that " 'way out' objects and performances" are art. He correctly notes that many people do not recognize such objects as art—but there again, of course, many people do.

16. There are similar real-life cases: the oil sketches of Neapolitan buildings made in the 1780s by the Welsh painter Thomas Jones appear not to have been considered by either the artist or his audience as artworks, but in the last forty years the sketches have been hailed as some of the most original artworks of the late eighteenth century.

17. Paul O. Kristeller, "The Modern System of the Arts," *Journal of the History of*

Ideas 12 (1951): 496–527, and 13 (1952): 17–46. For recent support for the thesis, see Paul Mattick, Jr., ed. *Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics and the Reconstruction of Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), especially the introduction.

18. The concept of art has therefore changed over its history; but note this does not commit us to a historical definition of art, since the task is to characterize the concept as it is *now*.

19. See in particular Beardsley, "Redefining Art."

20. See Dickie, *Art and the Aesthetic*.

21. Compare Richard Wollheim, *Painting as an Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 14–16.

22. See Gregory Currie, "Aliens, Too," *Analysis* 53 (1993): 116–18.

23. It is not in general true that pluralistic theories are normatively impotent: for an argument showing that there is adequate room for normative improvement in the case of pluralistic moral theories, see my "Moral Pluralism," *Philosophical Papers* 22 (1993): 17–40, and "Rag Bags, Disputes and Moral Pluralism," *Utilitas* 11 (1999): 37–48.

24. Saul Kripke, *Naming and Necessity* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), lecture 1.

25. The objection is due to Crispin Sartwell.

26. Stecker, *Artworks*, part 1. At pp. 24–25, n. 10, Stecker says that, given what I mean by a cluster account, he has no objection to the classification of his own view as such an account.

27. This was the result of Weitz's attack, as noted by Davies, *Definitions of Art*, 9.

28. For instance, Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Works and Worlds of Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), and Kendall Walton, *Mimesis as Make-Believe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), are studies of the nature of representation, but their results are not limited to artistic representation.

29. For a working-out of such a view of interpretation, see my "Interpreting the Arts: The Patchwork Theory," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 51 (1993): 597–609, and "Metaphor and the Understanding of Art," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 97 (1997), 223–41.

30. A shorter version of this chapter was delivered to the national American Society for Aesthetics conference in 1995. I am grateful to the participants at the session, and in particular to my commentator, Crispin Sartwell, for their comments. The chapter has also benefited greatly from comments by Oswald Hanfling, Alex Neill, and Robert Stecker.

3

Is It Reasonable to Attempt to Define Art?

ROBERT STECKER

The project of defining art[1] has had an uneven reception in our now-expiring century. Pursued confidently in its first half, the project looked to be both theoretically wrongheaded and nearly drowned in a sea of counter-examples in the middle years. However, like almost any other philosophical project, the weight of objections could not kill it off completely, and, in fact, in the last few decades, there has been a vigorous revival of interest in defining art and much ingenuity expended in offering up proposals. Now in the late nineties we appear to be doing inventory (in part, with the issuing of this volume). In my stocktaking, I sense two things. On the optimistic side, I see a rough, but still surprising, convergence of views, if not nomenclature, about what the right definition of art ought to look like, about the terms in which art ought to be defined. On the other hand, I see a sharp increase in skeptical sentiments about the feasibility and value of the project. Thus, in the last few years, when I have presented papers on this topic, the audience really came to life only on the issue of whether we should offer definitions at all, whereas in earlier years, there was much more interest in assessing the merits of particular proposals. If I am right about both trends, we are in the paradoxical situation of losing faith in the project just when a modicum of consensus may be in the offing.

In this chapter, I will first try to set out the consensus I see emerging. I will then turn to reasons why some are skeptical of the whole project of defining art, and to particular versions of "the consensus view." Finally, I will take up the issue of what a definition of art is supposed to accomplish. For it is only when that issue is settled that we can complete the evaluation of both trends mentioned so far.

DEFINING ART: THE "CONSENSUS" VIEW

At the risk of mentioning what is all too familiar, I will begin by pointing out the dominant rival proposals from which my proffered consensus has emerged. The position that was dominant in the first half of the century was functionalism, though some proponents of this view would be appalled at the label. According to this view, art is to be defined in terms of (typically) one or (possibly) more than one valuable function it fulfills. Perhaps not too much weight need be placed on the idea of a function. The basic idea here is that art is to be defined in terms of properties for which it is valued. Proposals of this sort can be translated into "function" terminology, since it is usually true that the possession or presentation of a given valuable property is a function of a work, but that may not be the most intuitive way of presenting these definitions. That art is what possesses significant form, is what evokes or expresses emotion (in possibly special ways), is what (intentionally) provides (a significant) aesthetic experience are examples of simple functionalist definitions of art. They are *simple* functionalist definitions because they define art in terms of one function, one valuable property. Just before the anti-essentialist (or antidefinitionist) backlash set in, functionalist definitions became increasing complex and (unfortunately) obscure. Thus there was organicism, the view that "art is really a class of organic wholes consisting of distinguishable, albeit inseparable, elements in their causally efficacious relations presented in some sensuous medium," and "voluntarism," the view that art is something that provides "satisfaction through imagination, social significance and [or?] harmony?"[2]

The next position that should be mentioned is anti-essentialism. This view should not be seen simply as claiming that art cannot be defined. Rather, it has more complex, and enormously influential, aspects: one negative, one positive. The influential negative aspect was the rejection of the specifically functionalist definitions just mentioned—both the simple ones and the last gasp excesses. The anti-essentialists reminded us of the ease with which counterexamples could be found to these definitions and offered theoretical reasons why these should come as no surprise. The most influential theoretical reason, if not actually the one they most emphasized, was based on the idea that the very nature (!) of art requires that its valuable functions change over time. On the positive side, the anti-essentialists do offer a conception of art, albeit a nondefinitional conception. Since it is inspired by Wittgenstein, it takes one of two forms. It is either a family resemblance conception according to which something is art in virtue of strands of similarities to various diverse paradigms,[3] or a cluster conception according to which something is art in virtue of satisfying *some* members of a set (cluster) of conditions. Each approach is inadequate until it an-

swers a "which" question: *which* similarities (conditions) are the ones that bestow arthood? Once this question is answered, however, we seem to be back on the track of a definition. Hence, anti-essentialism sowed the seeds of a new crop of definitions.

Each subsequent definition took its cue from some element in the anti-essentialist perspective. Institutionalist definitions seek to avoid the taint of anything functional (valuable, exhibited) in the defining conditions of art. Historical definitions try to identify the relevant strands of similarity and trace them back to originary first art. Neofunctionalists like myself are sometimes construed as belonging in this category, at other times construed as offering a hybrid of several different approaches. In any case the basic idea is to (partially) define art in terms of functions without pinning down those functions to a list that permanently applies to the whole history of art, past, present, and future. All these definitions are of a type Tom Leddy has called metalevel definitions because of the abstract level at which these theories operate and their (possibly eliminable) references to art, art forms, art functions, art institutions, and so forth.[4]

If one surveys the field of current definitions—and purportedly non-definitional conceptions—of art, one is most likely, at first, to be struck by their diversity, rather than any tendency toward convergence.[5] George Dickie and others still defend versions of the institutional theory according to which an object is an artwork just in case it is properly situated in the framework of an artworld institution; for Dickie, just in case it is an artifact of a kind created to be presented to an artworld public.[6] There are several historical definitions currently available, according to which artworks existing at a given time are defined in terms of a relation they bear to artworks existing at an earlier time, until we arrive at a first art which is defined in some other way. The most plausible and best-defended version of this view is an intentional-historical definition proposed by Jerrold Levinson.[7] I have defended a view I call "historical functionalism" which, despite its name, is not quite a historical definition as specified above. Roughly, something is an artwork at a time *t,* just in case either it is in a central art form at *t* and is intended to fulfill a properly specified function of that form, or it is an artifact that fulfills a properly specified function of art with excellence, whether or not it is in a central art form and whether or not it was intended to fulfill such a function.[8] Berys Gaut argues (in this volume) that art is to be understood not in terms of a definition, but as a cluster concept, thereby seeming to revive an anti-essentialist conception of art. Finally, simple functionalist definitions have not been entirely weeded out. In fact they pop up with surprising frequency, usually attempting, more or less straightforwardly, to define art in terms of aesthetic value.[9] This is the one sort of definition I will ignore in what follows.

Where is the uniformity—convergence, consensus—in this diversity of views? I find it in the following aspects of all the approaches to understanding art except the simple functionalist ones: the disjunctive character of art's definition, the ineliminability of reference to function and history, the importance of both intention and institution.

This characterization is very controversial. First, it simply ignores one group of definitions—the simple functionalist ones. Second, it characterizes various definitions in tendentious ways, since not all the proponents of these definitions would admit that their favored view has all the above-mentioned aspects. I won't try to justify here the first controversial feature,[10] but will focus on arguing for my (initially) tendentious characterization.

THE DISJUNCTIVE CHARACTER OF ART'S DEFINITION

Some of the conceptions of art mentioned above are explicitly disjunctive; others are not explicitly disjunctive. What I will argue is that all are actually disjunctive when all the necessary qualifications and conditions of adequacy are met.

Historical functionalism is explicitly disjunctive. The rough initial statement of that view given above indicates this. Gaut's cluster conception of art turns out to be equivalent to a disjunctive definition of art. Gaut's characterization of a cluster concept makes this clear. He explains that if the concept of an *F* is a cluster concept, then there are several different sufficient conditions for being an *F*, no conditions are individually necessary for being an *F*, that is, there is no condition that all the *F*s must satisfy, and finally, there are disjunctively necessary conditions for being an *F*, that is, it must be true that if something is *F*, then it satisfies one or another of the sufficient conditions for being *F*. To put matters a little more simply, cluster concepts give us sufficient conditions that are disjointly necessary (rather than necessary conditions that are [con]jointly sufficient as are given by so-called "real definitions"). All this is precisely what must be true if *F*s are to be disjunctively defined. To speak of a cluster concept is just another way of speaking of a disjunctive definition. Having said that, let me note two differences between Gaut's conception of art as a cluster concept, and my disjunctive definition of art. Gaut claims that it may be indeterminate whether a given condition for being art is sufficient or not. The conditions I state are asserted to be determinately sufficient. Second, Gaut makes no commitment as to the number of disjunctive conditions, or even whether there is a determinate number. There are a determinate number of disjunctive conditions on my view.[11]

The intentional-historical definition is not typically stated disjunctively. It is usually presented as claiming (roughly) that *w* is an artwork if and

only if *w* is seriously intended for regard in any way preexisting artworks are or were correctly regarded. However, this simple summary statement hides what is actually an elaborately disjunctive conception of art. First, it turns out that there are (at least) two different types of regard one can have for artworks—intrinsic and relational[12]—the intending of either one of which is sufficient to make something art. Second, it also turns out that there are alternative sufficient conditions for being art, one set out in terms of creative processes in the mind of the artist, another set out in terms of appropriation and projection by an artworld community.[13] An intentional-historical purist might attempt to eliminate these latter conditions while arguing that distinguishing between types of regards does not make the definition truly disjunctive. Even if this purist project succeeds, it won't head off the need to add yet another disjunctive condition, which *no* historical view can eliminate. The need for a further condition is easily brought out by considering the fact that before anyone can have the crucial intention mentioned in the initial definition, there must be some art around to which the intention refers. Eventually, this will lead us back to art *not* made with such an intention—first art. So as not to leave this art out, the definition must be rephrased: *w* is art just in case it is intended for a regard . . . , *or w* is first art (with an account of "first art" attached which allows elimination of that phrase). Hence, historical theories are essentially disjunctive.

Is there any reason to think institutional theories contain hidden disjuncts? The clearest and most explicit institutional definition we possess is Dickie's most recent proposal: an artwork is an artifact of a kind created to be presented to an artworld public. I wouldn't argue that this definition has a hidden disjunctive form. I would argue that the definition could not be adequate as it stands, and when made more adequate by supplementation, a disjunctive form would emerge. Let us assume for argument's sake that the original definition provides an adequate conception of much "mainstream" art of the past and present. It still would not very plausibly apply to first art (very early art) and to art outside the standard art forms. These need to be functionally defined. Hence, there must be other sufficient conditions for being art other than the institutional one Dickie proposes. Further, if first art is art in virtue of meeting functional conditions, other items that meet those conditions should also be art. Hence, there should be a self-standing alternative functional condition of arthood. So far, I have merely asserted that this is so. Let me now argue that it is by turning to the second feature on which all metalevel definitions should converge.

THE INELIMINABILITY OF FUNCTION AND HISTORY

Art out of the mainstream raises two questions for an institutional definition of art. The first question is: what makes an institution an art in-

stitution? Dickie, and other institutionalists, give us very little by way of answer to this question. Instead they give us features, like being an artifact presentation system, that both art and nonart institutions share in common. Dickie explicitly relies on our unarticulated background knowledge of current artistic practices to implement the distinction. Even on the questionable assumption that such an appeal suffices for picking out the art institutions of the present and recent past, it could not suffice as soon as we move to art produced in unfamiliar contexts, and could suffice least of all with the most unfamiliar case: the case of first art.

Even this skepticism grants the institutionalist too much, because it grants that all art, and first art in particular, is made within some institutional setting. But this ignores a second question raised by first art: is art always made in such a setting? As Stephen Davies has recently pointed out, this is most unlikely, not only for first art, but for much non-Western art (and, I would add, some traditional Western art).[14] Davies is certainly right if one thinks of an art institution as a framework *exclusively* concerned with the creation or presentation of artworks. For in the cases just cited, there are not such distinctive institutions, but rather the production of art is an aspect of a variety of wider social practices—religious, political, familial, and so on.

Historical definitions face an analogue of the first question (though not the second, since they have the resources to recognize noninstitutionalized art), namely, what makes a tradition an art tradition? This question arises because artworks arise in many *different* traditions that may have different origins (in different first artworks). Although historical definitions can explain how later items are artworks by relating them to a given tradition, such definitions are incomplete until a basis is provided for distinguishing art traditions from other historically continuous cultural practices.

The best way to define first art, art traditions, and even art institutions is in terms of art functions. The institutionalist has, as far as I can see, no alternative answer. A historicist like Levinson might appeal to common intentions across traditions. However, the supposition of such common intentions would be plausible only if works fulfilled common functions across traditions. In fact, the relevant intentions are intentions that objects be regarded in certain ways, which would presumably be of the intrinsic variety making reference to such functions. Hence, appeal to common intentions is not a distinct alternative to appeal to common functions. Rather, the former is parasitic on the latter.[15]

To this it might be replied that if we need to define or clarify when an institution is an art institution, and when a tradition is an art tradition, doesn't the same question arise regarding functions: when is a function an art function? This is certainly a legitimate question, but fortunately there are some functions that crop up across many different art forms; that are

frequently, if not invariably, fulfilled by individual artworks; and that are as noticeable in early art and art from different traditions as they are in more familiar works. Let's call these aesthetic functions. Works that fulfill aesthetic functions contain valuable aesthetic properties and provide valuable aesthetic experience. Works that fulfill aesthetic functions are, among other things, beautiful, or graceful, or vibrant, or expressively powerful, or vividly representational.

We tend to recognize aesthetic functions in very early art and the art of other cultures even if our aesthetic appreciation is partial and much of their extra-aesthetic significance is opaque. However, one cannot simply say that something is first art if it fulfills aesthetic functions or something is an art tradition or institution if it (initially) promotes their fulfillment. Many artifacts fulfill aesthetic functions, not all of which are art by any means. A more discriminating condition is needed. My own definition suggests that items that fulfill aesthetic functions with excellence are artworks. Davies suggests that first artworks are items that, when treated as a whole, display aesthetic features that are essential to their realizing their prime function (or one of their prime functions). Perhaps here too a disjunctive condition is appropriate. In any case, once we have a way of picking out first art, we can define art traditions and institutions as ones that originate with items so characterized.

If we can define first art in terms of aesthetic functions or features, it does not follow, and it would be wrong to infer, that we can define art in those terms. This is because once art traditions and institutions are established, the functions of art and the intentions with which it is made can diverge in unforeseeable ways. Many of these functions and intentions are form or genre specific. Many arise under what I have elsewhere called predecessor concepts to our current concept of art—concepts like those of ancient classic, and that of a liberal art (applied to music and poetry). I suspect that even the concept of fine art, that arose in the early eighteenth century, is a predecessor to our current concept of art. Aesthetic properties are not always preeminent in items falling under some of these predecessor concepts as well as our current concept. To understand the way we classify items as art today, we have to make reference to the historical development of the concept of art. Historicists do this by relating art made at a given time to the functions of contemporary or earlier artworks or to the intentions with which they are made. A cluster theorist would have to cope with the fact that the appropriate cluster of properties from which conditions sufficient for being art emerge is subject to historical change. Institutionalists, I have just argued, at least have to make reference to the origins of art institutions, to distinguish them from nonart institutions. In one way or another, a reference to art's history is a prerequisite to a satisfactory definition of art.

THE IMPORTANCE OF INTENTION AND INSTITUTION

To define art, does one also need to make reference to intentions with which art is made or the institutional framework in which it is made? Obviously, some of the definitions mentioned so far say yes. But do the proponents of the remaining alternatives have to make concessions similar to those claimed for function and history? I think the issue may be less forced here, and the case for consensus less clear, but a case can still be made that a satisfactory definition will make reference to both.

Recall that Dickie currently defines art as an artifact of a kind created to be presented to an artworld audience. The definition refers both to an intentionally defined kind ("kind created *to be* . . .") and to an aspect of the institutional framework of art (artworld audience). According to historical functionalism, it is sufficient for an item to be art if it is in a central art form, and it is intended to fulfill a properly specified function of that form. The intentional aspect of this condition is obvious. The institutional aspect is anchored in the notion of a central art form. Something is a central art form if it achieves a certain status in an artworld: items in such forms tend to be most readily presented in certain settings to certain audiences and to be received by those audiences in certain ways. A cluster conception of art would very likely contain a reference to these notions. The intentional historical definition obviously gives a central place to intention, but need it rely on any notion at all of an art institution? Levinson in fact recognizes one sufficient condition for being art that is distinctly institutional, namely, an item might be an artwork, in certain cases, in virtue of being appropriated and projected by an artworld community for artistic regard.[16] It is true that this condition is more an addition to, rather than an intrinsic part of, intentional historicism. That Levinson needs to look for such an addition, however, reinforces the fact that there is an institutional aspect of art making that definitions need to acknowledge. This institutional aspect may play a more central role in intentional historicism when we spell out the "regards" for which objects are intended if they are art (especially in the case of relational intending).

That *some* reference to art-making intentions and art institutions will crop up in a plausible definition of art leaves two deeper questions unanswered. Obviously, we want to know *which* intentional and institutional aspects need be mentioned. It is equally crucial to decide whether it is necessary that artworks possess these aspects or whether it is only part of one or more sufficient conditions that they do.

Regarding the latter issue, there is no consensus. As I have already argued, my own view is that it is not necessary that art be made in an institutional framework. I also hold there is no intentional necessary condition

for being art. Institutionalists and intentionalists obviously disagree.[17] This is an issue that remains to be settled.

Regarding the former issue, I will confine myself to a few remarks about the sort of intentions that satisfactory definitions will mention. I am skeptical that Dickie's approach will work. It is clear both that artworks need not be intended for presentation to an artworld audience and that so intending them is insufficient to make items art. Dickie recognizes that an instance of a kind created to be presented need not actually be intended for presentation. What is required, then, for something to belong to this kind? Dickie's answers to this question have proved elusive at best. It is equally unsatisfactory to specify the intention as the intention to make an artwork. Aside from the tight circularity of (partially) defining art in this way, being made with this intention is neither necessary nor sufficient for arthood. It is not necessary because art has been made before the concept *art* was available for incorporation into intentions. It is not sufficient because one can set out to make a work of art and fail. The appropriate sort of intentions are those mentioned by intentional historical and historical functionalist definitions, which I take to be very similar in this regard. These are, by and large, intentions that, by working in certain forms or media, one will fulfill certain functions. To avoid misunderstanding, it should be made clear that the claim is not that anyone who sets out to make an artwork with this intention necessarily succeeds, but rather that works *produced* with this intention in the relevant forms or media are artworks (even if they fail to fulfill the intended functions).[18]

If the argument so far is correct, we know the terms in which art should be defined. This is not the same as claiming that we know how to define art or that the correct definition is one which synthesizes or finds a compromise among the current rivals. Let us now turn to the current skepticism about the project of defining art and see if it supplies reasons to doubt whether the approach to defining art set out above can be successful.

SKEPTICISM ABOUT DEFINING ART

Current skepticism about the project of defining art only superficially resembles mid-century anti-essentialism. The latter had a powerful theoretical foundation in a Wittgensteinian conception of language. The former has no single, theoretical basis. For this reason one has to take a piecemeal approach to the current skepticism, addressing arguments one by one as they crop up in different writers. If there is a common thread among these arguments it is despair: for one reason or another, the authors of these arguments have become pessimistic that any definition of art can succeed.

I have already mentioned, and have tried to head off, one basis for doubt

about definitions, namely, the proliferation of alternatives and the failure of different theorists to reach agreement. I have argued that there actually is a degree of convergence about the correct way to define art among the most promising approaches. I will finish the reply in the last section by arguing that when we understand what definitions attempt to do, we should not expect *complete* convergence. Let me add that lack of agreement in philosophy is hardly peculiar to attempts at definition. It is the norm regarding any philosophical project. If one despairs due to lack of agreement, one ought to despair about philosophy, and much else besides.

A similar, though not identical, argument against definition is the inductive argument. It has two versions. One claims that this attempt to define art has failed, that attempt has failed, . . . , so the next attempt will probably fail. The other version states that definitions have failed in this area of philosophy, they have failed in that area of philosophy, . . . , so they are likely to fail in the philosophy of art. There are many problems with the inductive argument, but let us be satisfied here with one reply to each version.

The first version might have a modicum of plausibility, but note that it doesn't imply that we will never succeed in defining art. It also does not rule out that when a successful definition is found, this was made possible by contributions from earlier, less successful attempts. (Compare: This attempt to cure AIDS has failed, that attempt has failed, so the next attempt will probably fail. Perhaps, but this does not imply that there will never be a cure.) The second version of the argument seems to raise larger concerns. Medicine has succeeded in finding cures. Has philosophy ever succeeded in finding definitions? To say "no" is tendentious. There may not be *agreement* on a definition of knowledge or of justice, or of art, but there are proposals abroad that have not been decisively refuted. One (or more) may be perfectly correct, successful definitions.

Another source of despair about defining art is the thought that the concept itself has become fragmented; there just isn't one thing to define anymore. I find this thought both more elusive and more intriguing than those already mentioned. It is more elusive because it not clear how it differs from the claim already mentioned that theorists have proliferated definitions (conceptions) of art rather than converging on one conception. I suggest that the difference can be set out this way: The earlier argument did not preclude that there is some one thing to define which we might choose from the following candidates: the property of being art; the set of artworks past; present, and future; the extension of "art"; the truth conditions of "*w* is an artwork." It merely claimed that there is no agreement about how to define this "thing." In fact, Gaut, one proponent of the earlier argument, goes on to suggest that the best way to solve this problem is to think of *the concept* of art as a cluster concept, a concept to be defined

disjunctively. The present thought is that there is no one "thing" to be defined—no single property, set, extension, or truth condition. There is no one concept to capture. People have different conceptions of art because art is not one thing. There can, perhaps, be mistaken conceptions, but there is not one concept that all correct conceptions have to conform to.[19]

This thought is intriguing because it raises important questions about what would have to obtain for there to be a single concept of art. One proponent of the "no single concept" view is Alan Goldman.[20] He appears to base his view on the purported fact that the artworld is fragmented into various different circles of artists, of critics, of ordinary art appreciators, and as one goes from circle to circle at all levels one finds no common core of agreement about what is art. So his argument is: there is no agreement among experts (artists and critics), and there is no agreement in ordinary use, so there is no common concept. (Rather, we would have a concept of art relative to a circle.)

The premises of this argument are very far from obvious. First, such claims tend to be based on rough and ready impressions rather than painstaking efforts to sort out where agreement exists and where it doesn't. Second, much of the data on which impressions are based concern judgments about particular works, and differences in such judgments have many causes, only one of which is a difference in one's art concept. They can also be based on the way works are perceived or understood, personal biases, lack of familiarity or overfamiliarity, boredom with a particular art movement, and so forth. Third, the judgments that are relevant to the conclusion of this argument are classificatory judgments about candidate artworks. But it is well known that judgments that an item is or is not art are often issued to praise or disparage a given artwork, not to classify it.

Let an individual's conception of art be the totality of his or her beliefs relevant to classifying something as art or not art. A grain of truth contained in the premises of this argument is that it is false that conceptions of art are uniform across individuals. However, this, in itself, is not a very interesting truth. For one thing, it is probably true of individual conceptions of most objects of thought. For another, many individual conceptions of art are prereflective, insufficiently informed, biased, and lack of uniformity among conceptions is, at least in part, due to such factors. Individual conceptions, like other beliefs, can be evaluated against various desiderata, and ought to be revised to the extent that they fail to meet these. An adequate conception is one that satisfies all the desiderata. An adequate conception ought to be well informed (about the history of art forms, for example), unbiased, reflective (in the sense of taking into account implication of one's view and recognizing other well-known views). It ought to be consistent and not viciously circular. It ought to be able to cover the gener-

ally agreed on extension of "art" and handle hard cases in plausible ways. It ought to make the judgment that something is art corrigible. One can argue about what exactly a list of desiderata should or should not contain, but it should be initially easier to reach agreement here than on individual conceptions of art.

The important issue, in deciding whether the concept of art is fragmented, is whether there is more than one *adequate* conception of art. The more adequate conceptions there are, and the more diverse these conceptions are, the more fragmented (relativized) the concept. For reasons I will elaborate in the last section it seems to me quite possible that there is more than one adequate conception of art. However, for reasons already given in the first four sections individuals will express these possibly different adequate conceptions using a common core of ideas, so these conceptions will all roughly be in the same ballpark. This indicates to me that there is a degree of vagueness about what is art, but not that there is serious fragmentation of the concept.

The skeptical objections considered so far all raise doubts about the possibility of settling on a generally accepted, adequate, correct definition, especially a single such definition. Others have raised concerns that do not directly question this possibility but which discredit in other ways the project of seeking a definition. David Novitz, for example, argues that classifying items as artworks has little or nothing to do with defining art.[21] If his argument is correct, this would be devastating for the project of defining art because the point of that project has long been to articulate the conditions under which we classify items as art. If definition turns out to be irrelevant to classification, then what is the point of looking for a definition of art?

I wish I could extract one or several crisply stated arguments from Novitz's paper. Unfortunately, they have eluded me. Instead, I will first discuss various remarks which Novitz takes to support the claim that classification proceeds independently of definition. This will enable us both to sharpen the issue, sorting out true statements from false ones, and to evaluate the overall plausibility of Novitz's position. I will then ask how Novitz proposes to classify items as art and will suggest that he appeals to conditions which themselves approximate to a definition.

"Definitions tell us about the meaning of words and not the world, and the moment we revise them in the light of our experience of the world, we fail to treat them as definitions. A classificatory statement is never true by definition; it is a synthetic [a posteriori?] statement based on our experience of the world" (156). Classificatory statements *are* "synthetic." That doesn't mean that they proceed independently of definitions. Consider: "Joe is a bachelor." "How do you know that?" "Well, I know he is an adult male and I just found out that he is unmarried." The classification is di-

rectly based on a definition, but it still makes a claim that is synthetic and not true "by definition" because it requires ascertaining that the properties definitive of bachelors are possessed by a particular item, and this can only be ascertained "based on our experience of the world." I'm not sure that definitions themselves are never based on such experience (consider the definition of natural kinds), but even if that is true, and classificatory statements are so based, it doesn't follow that classification proceeds independently of definition.

"[Although] classificatory disputes about art sometimes parade as disputes about the real nature or essence of art, they are more properly construed as disputes about a range of normative issues . . ." (156). The passage stands in tension with the previous one, since questions about how we *should* treat an object are not clearly settleable by our experience of the world. The passage also suggests that classificatory disputes cannot be about both the nature of art and normative issues. But this is not so. If an item's being art depends on its possessing valuable properties or fulfilling valuable functions, and this determines how it should be treated, then classificatory disputes would be about both the nature of art and normative issues.

Novitz also points out that it is possible to classify radically innovative work as art, but he claims that definitions have a hard time accounting for such classifications. Either definitions succeed in covering radical innovations by becoming vacuous (the fate of institutional definitions, according to Novitz) or fail by requiring that new works bear crucial similarities to past ones (the fate of historical definitions like Levinson's and mine). I think it's possible to defend both institutional and historical definitions against these charges, but will here restrict the defense to the latter type of definition. First note that any satisfactory classificatory procedure for *F*s must place some sort of restriction on which items can be correctly deemed *F*s whether or not this procedure claims to define *F*s. Second, it should be realized that all sorts of innovation would be permitted by such definitions. For example works could fulfill new functions but also some traditional ones, or they could fulfill traditional functions in new ways or for a new subject matter. It is by now a traditional function of art to suggest new ways of seeing or thinking, to exhibit originality, to question past practice, to break "rules," in short, to be new and different in countless ways. Hence innovation seems to pose no difficulty for historical definitions. But what about innovation so radical the new work bears no significant relation to earlier ones? I know of no such works. Until a truly problematic example is offered, no genuine problem has been posed.

Novitz goes on to say that the cause of classificatory disputes is the fulfillment or the disappointment of the high expectations we have about art.

These are expectations that art will fulfill certain "eudaimonistic" functions.[22] Novitz's remarks about how reference to these functions serves the classificatory enterprise are confusing. On the one hand, he recognizes that appeal to these functions won't constitute a functionalist definition of art since they are shared by items which aren't artworks. On the other hand, he leaves it most unclear how appeal to the fulfillment of these functions can settle any classificatory disputes just because they are not sufficient for an item's being an artwork. In the end, Novitz recognizes that an appeal to eudaimonistic functions cannot by itself settle such a dispute. Other conditions need to be introduced.

Toward the end of the paper, Novitz suggests that a successful classificatory procedure has to meet two further conditions. First, "no artifact can be a work of art if no one has ever claimed this of it (or of anything of the sort)" (160). Second, Novitz suggests that these claims must receive some sort of positive uptake, though to what extent and by whom is left unclear. Whatever this acknowledgment of the claim that an item is art amounts to, it is something that, "in our culture at this time," we willingly tender "out of respect . . . for other human beings," at least if we can get an inkling of the "humanizing role" of the item under consideration (162). In earlier ages, such acceptance would not be so easily secured.

This suggests the following protodefinition: An item is an artwork if and only if (*a*) it performs a eudaimonistic function, (*b*) someone claims art status for it, or for things of the same sort, (*c*) this claim receives adequate acceptance. I call this a protodefinition for several reasons. First, Novitz did not intend to state a definition. Second, perhaps in part because of this, it has obvious rough edges in need of refinement before it could be taken seriously. For example, the function mentioned in (*a*) needs to be more clearly specified. As it stands, (*b*) will be satisfied by everything, since everything belongs to a sort that some artwork belongs to. With regard to (*c*), a clearer explication of "adequate acceptance" is needed, as well as more explanation why the condition is necessary. Third, however, Novitz's concluding remarks, just adumbrated, are much more suggestive of conditions necessary and sufficient for arthood than were his earlier statements. This resulted from the fact that he finally had to articulate a classificatory conception of art, and this inevitably approximated to a definition.

Finally note that the classificatory conditions Novitz articulates have most of the characteristics the first section claimed to be required by the "consensus view" about defining art. Both functional (condition *a*) and institutional (*b* and *c*) aspects of art are highlighted. There is implicit reference to art's history in the recognition that both artistic functions and norms of acceptance change with time. There is not a clear acknowledgment that our classificatory procedures appeal to a disjunction of condi-

tions, but given Novitz's overall position, this is a concession that might be easily secured. In short, when spelled out, Novitz's conception of our classificatory procedure for art is not radically different, in its fundamental terms, from that set out in the best current definitions of art.

WHAT DEFINITIONS ACCOMPLISH

There is probably as much controversy, and diversity of views, about what definitions are and what they do as there are definitions of art. I will not survey here a large number of views about definition, and I will not argue that one conception of definition is the correct definition of "definition." I will simply contrast my own view about what a definition of art can accomplish with two others.

One common conception is that definitions reveal the real essence of what they define. Where something has a real essence, it is a necessary truth that something is an *F* only if (or if and only if) it is a *G*, and this necessary truth can only be discovered a posteriori. Some proposed definitions of art appear to hope to identify such an essence, while many skeptics about defining art express doubt that there is any such thing to be discovered.[23] On this one issue I incline to the skeptics' side. There may be some items for which this conception of definition is appropriate, and natural kinds, if such there be, would be leading candidates. It may be that something is water if and only if it is composed of H_2O molecules, and that this is a necessary, but an empirically discovered, truth. It may also be true that the meaning of "water" is simply its referent, hence, not only water but "water" is defined by a real essence. Artworks, in contrast, are artifacts; they are not natural kinds. Artifacts, I assume, don't have, as their essence, hidden natures that can be discovered. We couldn't discover that, though we thought chairs were artifacts made or used to be sat upon, this is really true only of some chairs, and that the real essence of chairs lies completely elsewhere. Hence, artifacts are not defined by real essences.

Perhaps some kinds of artifacts, and other humanly invented kinds, have essences even if they are not real essences. In inventing the kind, we invent the essence of the kind, and preserve it in the meaning of words used to refer to items belonging to the kind. For these kinds, it is a necessary truth that something is an *F* only if (or if and only) it is a *G* where this is known a priori on the basis of the meaning of words designating *F*s. Perhaps, it is necessary that something is a chair if and only if it is an artifact made or used to be sat upon by a single individual (or perhaps certain additional surface structural features are also necessary to rule out such things as stools, beanbags, etc.). Whether or not this is so for chairs, it might more plausibly be so for the kinds *aunt* or *bachelor*. If any of these claims could

be made out, it would be based, not on the hidden nature of these kinds, but on a meaning of the words used to designate them. Let's call definitions based on such meaning "lexical."

Artworks are the artifacts we classify using the label "art." Their having an essence depends on the possibility of giving a lexical definition of "art," that is, on there being a uniform set of properties—properties necessary and sufficient for being art—that invariably informs the classifications of those who understand the meaning of "art." In claiming in the fifth section that individual conceptions of art vary across individuals, I denied that there is such a uniform set of properties. Even if some kinds can be lexically defined in a satisfactory way, important cultural kinds, like art, religion, or morality (whether or not the items that fall under these kinds are artifacts) cannot be.

Nevertheless, the main thing we have to go on in defining art is our classificatory practice. Since this practice isn't as uniform as it is for classifying (people as) aunts, we need a somewhat different conception of what a definition could accomplish here. A definition will be somewhat descriptive and somewhat suggestive or revisionary. One could say that it proposes a "rational reconstruction" of our classificatory practice according to desiderata such as those listed in the fifth section. We can engage in debates about proposed definitions on the basis of desiderata hoping to achieve "reflective equilibrium," which, I take it, means settling on one definition. But it is equally possible, in fact, more likely, that several, possibly incompatible, definitions will be equally good reconstructions. If this turns out to be so, there is at least reason to hope they will have in common the features picked out by the "consensus view" mentioned in the first section.

To give an example of the way in which a definition combines description with revision, consider the fact that our current concept of art expands the domain of artworks enormously compared with any concept of art that existed two hundred years ago. Not only have the traditional art forms been blurred by multimedia, conceptual, and performance works, not only have many new art forms been introduced such as photography and cinema, not only have many new materials been introduced into traditional forms such as sculpture, but many traditional practices such as quilt making now are far more readily acknowledged as capable of producing artworks than they would have been before. Objects from this latter category of what we can now call traditional or "folk" art have literally poured into our art museums. This much is a fact that any current conception of art must take into account. How it should do so is a much more debatable matter, and that there is just one right way of doing it is hard for me to believe. Institutional theories are designed to recognize expansions wrought

by the avant-garde, although some think they do so too uncritically. They have not been as good at recognizing traditional art, but it is open to a conception to deny that some things currently being *called* art really are so. Functional and historical theories have more resources to recognize traditional art, but different theories do so in somewhat different ways.

These remarks shouldn't be understood as claiming that the current leading proposals are all equally satisfactory reconstructions. I am not claiming this, nor do I believe it. The claim is simply that there could be equally satisfactory reconstructions.

It also shouldn't be thought that I am suggesting that proposed definitions are really honorific rather than classificatory. The definitions are concerned with making sense of our classificatory practice, even if the sense made is somewhat idealized. The definitions that eschew reference to functions, properties, or "regards," for which we value artworks, such as institutional definitions, are just as much idealized conceptions of this practice as definitions that do make such references.

All this suggests that, for the project of defining art, both extreme pessimism (skepticism fed on despair of making progress in this arena) and overly buoyant optimism (supposing there is a definition that reveals the essence of art) are misplaced. What we can reasonably hope to do is suggest ways of making sense of a practice which is not so uniform as to yield an essence of art and not so shot through with inconsistency as to resist any attempt at sense making. By doing so, we become clearer about our individual conceptions of art, can examine them against various desiderata for adequately defining art, and perhaps extend the common ground in our various individual conceptions.

NOTES

1. What is usually defined is actually *work of art* (*artwork*). I will speak of defining art for convenience and brevity covering attempts to define both art (a practice) and artwork (an object). When actual definitions are discussed, it will be clear what is being defined.

2. Both quotations are from Morris Weitz, "The Role of Theory in Aesthetics," in *Aesthetics in Perspective,* ed. Kathleen Higgins (Fort Worth: Harcourt, Brace, 1996), 76–77. Organicism was Weitz's own view before his conversion to anti-essentialism. Voluntarism is the view of Dewitt Parker.

3. Paradigms are very clear examples of some type of entity. So presumably, paradigms of art might be the nearly universally acknowledged great works of a canon, such as the Mona Lisa, Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, or *Middlemarch.* To think

of works as becoming art in virtue of strands of similarity to various paradigms would be to think of them as art in virtue of similarity to these exemplars, which, it should be noted, can come into existence at any point in the history of art. An alternative is to think that something becomes art in virtue of strands of similarity to so-called first art. I believe Weitz tended to think in terms of paradigms as just defined, whereas current historical conceptions of art rely on first art. One such historical approach, which, like Weitz, does not attempt to provide a definition of art is Noël Carroll's narrative approach. See "Historical Narratives and the Philosophy of Art," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 51 (1993): 313–26, and "Identifying Art," in *Institutions of Art: Reconsiderations of George Dickie's Philosophy,* ed. Robert J. Yanal (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994).

4. Thomas Leddy, "Stecker's Functionalism," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56 (1998): 398–402.

5. Berys Gaut is so struck in " 'Art' as a Cluster Concept," in this volume.

6. Dickie's current definition is presented in *The Art Circle: A Theory of Art* (New York: Haven Press, 1984). Other important attempts to defend institutional definitions are Stephen Davies, *Definitions of Art* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991); and David Graves, "Constituting Art: The Institutional Theory of Art," Ph.D. diss., Tel Aviv University.

7. Levinson has defended intentional historicism in a series of papers, the most important of which are "Defining Art Historically," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 19 (1979): 232–50, "Refining Art Historically," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 47 (1989): 21–33, and "Extending Art Historically," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 51 (1993): 411–24. James Carney has proposed an alternative historical definition—the style-historical theory—most notably in "The Style Theory of Art," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 72 (1991): 272–89.

8. This view was first set out and contrasted with other historical definitions in Robert Stecker, "The Boundaries of Art," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 30 (1990): 266–72. It is further elaborated and defended against objections in "Historical Functionalism or the Four Factor Theory," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 34 (1994): 255–65, and in *Artworks: Definition, Meaning, Value* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 48–65.

9. I won't try to cite even a representative sample of these. Monroe Beardsley's "An Aesthetic Definition of Art," in *What Is Art?* ed. Hugh Curtler (New York: Haven, 1983), 15–29, is a by now classic attempt, and Richard Lind's "The Aesthetic Essence of Art," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 50 (1992): 117–29, is a sophisticated recent proposal.

10. I have criticized simple functionalist views in *Artworks,* 33–47.

11. Whether Gaut's cluster concept is tantamount to a definition depends on whether he would ultimately settle on a finite, definite set of conditions in the cluster. If he would, then speaking of a cluster concept is just another way of referring to a disjunctive definition. If he would not, then the former is distinct from the latter.

12. The intrinsic way of intending something for regard is to intend that a work be regarded in certain intrinsically characterized ways: R^1, R^2, R^3, etc., ways in which past works have been regarded. I would argue that this boils down to in-

tending that a work has valuable properties or functions that some past work has. In the relational way of intending, one does not have in mind such specific properties, but one has in mind works, genres, or art in general.

13. Levinson says that these pick out different *senses* of art. However, the items picked out by these "senses" get pretty much the same treatment—are regarded in about the same way—as items picked out by the intentional historical "sense." Hence, it seems to me more accurate to say these different conditions are different grounds for picking out the same sort of thing.

14. See Stephen Davies, "First Art and Art's Definition," *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 35 (1997): 19–34, and "Non-Western Art and Art's Definition," in this volume.

15. For a more detailed argument for these claims, see the papers by Davies cited in n. 14.

16. Levinson qualifies the condition with three further stipulations: that the item in question be (*a*) inordinately valuable as art, (*b*) unsuited for other employment, (*c*) something we could scarcely help taking as art.

17. Or perhaps it is not completely obvious that they disagree. Levinson does offer alternative sufficient conditions to the intentional historical conditions, and Davies, though he has defended the institutional theory, now seems to see that not all art making occurs within an art institution.

18. For arguments for this claim see my *Artworks: Definition, Meaning, Value,* 50–54, and the papers by Levinson cited in n. 7. For further thoughts on the best way to characterize the intention, see Leddy, "Stecker's Functionalism," and my reply, "Leddy on Stecker's Functionalism," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56 (1998): 402–4.

19. However, it is not clear why this thought too could not be expressed in terms of a disjunctive definition of art.

20. Goldman expressed these views in comments on my paper "The Intentional-Historical Definition of Art," presented at the APA Pacific Division Meeting, San Francisco, March 29–31, 1995.

21. David Novitz, "Disputes about Art," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 54 (1996): 153–63. Parenthetical page references below will be to this article.

22. Novitz expresses two quite different conceptions of these functions. On one conception, art has the specific functions of humanizing the world, making it a place where we belong, where we feel at home. Novitz repeatedly refers to these functions throughout his paper. Yet as a characterization of art functions, this conception is highly implausible, not because art never fulfills them but because it only sometimes does. Much art does the opposite, making the world strange, other, inhospitable, cold, shocking. Much art does neither but has yet other functions. I agree that many disputes about classification turn on the function or value of a candidate item but not necessarily on the specific functions Novitz's first conception mentions. Novitz's second conception recognizes this without recognizing its incompatibility with the first conception. On this second conception, art's functions vary with time but are invariably "eudaimonistic." I read this literally as merely saying that art invariably serves human happiness or flourishing in some way or other.

The trouble with this conception is that it borders on the vacuous and fails to distinguish art from the many other artifacts that also serve eudaimonistic functions.

23. Some of the skeptical arguments against this have already been discussed. See discussion of Goldman and Novitz above. Among proponents of the view that a definition should capture the discoverable essence of art is Arthur Danto, most clearly in "Responses and Replies," in *Arthur Danto and His Critics,* ed. Mark Rollins (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1993), 193–216.

4

Aesthetic Concepts of Art

JAMES C. ANDERSON

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will attempt to defend an aesthetic theory of art against some of its most critical objections.[1] I will begin by trying to make clear the nature of the project of art definition. I will distinguish this metaphysical project from the epistemological problem of art identification. I will suggest that differentiating these related problems is helpful in two ways. First, we will gain clarity on exactly what we are seeking in a definition of art. Second, we will see that several other recent definitions of art can be viewed, not as competitors to the aesthetic definition of art, but as definitions addressed to a distinct philosophical problem. In fact, the seemingly opposing definitions complement the aesthetic theory of art's nature.

In the second section, I will attempt to offer a clear concept of the aesthetic. The concept offered will have several advantages. First, the articulation of the concept of the aesthetic shares features, in terms of both content and structure, with accounts offered by others whether or not they see the aesthetic as central to the project of defining art. Second, the concept offered will not make reference to any other, more fundamental artistic notion; in short, the account will, at least initially, hold the promise of being theoretically useful. Third, the concept put forth will be consistent with the history of the concept of the aesthetic. This will place the subsequent use of the concept well within the tradition of other aesthetic definitions of art. Finally, having given shape and content to the notion of the aesthetic, I will be able to show that aesthetic conceptions of art are not committed to formalist criteria of art evaluation.

The third section of the chapter investigates ways in which the concept of the aesthetic is incorporated in definitions of art. I will look at two very different schema for aesthetic definitions of art. The first approach, employed most notably by Beardsley, incorporates the aesthetic into the

artist's intention in producing an artifact. The resulting definition, it will be shown, is *descriptive* in nature. The second approach limits the intentional component of the definition to the creation of an artifact and treats the aesthetic component functionally. The creator of art need not have intended the artifact to have any aesthetic potency. It is a matter of whether the artifact, in fact, rises to some level of aesthetic potency. The resulting definition is, of course, *evaluative* in nature. The strengths and weakness of these two approaches will be investigated with special attention being paid to the issues of the possibility that artworks may be created outside of the context of the "art world," and cross-cultural art identification. In the fourth section, I consider the objection that aesthetic definitions of art are either too narrow or too broad.

I begin with the nature of the project. In his paper "Does Traditional Aesthetics Rest on a Mistake?" W. E. Kennick asks us to

> [i]magine a very large warehouse filled with all sorts of things—pictures of every description, musical scores for symphonies and dances and hymns, machines, tools, boats, houses, churches and temples, statues, vases, books of poetry and of prose . . . postage stamps, flowers, trees, stones, musical instruments.[2]

Further, we are to imagine that a person is instructed to enter the warehouse and bring out all of the works of art. Kennick rightly concludes that, with some exceptions, the person would be able to do this even though the person "possesses no satisfactory definition of Art in terms of some common denominator."[3] The items concerning which the person is in doubt are accounted for, by Kennick, as a consequence of the vagueness of the concept of art. According to Kennick, it is sufficient for the completion of the warehouse exercise that the person understand English, and understanding English is not, whatever it is, understanding a set of definitions of the terms we so comfortably use. The warehouse experiment is but a piece of Kennick's overall argument against the definability of art. But from the experiment alone, it does not follow that art cannot be defined. At best, it follows that definitions of art (even a correct definition) would be of no practical value with respect to the project of art identification.[4] The exercise may show as little as that definitions of art would not be useful in identifying works which are paradigmatic cases of art.[5] It is the connection between the projects of the identification of art objects and the defining of art that concerns me here.

In his recent paper "Historical Narratives and the Philosophy of Art," Noël Carroll presents an interpretation of the history of attempts to define art which shares a key feature of Kennick's warehouse example; that is, the assumption that the point of definitions of art is the practical concern of art identification. Carroll writes,

The recurrent task of the philosophy of art, as a matter of fact, has been to provide means to *identify new and emerging work, particularly work of a revolutionary sort,* as art.[6]

Further, he claims that "the definitional approach presumes that we identify art—including, most particularly, avant-garde art—by means of real definitions."[7] According to Carroll, attempts to define art should be viewed as misguided (in outward presentation) attempts "to provide the theoretical means for establishing that mutations issued from avant-garde practice belong to the family of art . . . to establish theoretical connections between the innovations of the avant-garde and the body of work antecedently regarded as art . . . to isolate a method for *identifying* artworks."[8]

To make the philosophical project more clear, Carroll abandons the definitional approach in favor of an explicit attempt to provide means for the identification of works of the avant-garde as artworks. Before providing that account, however, Carroll distinguishes his view from Kennick's by claiming that he does "not think that we have any principled reason for thinking that a real definition of art will never be constructed . . . it may nevertheless turn out that a real definition is unnecessary."[9] Unnecessary for what? For any philosophical enterprise which is not "marginal and academic."[10] So while Carroll is not prepared to abandon the possibility of defining art, he shares with Kennick the view that definitions of art are designed for the practical purpose of identifying objects as works of art and providing the reasons for such identifications. It is certain too that Carroll would *disagree* with Kennick concerning the ability of persons to pick out, on the basis of linguistic abilities alone, the vast array of objects which are works of art. At this point in time, and even when Kennick proposed the warehouse example, only paradigmatic cases of art could be successfully identified and retrieved from the warehouse. Still, Carroll agrees with Kennick that the *point* of definitions is meant to be the practical matter of art identification. For Kennick such definitions are unnecessary; for Carroll they are either unnecessary or disguised articulations of art-historical narratives. For both Kennick and Carroll, the role of such definitions is seen as *epistemological.*

I want to contrast the epistemological view of definitions with the project of this chapter and, I believe, the actual project that has typically guided the philosophical enterprise of providing definitions of art. In *The Principles of Art,* Collingwood contrasts "having a clear idea of [a] thing" and "defin[ing] any given thing."[11] The former is the epistemological notion of recognizing something as an instance of a kind when one sees it, being able to enter the warehouse and pick out the works of art. Of defining a concept he writes, "in order to define any given thing, one must have in one's head not only a clear idea of the thing to be defined, but an equally clear idea of

all the other things in reference to which one defines it."[12] This understanding of the project of definition *presupposes* the ability to correctly employ the concept in question (in at least most cases). Defining a concept goes beyond that ability to provide an articulation of the concept in terms of other related concepts, to finding the place of the concept on the conceptual map.

Or consider Harold Osborne's characterization of the definitional project:

> It is a primary task of philosophy to make articulate the tacit concepts latent in our linguistic habits and the other conventions by which we live, to bring to the surface the submerged rationality of our social lives . . . to articulate and to display in all its complexity the inarticulate concept of art implicit in the behavior and conventions of the art world.[13]

Again, the project is to place and make explicit the content of our concept of art. As for the motive for pursuing such definitions, Osborne claims that it is "primarily an intellectual curiosity. . . . And philosophy is, after all, powered by a self-rewarding intellectual interest."[14] I find it difficult to believe that these philosophers, so self-conscious and explicit about what they are trying to do, could really be motivated by a concern for art identification generally or identification of the avant-garde in particular. This is not to say that the avant-garde does not provide significant problems for various definitions of art or that the avant-garde does not totally motivate and justify the epistemological project pursued by Carroll and others. I am only pointing out that my project, like Collingwood's, Osborne's, and others', is *metaphysical* in nature. I am interested in trying to find out what a work of art *is* and what it is *essentially*.

I would be content to rest with the above description of this project and accept Carroll's characterization of it as "marginal and academic," except that I do believe that the metaphysical project can be useful in the completion of our understanding of the epistemological project. I will briefly explain why this is so. In describing the historical narratives designed to explain the art status of works of the avant-garde, Carroll writes:

> An identifying narrative establishes the art status of a work by connecting the production of the work in question to previously acknowledged artistic practices. . . . this procedure requires that there be a consensus about certain objects and practices in the past . . . that we know that certain objects and practices already count as art.[15]

Since his account is nondefinitional, we cannot charge Carroll with circularity with respect to the structure of the historical narratives.[16] My claim is weaker than that. I claim only that it is a perfectly good and natural question to ask what makes the objects and practices which, in Carroll's account, already count as art, art. If an answer to this question were forth-

coming, the epistemological and the metaphysical aspects of the philosophy of art would be joined. In fact, I view the projects as complementary in just this way.

The significance of the metaphysical enterprise is also apparent if we reconsider Kennick's warehouse example. First, since I have acknowledged, with both Collingwood and Osborne, that linguistic proficiency is a necessary condition for the definitional project as I understand it, I accept much of what Kennick asserts. However, Kennick does admit that the person in the thought experiment will be puzzled by some objects, not knowing whether the thing is a work of art or not. Kennick attributes this ignorance to the "systematic vagueness of the concepts in question."[17] But there may be many reasons why a person might not know whether an object is a work of art, and not all of those reasons reflect "systematic vagueness." If, for example, a work of art is necessarily an artifact, the person might not know whether a given object is a work of art *because the person does not know whether the object in question is an artifact* (as opposed to a rock thrown through the warehouse window). If a work of art is necessarily created with some specific intention, the person might not know whether a given object is a work of art *because the person might not be able, from the appearance of the object, to discern the intention with which it was made* (even if the person is certain that the object is an artifact). Having an adequate definition of art at our disposal has the added advantage of helping us to understand our own knowledge and ignorance of particular cases.

This knowledge is not merely academic. Imagine that our warehouse is about to be demolished. If I fail to pick out a particular object from the warehouse and it is brought to my attention that the object is not a mere tree root (as I supposed) but an artifact designed to symbolize at once the beauty of nature and our disregard for it, my reflections on the nature of art could result in my running back into the warehouse to retrieve the object. In this instance, my understanding of the place of the concept of art in our conceptual framework might well have the very practical consequence of saving the world an important work of art.

THE CONCEPT OF THE AESTHETIC

The concept of the aesthetic, as it functions in aesthetic definitions of art, is a quasi-technical notion. One could define it, as it has been defined, in different ways to capture different phenomena and to carry out various theoretical tasks. On the other hand, insofar as one uses it to define art, as I will attempt to do in the third section, there are several constraints that must be met by any useful account of the concept. First of all, the account we offer of the aesthetic must apply both to natural objects and events,

on the one hand, and to works of art on the other. Works of art will then be seen as a species of the broader class of aesthetic objects. Just how the broader class is narrowed to include all and only artworks is the challenge of the third and fourth sections of this chapter. Still, in putting forth our account of the aesthetic, the overall theoretical project of defining art aesthetically must be kept in mind.

Second, our account of the aesthetic must be sensitive to and reflect the wide variety of reactions audiences have to various objects, artworks among them. The range of relevant responses can include not only pleasure but sorrow, melancholy, anxiety, perplexity, and anger. Traditional accounts of the aesthetic have given a central, perhaps exclusive, place to the concept of pleasure. For reasons to be discussed in what follows, this mistake must be avoided.

Third, the account provided should be tied to what we might call the aesthetic tradition. In his paper "Beauty and the Genealogy of Art Theory," Noël Carroll cautions that

> [o]ne way to attempt to save the aesthetic approach is to effectively redefine what is meant by "aesthetic" in such a way that anything that is an appropriate response to art is redesignated as an *aesthetic* response. . . . To reclassify [all] art responses as aesthetic responses is . . . at best an exercise in stipulative redefinition, if not a downright misuse of language.[18]

I will show, then, that the sense of the aesthetic developed in this section is tied to the traditional uses of the term.

Finally, the account I offer cannot employ the concept of art in the articulation of the aesthetic; this would render circular the subsequent definitions of art. In this regard, I will consider an argument presented by Stephen Davies which claims that the aesthetic properties employed in understanding and evaluating artworks presuppose the concept of art.[19] Any definition of art in terms of such properties would, thus, be circular.

I turn now to the issue of the variety of experiences that can reasonably be understood to be aesthetic in character and how recent accounts of the aesthetic can help in understanding that variety. Kendall Walton has recently provided an account of a family of aesthetic concepts including *aesthetic pleasure, aesthetic appreciation,* and *aesthetic value.*[20] With some modification, but while retaining the structural features and much of the content of his view, we will be able to account for the variety of aesthetic reactions to both nature and art. The foundational concept in Walton's family of aesthetic notions is aesthetic pleasure; this he defines as "pleasure taken in one's admiration or positive evaluation of something."[21] Walton defines aesthetic appreciation as "tak[ing] pleasure or delight in judging [anything] to be good."[22] Finally, building on these more basic notions,

his concept of aesthetic value is defined as "a certain *propriety* in [one's] taking aesthetic pleasure in [something]; it must be reasonable or apt or make sense to do so."[23]

There are several notable features of these definitions. The first is the *structural feature* of the concepts. All three members of the family of aesthetic concepts involve metaresponses; the concepts have a two-tiered structure.[24] Both aesthetic pleasure and aesthetic appreciation are meta-responses (pleasure) to base responses (admiration or positive judgment) to some object or event. Second, all of the concepts have as a constituent a *value judgment* either in the explicit form of "judging something to be good" or as a "positive evaluation of something." Third, the foundational notion in Walton's account of the aesthetic is *pleasure.* In what follows, both the two-tiered structural feature of the aesthetic and the value judgment feature will be retained, while the primacy of aesthetic pleasure will be rejected.

As a matter of clarification, it should be noted that the definitions offered by Walton do not sufficiently distinguish aesthetic pleasure from aesthetic appreciation. In fact, the definitions offered are virtually indistinguishable. This echoes traditional accounts of the aesthetic given in terms of a sort of pleasure. But aesthetic appreciation need not involve pleasure at all. One can aesthetically appreciate Mozart's *Requiem* while feeling sad, and, more important, *because* one is saddened by it. One can appreciate *Psycho* while being terrified and *because* one is terrified by it. Of course, this is not to deny that *sometimes* such works bring about mixed pleasures, that is, pleasure with one's sadness or terror. Indeed, such reactions are not uncommon. However, pleasure at any level is not necessary for aesthetic appreciation.[25]

What is necessary for aesthetic appreciation is the recognition or judgment "that something is good." Further, the correct account of aesthetic appreciation does require the structural feature present in Walton's account. These two features of Walton's account are preserved if we understand aesthetic appreciation as a species of value judgment which focuses on *one's experience* of objects and their properties. We can, thus, define aesthetic appreciation as *believing the experience of the properties of an object to be intrinsically valuable.*[26]

Typically, aesthetic experience has been thought of as a sort of pleasure. The problem with such views is that they fail to countenance the fact that some works of art sadden us, some create anxiety in us, some even anger us. This would be no problem if we were willing to denigrate all such works; but, to the contrary, we often appreciate and value such works *for these very features.* It would seem to follow that no phenomenological account of "the aesthetic experience" is possible; for any such description, there will be an experience of some other artwork which will have the opposite character-

istics and which will be as aesthetic as the original experience. The two-tiered approach resolves this problem. It allows us to capture the variety of aesthetic experiences while retaining a common feature of the aesthetic.

The variety typical of aesthetic appreciation, value, or even pleasure is found at the level of the base experience. We may experience pleasure, but we may also experience excitement, provocation, or sadness. The definitively aesthetic dimension comes in the way we regard that experience, that object, or the achievement of the person responsible for the object. On Walton's view, we may feel anxiety in the face of certain works of art but take pleasure in admiring the way the work brings about this anxiety. He claims:

> If we take pleasure in admiring the work for whatever we admire it for, this pleasure is aesthetic. And if such pleasure is properly taken in the work, this constitutes the work's aesthetic value.[27]

Walton goes on to consider cases in which works are revolting, even (and especially) designed to be revolting. Such cases can be treated in the same way. They are, if they are aesthetically successful, at once revolting and delightful.

The view of aesthetic appreciation offered here differs from Walton's. While they are both compatible with a wide range of base-level experiences, our view does not require pleasure or delight[28] at the metalevel; it requires only that the person *regard the experience* of the object as having intrinsic value. This approach to aesthetic appreciation has the advantage of purging pleasure (enjoyment, delight, etc.) from the aesthetic altogether. When one listens to Mozart's *Requiem* and has aesthetic appreciation for it, it is difficult to find the pleasure in the sadness. It is less difficult, perhaps, to regard that sadness (in that context) as having intrinsic value.[29] This is not to say that we never have the mix of (second-order) pleasure with our (first-order) sadness; that, I would be happy to call, with Walton, a species of aesthetic pleasure. I am only claiming that aesthetic appreciation need not be accompanied with such pleasure; the belief in the requisite intrinsic value is sufficient. Likewise, aesthetic value need not include the notion of pleasure; it is sufficient that the judgment of intrinsic value be appropriate.

We have retained the notion of aesthetic pleasure in our family of aesthetic concepts; however, it is no longer to be understood as essential to the aesthetic. This very shift brings clearly into focus the second requirement of any useful account of the aesthetic. We must offer an articulation of the aesthetic which is related to its philosophical tradition. Part of the difficulty of fulfilling this condition is that, traditionally, the aesthetic response has been taken to be one of a specific sort of (disinterested) pleasure. A related problem we must face in fulfilling this condition on the aesthetic is

the claim, made by Carroll, that the tradition of aesthetic accounts of art is committed to formalist accounts of art evaluation; that is, that aesthetic theories are necessarily "beauty theories."

Carroll presents a version of the modern history of the aesthetic and of the development of aesthetic theories of art. He begins with Hutcheson and considers the central figures of Kant, Bell, and Beardsley, in whose work aesthetic theories of art culminate. He notes that the search for an articulation of the concept of beauty in Hutcheson and Kant included the crucial notion of *disinterested pleasure.* This, coupled with Bell's essentialism in attempting to define art, a project that neither Hutcheson nor Kant was pursuing, led to Bell's *formalism* (significant form) as the least common denominator of all art. The consequence of this was Bell's rejection of representational content, art-historical properties, and moral criticism as relevant to art assessment. The story culminates in Beardsley's articulation of the content of Bell's (unarticulated) notion of significant form. Beardsley's "General Canons" of unity, complexity, and intensity serve to capture the formalist component of the aesthetic theory. The various descriptions of the aesthetic experience provided by Beardsley each contain the notion of a detachment from practical concerns; thus the notion of disinterestedness is carried through in his account of the nature of aesthetic objects generally, and works of art in particular. Carroll concludes the account as follows:

> With Beardsley, we find the most systematic reduction of art theory to aesthetic theory, which I have tried to show means essentially a reduction to beauty theory. . . . This systematically requires that questions of art history, authorial intent, utility, cognitive content, and so on be bracketed, as they are in testing for beauty in the treatises of Hutcheson and Kant.[30]

As a result of Beardsley's formalism, Carroll finds it quite natural that Beardsley would reject, as artworks, many of the works of the avant-garde, since "much avant-garde art is explicitly designed to defy traditional senses of beauty."[31]

The story presented by Carroll is compelling. Further, a theory of art which rejects the avant-garde or, more generally, works which cannot be understood in terms of their formal features is, in a word, unacceptable. Inasmuch as we are committed to the essentialist project, it seems that we must find a version of the history traced by Carroll that does not end in a "beauty theory of art." We need to provide a sense of the aesthetic that is connected to the history outlined by Carroll but which does not rule out as irrelevant art-historical properties, representational content, or the moral content of works of art as possible objects of aesthetic appreciation. The family of aesthetic concepts articulated above fulfills these conditions.

The key to the connection between the concept of the aesthetic pre-

sented here and the tradition of the aesthetic comes through the concept of intrinsic value. All of the concepts of the aesthetic defined above include, directly or indirectly, the notion of intrinsic value.[32] This feature of the aesthetic is crucial since it will be in terms of the central role of intrinsic value that our account will be linked to the aesthetic tradition. I propose that the concept of disinterestedness (which Carroll articulates in terms of "detachment") is connected to the concept of intrinsic value. I will not rewrite Carroll's account of the history of the central figures in terms of intrinsic value; I will, however, suggest how this view of the historical figures makes sense of the concept of disinterestedness and the (mistaken) identification of aesthetic theories of art with formalist (beauty) theories of art.

When we contemplate nature from an aesthetic point of view, we are not concerned with the benefits that might accrue to us were we to exploit it in some way, nor are we concerned with the harms that might befall us. As Hutcheson says, we are not concerned with "any prospect of advantage or disadvantage."[33] We are, however, concerned with *value* in some sense, beauty being a good thing. It seems natural to suppose that the contrast between an interested view of nature and a disinterested view is to be explicated in terms of valuing it instrumentally (in terms of "rewards"),[34] on the one hand, and valuing it intrinsically, on the other. In the case of the aesthetic appreciation of nature there is nothing but our experience of the structure and sensory properties of nature to be so valued; there is just the way it looks to us.[35] In terms of our definition of aesthetic appreciation, the range of properties the experiences of which we could regard as intrinsically valuable include just the properties we would naturally assimilate under the concepts of beauty or sublimity. The properties would include the smooth, the jagged, intensity and subtlety of color, the smell of salt and roses. Understanding our experiences of such properties in this way is to be contrasted with viewing nature from an economic point of view, for example.

In art, however, the sorts of properties the experiences of which we could believe to be intrinsically valuable are extended beyond the properties of nature, to include, for example, the semantic properties of the works. This is because, of course, works of art are the products of human activity; they have *meaning* as well as mere formal properties. Art objects have ranges of properties that natural objects, short of the acceptance of the Argument from Design, could not have. The experiences of these properties are often, perhaps most often, what are most interesting to us in the realm of art from an aesthetic point of view. These properties include art-historical properties, representational (including moral) properties, and cognitive properties. In short, the account of the aesthetic we have offered includes but is not limited to the formal properties of artworks. Because of this, there is

no reason for us to exclude from the realm of art the works of the avant-garde insofar as they instantiate semantic properties, for example, art-historical properties our experience of which is taken to be intrinsically valuable.[36]

The view we have here articulated treats the aesthetic features of nature as a subset of the broader set of aesthetic features shared by art and nature. Artworks function generically in the same way that beautiful natural objects do; they are objects of aesthetic appreciation. While accepting this arrangement, at least for the sake of argument, Stephen Davies attempts to show that one cannot use this conception of aesthetic properties to define art.[37] Davies argues that the aesthetic properties which are relevant to art's function, and, hence, its definition, presuppose the concept of art:

1. The functionalist definition of art requires that an object meet a certain minimal standard of evaluation to be a work of art (that it provide for aesthetic appreciation, for example).
2. An object will meet that standard in virtue of its aesthetic properties.
3. But the aesthetic properties that elevate the object to the point of fulfilling the function of art depend on the object's being recognized as a work of art.
4. Therefore, the concept of a work of art is conceptually prior to the concept of (the relevant) aesthetic properties.
5. Therefore, the functional definition of art is circular (presupposes the concept of art).

The (sub)argument for premise 3 comes from Davies' reading of Danto's discussion of the difference between artworks and "real" things. Davies writes:

> If the spirit of Danto's arguments is accepted, then they show that [works of art] take on other aesthetic properties when seen properly as artworks falling within artistic traditions. . . . To appreciate such pieces as artworks is to appreciate them for such properties. . . . So art status must be conferred as a prior condition of the generation of the very properties in terms of which art is valued as such.[38]

A second, more radical, strategy for justifying premise 3 is offered by Davies as well. This is the view that there are no "purely aesthetic properties," that is, aesthetic properties in nature that do not presuppose those aesthetic properties present in works of art. He writes:

> The claim, then, is not solely that we look at nature as if it were the product of artists' actions but, further, that we cannot view it otherwise. . . . were we to put our understanding and appreciation of art aside, we would find nothing (or only a little) of aesthetic interest remaining.[39]

This later view about the nature of aesthetic properties in general would be sufficient to justify premise 3. The view suggested here is that all aesthetic properties are necessarily properties which presuppose the concept of art. Let us call an aesthetic property which presupposes the concept of art an *art-aesthetic property*. The suggestion, then, is that all aesthetic properties are art-aesthetic properties. When we view nature aesthetically, we employ concepts which have the concept of art built into them. This view is to be distinguished from the more naive view that we cannot help but think of nature as the product of an artisan—that, for some reason, we are all necessarily committed to the Argument from Design. This more sophisticated claim is that even the person who views nature as the product of purely natural processes employs, insofar as she views nature aesthetically, concepts which presuppose an application in the art world. In this sense, "we cannot view [nature] otherwise"—that is, as both aesthetically interesting and completely independent of the concept of art.

This second defense of premise 3 is strange, especially as it is stated by Davies. If all aesthetic properties are art-aesthetic properties, why should there be exceptions as indicated by Davies' parenthetical phrase "or only a little." In the same paragraph Davies suggests that on this view, such purely aesthetic properties would be "unexpectedly thin and scarce." The first point to make is a logical one; if the dependence of "pure aesthetic properties" on art-aesthetic properties is a *conceptual* one, there will be *no* exceptions. But what reason is there for thinking that there is such a conceptual dependency? There is the claim in Danto that often the same terms are used to describe art-aesthetic properties and what we take to be pure aesthetic properties, thus allowing us to think that we are referring to the same property (i.e., the pure aesthetic property) when actually the art-aesthetic property is a distinct property. But this consideration fails to show the conceptual dependency Davies refers to. This argument from Danto presupposes that there are two distinct aesthetic properties all along. While the radical position outlined here would be sufficient to justify premise 3, I see no reason to believe it.

Of course, one need not claim that all aesthetic properties are art-aesthetic properties to sustain premise 3 and the subsequent refutation of the aesthetic functionalist account of art. It would be sufficient to show that the properties, aesthetic or otherwise, *that elevate an artwork to art status* presuppose the concept of art. The radical defense of premise 3 has been worth considering, however, since, if it were true, it would be sufficient to undermine *any* aesthetic theory of art.

Failing the radical view discussed above, what reason do we have for thinking that premise 3 of Davies' argument is reasonable to believe? Can

we not conceive of a work of art that is such simply in virtue of aesthetic properties which it shares with natural objects? I see no obstacle to this. In fact, it seems to me that in music, for example, the presence of pure aesthetic properties is far from "thin and scarce." Many, perhaps most, works of music rise to the status of works of art (from a functionalist's point of view) in virtue of their pure aesthetic properties. This explains the fact that music, from rock to classical, can be aesthetically appreciated without any knowledge of the properties the work has in virtue of "its location within an art-historical tradition of [music]."[40] These properties include rhythm, tone, and melody. Even if these features turn out to be *expressive* features of the works in which they occur, it would not follow that they are art-dependent in the way that premise 3 requires. There are many expressive properties in nature (including aesthetic properties)—they include configurations of the human face and voice, for example.[41] It may turn out that the connection between expressive features in works of art and expressive features in nature (of the human face and voice, for example) is complex, that they are not the very same properties, for example.[42] This would not show, however, that the expressive features of, say, musical works presuppose the concept of art. That would be the case only if such properties were, in every case, conventional *and* the conventions involved were specific to the art world.

The plausibility of the argument offered by Davies rests, I think, on the importance, in *some* works of art, of semantic aesthetic properties. *Some* works of art rise to the status of art (from a functionalist point of view) in virtue of those properties. This is certainly true of Duchamp's *Fountain* and Danto's *Can Opener*. And it is worthwhile to point out how many aesthetic properties of art are art-aesthetic properties. All of that said, there is no reason to suppose that a general claim about the centrality of art-aesthetic properties is forthcoming.

I have articulated a concept of the aesthetic which recognizes the variety of aesthetic reactions to art while retaining the unity of such reactions. The account I have offered is closely connected, by way of the concept of intrinsic value, to traditional accounts of the aesthetic. At the same time, we have seen that the tradition, understood in terms of intrinsic value, is *not* wedded exclusively to formalist conceptions of art evaluation. In this way, the avant-garde can be embraced by the aesthetic tradition. Finally, the family of concepts provided here is not barred, on grounds of circularity, from providing a definition of art. It remains to be seen whether this understanding of the aesthetic can be translated into such a definition.

DEFINING ART

In what follows, I will attempt to develop two definitions of art, both of which have, at their core, the concept of the aesthetic. One definition will be descriptive in nature and the other evaluative. Inasmuch as each reflects an ordinary use of the term "art," the two accounts are not competitors for *the* correct definition of art. Rather, the two definitions complement each other. To illustrate the complementary nature of these concepts, I will briefly describe how they apply to various problematic cases.

The first, and most obvious, requirement of any employment of the concept of the aesthetic in defining art is to distinguish works of art from objects in nature which exhibit aesthetic properties and provide opportunities for aesthetic appreciation. This is accomplished by claiming that works of art, unlike natural objects, are artifacts. Much has been written about this artifact condition and the level of human activity required for something to be an artifact.[43] This condition has wide acceptance across various accounts of the nature of art, including, for example, Dickie's institutional view. The basic insight here is that artifactuality (some level of intentional human activity) distinguishes natural objects from works of art. Since the creation of an artifact is an intentional activity, it follows that all works of art are intentionally produced.

All art is made intentionally. The *content* of the intention required for artwork production is the point at which divergent strategies emerge within the domain of aesthetic theories of art. The claim that art is intentional is ambiguous in at least three ways. First, saying that works of art are intentional might mean that if someone makes a work of art, then she was intentionally making a work of art. That is, the concept of art was partially constitutive of her intention. The works of art made in art classes and studios are typically artworks of this sort; we might call such works *art-self-conscious* artworks. These are artworks created specifically to be works of art.[44]

Second, the intentional component might mean that there is a specific intention common to all artworks though that intention does not necessarily include, as part of its content, the concept of art. For example, it might be the case that all works of art are intended to be artifacts which are expressive or beautiful or representative of reality.

Finally, it could mean that if someone makes an artwork then she was intentionally making *something or other* and, for reasons independent of the content of her intention, the artifact turned out to be an artwork. Here the content of her intention is independent of both the concept of art and, perhaps, even the concept of the aesthetic. For example, a person might set out to make a widget, a car, a garden, and then for some reason independent

of the content of her intention, the widget, car, or garden is recognized to be a work of art.

Of the above alternative accounts of what it means for art to be intentional, only the first is unavailable to us in our attempts to construct an aesthetic definition of art. If we are trying to define art (even partially) in terms of the necessary intentions of a person making an artifact, then the sort of intention articulated in the first alternative would render the resulting definition circular. Aesthetic definitions of art are necessarily definitions that allow for the possibility of art which is not *art self-conscious*. As we shall see later in this section and in the fourth section, however, the concept of art-self-conscious art will prove crucial in solving one of the central difficulties with aesthetic theories of art.

Both of the two remaining alternatives have been employed by those presenting aesthetic definitions of art. Beardsley, for example, employs the second strategy. He rejects the *art-self-conscious* alternative and asserts that the requisite intention is the intention "of giving it [the artifact] the capacity to satisfy the aesthetic interest."[45] This approach combines the artifact condition and the aesthetic condition by way of the artist's intention. In one fell swoop, artworks are thought to be differentiated from natural objects (nonartifacts), even those which satisfy the aesthetic interest, and other artifacts, even those which (happen to) satisfy our aesthetic interest, which are not works of art. The sandstone "Needles" of southern Utah satisfy our aesthetic interests, but, not being artifacts, they are not works of art. My handsaw, while an artifact, is not a work of art since its creation was not guided by the specific aesthetic intention; it was made merely, let us suppose, to saw wood efficiently. We will call this approach the *aesthetic intention strategy* and express this strategy in the following schematic definition of art:

O is a work of art-d = df O is an artifact created with the intention of being an object of aesthetic appreciation.[46]

The third strategy, represented by Richard Lind's definition of art, separates the artifact condition and the aesthetic condition for being art. The intentional element, according to Lind, is exhausted by the artifactuality of art works. The aesthetic dimension of art is a matter of how the artifact turns out to function. He writes:

> Function is the mode of action by which something *fulfills* its purpose (O. E. D.). It thus refers to what the object actually does, rather than simply what the artist intended. . . . Nothing is art, we claim, if it does not so function, which would explain why we will not accept anything as "art" simply because someone has labeled it as such.[47]

Artworks are distinguished from natural objects of beauty, for example, in terms of the (intentional) artifact condition. But which artifacts turn out to be works of art is *not* determined by the content of the creator's intention. Rather, whether an artifact turns out to be art is a matter of how the artifact *functions* (aesthetically). I will call this approach the *aesthetic function strategy* and express it in the following schematic definition of art:

O is a work of art-e = df O is an artifact and O functions to provide for aesthetic appreciation.[48]

There are important differences between these two approaches to defining art aesthetically. While the aesthetic intention strategy allows for the creation of artworks outside of the art world, it does so only on the condition that we ascribe one of a range of aesthetic intentions to the creator of such artifacts. This strategy requires that the cave painters of Lascaux framed the aesthetic intention if we are to assert that the paintings are artworks. Epistemically less controversial, the aesthetic functionalist view requires only that we recognize the paintings to be human artifacts, and, given how they function for us, their art status is secure.

Generally, the aesthetic functionalist approach allows for cross-cultural art identification without troubling ourselves over the specific purposes for which the work was created. Some African masks are art since they are clearly artifacts and these artifacts function aesthetically. Such cases, like the case of the cave paintings, are seen as instances of the more general phenomenon of artifacts that function aesthetically but where it is not unreasonable to suppose that the works in question are not *art self-conscious*. That is, it is reasonable to suppose that the creator of the artifact was *not* trying to make a work of art. Minimally, we can say of such cases that whether or not the artistic intention exists is epistemically unavailable to us. In the more temporally removed cases, such as the cave paintings, it might be more reasonable to deny even the possibility that the objects are *art self-conscious*.

One advantage of the aesthetic functionalist approach is that we can say of such works (those from temporally remote times and those from other cultures temporally remote or not), without hypothesizing unknown intentions on the part of the artisan, that the artwork is the artwork of the artisan. Such art objects are not to be treated as found objects elevated to the status of art by a curator or anthropologist.[49] On the aesthetic functionalist view, a person can be an artist without having any conception of being such or of what it would be to be such.[50]

For the same reason we have explored above, the aesthetic functionalist view also allows, as art, artifacts which are created with intentions *known to be other than aesthetic intentions*. For example, even if we know that

the cathedral was created to glorify God or that the mask was created to frighten evil spirits or to secure victory in an impending battle, the artifacts might still be works of art provided that they succeed in functioning aesthetically. In this sense, the aesthetic functionalist approach provides an evaluative definition of art. To say that something is a work of art-e is to say that it fulfills a certain function well or adequately. Given the nature of that function, to say that an artifact is a work of art-e is to praise it, to say that it is good.

Whether these features of the aesthetic functionalist account of art are advantages or disadvantages will be discussed later. The point here is to show how this strategy differs from that of the aesthetic intentionalist. For the aesthetic intentionalist, unless the requisite intention is present, the artifact is not a work of art. If the requisite intention is not known to be present, we do not know whether the artifact in question is a work of art. If the intention is known to be other than aesthetic, the artifact in question is known not to be a work of art. I turn now to some other distinguishing features of the aesthetic intentionalist's strategy.

The aesthetic intentionalist strategy provides a descriptive or classificatory sense of the phrase "work of art." By this I mean that, unlike the aesthetic functionalist approach, the schema gives a sense of the phrase that carries no implication as to whether the work of art is good or not. Because the definition embeds the aesthetic component within the intentional component, and because it is at least logically possible for an artifact to fail completely to live up to the intentions of its maker, it is possible for an artifact to completely fail to provide for aesthetic appreciation and remain a work of art. While the aesthetic functionalist approach provides an *evaluative* notion of art, the aesthetic intentionalist provides a *descriptive* conception of art. At the same time, embedded within the definition, in the concept of the aesthetic itself, is the aesthetic criterion of art evaluation. The presence of this criterion is, after all, one of the hallmarks of the aesthetic approach to art.

One consequence of the descriptive nature of the aesthetic intentionalist strategy for defining art is that the art status of various objects is left open from an epistemological point of view. One cannot generally tell, on this view, by merely looking at an object whether or not it is a work of art. This is true for at least two reasons; first, one might be confronted with an object which gives rise to some range of aesthetic appreciation but of which it is not known whether or not the object is an artifact.[51] Not knowing whether the smooth stone with the raised oval at its center is an artifact (as opposed, for example, to a fossil) precludes knowing whether or not it is a work of art. This is an advantage of such definitions because the real-life uncertainties of this sort correspond to and are explained by the definition

schema. Recalling the nature of our project, the job of a definition of art is not to *identify and determine* whether every object is or is not a work of art. The job is to explain what it is to be a work of art; actual uncertainties will largely remain uncertainties.

Second, even if one can determine the artifactuality of a given object, one can be, and often is, uncertain as to whether the artifact in question is a work of art *because* one might not know what the point of producing the artifact in question was. Again, this can be seen as an advantage of the above definition schema. One's uncertainty as to whether a given artifact is to be classified as a work of art is sometimes matched by and explained in terms of one's uncertainty as to the intention (reasons) of the person who created the object. If we take, for example, an artifact from an unfamiliar culture (or time) such as the pictographs in the "Great Gallery" in Canyonlands National Park, one wonders whether the mummy-shaped human figures were produced as a sort of historical record of family lineages or with some aesthetic satisfaction in mind or both. Are they works of art of a culture foreign to us, or are they the history book of a culture foreign to us? The definitional schema tracks our uncertainty in such cases.

It might be objected, however, that the schema is too weak in this area, especially in light of the account given of the same cases by the aesthetic functionalist approach. Given the point that the aesthetic intentionalist schema represents a descriptive or classificatory sense of "work of art" and that the classificatory approach allows that works could be complete failures, it would seem to follow that we should be uncertain as to whether *any and all* artifacts of unknown intention are works of art. In short, the definition, according to this objection, does not track our uncertainty since it dictates uncertainty where there is none. While we wonder whether the pictographs at the Great Gallery are works of art, we do not have the same sense of uncertainty about *every* artifact from that culture.

To answer this objection we must turn our attention to the issue of what counts as evidence for the existence of the aesthetic intention. Beardsley points out that

> we can reasonably infer the aesthetic intention . . . from properties of the product. A painting with a religious subject and evident power to move believers . . . may also give evidence of extreme care in the composition, color harmony, subtle variations in light and texture; then we have good reason to believe that *one* of the intentions with which the painter worked was the aesthetic one.[52]

The presence of a great many aesthetically interesting features in an artifact is evidence of the aesthetic intention. That evidence, not present in the case of artifacts generally, gives rise to the question of whether the object is actually a work of art. The presence of those features gives point to the

question of the art status of the object. The background assumption upon which we operate in confronting artifacts from our own or any culture is that the features they have, especially those they have in some abundance and forcefulness, are not accidental. At the same time, without knowing the *actual* intention of the person responsible for creating the artifact, we are left uncertain as to whether what we suppose to be the person's actual intention was her intention. We must concede to the objection raised here that it is possible that any artifact of unknown intentional origin might have been made with the aesthetic intention; it is just that, in most cases, it is pointless to raise the question. So, together with the assumption concerning when questions of art-d status have a point, the definitional schema does track and explain our uncertainty about the art status of objects of unknown (intentional) origin.

It may seem then that we have taken sides against the aesthetic functionalist on the issue of such epistemological questions of art recognition. Actually, the distinct implications of the two concepts with respect to these sorts of cases are to be expected. The fact that they differ in these respects does not favor one over the other as "the" concept of art. There are two concepts of art. One is evaluative and captures one set of pretheoretical intuitions and applications of the term "art." The other is descriptive and captures another set of pretheoretical intuitions and uses of the term "art." In cases of artifacts where the specific intention of the creator is unknown, the two concepts apply in distinct ways to the same subject matter. They capture our seemingly conflicting intuitions about such objects. On the one hand, we judge such objects to be works of art; on the other hand, we reserve judgment as to their art status pending more complete anthropological information. Once one recognizes that questions concerning these matters require specificity with respect to the concept of art in question, clear answers are forthcoming. Further, while there are two concepts of art operative in these and other cases, *both* concepts are aesthetic conceptions of art.

TOO BROAD, TOO NARROW

I turn now to the question of the broadness of these two concepts. It might be thought that in our attempts to include artworks which are conceptual in nature, we have so broadened the notion of the aesthetic that the dependent concepts of art will include artifacts which are clearly not works of art (in either of the senses defined above). Further, it might be argued that there is no principled way of excluding counterexamples that will not also exclude bona fide works of art (thus making the account of art too narrow). This is the challenge we face.

Let us imagine that we read a very clearly written philosophical essay.

Suppose further that the structure of presentation is so entirely perspicuous that it rises to the level of functioning to provide aesthetic appreciation. According to our account of "art-e," we should conclude that this philosophical essay is a work of art. This may seem, at least, to be counterintuitive.

Lind attempts to avoid this consequence by distinguishing "primary" from "secondary" functions of artifacts.[53] The idea here is that if something is an advertisement, for example, its principal function is to sell a product, whereas the principal function of artworks is to deliver aesthetic appreciation. The principal function of our philosophical essay is not aesthetic, and, thus, the essay is not a work of art-e.

The problem with trying to solve our problem in this way is that if an advertisement fails to be effective as an advertisement (that is, it fails to sell), its (alleged) secondary function may become its principal function. Thus the failed advertisement "becomes" a work of art *because of its failure to be an effective advertisement*.[54] In the case of our philosophical essay, if the essay fails to do what philosophical essays are supposed to do, it might well be a work of art, *in virtue of that failure*. Lind's way of trying to solve the problem faced by evaluative definitions of art is misguided. In fact, the problem, as Lind presents it, is based on a false dilemma. Why couldn't a piece of philosophy or an advertisement be a work of art-e? The problem arises from the mistake of confusing the descriptive and evaluative senses of "art." The temptation to exclude the philosophical work and the advertisement arises from our thinking that such artifacts are (normally) created with other objectives in mind. They are not brought about with the proper intentions; thus, they are not works of art. But the temptation to exclude such objects is based on the descriptive sense of the term "art," that is, art-d. We have already pointed out that artifacts which are works of art-e need not be works of art-d. In short, we have no reason, once we clarify which sense of the term is being employed, to deny art-e status to some philosophical works and many advertisements.[55]

If the broadness objection can be avoided with respect to art-e, it seems less easily solved with respect to art-d. In fact, the philosophical essay we have been discussing, so long as there was an intentional effort to make the essay perspicuous and elegant, presents serious problems for the descriptive concept of art. While, if I am correct, we should be willing to call the essay a work of art-e, it would seem not to count as a work of art-d.

With respect to our conception of works of art-d, we face a dilemma. One horn of the dilemma can be put as follows: *There are many human activities which embody aesthetic intentions which are not works of art-d.*

One natural way to solve this problem is to make a distinction between primary and secondary intentions in creating artifacts. We can say that the

philosopher was trying (primarily) to present a cogent argument for some proposition *by* (secondarily) trying to be clear and elegant in her presentation. It would make no sense to say that she was trying (primarily) to be elegant and perspicuous *by* trying to argue for some proposition. We can then modify our definitional schema as follows:

O is a work of art-d = df O is an artifact created with the primary intention of providing for aesthetic appreciation.

This move, however, places us squarely on the second horn of our dilemma. For in the attempt to narrow the range of aesthetic activities to just those which are works of art-d, we end up precluding large classes of *bona fide* works of art-d. Our earlier comments on the epistemic status of religious art aside, this modified definition of art-d would preclude most religious art, large classes of political art, art the primary point of which is to comment on other art, and in general any art in which aesthetic means are used in the service of the fulfillment of other intentions. The second horn of our dilemma, then, is that: *There are many works of art-d in which the concern for aesthetic appreciation is not primary.*

But perhaps the problem can be solved by drawing the "primary/secondary" distinction in a different way. We do want to say, for example, that there is a difference between expressing religious ideas in a philosophical tract such as the *Summa Theologica* and expressing even the same ideas in the stained glass windows of a cathedral. The former, if it is concerned with the aesthetic at all, is so only secondarily, remotely, peripherally. The latter reflects a conscious choice to express those ideas in what is primarily, centrally, basically an aesthetic manner.

The solution to the broadness problem lies in drawing the "primary/secondary" distinction in a deeper way. If we consider the works of those that use artistic means to advance political positions, religious visions, or claims about the nature of art—cases in which the primary intention is not aesthetic in nature—we see that those we are inclined to consider to be works of art-d are instances of art-self-conscious art. They are works of art which take place squarely within established artistic traditions, or are presented by their creators *as works of art*.[56] This suggests the following solution to our problem. Artworks-d which are not generated from aesthetic motives are artworks-d in a *derivative, secondary* sense.[57] Such works require, for their art-d status, the existence of established art practices which they use, comment on, or to which they react. In being art-self-conscious artworks, these works bypass the aesthetic intention. They are precisely the sorts of artworks which generate the plausibility of the institutional approach to art. Still, they are works which presuppose a sense of "work of art-d"

which is not art self-conscious. In short, the seemingly distinct phenomena of political art, religious art, art which comments on art, and anti-aesthetic art all share the feature of being works of art-d in a dependent sense.[58]

We can now offer the following amended definitional schema for the descriptive sense of "work of art":

O is a work of art-d = df O is either (1) an artifact created with the intention of being an object of aesthetic appreciation or (2) an artifact which is an instance of art-self-conscious art.[59]

The definition is to be understood such that the second disjunct in the definiens is parasitic on the first disjunct, as discussed above. Further, the disjuncts are not meant to be mutually exclusive; much of the world's religious and political art is created with aesthetic concerns in mind.

Having suggested the above solution to the second horn of our dilemma, have we not impaled ourselves squarely on the first horn? There are many human activities that embody aesthetic intentions which do not seem to count as works of art-d. This is especially important in light of the primacy of the first disjunct in the above definition. Having abandoned the approach of distinguishing art-d from nonart-d in terms of primary and secondary *intentions,* choosing rather to advocate a primary and secondary *sense of the term "art-d,"* we are left, once again, with our intentionally aesthetically pleasing philosophical essay, Mr. Murphy's well-mowed lawn, my sister's nose ring, and an endless list of aesthetic projects which fulfill the above conditions for being works of art-d *in the primary sense.* Pretheoretically, however, they should not count as works of art-d. But can the pretheoretical intuition be taken at face value?

The issue here is whether the class of objects we call works of art-d can be differentiated, in a principled way, from the wider class of objects we might call aesthetic activities or the products of aesthetic activities. And if we cannot, must we abandon the aesthetic definition of art-d? My own view is that we cannot provide such a distinction but that this should not lead to the rejection of the aesthetic definition of art-d. First we must note that the very objects we are concerned with here would be recognized, uncontroversially, as works of art in contexts other than those in which they normally occur. The philosophical paper, if presented by Bernar Venet, would be a work of art-d. Mr. Murphy's lawn, if presented by Christo, would be a work of art-d. And, of course, the use of ones own body as part or all of a work of art-d is now a commonplace. But in these cases, the works would not be *the philosopher's* paper, or *Mr. Murphy's* lawn, or *my sister's* nose ring; they would have different aesthetic properties; they would be instances of art-self-conscious art-d. Further, it is likely that none

of the original examples rises to the status of a work of art-e, though the Venet and Christo counterparts might. Still, I wonder, for all that, if the philosopher's paper, Mr. Murphy's lawn, and my sister's nose ring should not count as the modest, unpretentious works of art-d of their lives. Once one admits the possibility of works of art-d that are not art-self-conscious works of art-d, I see no good reason to preclude them. Perhaps an alternative, nonaesthetic theory of art, perhaps one presented in this volume, will more adequately address the metaphysical project with which we began without a remainder as troublesome as this.

NOTES

1. I would like to thank Noël Carroll, Sara Rose, and the participants in my 1996 seminar in aesthetics for their help in formulating the ideas in this chapter, a special thanks, also, to Lori Grant. I assume responsibility for the mistakes in this essay and the contortions through which I put the aesthetic tradition.

2. William E. Kennick, "Does Traditional Aesthetics Rest on a Mistake?" *Mind* 67 (1958): 321.

3. Ibid., 322.

4. Kennick goes on to point out that the same person instructed to pick out all of the objects which conform to various philosophical definitions of art, for example Significant Form, would be at a loss. Of course, it might just be a feature of the definitions which Kennick considers that they are of no use in art identification. The problem with definitions employing concepts such as Significant Form might be that the definiens are less clear than the definiendum. This reduced charge would be justified only if the person presenting the definition did not supply a context for the use of the definiens. While Bell certainly did not, it is less clear that other definers of art have been so lax.

5. I will return to the issue of whether a clear definition might be of some value in identifying problematic cases of works of art later in this section and in section 3.

6. Noël Carroll, "Historical Narratives and the Philosophy of Art," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 51 (1993): 314. My italics.

7. Ibid., 315.

8. Ibid., 314. My italics.

9. Ibid., 315.

10. Ibid.

11. R. G. Collingwood, *The Principles of Art* (London, 1972), 2.

12. Ibid.

13. Harold Osborne, "What Is a Work of Art?" *British Journal of Aesthetics* 21 (1981): 5.

14. Ibid.

15. Carroll, "Historical Narratives," 318.

16. Another similar account, but one which is definitional, is that provided by Jerrold Levinson. Levinson relates works from the past and present to ur-works, which are stipulated to be works of art. Of such a definition, it seems a fair question to ask what makes ur-artworks, artworks. See Jerrold Levinson, "Defining Art Historically," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 19 (1979): 232–50.

17. Kennick, "Does Traditional Aesthetics Rest on a Mistake?" 322.

18. Noël Carroll, "Beauty and the Genealogy of Art Theory," *Philosophical Forum* 22 (1991): 334 n. 51.

19. Stephen Davies, *Definitions of Art* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991), 67–69.

20. Kendall L. Walton, "How Marvelous! Toward a Theory of Aesthetic Value," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 51 (1993): 499–510.

21. Ibid., 505.

22. Ibid., 504.

23. Ibid., 506.

24. This same two-tiered structure of the aesthetic is found in Richard Lind's account of the *aesthetic object*. Lind distinguishes two sorts of interests constitutive of the aesthetic; the first is a perceptual interest—the interest we have in making intelligible what is encountered in experience. The second, metalevel interest is in enjoying the fascination that occurs in heightened perceptual interest. In short, aesthetic pleasure is a pleasure taken in the satisfaction of a two-tiered interest. Aesthetic objects are those that, satisfying the perceptual interest (to a high degree), motivate and satisfy the metainterest. See Lind, "The Aesthetic Essence of Art," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 50 (1992): 117–29.

25. Walton's account of aesthetic value is better on this point. Once one introduces the notion of the *appropriateness of aesthetic pleasure*, one can assert that an object has aesthetic value even if one does not (actually) take pleasure in judging it to be good. All that is required is that such pleasure, were it to occur, be appropriate. This still suggests, however, that a sort of pleasure is the most fundamental aesthetic concept. To resist this impulse, it would be best to define aesthetic value as propriety of aesthetic appreciation where "aesthetic appreciation" is defined independently of aesthetic pleasure. In his critique of Hume's account of taste, Noël Carroll rightly points out that recognition of aesthetic value need not involve any positive sentiment (pleasure) toward the object. One can see the aesthetic value in the romantic ballet as practiced by the school of Bournonville without enjoying such dancing in the least. It is more difficult to understand how one could be said to aesthetically appreciate such dances without judging that one's experiences of them are valuable. Because of this, it makes perfect sense to say that while I recognize the aesthetic value (the appropriateness of someone's aesthetic appreciation) of such ballet, I personally do not appreciate that sort of dance. See Carroll, "Hume's Standard of Taste," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 43 (1984): 187–89.

26. I am indebted to Gary Iseminger for his formulation of this notion of aesthetic appreciation; see Iseminger, "Aesthetic Appreciation," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 39 (1981): 389–99. His strategy is explicitly designed to reply to the charges made by Dickie that no intelligible and theoretically useful sense of the

aesthetic is forthcoming. Taking the notion of appreciation *simpliciter* as his starting point, Iseminger proceeds to articulate a species of appreciation which captures our sense of the aesthetic, does not commit us to any special sort of mental states definitive of the aesthetic, and might prove to be theoretically useful. The account of aesthetic appreciation offered by Iseminger is as follows:

S aesthetically appreciates the *F*ness of *a* if:

i. *a* is *F;*

ii. *S* experientially takes *a* to be *F;*

iii. *a*'s being *F,* and *S*'s experientially taking *a* to be *F* are "cognitively related";

iv. *S* believes that experientially taking *a* to be *F* is intrinsically good

(where *S* is a person, *a* is an object, and *F* is a property). Here, again, we have a base-level experience, *S*'s experientially taking *a* to be *F,* and a second, metalevel response, believing that experientially taking *a* to be *F* is intrinsically valuable. My earlier criticism of Iseminger's definition was based on the mistaken assumption that if someone believes something, *p,* one knows that one believes *p* and that one would not consciously deny *p;* see Anderson, "Rethinking Aesthetic Appreciation," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 41 (1982): 97–98; and Davies, *Definitions of Art,* 57–62. My other objections to Iseminger's definition were based on a confusion of the concept of aesthetic appreciation and aesthetic value.

27. Walton, "How Marvelous!" 506.

28. In the case of the aesthetic appreciation of nature, Walton includes the attitudes of awe and wonder at the base level. Ibid., 508.

29. Jerrold Levinson, "Music and the Negative Emotions," in *Reflecting on Art,* ed. John Andrew Fisher (Mountain View, Calif.: Mayfield, 1993), 374–90.

30. Carroll, "Hume's Standard of Taste," 326.

31. Ibid., 327.

32. In addition, all of the philosophers mentioned who accept the two-tiered account of the aesthetic also acknowledge that the value involved in aesthetic appreciation is *intrinsic* value. Iseminger makes this explicit in the above-cited definition. Walton also claims that aesthetic value is "independent of other values, of practical values, moral values, economic values, etc." (502). Finally, when Lind tries to distinguish aesthetic objects from other interesting objects, he takes as a necessary (though not sufficient) feature of aesthetic objects that "they are objects we consider "for their own sake alone" (120).

33. Francis Hutcheson, *Inquiry Concerning Beauty, Order, Harmony, Design,* ed. Peter Kivy (The Hague, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973), 36.

34. Ibid., 37.

35. This should not be meant to imply, as it did for Hutcheson, that the perception of beauty, even in nature, is "immediate." The features in nature the experience of which can be taken to have intrinsic value might be valued as such only upon reflection; the array of formal properties involved might be apparent only after years of study. The point I am making here is that nature does not have the semantic features that art has.

36. At one point Carroll considers the possibility of providing an account of disinterestedness in terms of intrinsic value. He says:

> Bell . . . might have said that aesthetic experience was an intrinsic good and that this was connected to its detached nature. But it seems to me that the commitment of intrinsic goodness is an optional feature of beauty theory; detachment . . . is the essential, recurring feature of the dominant characterization of beauty in the tradition. ("Hume's Standard of Taste," 325–26)

I have no interest in arguing whether disinterestedness understood as detachment or as involving intrinsic value is "dominant" in the tradition. I could concede that viewing it as detachment is exactly why *some* aesthetic theories have been beauty theories (Bell's, for instance). On the other hand, it is quite natural to take the view that disinterestedness, within the tradition, is explicable in terms of intrinsic value and that doing so avoids any inclination to collapse an aesthetic theory of art to a beauty theory of art (narrowly construed).

37. At least one cannot use it to define art *functionally.* See Davies, *Definitions of Art,* 67–77.

38. Ibid., 69.

39. Ibid., 160.

40. Ibid., 68.

41. For an account of the relationship between the expressive features of the human face and voice and expressive properties in music, see Peter Kivy, *The Corded Shell* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980).

42. See Iseminger, "Aesthetic Appreciation," 392–95.

43. The minimal sense in which I use the term "artifact" does not contradict Davies' denial of the artifact condition. For example, Davies requires that all artifacts be physical objects; I do not. See Anderson, "Musical Kinds," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 25 (1985): 43–49. I am using this condition only to distinguish natural objects and unintentional human activity from artworks. I believe that this use of the concept is unobjectionable. See Davies, *Definitions of Art,* chap. 5. For a comprehensive discussion of artifactuality, see Randall R. Dipert, *Artifacts, Art Works, and Agency* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993).

44. According to institutional theories of art, all works of art are of this sort. It is another question as to whether being an artifact made to be an artwork is sufficient for being an artwork. If, for example, the concept of art is normative in certain respects, it could turn out that some artifacts created to be artworks fail to be artworks.

45. Monroe C. Beardsley, "An Aesthetic Definition of Art," in *What Is Art?* ed. Hugh Curtler (New York: Haven, 1983), 21.

46. The definition is schematic in the sense that the specific intention articulated here is *not* necessary for something's being art-d. Any one of a family of intentions would be sufficient; for example, the intention to provide aesthetic pleasure, which differs in content from the intention to provide for aesthetic appreciation, would be sufficient. I do not believe that a definition of this sort that articulates too specific a content for the intention can succeed.

47. Lind, "Aesthetic Essence of Art," 125.

48. Again, the definition is schematic in the sense that it could as well be expressed in terms of other members of the family of aesthetic concepts.

49. Walton, "How Marvelous!" 501.

50. This is not to say that any person, regardless of his or her understanding of the concept of art and the history of art world practices, could create *any* artwork. Some artifacts could only be made, with the properties they in fact have, by a person who is creating *art-self-conscious* art.

51. This sort of uncertainty is shared by the aesthetic functionalist approach. To this extent, the functionalist approach is descriptive as well.

52. Beardsley, "Aesthetic Definition of Art," 23.

53. Lind, "Aesthetic Essence of Art," 125.

54. Recall that the "primary/secondary" distinction is not a distinction of intention. I am indebted to Jinhee Choi for this example.

55. But a problem concerning the broadness of art-e remains. The difficulty is not so much in recognizing examples such as those discussed above as art-e; the problem is that once we do so, we have no principled way to distinguish the *literal* use of art-e from the *metaphorical* use of the term. Sometimes we use the phrase "work of art" in an evaluative but nonliteral sense to refer to various human activities. We say of the Aparicio-to-Johnson-to-Powell double play, "it was a work of art." I do not think we are using the expression here in the same way we use it to characterize the cave paintings at Lascaux or a well-crafted advertisement or even a finely written philosophical essay. What could we be meaning here other than that the artifact (intentional product of human activity) functions to provide aesthetic appreciation? And if so, why isn't the double play *literally* a work of art-e?

56. The possible exception to this seems to be the case in which we are not certain as to whether the work is a work of art-d though we are confident that it is a work of art-e, e.g., the cave paintings. But the issue in these cases is different and has been dealt with above.

57. Such works, while not artworks-d in the primary sense, are not for all that less common than works of art-d in the primary sense. In fact, in our culture, which is so self-conscious about its art creation, display, evaluation, and education, almost all art is art self-conscious. I do not mean to suggest either that all art-self-conscious art is art-d in a secondary sense. The philosophical preoccupation with nonaesthetic and anti-aesthetic art sometimes leads us to ignore the fact that aesthetic concerns motivate much of today's art.

58. For an articulation of a similar view, see Richard Shusterman, "The End of Aesthetic Experience," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 55 (1997): 29–41.

59. Concerning this definition, let me first point out that when a person "bypasses" the aesthetic intention by creating an artifact which is an instance of art-self-conscious art, the person does not have, as a constituent of her intention, the philosophical content of the primary concept of art. I am not proposing an account of the secondary sense of art-d which requires that the artist have in mind the primary sense of art-d. Art-self-conscious art is not normally philosophically self-conscious. Further, it may well be necessary to add further disjuncts to handle other sorts of cases. Consider, for example, an early Christian painting—a station of the cross. Leaving aside the issue of whether this work rises to the status of art-e, we can ask whether the work is an instance of art-d. Let us further suppose that the work was intended to convey its religious message and that there was no

aesthetic intention. Finally, let us suppose that the painting is not an instance of art-self-conscious art; that is, the painter was not intending to create a work of art. Is this painting a work of art-d? On the one hand, I am tempted to say, "Yes, it's a painting after all." Perhaps we should add a disjunct such as this: *or (3) an artifact that employs recognizable artistic means.* Art is a family of concepts which circles back on itself in a marvelous variety of ways.

5

The Institutional Theory of Art

GEORGE DICKIE

PROLOGUE

I have made four tries over the years to formulate an institutional definition of "art." By an institutional account I mean the idea that works of art are art because of the position they occupy within an institutional context. My first try was in 1969 in a journal article. The next two tries—in 1971 and 1974—were rather minor attempts at revision. In 1984, I attempted a major overhaul of the theory. I shall call the first three formulations "the earlier version of the institutional theory." I shall call the fourth and last formulation "the later version of the institutional theory." In the first try (of the earlier version), I specified the definition as follows:

> A work of art in the descriptive sense is 1) an artifact 2) upon which society or some sub-group of a society has conferred the status of candidate for appreciation.[1]

I soon realized that speaking of society or some subgroup of society as conferring candidacy for appreciation gave the wrong impression that works of art are created by society or a subgroup of society acting as whole, an impression I had not intended. Here and in all subsequent discussions of the institutional theory, I have been trying to capture what goes on when art is created by artists, whether it be a single person painting a picture or a group making a movie. Even in this very first article and despite the perhaps misleading language of the definition, I explicitly stated that the status of candidate for appreciation "must be conferrable by a single person's treating an artifact as a candidate for appreciation. . . ."[2] This quote makes it clear that even at this early date the theory focuses on the actions of artists when they create art.

In 1971, with an eye to removing this possibly misleading impression about who creates art, I reformulated the definition to read,

A work of art in the classifactory sense is 1) an artifact 2) upon which some person or persons acting on behalf of a certain social institution (the artworld) has conferred the status of candidate for appreciation.[3]

In 1974, I formulated the definition in virtually the same way.

A work of art in the classificatory sense is (1) an artifact (2) a set of the aspects of which has had conferred upon it the status of candidate for appreciation by some person or persons acting on behalf of a certain social institution (the artworld).[4]

In both of these slightly later formulations, I spoke of "some person or persons," that is, artist or artists, conferring the status of candidate for appreciation in order to avoid the impression that society acted as a whole to make art.

Despite the conscious care I have employed after the first formulation to avoid the misunderstanding about how art is created according to the institutional theory, a misinterpretation of my view on just this point has become widely accepted. Richard Wollheim in his 1987 book *Painting as an Art,* focusing only on the earlier version of the theory, attributes to me the view I had taken such pains to avoid. Specifically, Wollheim attributes to me the view that, according to the earlier version of the theory, art is made by representatives of the artworld who meet and jointly act as a group to confer status on certain objects. Wollheim then ridicules this absurd view.

Does the art-world really nominate representatives? If it does, when, where, and how, do these nominations take place? Do the representatives, if they exist, pass in review all candidates for the status of art, and do they then, while conferring this status on some, deny it to others? What record is kept of these conferrals, and is the status itself subject to revision? If so, at what intervals, how, and by whom? And, last but not least, Is there really such a thing as the art-world, with the coherence of a social group, capable of having representatives, who are in turn capable of carrying out acts that society is bound to endorse?[5]

(Notice that according to Wollheim the institutional theory is about the conferring of the status of *art,* whereas my three earlier definitions speak of the conferring of the status of candidacy for appreciation, but I shall ignore this detail.)[6]

Arthur Danto picked up Wollheim's version of my earlier view and incorporated it into a paper on which I was a commentator. I informed Danto that this was a gross misinterpretation of my earlier view, but when his paper was published, he still attributed this view to me. Subsequently, Danto attributed this same view to me in one of his columns in the *Nation.*[7] I wrote a letter of protest to the editor which was published along with Danto's reply to my letter. In his reply, Danto calls Wollheim's account the *core* of the institutional theory and says, "Nor can there be great doubt that

this core plays a central role though George Dickie's various formulations of the I[nstitutional] T[heory of] A[rt]. . . ." Danto then asserts that Dickie "has lately come to specify that 'some person or persons' must be an artist (or some artists), but in my [Danto's] view this is a step backwards from the robust form in which the [institutional theory of art] is best understood."[8] Danto is saying that the version of the institutional theory that Wollheim ridicules is the best way to understand the earlier version of the theory.

First, the so-called core had never been my understanding of the earlier version. Second, it is not *lately* that I have specified artists to be the creators of art. I put "person or persons" into the definition twenty-eight years ago for this purpose. And when I made this change twenty-eight years ago I also wrote:

> A number of persons are required to make up the social institution of the artworld, but only one person is required to act on behalf of or as agent of the artworld and confer the status of candidate for appreciation. Many works of art are never seen by anyone but the persons who create them, but they are still works of art. The status in question may be acquired by *a single person's treating an artifact as a candidate for appreciation*. Of course nothing prevents a group of persons conferring the status, but it is usually conferred by a single person, the artist who creates the artifact.[9]

When I spoke of a group conferring the status of candidate for appreciation, I had in mind, not the whole artworld or a group of its nominated representatives, but a group that makes a movie, puts on a play, or the like. Furthermore, in the original article of thirty years ago, although I did not give many examples of art making, I did speak of Duchamp's artistic act of creating *Fountain*. I wrote, ". . . Duchamp's act took place within a certain institutional setting . . . ," but I did not say that some group of artworld representatives had to also act or concur in Duchamp's act.[10]

By the way, Wollheim was not the first one to attribute what Danto calls the "robust" version of the institutional theory of art to me, but he was, I think, the first to attribute it and to criticize it. As for this "robust" form of the theory, I believe that it is best embraced by aestheticians of the species *Paranthropus robustus*.[11] Unfortunately, the "robust" view has now even been attributed to me in the recently published *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*.[12]

An article by Monroe Beardsley convinced me that there was a kind of inconsistence between each of the first three definitions and the texts with which I had surrounded them.[13] In the texts, I had spoken of the institution of art as an informal institution, but in the definitions which purport to encapsulate and describe the institution, I used the very formal language "conferred upon" and "acting on behalf."

Consequently, in *The Art Circle*[14] (the 1984 formulation and the later

version of the theory), I dropped the formal language. Also, in this fourth attempt, I specified five definitions—definitions of what I regard as the core notions of the institutional theory of art.

An artist is a person who participates with understanding in the making of a work of art.

A work of art is an artifact of a kind created to be presented to an artworld public.

A public is a set of persons the members of which are prepared in some degree to understand an object which is presented to them.

The artworld is the totality of all artworld systems.

An artworld system is a framework for the presentation of a work of art by an artist to an artworld public.[15]

There is absolutely no element in any of these five definitions that gives the slightest impression that anything other than artists, as everyone ordinarily understands artists, creates art. The fact that I specify a definition of "artist" as one of the five definitions makes it clear how I understand art to be created. Both Wollheim and Danto published their comments well after the appearance of the later version (Wollheim even refers to the later version). It is unfortunate that Wollheim did not take sufficient notice of or that Danto did not take any notice of the later version because that would have made for a more accurate interpretation of the earlier version. In the later version, at the beginning of *The Art Circle,* I discussed at considerable length the misinterpretation of my earlier view that had already been made by some, which is exactly the same misinterpretation that Wollheim and Danto made later.[16]

Notice too that in the later version reference to candidacy for appreciation is also dropped. Candidacy for appreciation was originally included in order to distinguish between those aspects of a work of art to which appreciation and/or criticism ought to be directed, for example, the representation and spatial organization visible on the surface of a painting, and those aspects of an artwork to which appreciation and/or criticism ought not to be directed, for example, the color of the back of a painting. This distinction is still important, but I decided that it was not one that needed to be addressed within the institutional theory of art.

At this point I want to take note of an argument invented and used by Danto that I have adopted. Danto envisions visually indistinguishable pairs of objects: *Fountain* and a urinal that looks just like it, the painting *The Polish Rider* and an accidentally produced paint and canvas object that looks just like it, Warhol's *Brillo Box* and a real Brillo box that looks just like it. Danto notes that the first member of each of the pairs is a work of art

while the second member is not. He concludes that there is a context that the eye cannot descry that accounts for the first member's being a work of art and the second not. That is, the first member of each pair is embedded in a context that the second member of each pair is not. Danto then gives his account of what this context is. I accept Danto's argument, but I give a different account of what the context is, namely, the institutional account embodied in the definitions I have given. The visually indistinguishable objects argument of course applies, with suitable adjustments, to artworks outside the domain of visual art.

THE TWO VERSIONS OF THE INSTITUTIONAL THEORY

In all formulations of the theory, I have tried to formulate what I first called a "descriptive" and subsequently called a "classificatory" sense of "work of art." That is, I have always sought to define a value-neutral sense of art. I believe this is necessary because we sometimes speak of bad art and worthless art. If works of art are defined as necessarily valuable, it would make it difficult or impossible to speak of bad or worthless art. Thus, I believe that the basic theory of art is about a value-neutral sense of art. Notice that this basic theory is about the members of the class of works of art: some members are excellent, some members are mediocre, and some members are bad. The general *activity* of creating artworks is of course a valuable activity, but it is the members of the class of works of art that the institutional theory is focused on. By the way, not all the products of a valuable activity need to be valuable, although a certain percentage of them would have to be. Furthermore, I do not deny that the expression "work of art" can be used in an evaluative way. Thus, there is an evaluative sense of "work of art." My definition of "work of art," however, is supposed to capture a basic, nonevaluative sense of the expression, which of course includes all the works of art to which the evaluative sense applies as well as all the mediocre and bad works.

Both the earlier and the later versions of the theory are responses to the view that "art" is an open concept that cannot be defined in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions.[17] The general claim of the institutional theory is that if we stop looking for *exhibited* (easily noticed) characteristics of artworks such as representationality, emotional expressivity, and the others that the traditional theorists focused on, and instead look for characteristics that artworks have as a result of their relation to their cultural context, then we can find defining properties.[18] The theories of art formulated by the traditional theorists are easily refuted by counterexample because the immense diversity of artworks easily furnishes examples of works of

art that lack the properties specified as defining by the traditional theories. On the other hand, no artwork, no matter how unusual, can escape its relations to its cultural context. The problem is to find the defining relational properties of artworks to their culture and to characterize them correctly.

One problem of my three earlier attempts at definition already noted is the formal language used in the formulations of the definitions; the changes in the definitions of the later version are aimed at arriving at an overall account that is consistently informal. Another problem of the earlier account is that it claimed that the artifactuality of artworks could be achieved in two ways: (1) by being crafted in one traditional way or another, or (2) by being conferred. The conferring of artifactuality in the earlier version was supposed to account for the artistic artifactuality of found art, Dadaist art, and the like, cases in which no traditional crafting occurs. I subsequently came to believe that artifactuality is not something that can be conferred, but is a characteristic that must be achieved in some way. In the later version, I tried to show that found art, Dadaist art, and the like possess a minimal artistic artifactuality as the result of artists' *using* found objects, manufactured objects (Dada), and such as media within the artworld. Thus, for example, Duchamp *used* a plumbing artifact (a urinal) to produce the sculpture-like artwork *Fountain*. *Fountain* is a manufactured artifact as the result of what happened in a factory *and* an artistic artifact as the result of what Duchamp did with a factory-manufactured object—it is a double artifact. Of course, ordinary paintings are double artifacts too, since artists construct them using manufactured items: paints, canvas, and the like. *Fountain* is like what anthropologists have in mind when they speak of unaltered stones found in conjunction with human or humanlike fossils as artifacts. The used object is a complex thing made up of a simpler thing and its use—the urinal and its use, a rock and its use, and so on.

THE LATER VERSION OF THE INSTITUTIONAL THEORY

I now move to the remainder of the content of the later version of institutional theory, and I shall do so by commenting on the five definitions in the order that I listed them above.

An artist is a person who participates with understanding in the making of a work of art.

The notion of *understanding* is very important here. There are two things to be understood. First, there is the general idea of art that must be understood so that an individual acting knows what kind of activity he or she is involved in. Being an artist is a mode of behavior that is learned in one way or another from one's culture. Second, there is the understanding of

the particular artistic medium or media that an individual is using. Such understanding need not involve great mastery of a medium, for even beginners can create art. On the other hand, a person can understand both of the above things, participate in the making of a work of art, and still not participate as an artist. Stage carpenters and primers of canvases participate in a way in the making of artworks and in almost all cases no doubt have the requisite understandings, but they do not participate in the artist *role* because what they do can be done without the requisite understandings. A primer of canvases has a very different role from that of an assistant who helps a master with a painting.

The definition of "artist" depends on the notion of work of art and naturally leads on to a definition of "work of art."

A work of art is an artifact of a kind created to be presented to an artworld public.

In the first three formulations of the definition of "work of art," I broke it into two parts. The first part involved artifactuality, and the second part involved the conferring of candidacy for appreciation. Both conferring and candidacy for appreciation have been dropped, and the definition is not broken up in any way. In the later version, the defining of "work of art" is approached entirely through the *creating* of an artifact. Focusing on artifactuality in this way is a return to tradition, for from ancient times on philosophers of art have been concerned to theorize about the class of objects that is generated by a particular kind of human making. Philosophers have been interested in these objects precisely because they are human artifacts. According to the later definition, the *status* of art is achieved through the creating of a certain sort of artifact. Such an artifact is one that is intended to be a particular sort of thing, namely, the kind of thing created to be presented to an artworld public. Notice that putting it in this way leaves open the possibility that artworks can be created that are *never* presented to anyone, for the definition requires only that an artwork be a kind of thing to be presented. I have phrased the definition in this way to allow for the untold artworks that have been created but which for one reason or another have not reached any artworld public. By the way, in using the word "kind" here, I am using it in a very general way and am not using it to suggest kinds or genres within art such as novels, painting, or the like.

I should note that such things as playbills, exhibition catalogues, and the like are created to be presented to artworld publics, but they are not artworks. They, however, are derived from artworks, and the definition is intended to apply to *primary* objects of the artworld domain.

The definition of "work of art" makes essential use of the notions of *public* and *artworld*, so these two notions need definition and discussion.

A public is a set of persons the members of which are prepared in some degree to understand an object which is presented to them.

"Public" as here defined is not tied solely to the artworld—it is a notion of general application. There is a voting public, a basketball public, a dog show public, and the like, as well as a painting public, a stage public, and other artworld publics. A public as such is just a set of persons who understand and know how to deal with a particular kind of situation. A member of an artworld public has characteristics that parallel those of an artist: (1) a general idea of art and (2) a minimal understanding of the medium or media of a particular art form.

Does an artist always have in mind a public for his or her work? Suppose an artist deliberately withholds a work from actual presentation. If an artist does so because he or she judges it unworthy, then it is being judged as unworthy for a public and is thus being counted as a kind of thing created to be presented to a public. Suppose an artist withholds a work because he or she regards it as too revealing in some way. In this kind of case, an artist has a public in mind because it is a public to whom the work would be revealing. In cases when a work is deliberately withheld from a public, there is a *double intention,* that is, there is an intention to create a thing of a kind to be presented to an artworld public, but there is also an intention not to actually present it.

Now for the definition and discussion of the other notion used in defining "work of art," namely, "artworld."

The artworld is the totality of all artworld systems.

This means that the artworld is a collection of different systems—painting, literature, theater, and the like. The collection is not a tidy one but is rather one that has been drawn together over time in a somewhat arbitrary way. Why does it include literature, theater, and ballet but not dog shows, horse shows, and circuses? The answer is that the artworld is a cultural construction—something that members of society have collectively made into what it is over time. Although perhaps no one has ever consciously decided that dog shows are excluded from the cultural construction that is the artworld, it has turned out that way. If the history of culture had been a little different, the artworld might also be different and include dog shows. There is a strong chance of there being an element of arbitrariness in every cultural construction simply because they come about as a result of people's behavior over time.

Traditional theories of art try to avoid the untidiness exhibited here by attempting to bind all the diverse works of art together as instances of some characteristic or characteristics of human nature such as the expression of

emotion; the characteristic (or characteristics) is used as the essence (or essences) of art. The sheer diversity of artworks, however, destroys the traditional approach. The institutional approach embraces the great diversity and admits to the kind of logical untidiness discussed above. Traditional theories try to discover the essence of art in some aspect of human nature such as the expression of emotion. The institutional theory focuses on human culture and its history.

The definition of "the artworld" depends entirely on the notion of *artworld system,* which I have defined as follows:

> An artworld system is a framework for the presentation of a work of art by an artist to an artworld public.

The first four definitions of the later version have been produced by means of a linear descent, that is, "artist" is defined in terms of the notion of *work of art.* "Work of art" is defined in terms of the notions of *public* and *artworld.* "Public" is defined generally and thus stands outside the linear descent. "The artworld" continues the linear descent and is defined in terms of the notion of *artworld system.* The definition of "artworld system," however, instead of extending the linear descent using more foundational notions, reaches back and uses all four of the earlier-defined notions. Thus, what begins as a linear descent ends up being a circle—the five definitions constitute a circular set. Circularity is a characteristic that traditional theories do not have. For example, expressionism defines "art" in terms of the expression of emotion, but the definition of the "expression of emotion" would not involve the notion of art.

Circularity is generally regarded as a logical fault because it is claimed that it fails to give an informative definition or description. For example, when Clive Bell said that significant form is what causes aesthetic emotion and then said that aesthetic emotion is what is caused by significant form, many concluded that they had really not been told anything, and perhaps they had not. Artist, work of art, public, artworld, and artworld system, unlike significant form and aesthetic emotion, are not technical notions generated within a theory and in need of a theoretical explanation. The five central notions of the institutional theory are all notions that we all learn at a tender age, and we learn them together as a set. Art teachers and parents teach children how to be artists and how to display their work. Children are taught how to draw and color and how to put their drawing on the refrigerator door for others to see. What children are being taught are basic *cultural roles* of which every competent member of our society has at least a rudimentary understanding. These cultural roles are, I believe, invented very early on in primitive societies and persist through time into all structured societies. So, when we hear "artist" and "work of art" we are

not baffled in the way that we are when we hear "significant form" and "aesthetic emotion." When adults hear "artist" and "work of art," they hear words that they have known the meaning of for a very long time. The circularity of the central notions of the institutional theory thus poses no problem for the understanding of these notions. The fact that the five central notions of the institutional theory are learned together as a set means that they are what I call "inflected concepts," a set of concepts that bend in on themselves, presupposing and supporting one another.

There is nothing mysterious about such sets of concepts. I suspect that many of our cultural phenomena involve inflected notions, notions that are interdefined and are learned as a set. The political notions of executive, legislature, judiciary, and law are such a set of concepts.

I noted earlier that artist and artworld public roles come into existence in the most primitive of societies and persist into the most advanced of societies. In their earliest manifestations, the central roles of artist and artworld public pretty much are the culture's artworld. Later, the artworld contains many other roles: art gallery entrepreneurs, museum curators, art critics, art theorists, philosophers of art, and others. All of these sophisticated roles are parasitical on the central roles of artist and artworld public, the cultural framework that persists through time and constitutes the core of the art-making enterprise.

When, someone might ask, did the first work of art come into existence according to the institutional theory? First, the institutional theory is a *structural* theory, by which is meant that the theory is about the five defined elements that make up the structure of the art-making enterprise. Thus, according to the institutional theory, the first work of art would be the one that occupied the work of art node of the artworld structure when that structure first gelled. It would of course be very difficult to date the time of such a gelling, although no doubt it has occurred many different times in many different cultures.

Finally, it should be noted that the institutional theory of art is not an attempt to say everything that there is to be said about art. Art does many, many different things that are not touched on by the institutional theory or any other theory of art. Any theory of art, including the institutional theory, attempts to specify defining characteristics, which are going to be rather narrowly restricted and simply will not reflect the broad scope of the things that works of art do.

TWO RECENT CRITICISMS OF THE INSTITUTIONAL THEORY

Noël Carroll has recently attacked the institutional theory of art.[19] At the same time, he has presented his historical/narrational account of *identifying*

ing artworks as a replacement for the institutional theory and any other theory of art, although he explicitly states that his account of identifying art is not a theory of art.[20]

Carroll attacks the circularity of the institutional theory by saying that it does not say anything specific about art but is rather just

> the necessary framework of coordinated, communicative practices of a certain level of complexity. . . . But in illuminating certain necessary structural features of such practices, Dickie has not really told us anything about art *qua* art. . . . But . . . [this] . . . is not what disputants in the conversation of analytic philosophy expected in the name of a definition. [This] . . . is no longer playing the game according to its original rules, and it only confuses matters to pretend that a real definition is still in the offing.[21]

I have never attempted to play according to the original rules of what Carroll calls "real definition." As a matter of fact, I have never even used the expression "real definition." First, following Maurice Mandelbaum, I went beyond the exhibited characteristics of artworks in looking for necessary and sufficient conditions, which violates the definitional rules as conceived of by Morris Weitz and others. Following Mandelbaum and Danto, I sought relational characteristics of art that situate it within human culture because I regard the exhibited characteristics used by traditional theories as hopeless as defining characteristics. Second, I explicitly noted the circularity in both versions of the institutional theory; it is this circularity that marks the definitions of the institutional theory as different from the linear definitions required by the original rules of what Carroll calls "a real definition." My view is that the necessary and sufficient conditions specified in the institutional theory cannot be understood independently of the institution of art—an institution that is imbibed from early childhood. I never intended or pretended to give a real (noncircular) definition in Carroll's sense. I take it that such a real definition would specify necessary and sufficient conditions that can be known independently of the defined term "art." This is what the traditional theories of art have always tried to do and what I have tried to get away from. What the traditional theories of art and their definitions tell us about art qua art is false. What the institutional theory tells us about art qua art is something that we already know and have known from an early age, although actually formulating this knowledge is not easy.

By the way, I find no fault with the historical/narrative scheme that Carroll describes for identifying artworks. When faced with an object, the artwork identity of which is contested or uncertain, Carroll proposes that the solution lies in telling a *true* narrative that relates the object to earlier undoubted art objects or events. If such a story "links the contested work to preceding art making practices and contexts in such a way that the work

under fire can be seen to be the intelligible outcome of recognizable modes of thinking and making of a sort already commonly adjudged to be artistic," then the object is identified as an artwork.[22]

Carroll raises an important question about his own narrational theory—the question of whether the kind of narrations he has in mind might result in identifying nonartworks as art. The example he mentions is Van Gogh's severed ear. Suppose, he says, that a true narrative could be constructed that relates the ear to an attempt by Van Gogh "to symbolize the plight of his artistic convictions in the face of Gauguin's criticisms."[23] Even if such a true story could be told, Carroll says that would not suffice to identify Van Gogh's ear as an artwork. Carroll then compares Van Gogh's mutilation to a twentieth-century artwork—Rudolf Schwarkolger's self-mutilation. Why is Van Gogh's mutilation not an artwork when Schwarkolger's mutilation is? The reason, Carroll says, is that the earlier one lacks a framework that the later one has. Carroll describes this framework as follows:

> In order to establish the art status of a contested work, one needs not only to tell an identifying narrative that connects the work in question with acknowledged art practices, but, as well, one needs to establish that the thinking and making that the identifying narrative reconstructs be localized to activities that occur within recognizable *artworld systems of presentation*—i.e., artforms, media and genres which are available to the *artist* and *the artworld public* under discussion. That is, identifying narratives must be constrained to track only processes of thinking and making conducted inside the *framework of artworld systems of presentation* or recognizable expansions thereof. Moreover, where this constraint is honored, identifying narratives will not commit the error of overinclusiveness. (italics mine)[24]

It turns out that the framework Carroll describes for constraining identifying narratives is made up of the central notions of the institutional theory of art—a theory that Carroll has rejected as a real definition. Carroll's theory for identifying art approaches a work of art from the consumer's point of view, while the institutional theory approaches works of art from the point of view of the artist. The institutional theory, however, despite its circularity, tells us all that we need to know about how to identify artworks.

In his book *Definitions of Art,* Stephen Davies, who himself opts for the institutional approach, nevertheless rejects both of my versions of the institutional theory because they both lack what he takes to be a necessary ingredient of institutionalism—the notion of *the conferring of the status of art.* Although he has something to say about this ingredient, he never really justifies its necessity for institutionalism.

Davies is right that both of my versions lack what he takes to be the necessary feature, namely, the conferring of the status of art, although in *Aesthetics: An Introduction* and *Art and the Aesthetic* I did sometimes carelessly write of conferring *the status of art* as a kind of shorthand for conferring

the candidacy for appreciation. The official view of the two earlier books, however, is that candidacy for appreciation is conferred and artifactuality may sometimes be conferred.

Davies' evaluation of all of my versions of the institutional theory is summed up in the following two quotations from his book.

> Dickie too often discusses the conferral of art status as if it were a kind of action, like shaving, rather than an exercise of authority vested in socially defined roles, with the result that he has no useful explanation to offer of who can confer art status on what and when.[25]

> An artist is someone who has acquired (in some appropriate but informal fashion) the authority to confer status. By "authority" I do not mean "a right to others' obedience"; I mean an "entitlement successfully to employ the conventions by which art status is conferred on objects/events."[26]

Davies thinks that the necessary feature of conferring the status of art in turn rests on an exercise of authority by an artist.

I have of course never held that art status is conferred, but Davies thinks that I and any institutionalist should. Moreover, he thinks that the creation of art derives from an act of authority. He contrasts the authority that Duchamp allegedly exercised in creating *Fountain* with the lack of authority of the plumbing salesman I imagined in *Art and the Aesthetic.* I claimed such a salesman could have done what Duchamp did if he had had the imagination and wit to do so. Davies' view is that art is created by an exercise of authority—an exercise of an entitlement to employ art-making conventions. He claims that my imaginary plumbing salesman would lack such authority. Davies never gives any argument in support of his claim about authority. Is his claim true?

Consider a mundane example of art creation. An artist paints away in his studio on a canvas and after a while says to himself, "It's finished," and he then signs the painting. A work of art has been created, but there has been no exercise of authority. The artist may have exercised some skill, imagination, knowledge of a particular sort, and the like. Neither our artist nor Duchamp exercises authority in creating art. After the fact of art creation, an artist may exercise authority over his paintings because they are his property—for example, authorize a gallery owner to display them for sale. Perhaps Duchamp exercised such after-the-fact-of-art-creation authority in getting *Fountain* displayed at that now-famous art show. An artist also exercises a similar authority of the property sort when he or she says, "It is finished," but having the authority to determine when one's own work is completed is not at all the kind of authority Davies has in mind. For Davies, the relevant authority is the authority to exercise an entitlement to employ art-making conventions.

I think Davies has confused the notion of being in a position to do something because one is possessed of authority with the notion of being in a position to do something for other reasons. A policeman, a doctor, a pharmacist, a parent, and the like are in a position to do certain things because they have the authority to do them. But one can be in a position to do something, not because of authority, but because of knowledge and skill. Someone might be in a position to do CPR or the Heimlich maneuver simply because of the knowledge of how to do them. One does not have to have authority to do such things. On the other hand, to do brain surgery one must possess a certain medical authority and be licensed by the state to have the legal authority to do so. I think that the creation of art falls under the notion of being in a position to do something because of the possession of knowledge (and sometimes skill). The general conceptional scheme I have in mind is this. There is the more general notion of being in a position to do something. Under this general notion there are two species: (1) being in a position to do something because of authority, and (2) being in a position to do something independently of authority.

In a review of *Definitions of Art,* Ira Newman makes a similar point about Davies' claim about authority. Newman writes:

> By invoking the notion of authority and roles, Davies has a political or organizational structure in mind. . . . So Davies' notion [of authority] has to be viewed as, at best, metaphorical: that is, it is *as if* the members of the artworld conferred art status the way ministers and judges do. Yet Davies offers few supporting reasons for viewing this metaphor as an apt one. There is nothing remotely like a process of election or selection in which members of the artworld assume posts for conferring artwork status. And knowledge of art's history and theory (so central to understanding why Duchamp's *Fountain* may be an artwork) does not achieve anything like granting the authority to *bestow* art status; . . . this is the "authority" of a qualified expert, and an altogether different sense from the one Davies has in mind. Davies' notion of authority thus seems as mysterious, at this stage, as the concepts it is intended to illuminate.[27]

I conclude that Davies' main objections to my versions of institutionalism, namely, that both lack an account of how art status is conferred and how it is conferred by an exercise of authority, are unfounded.

THE CLASSIFICATION OF THEORIES OF ART

In his recent book Stephen Davies has classified theories of art in a very useful way as either functional, procedural, or historical. Functionalism defines "art" in terms of something taken to be an essential function of art; art as the expression of emotion is a clear case of functionalism. Proceduralism defines "art" in terms of some procedure; the institutional theory

is a clear case of proceduralism. Historical theories define "art" in terms of some historical relation; Carroll's theory is a clear case of a historical theory, although it is *not* a theory of art. Jerrold Levinson's theory is a clear case of a historical theory of art, because he defines present-day art in terms of its historical relation to art of the past.[28] Some theories turn out to have aspects that fall under more than one of the three categories.

There is another useful way to classify theories of art, one based on the distinction between natural-kind activities and cultural-kind activities.[29] Animal species exhibit natural-kind activities such as seeking food, eating, mating, and the like. Such activities are no doubt written in the genes and come about as the result of bodily maturation. Human beings and perhaps some other species also exhibit cultural-kind activities such as seeking food using certain techniques, eating in ritualized ways, marriage, and the like. Cultural-kind activities are human inventions and are passed on from generation to generation by means of teaching and learning. Cultural-kind activities are sometimes ways of carrying on natural-kind activities.

Expressionism—the view that art is the expression of emotion—is a clear example of a natural-kind activity theory of art. The expression of emotion as such is a natural-kind activity, although of course cultural matters may become involved in the expression of emotion. Thus, expressionism tries to derive art directly from human nature as a natural-kind activity. The institutional theory of art is a clear example of a cultural-kind activity theory; on this theory, art is a cultural invention. Art may involve natural-kind activities such as the appreciation of basic aesthetic qualities, but the institutional theory does not see such appreciation as essential to art.

NOTES

1. George Dickie, "Defining Art," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 6 (1969): 252.

2. Ibid.

3. George Dickie, *Aesthetics: An Introduction* (Indianapolis: Pegasus, 1971), 101.

4. George Dickie, *Art and the Aesthetic: An Institutional Analysis* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1974), 34.

5. Richard Wollheim, *Painting as an Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 15.

6. It is true that unfortunately in *Aesthetics: An Introduction* and *Art and the Aesthetic* I occasionally did speak of the conferring of the status of art as a kind of shorthand for the conferring of the candidacy for appreciation.

7. Arthur Danto, "The 1993 Whitney Biennial," *Nation*, 19 April 1993, 553.

8. Arthur Danto, "Danto Replies," *Nation*, 7 June 1993, 758.

9. Dickie, *Aesthetics: An Introduction,* 103.

10. Dickie, "Defining Art," 255.

11. For another discussion of Wollheim's misinterpretation, see my "An Artistic Misunderstanding," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 51 (1993): 69–71.

12. *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy,* ed. Robert Audi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 378–79.

13. Monroe Beardsley, "Is Art Essentially Institutional?" in *Culture and Art,* ed. Lars Aagaard-Mogensen (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1976), 51–52.

14. George Dickie, *The Art Circle: A Theory of Art* (New York: Haven, 1984). This book is the single best account of the institutional theory of art.

15. Ibid., 80–82.

16. Ibid., 9–10.

17. See Paul Ziff, "The Task of Defining a Work of Art," *Philosophical Review* 62 (1953): 58–78; Morris Weitz, "The Role of Theory in Aesthetics," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 15 (1956): 27–35; and William Kennick, "Does Traditional Aesthetics Rest on a Mistake?" *Mind* 67 (1958): 317–34.

18. My ideas on this point have their origin in an article by Maurice Mandelbaum, "Family Resemblances and Generalizations concerning the Arts," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 2 (1965): 219–28.

19. The discussions of Noël Carroll's and Stephen Davies' criticisms of the institutional theory are both derived from material contained in my "Art: Function or Procedure—Nature or Culture?" *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 55 (1997): 19–28.

20. Noël Carroll, "Art, Practice, and Narrative," *Monist* 71 (1988): 140–56.

21. Noël Carroll, "Identifying Art," in *Institutions of Art: Reconsiderations of George Dickie's Philosophy,*" ed. Robert J. Yanal (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 12–13.

22. Noël Carroll, "Historical Narratives and the Philosophy of Art," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 51 (1993): 316.

23. Ibid., 324.

24. Ibid. Italics mine.

25. Stephen Davies, *Definitions of Art* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991), 84.

26. Ibid., 87.

27. Ira Newman, review of *Definitions of Art* by Stephen Davies, in *Canadian Philosophical Reviews* 12 (1992): 183.

28. See Davies, *Definitions of Art,* 243, for a discussion of the theories. See also my "Art: Function or Procedure—Nature or Culture?" *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 55 (1997): 19–28.

29. See my "Art: Function or Procedure—Nature or Culture?" for a discussion of this way of classifying theories of art.

6

The Deviant Ontology of Artworks

JOSEPH MARGOLIS

I

A dear friend, Eddy Zemach, chides me in his recently published aesthetics, *Real Beauty*, for having introduced in one of my own pieces a "gnomic" relation—that is, a relation that is conceptually "unhelpful" because its "logic" is lacking—in offering the notion of "embodiment," according to the formula: "the 'is' of embodiment . . . is not to be collapsed into the 'is' of identity."[1] As Zemach rightly implies, the formula was meant to displace Arthur Danto's better-known formula—namely, that the " 'is' of artistic identification" is not the same as the " 'is' of identity."[2] I meant it as an irony, because Danto never explained his meaning; what we can make of it entails that there are no artworks or works of art at all: speaking of art is, for Danto, a purely rhetorical flourish regarding things that are real ("mere real things") but that are never, qua real, artworks! For his part, Zemach signals an unwillingness to entertain conceptual improvisations that begin with acknowledging the ontic difference between what is culturally real and what is physically real (without yet invoking dualism). In any case, I am unconditionally committed to explaining and defending the embodiment claim.

I concede that my usage requires (still requires) defense, because, as Zemach correctly reports, I hold, invoking embodiment, that one particular could (be said to) "instantiate another particular."[3] Certainly, I meant by that to offer something in the way of a distinctive "metaphysics" of art—apt, for instance, for the puzzles of description and interpretation—whereas it has always seemed to me something of a small scandal that an able philosopher (Danto) could have so blithely pursued his close analysis of paintings without ever explaining how his conception of art served his sanguine sense of objective interpretation.

Beyond that, I thought I had (in 1980, when *Art and Philosophy* appeared) actually explained the "logic" of the notion; and certainly, since

1980, I have in many places (which Zemach nowhere considers) returned to the logic and metaphysics of the question. The matter is important, I feel certain, because so many philosophers of art perseverate in one or another canonical view of art's ontology in ways that are plainly indefensible and inadequate to the problems that arise in our usual discourse about the arts; and because the solution I offer points the way to a more general solution regarding the relationship between culture and nature. I won't protest the disinclination of philosophers to be guided by me! But they must surely explain what they would put in place of the minimal claims of my embodiment thesis: first, that cultural phenomena are "emergent" with respect to (not reducible to) physical and biological nature; second, that cultural phenomena exhibit certain sui generis properties that their embodying medium lacks; third, that these distinctive properties (which I denominate "Intentional") are indissolubly embedded ("incarnate") in the properties of the embodying (non-Intentionally qualified) medium; and, fourth, that, since the embodied and embodying entities share physical or biological properties (the non-Intentional properties indicated), we may speak conveniently of one particular's instantiating another.[4] The economy gained brings together, by a single stroke, the avoidance of dualism, the admission of the conceptual distinction of cultural reality vis-à-vis physical reality, and the minimal logical peculiarities of the ontology of artworks. What I claim is that no philosopy of art is likely to be viable if it does not come to grips with these considerations. Neither Danto nor Zemach accepts the charge.

Zemach does touch on an essential connection he does not bother to analyze, which was (on my own part) meant to contribute to the supporting argument in favor of embodiment. I need to reclaim that connection. I hope he will not mind, therefore, if I take advantage of his observation to explain why it actually misses the mark and why my own theory of art and interpretation falls into place so trimly—and, I trust, compellingly. Zemach says (not accurately, as far as my own view goes, but discerningly enough):

> Relativists believe that there is no way for us to identify the interpretandum, the artwork X itself, through the veil of its interpretations. Being what we are, we are necessarily biased: we cannot see the work as uninterpreted, and each reader constitutes the interpretandum differently. In a word, interpretation is all there is; the interpretandum is a myth. . . . Interpreters *impute* (as Margolis says) their interpretations to the interpretandum, and different interpreters impute different interpretations to the work, but that does not obliterate the work X as it is in itself. The properties X has as such are those shared by all its instances, so if you know X's occurrences, you know what X is as such.[5]

What Zemach reports or conjectures here is, I am afraid, false about art, false about my theory, and an obvious non sequitur to boot. You have only

to consider that there may be no set of properties (neither physical nor Intentionally incarnate) that all correctly pulled instances of a particular Dürer engraving could be reasonably said to share that would not be judged to be too much like an artwork's least common denominator to have much relevance for any pointed discourse about the arts. I offer this only as a clue. There are more important considerations bearing on the ontology of art that would need to be laid out to make the case. I'll dwell a little longer on Zemach's formulation, but I have no wish to reduce the theory I defend to a quibble. The deeper claim is worth restating, and the clue to the solution of Zemach's puzzle is easily drawn from what Zemach himself supplies.

The truth is that there is more at stake than meets the eye. If you review Zemach's implicit objection, you will see that it rests on the presumption that if artworks are real entities, they must have their properties apart from interpretive imputation, which our descriptive efforts must then address; that to "impute" (to be able only to impute) properties by alternative perspectived means ("bias," in Zemach's terms) signifies that there are no artworks at all, that artworks are not real. On my reading, that risks collapsing the difference between my theory and Danto's—which is precisely the reverse of my intention. It is also a non sequitur.

Let me say—against Zemach—that (1) artworks are real but have natures significantly different from those of physical entities; (2) their natures include a range of properties that disallow any criterial or epistemic disjunction between "perceiving" and "imputing" (or between "describing" and "interpreting") the objective properties of given artworks; (3) admitting (2) makes it impossible to disallow the pertinence of a relativistic account of objective truth claims about artworks; (4) admitting the reality of physical entities presupposes and entails the reality of cognizing selves (persons, ourselves); and (5) what distinguishes artworks from physical entities is generically the same as what distinguishes selves from physical entities (the members of *Homo sapiens*), however specifically different selves and artworks may be from one another (for instance, as in possessing or lacking consciousness). (Treat this as a continuation of the tally collected a moment ago regarding "embodiment.")

I do not find in Zemach—or in anyone else—a compelling argument to the effect that all real entities are physical entities or are modeled (denotatively and predicatively) in the same way physical entities are modeled, or that they are necessarily so modeled. In fact, I hold that artworks are real and modeled very differently from physical entities; so modeled, in fact, that they are "embodied" entities, conformably with the troublesome thesis that one particular may instantiate another.

I do not deny that my usage is unusual, but I see no damaging paradox in it—and no better idiom in sight. The truth is, we must invent the ontologies we need, much as we invent our mathematics, seeking only to make

them plausible and coherent and serviceable for our best analyses. The idea (Zemach's) that a real entity is, in all cases, determinate in all its properties, intact apart from our inquiries and interventions, and that that is the minimal condition on which interpretive objectivity rests, is, in my opinion, a recipe for conceptual disaster. If you demur, then, I must ask you, where is the supporting argument? The importance of the quarrel rests with the possibility that, first of all, what's generically true of artworks is, in an important regard, also generically true of (human) selves—and of everything else that belongs to the world of human culture; and, second, that if the entities of physical nature are real, then it cannot be denied (on pain of paradox) that cultural entities are real as well and must be embodied in the sense I suggest. There's the challenge. *Epistemically,* we cannot admit determinate physical entities without admitting the reality of selves; but the reality of selves is inseparable from the *ontic* standing of the cultural world.

Certainly it is clear that, unlike what may be argued regarding physical objects, cultural phenomena (language, artworks, institutions, practices) cannot have their properties "apart" from human selves or human societies (in the sense in which—whether ultimately justified or not—we do say physical objects are "independent"). The properties of cultural things need not, however, be arbitrarily dependent on whatever any one or several of us suppose they are—they are entitled to some sort of objectivity; but, then, the existence and nature of human selves (the languaged, encultured, "second-natured" members of *Homo sapiens* who acquire, in infancy, the aptitudes that mark them as cultural "artifacts" in their own right) cannot be what they are entirely "apart" from the aggregated, similarly second-natured societies in which they are first formed. Short of some reductive or eliminative physicalism (which I claim cannot work), it is not in the least strange to suppose that the distinctive properties of artworks and selves may well invite—may even oblige—us to concede that something like the embodiment relation must hold among cultural entities if we insist on characterizing *physical* objects in (something like) Zemach's way! That is part of what I mean by saying that, in the profoundest sense, selves (a fortiori, artworks) cannot possibly exist apart from the collective life of an encultured society. In a word, there is, finally, no point in speaking of the objective or actual properties of artworks without explaining the ontic relationship between natural and cultural (culturally emergent, or culturally constituted) entities. I press the point against both Zemach and Danto.

Let me come to the nerve of the quarrel, a concession any ontology of art should allow: namely, that artworks characteristically possess representational, expressive, symbolic, semiotic, stylistic, genre-bound, traditional, and historical properties. I call such properties "Intentional," meaning by that to equate the Intentional and the cultural (or, the culturally meaning-

ful—or, intrinsically interpretable).[6] That permits me to accommodate the notion of the "intentional" which Brentano and Husserl developed, while escaping the solipsism and acultural cast of their particular theories. These characteristic properties are easily recovered under terms keyed to our acquisition of a first language. They are presupposed (I suggest) in all our talk of art, but also in theorizing about the nature of human selves—which, as I say, motivates my own ontology of art. I mean to capture all that by the term "Intentional."

I lay it down as a formal (but entirely uninterpreted) condition that properties must be *adequated* to their *denotata*, that is, that whatever properties are attributed to artworks (to any "thing," in fact) must cohere consistently with the conceived "nature" of such things (whatever that may be). It is for instance uncontroversially conceded that sentences like "The stone smiled" literally fail the adequation test. John Searle claims (without supporting argument) that mental attributes may be directly predicated of the brain (thoughts and memories, for instance), though (he says) they are not physical.[7] I do not agree, though I do not endorse physicalism. Certainly, on the usual view, physical objects lack Intentional properties or are assigned them only rhetorically or figuratively. Danto, for one, assigns Intentional properties to "mere real things" (physical objects preeminently); hence, in a way that cannot meet the adequation test; hence, in a way that fails to explain how descriptive and interpretive judgments (of artworks) could possibly be objective: I find this philosophically unacceptable.

Zemach is on stronger ground. *He* believes that those who, like myself, speak of *imputing* Intentional properties to artworks imply thereby that there are no such entities (they don't *exist*); or alternatively, that, if there are artworks, they lack Intentional natures or their distinctive properties are entirely reconcilable with physicalism. (Why, otherwise, should we be obliged to "impute" such properties to them?) Zemach precludes the obvious option: namely, that Intentional properties *are*, predicatively, so distinctive that no one, modeling artworks on physical paradigms (Zemach himself, for instance), would (1) admit such properties in the adequational sense, or (2) admit their supposed descriptive and interpretive oddities in standard critical practice.

Still, there is a challenge there that must be met. Here, by way of a promissory note, I simply introduce artworks as the adequated *denotata* of certain familiar Intentional properties. My bet is that they will resist reductionism and eliminativism. That's all! So far, then, my proposal is viable (against Zemach's objection) as well as philosophically responsible (against Danto's maneuver). I acknowledge that all the old puzzles associated with mind and body and culture and nature will have to be resolved conformably. I welcome the responsibility. But my blunderbuss solution is

to treat all cultural entities as indissolubly complex—*embodied in* suitably selected *physical* (or biological or electronic) particulars: paradigmatically, selves, *in* the members of *Homo sapiens;* also, by the conditions of their production, paintings, *in* pigments; words, *in* sounds; actions, *in* bodily movements; thoughts, *in* brain states; and so on. If you grant all that, you will have answered the "gnomic" charge originally raised.

I say the cultural world has emerged in a sui generis way from the physical and biological world. Its reality is not in question, whatever we may suppose its proper analysis to be. It manifests itself paradigmatically in the mastery of natural language and whatever language makes possible in specifically nonlinguistic ("lingual") ways (as in dancing, in the preparation of food, in making love). It is reflexively identified (as is, indeed, the physical world) by encultured selves, who are themselves the preeminent entities of the cultural world. The important point is that cultural entities and cultural phenomena are (1) real, as real as physical entities and physical phenomena, (2) causally efficacious in both physical and cultural contexts, (3) distinguished by their possession of Intentional properties, and (4) ontically sufficient for justifying, as a consequence, the objective standing of interpretive and legitimative inquiries that go beyond the merely causal. I steer a middle course between reduction and elimination, on the one hand, and dualism, on the other. Hence, I speak of cultural *entities*—artworks, here—as *embodied,* and of their (adequated) properties as *incarnate,* that is, indissolubly complex qua cultural. It is in this sense it may be said that, predicatively, a mental or a linguistic or a stylistic property has both physical and Intentional features and that its Intentional features are *discerned* only in its indissolubly incarnating features. (So the term "Intentional" is benignly equivocal.)

Furthermore, it is in this sense that I treat the "is" of embodiment as a kind of entitative analogue of the "is" of predicative instantiation, the use of which I restrict to the cultural world. The device is largely instrumental, in the way of facilitating reference, predication, numerical identity, reidentification; hence, also, description, interpretation, explanation, evaluation, and the like. Except, of course, for my not being willing to scant a realist reading of conditions 1–4. I see nothing strange in any of this, unless it is the nearly total neglect of such niceties in English-language philosophies of art and philosophy in general. I cannot see that either Zemach or Danto—or anyone else—has ever shown the least basis for supposing that the logical, ontological, and epistemological issues I address can be managed in any seriously different way or can be simply retired.

Finally, if, as I believe, the individuation and numerical identity of artworks cannot be derived (criterially, algorithmically, or by any rule) from purely physical entities, then (1) to denote an artwork as the referent of

descriptive and interpretive discourse and (2) to go on to describe and interpret an artwork as such is to proceed in such a way that (3) relative to physical entities, there can be no principled distinction between the *description* and *interpretation* of artworks on the one hand and *imputations* to that effect on the other. Whether the second way of speaking ("imputation") is idle or superfluous will depend on what the connection is between Intentional and non-Intentional properties and whether Intentional properties do exhibit the oddities and indeterminacies I have been hinting at. In any case, there's little point in dismissing this bit of caution on my part in advance of an actual analysis on either side.

In fact, I argue that reference and predication are inherently (logically) informal and that their informality runs even deeper if we admit Intentionally qualified entities. I am persuaded that reference is "imputational," if we understand by that that fixing the denotata of our discourse is, inherently, noncriterial, consensual, tolerated by the spontaneous fluency of our discursive practices, incapable of being fixed by any formal rule at all; also, that, by parity of reasoning, our predicables are similarly instantiated, unless (per contra) "Platonism" proves viable. To speak of "imputation" is, in general, simply to concede the insuperably consensual informality of natural-language discourse. There is (and can be) no algorithmic connection between our discourse about the physical world and discourse about the cultural world. Reference and predication are epistemically hostage everywhere. If so, then a relativistic treatment of the description and interpretation of artworks cannot be ruled out a priori. I can put the point neatly; reference and predication are affairs not of *savoir* but of *savoir-faire;* but if so, then so too are the description and interpretation of artworks.

II

Let me mention without ceremony the single most compelling, most incontestable clue favoring the theory I support: namely, we first learn to speak by living as children among linguistically competent adults; but there is no way to account for our fluency (in learning and using language) by any general inferential strategy that proceeds *from* reliably first fixing certain physical marks (sounds, say) *to* the determinate Intentional features of linguistic utterances (meanings, say). That would, in effect, be methodological solipsism, faulted by self-referential paradox. What holds here holds for artworks as well. Herbert Feigl, I may say, was fond of speaking, in conversation at least, of the "many"/"many" problem, that is, of the puzzle that, for any determinate physical movement, there are indefinitely many significant actions that might be "associated" with (I should say, "embodied" in) that movement (signaling or pretending to signal, for instance); that,

for any action, there are indefinitely many alternative bodily movements that might convey the same action (greeting another, say); and that there is no legible rule or law coordinating the two sets.[8] The "many"/"many" problem obviously applies to language as well. If you add to this the insuperable informality of reference and predication (and the informality of fixing the "contexts" of reference and predication), you will find that you are committed to some form of constructivism—if you take a realist view of physical and cultural phenomena.[9]

These elementary adjustments defeat Zemach and Danto at a stroke, since, on the argument, there can be no way of prioritizing discourse about the physical world over discourse about the cultural; and, in addition, there can be no principled disjunction between description and interpretation in either quarter. If you grant this much, you see the sense in which all truth claims have an imputational cast without (yet) calling into question a realist treatment of whatever is entitatively posited in either physical or cultural space. This means, very simply, that what is real (however ontically "independent" we suppose the real to be) is, *epistemically,* dependent on human conditions of understanding and belief. In this sense, *the realist reading of what is real* is an interpretive posit—the internal accusative, so to say, of interpretive *tertia,* subject therefore to the historical drift of our conceptual schemes.

I emphasize the point because, in the world in which we describe and interpret artworks, it is regularly supposed—certainly, by Zemach and Danto[10]—that we cannot *interpret,* in any sense that deserves to be called objective, what is not antecedently *described* or describable (noninterpretively). But this fails to concede that what is taken to be descriptively reliable—the condition on which admitted "interpretations" are supposed to perform their characteristic labor—is, on a constructivist theory (which, I claim, we cannot escape), itself the upshot of an interpretive posit. Epistemically, we "constitute" the intelligible world we claim to describe objectively—both the natural and the cultural worlds; ontically, we posit what we take to be the reality of nature as it is apart from what we posit as culturally real. The *reality* of our cultural world is inseparable from human life and intervention; and the *realism* of physical nature remains *epistemically* dependent on the conceptual conditions of human inquiry.

The denial of this benign antinomy produces instant and insuperable paradox. I see no difficulty there. Culture, but not nature, is infused with Intentional properties; and Intentional properties are intrinsically interpretable—apt for interpretation. There is, therefore, a dual sense in which we speak of interpretation: first, constitutively, in epistemic terms (that is, holistically, in terms) that, *pace* Kant, cannot be initially assigned distinct subjective and objective sources but depend instead on some prior sym-

biosis within which they (a fortiori, the epistemic and the ontic) are first "constituted"; and, second, objectively, within the terms of the first, by which we claim to articulate the meanings and significative structures of human acts, histories, practices, institutions, as well as the meanings of the artifacts, machines, technologies, and artworks that are thereby produced.

I say you cannot formulate a reasonable theory of the arts—the fine arts—without providing a pertinent sketch of the relationship between nature and culture. For example, when Monroe Beardsley treats even the interpretation of literature as somehow akin to discerning the physical properties of natural objects—hence, effectively conceding (and immediately overcoming) the difference between Intentional and non-Intentional properties and, thereupon, construing interpretation as straightforward empirical description—it comes as a surprise to learn that Beardsley has no ramified theory of art at all or of how culture and nature ought to be ontically and epistemically compared.[11] When, therefore, Beardsley distinguishes "interpretation" proper from a merely parasitic, hardly objective, form of interpretation—what he calls "superimposition" (reading *Hamlet,* for instance, in Freudian terms)—or when he fusses about his inability to discern with assurance what is "in" a work of art and what is not (in expressive or representational or other semiotic respects),[12] he is surely acknowledging the ontic and epistemic puzzles of Intentionality and culture that he fails to analyze.

Now, the essential key to resolving the puzzles of the ontology of art and of the methodology of the interpretation and history of art lies with the strategic proposal that, whether with regard to the "constructive" relationship between nature and culture or, within the space of the real, with regard to the description and interpretation of Intentionally freighted entities, the description and interpretation of artworks and human deeds are inherently informal, consensually tolerated qua objective, determinable only collectively, not criterial, and such as to defy any principled disjunction between what is said to be discerned in that part of the independent world and what is ("only") reasonably imputed to the constituted denotata of our truth-claiming discourse. The thing to grasp is that, even among the natural sciences, criteria of objectivity ultimately rest on their being consensually embedded in our ordinary practices of description and interpretation, which are not, in their turn, explicable in crisp criterial ways. I take this to be the master theme of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* and *Of Certainty,* correct enough as far as Wittgenstein goes but never actually developed far enough (by Wittgenstein) to meet the special puzzles the arts and their interpretation present. More generally, I take the entire argument to implicate the need for admitting the historicity of our conceptual schemes, which Wittgenstein would never have favored but which,

applied to the logical peculiarities of Intentional predicables, explains the unavoidability of treating interpretation in relativistic terms. For the moment, I emphasize only the argument's coherence.

III

In Anglo-American philosophies of art, as in Anglo-American philosophy in general, discourse about physical nature is regularly taken to be paradigmatic of "objective" inquiry, so much so that exemplars of that discourse are rightly thought to govern the right analysis of the ontology of art and of the logic and methodology of interpretation. A short review of current discussions would confirm that that was indeed the general tendency. It is certainly the assumption shared by Beardsley, Danto, Goodman, and Zemach, for instance. But its plausibility is doubtful at best, and, in any case, it is patently inadequate—utterly unable to capture or eliminate Intentionality. The entire question of how to construe the ontology of art is best managed, I suggest, by adhering to the following two constraints: one, that the logic and methodology of describing and interpreting artworks should be adequated to the nature of artworks; the other, that artworks themselves obviously have an Intentional nature. I cannot imagine a more sensible general policy, though I admit that, once these concessions have been made, there may be very little agreement about how to proceed further or what, precisely, such constraints entail. I myself think it impossible to avoid drawing certain radical conclusions. Others do not—chiefly, I believe, because they already adhere to standard views about bivalence and interpretation, about a priori conditions of objectivity, about certain canons of reality whether with regard to nature or culture, all of which betray a taste for the presumptive paradigms of physical nature.[13]

All this is threatened in the profoundest way by admitting reference and predication and Intentional predicables. I could add to these worries cognate difficulties regarding context, the historicity of thinking, truth and knowledge, the distinction between the subjective and the objective, and our very understanding of what is real. But, for the sake of a lean challenge, I put all that aside.[14] There remains at least one decisive "adequational" theorem that the theory of interpretation must conjure with: namely, that if artworks are construed entitatively (as stable individuated denotata), then (1) artworks may be assigned numerical identity, even granting their problematic nature; and (2), compatibly with (1), artworks possess determinable but not strictly determinate "natures," in virtue of their Intentionality. The theorem is almost universally neglected. In any case, I find no profit in pursuing the logic of interpretation or the validity of defining what a work

of art is, without coming to terms with the theorem just mentioned. The trick is to flesh out what it entails.

Before proceeding further, however, I should explain that I approach the ontology of art in the unorthodox way I do because standard discussions (Zemach's and Danto's, for instance) tend to slight the complexities that I espy. It's an uphill effort to explain what turning things around entails and, of course, what would justify doing so. I take the detour—if that's what it is—to be important because, for one thing, philosophical habits of thinking about artworks have so deeply entrenched the model I wish to dismantle; for another, because the replacement I intend affords a decisive clue to understanding our own ontology; and, for a third, because making provision for the ontology of art involves a fundamental rethinking of our general conception of reality. There is hardly any sustained analysis of cultural entities that is not committed a priori either to the physicalist paradigm or to some frank Platonism.[15] Both options seem to me untenable—for the same reason: namely, the nature of Intentional predicables.

I hold that cultural entities form a sui generis run of real things already implicated, as ontically different, in the analysis of physical nature. Without admitting their peculiarities, we cannot (I suggest) make clear sense of the natural sciences themselves. For knowledge is itself a cultural artifact. We certainly cannot, otherwise, give a convincing account of the central puzzles of art and criticism, for instance of the following sort: How is an artwork individuated and identified numerically, if it is not merely a physical object? In what sense is it possible for artworks to be real, in spite of the fact that Intentional properties cannot be determinate or fixed in whatever way we suppose physical properties can? What does it mean to say that the properties of artworks are inherently interpretable, in spite of the fact that we cannot defend a principled distinction between *what they are* and what they are ("merely") *imputed to be*? In what sense can we rightly say that the imputed properties of artworks remain objective (or real), if divergent ascriptions, possibly even incompatible interpretations, may be validated? And in what sense can the Intentional properties of artworks be objectively assigned if they can be altered or affected by the changing history of their ongoing interpretation?

I favor certain heterodox possibilities here, and I claim to be able to provide a unified and plausible answer to all these questions, in the spirit of relativism and historicism—for instance, in accord with the interpretive work (*not* necessarily the theories) of such figures as Stephen Greenblatt, Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, Harold Bloom, and Stanley Fish.[16]

All this is mere scaffolding, I admit. But I anticipate that the answers I have yet to air will drive us back to the distinctions already in hand. So let

me collect the scattered parts of the doctrine already introduced. Here is a convenient tally of them: (1) Physical nature and culture are distinguished primarily in terms of what lacks, and what, in the real world, possesses, Intentionality; hence, the cultural is sui generis and cannot be reduced to the physical. (2) Cultural entities are embodied in natural or physical entities, and their properties are correspondingly incarnate in natural or physical properties; hence, cultural entities exist in the same sense physical objects do and their properties are as real as physical properties are. (3) Intentional properties are inherently interpretable, determinable but not determinate in the way we suppose physical properties are; hence, whatever we believe the logical features of truth-bearing discourse may be when addressed to physical entities, physical exemplars are not likely to be apt paradigms for defining objective discourse about cultural entities. (4) Intentional properties are such that the individuation and numerical identity of (adequated) cultural entities differ markedly from the individuation of physical entities; accordingly, the "natures" of cultural entities are such that we cannot defend any principled distinction between discerning and imputing natures (or properties) to them; hence, the description of cultural entities is already interpretive or imputational. (5) The objective ascription of Intentional properties is compatible with conceding divergent imputations (or descriptions) that, applied to physical objects, would produce contradiction and paradox; it is also such that objectively imputed properties may actually be altered by the ongoing process of interpretation and reinterpretation; hence, the criteria of objective description cannot be the same in nature and in culture, though they are logically reconcilable. You see the reason for warning that the admission of artworks begins to challenge canonical views of reality.

IV

Turn back, then, to the most strategic considerations. These fall into two baskets. On the one hand, considerations of reference and predication confirm the impossibility of disjoining ontic and epistemic questions; hence, the unavoidability of a conjoint realism involving nature and culture. On the other hand, those regarding the Intentional complexities of artworks themselves (within the space of the first) cannot fail to lead to heterodox concessions regarding the logic of truth claims, the constructed nature of objectivity, and the replacement of physicalist paradigms of reality.

About the first basket, I offer the following: for one thing, logically, reference cannot be captured by predicative means at all, and, as a consequence, cannot be captured in any rulelike, criterial, or algorithmic way; and, for another, since, epistemically, there is no invariant rule by which

to confirm successful predication, predicative objectivity must be largely consensual, in a sense akin to the *lebensformlich* regularities Wittgenstein sketches in his short account of human practices.

The first basket collects the remarkable mistake (or, the fated inconclusiveness) of Duns Scotus's notion of haecceity, W. V. Quine's epistemically irrelevant proposal to replace proper names by descriptive predicates, the epistemic futility of Saul Kripke's invention of "rigid designators," and similar conceptual flora. The hopelessness of all such maneuvers was, I may say, already anticipated by Leibniz.[17] The second instruction rests on the obvious fact that, from Plato to the present, no one has ever been able to provide a convincing clue about how to discern—or confirm that we have discerned—*any* "Platonist" guide to the true predicables of nature (whether idealist or realist or conceptualist). There is no point to a theory of reference (or denotation) or predication that does not account for communicative success. Hence, there can be no adequate theory of reference or predication that does not ground such success, constructively, in the consensual tolerance of our natural-language practices. But if that is so, then you see at once why a realism regarding physical nature implicates a realism regarding Intentional entities: for no imputation of objective reference or predication makes sense if its success is not ascribed to the thought and action of languaged selves functioning cognitionally within the cultural world they inhabit.

The verdict is more powerful than we may require, because it affects, equally, all parts of discursive inquiry—confirms, in fact, the *epistemic* dependence of truth claims about physical nature on a realist reading of culture and selves. You see, therefore, that a principled disjunction between description and imputation (even in the absence of Intentional properties) signifies a form of cognitive privilege; alternatively, the rejection of privilege confirms that a viable realism must be a constructive or constructivist realism. There is no principled way to assign the apparent "structures" of the intelligible world to what, disjunctively, is "brute" and what is conceptually "invented." That explains the sense in which physial nature implicates the ontic standing of human culture—a fortiori, the oddities of artworks.

You begin to see how much must—and should—be revised to make room for artworks. It's one thing to admit that the world of human culture and human minds must have evolved from cosmic sources that originally lacked Intentionality altogether. It's quite another to grasp that whatever is conjectured to be thus and so is itself insuperably dependent on our being the competent investigators that we are. Our description of the real world is endogenously encumbered by the epistemic conditions under which we function, in spite of the fact that, within such terms, we have good reason

to believe that, ontically, we have indeed emerged from prior conditions that lacked the Intentionality of our cultural world. I see no troublesome paradox there. I say only that the *realism* of the physical world presupposes and entails the *reality* of the cultural world! That is my bottom line: a theorem implicated in the entire labor of philosophy spanning the work of Galileo and Descartes down to Kant and Hegel. No promising philosophy can, I think, bypass its lesson. That Zemach and Danto have never come to terms with this theorem I have, accordingly, taken as a clinical sign. The strenuous recovery of the world of the arts is, then, no more than the obverse side of the irreducibility of Intentional phenomena, once the inseparability of ontic and epistemic questions is admitted.

Readers will be impatient, however, to be given a sense of the local bearing of these speculations on the arts. I believe I can satisfy them. It comes as a surprise to learn how many of the familiar quarrels about the objective description and interpretation of artworks are tethered to the issues I have just been addressing. For example, agreeing with Danto's dictum that the " 'is' of artistic identification" cannot be the same as the " 'is' of identity"—because the first but not the second concerns the ascription of properties Danto treats as rhetorical and I collect as "Intentional" as well as real—I claim that there is and can be no way of individuating artworks or identifying what belongs, predicatively, to their "nature" or "career," by any means confined to their physical properties or purely physical embodiment.[18]

I don't find the question addressed in Danto or Zemach or Richard Wollheim[19] or Beardsley or any of an army of current philosophers and theorists of the arts. But if what I have been saying is correct, then the numerical identity as well as the "limits" of what belongs to the "nature" of an artwork *cannot be specified except in Intentional terms*—and, there, nature and interpretable limits cannot be fixed invariantly or "probably" or "for the most part" or in any way that is epistemically "impenetrable" to the flow of history. But, of course, if that is so, then all the disputes about the description and interpretation of artworks are not responsibly informed, if they ignore art's ontology.

I don't happen to agree with the Romantic, or hermeneutic, theory of literature. But if you concede (with E. D. Hirsch, say) that the objective meaning of a Greek tragedy depends on, and requires, the articulation of something like the essential entelechy of the *genre* TRAGEDY, drawn from the historical ethos of the Greek world,[20] which the play instantiates, you see at once that (1) objective attribution will depend, inescapably, on some form of cultural realism; (2) there will be no principled disjunction between what, objectively, is "in" and what is merely "imputed" to an artwork more secure than the standing of such genres, traditions, practices, *Sitten,* or the like; and (3) the specific objectivity with which we mark off

the "limits" of the interpretable "nature" of any artwork, as well as the objectivity of any attribution we make with respect to it, will depend on the measure of objectivity we can rightly accord Intentional determinations in the first place. I claim they can never be more than consensually (*never,* criterially) regularized, always in a way responsible to the historical drift of one's enabling tradition.

I have already remarked that we cannot fix the "number" of even physical objects except consensually—in effect, Intentionally and interpretively. In addition, if, now, we mean to identify a particular artwork that (1) is embodied in but is not identical with a particular physical object (because it possesses and the other lacks Intentional properties), (2) exists only as an Intentionally qualified object such that (3) its Intentional properties are not the same as whatever physical properties they are incarnate in, you see at once that these conditions cannot be satisfied except by having first interpretively posited a suitable *denotatum.* You see the sense, therefore, in which, at the point of individuation and certainly at the point of attribution, a good deal of interpretive imputation will already have been at work. Even if we were clear about the number and nature of the embodying physical object and incarnating physical properties in which a particular artwork was theoretically embedded, there would (recalling Feigl) be no rule by which the Intentional features of an individual artwork could possibly be fixed conformably. But, if so, then even the would-be fixities of the embodying entities would be put at risk. (Because, of course, reference and predication are Intentional.) That is what the "naturalists" ignore (Quine and Davidson for instance).[21] Think of the diverse performances of a Mozart sonata or the diverse printings of a Dürer engraving or the bearing of the history of interpretation on the identity and reinterpretability of *Hamlet* or *Las Meninas* or *Sarrasine* or *Miss Lonelyhearts* or (Duchamp's) *Fountain.*

I say there is a conceptual gap between the number and nature of embodying and incarnating factors and the number and nature of the embodied and incarnated features of artworks, and *that that gap cannot be overcome* except consensually, within the changing practices of the societies in which such questions arise and are resolved. If you grant that much, you see at once why the description and interpretation of artworks cannot fail to be "imputational"—and why their objectivity cannot fail to be "constructed." We are free to theorize as we please about what to count as an artwork—and why; but, on the argument, we cannot expect to lay the matter to rest by any criterial definition. When, for instance, I conjecture that Max Ernst's *Jeune fille poursuivie par un rossignol* justifies ascriptions of a generically psychoanalytic sort or even looser attributions concerned with the reception of Freudian materials in the West, I am theorizing in implicit conformity with the ontological latitude I have suggested cannot be

avoided and cannot be brought to closure in any way that would ever endorse a uniquely valid interpretation. There's no point to quarreling about the bivalent or multivalent logic of interpretation, therefore—say, regarding which is methodologically correct—if the parties to the dispute ignore the implicated puzzle. There's no doubt that Beardsley and Danto fail in this respect.

V

I apologize for the busyness of all this labor. The truth is: English-language philosophies of art have largely avoided addressing the ontic complexity of art's Intentional "nature." It would have been quite impossible to make plausible the logical peculiarities of artworks in terms of an ontology that simply shunned the Intentional (like W. V. Quine's *Word and Object*). But the ontic admission of Intentionality has an extraordinary effect on the standing of more canonical views. I have, therefore, found it necessary to provide some evidence of the sheer coherence of the model of cultural realism that I propose. There is a contest there that deserves a fuller inning.

I must now leave the larger argument to one side, in order to come, finally, to the deeper oddities of art's interpretable nature. In part, this means no more than a reminder that the generic features of cultural entities apply directly, automatically, to artworks, in virtue of their being properly constituted real entities.

The most important theorem has already been mentioned, namely, that, ontically, the individuation of a particular artwork need not (1) presuppose the necessary fixity of its nature, or (2) presuppose that its being determinate in "number" entails its being determinate in "nature." The two issues are quite different.

I have now shown that both reference and predication owe their usual determinacy to the informal consensual tolerance of discursive practices; hence, that there cannot be any criterial appeal to fixed essences in confirming numerical identity anywhere in nature. What holds for non-Intentionally qualified entities holds for culturally qualified entities as well—hence, for artworks and persons. The point is that Intentional predicables are determinable but not antecedently determinate in whatever crisp way we suppose obtains among physical exemplars. But even natural predicables like "red" cannot be criterially determinate, *if* "Platonism" (in all its forms) is false or epistemically inaccessible.[22] I hold, of course, that Platonism *is* false. The upshot is that a viable realism must be a constructive realism.

Apart from that, Intentional predicables ("tragic," "baroque," "Mozartian," "postmodern") prove to be determinable but not determinate in an important additional sense: they (but not predicables like "red") are in-

trinsically interpretable—alterable, in fact, as a result of being thus interpretable. That will need to be explained more fully, but it marks a decisive difference from predicates like "red." The most contested puzzles of objective criticism and interpretation are, I am persuaded, tied to the resolution of this single issue. I rest my case on it.

The required solution is straightforward enough. All that's needed is to bring the import of the generic claim to bear on the specific work of interpreting artworks. The first step is to explain what is meant by the objectivity of Intentional properties. For, of course, it is likely to be thought that predication cannot be objective if the predicables ascribed to existing things are not independently determinate—"there," apart from interpretation itself. (I suppose that Zemach and Danto were warned off the theorem, or something like it, because of such a worry. It explains in part the general tendency of recent philosophies of art to disclaim Intentional complications.)

In any case, the objectivity of general predicables cannot be secured—avoiding Platonism in all its protean forms—unless we locate it in a *sittlich* or *lebensformlich* way: meaning by that, once again, that predicative objectivity is not criterial but collective, consensually tolerant, grounded in the discursive practices of an enabling society, and subject to historical drift. To construe objectivity in a *lebensformlich* way is, effectively, to deny any antecedently determinate disjunction between "subjective" and "objective" ingredients in knowledge or reality. (I deny that that is tantamount to idealism, but I cannot pursue the matter here. For present purposes, simply confine the issue to cultural entities, though it has a wider scope.)

There is no other ground for objectivity—anywhere—if the puzzles of reference and predication are as I suppose they are. Hence, to offer now a "lax" sense of objectivity for the interpretation of artworks is not to fall away from a stricter canon (as Zemach and Danto suppose). There is no such canon if the constructivist argument goes through. (But there *is* sufficient objectivity there for all our needs.) In that sense, if I may venture the point, the problems of the philosophy of science and the problems of the philosophy of art are one and the same.

The upshot of all this, applied to the arts, concedes that Intentional properties are (1) intrinsically meaningful, significative, semiotic, linguistic, lingual, symbolic, or the like; hence (2) interpretable in a historicized and *lebensformlich* way. I hold that all referential and predicative practices (a fortiori, all individuative and reidentificatory and descriptive practices) are subject to the drift of history, but history itself, of course, is blind. There are no epistemic resources for fixing the historical drift of our own epistemic practices, except retrospectively, from a vantage that cannot characterize itself in historicist terms. Practices do change with use, we

know; but we can judge only synchronically or systematically. We cannot do otherwise. Nevertheless, we remain aware that, with the passage of time, we shall probably change our epistemic assessment *of what has gone before,* including our assessment of our own cognitive competence *ante.* By itself, that is the ordinary state of affairs, applicable to science and interpretive criticism alike. It need not commit us (yet) to historicism.

The picture changes completely, however, when we introduce Intentional properties. For such properties are intrinsically interpretable and their objective standing *is, ineluctably, a function of the historicized drift of their ongoing reinterpretation.* That alters our sense of both the inquiries of science and the meanings of artworks. For example, it is generally acknowledged that the early forms of Cubist painting (particularly in Braque's work) were deliberately built up from the forms Cézanne originally developed in his still lifes and landscapes. But, then, the "meaning" of the so-called geometrizing tendencies *in Cézanne* (poorly characterized thus, it must be said) were (will have been) retrospectively affected by the *later* history of painting, now including and going beyond Braque's and Picasso's Cubism. All the oddities of Intentional properties are bruited here. In particular, determinable Intentional properties will not be able to be increasingly determined in the same linear way non-Intentional properties (red, for instance) are said to be.

As philosophers of art, we are likely to take very different stands on what to make of such connections. My own view is that interpretive objectivity will have to be constructivist in form, will be an artifact, and will have to make room for the historicity of interpretation, that is, *for the historicized alterability of its interpretively assigned past.* I judge this to be the precise counterpart of Thomas Kuhn's historicizing of scientific "paradigms," once we give up canonical notions of "perceptual neutrality."[23]

That is the ultimate sticking point. A valid account of predicables entails their being grounded in the consensual life of an inquiring society. This commits us, I should say, to the historical drift of our constructed notions of objectivity. But in the natural sciences—or wherever our principal predicates are not Intentional—we resist historicity. We find causal regularities that seem to promise invariant laws, and we are abetted by predictive and technological success. In interpretive contexts, by contrast, although the *historicized* import of our *present* epistemic stance remains as blind as before, we construe the meaning of an artwork as ranging, retrospectively and critically, over the historicized import of selected *prior* interpretations. Thus, the "meaning" of *Hamlet* is, now, a function of how the play is to be objectively reinterpreted in the light of how we reconstruct the history of its past interpretations! The significance of Hamlet's procrastination has, as we now see matters, passed through a phase of oedipal interpretation,

which may now have waned in terms of cultural plausibility. We cannot fix our own historicized perspective, our "horizon," but we are aware, inferentially, that we must be occupying what, from a later historical vantage, will be defined as that perspective. We construe the objectivity of our interpretive judgments in terms of how we construct (historically, blindly, but pertinently) our relationship to the interpretive work of the past. There is no other way to proceed: there is no sense, comparable to the "independence" of non-Intentionalized reality, in which the meanings of artworks are thought to be independent of the drift of human history.

The chief considerations are these: first of all, we identify our interpretive resources in accord with how we interpret our actual practices, so that apparent methodological constraints (e.g., relevance) prove to be confirmed only within the same consensual tolerance that already informs the interpretations they would delimit; second, the objectivity we suppose obtains is defined in terms of what accords with our grasp of the very history of interpretive practice, leading to our present competence; third, there is no principled reason for supposing that, if there is one valid reconstruction of the meaning of an artwork, there cannot be indefinitely many constructions that conform with our interpretive practice, yet do not implicate any uniquely valid interpretation.

The argument is quite uncomplicated: artworks are Intentionally qualified; what is so qualified is intrinsically interpretable; but the norms of interpretation cannot fail to fall within the historicized tolerance of actual practice; and, there, conformity never functions criterially and can never preclude (for principled reasons) the validity of divergent, even incompatible, interpretations.

We are at the end of the harangue. I take the Intentionality of artworks to be ineliminable but problematic, and I accept the burden of explicating what doing that entails. I say it changes our conception of what is real (in the direction of admitting cultural entities) as well as our conception of objectivity regarding all such entities (in the direction of relativism and the peculiar alterability of Intentional properties). I have taken pains to demonstrate the coherence of the ontology it requires and the epistemic amplitude it accommodates. The entire effort rests with overtaking the resistance of the philosophical canon. One sees the philosophical prudence of resisting Intentionality. But the cause is hopeless, if, apart from artworks and history, we cannot avoid a realist reading of the Intentionality of language and selves. In fact, my argument is, finally, a *reductio:* for to reject Intentionality is to reject our own existence—an odd rejection—and the tribunal of experience; and to admit our existence is to discover that we cannot, conformably, deny the reality of history and art.

NOTES

1. Eddy M. Zemach, *Real Beauty* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 159–60. The remark appears in Joseph Margolis, *Art and Philosophy* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1980), 43–44.

2. See Arthur C. Danto, "The Artworld," *Journal of Philosophy* 61 (1964): 571–84.

3. Zemach, *Real Beauty*, 160; Margolis, *Art and Philosophy*, 22.

4. This resolves, in fact, the notorious incoherence of Strawson's account of "basic particulars," since, now, we can admit that two "basic particulars" (in Strawson's sense) *can* occupy one and the same place, if one is "culturally emergent" with respect to the other. See P. F. Strawson, *Individuals: An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics* (London: Methuen, 1959).

5. Zemach, *Real Beauty*, 155–56.

6. For a fuller sense of the "Intentional," see Joseph Margolis, *Historied Thought, Constructed World: A Conceptual Primer for the Turn of the Millennium* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

7. See John Searle, *The Rediscovery of the Mind* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992).

8. I have never found the expression in Feigl's papers; but it is, of course, the central worry of his important book, Herbert Feigl, *The "Mental" and the "Physical": The Essay and a Postscript* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1967).

9. I give the full argument in *Historied Thought, Constructed World* and, by pieces, in other places. See Joseph Margolis, *Interpretation Radical but Not Unruly* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

10. See Arthur C. Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981). See, also, a very succinct version of this overly easy presumption (partly directed against my own view) in Richard Shusterman, "Beneath Interpretation: Against Hermeneutic Holism," *Monist* 70 (1990): 181–204.

11. See Monroe C. Beardsley, *The Possibility of Criticism* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1970).

12. See Beardsley, *Possibility of Criticism*, 36.

13. I offer, as fair specimens, the gathering efforts of Stephen Davies and Robert Stecker. Both have, for instance, opposed my relativistic account of interpretation without, if I may say so, adhering to the two constraints I have just mentioned. In this sense, their views, however interesting, are nearly completely arbitrary. You will look in vain, for instance, for an analysis of the ontology of art or of the adequation between art and interpretation in their most sustained discussions; and you will not fail to see that their objections are entirely formal and a priori (that is, uninterpreted, never actually applied to the properties of artworks).

I take such indifference to be the mark of presuming on the paradigmatic standing of the physical (or non-Intentional). The picture of physical reality that twentieth-century philosophy has favored is of an independent, determinate run of entities that (necessarily) either have or lack any particular property we may specify (Excluded Middle). See Stephen Davies, *Definitions of Art* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991); and Robert Stecker, *Artworks: Definition, Meaning, Value* (University

Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997). The strategy of these two books should be viewed in the light of a symposium that appeared in the *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism,* in which Davies and Stecker respond to a paper of mine outlining the general form of a relativistic account of interpretation. See my "Plain Truth about Interpretation on a Relativistic Model," Davies' "Relativism in Interpretation," and Stecker's "Relativism about Interpretation," published together in the *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 53 (1995). The point I wish to stress is that my proposal is intended to support (has always been explicitly linked to) a ramified account of what an artwork is. I single out Davies and Stecker because of their confrontational style—which I enjoy; but the truth is, there are many discussants who share their convictions about bivalence and objectivity and the rest, who also show their disinclination to venture into the ontological thickets.

14. See Margolis, *Historied Thought, Constructed World,* for a further reading of these matters.

15. See, for the most developed recent account of the Platonist stripe, Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Works and Worlds of Art* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1980). On the first option, you may of course take Beardsley, Danto, and Zemach as reasonable specimens.

16. See, further, Margolis, *Interpretation Radical but Not Unruly.*

17. See, for instance, *Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence,* ed. H. G. Alexander (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1956), Leibniz's fifth letter.

18. On the generic puzzles of cultural reality (and the use of the terms "nature," "career," "unicity," "history," and the like), see Margolis, *Historied Thought, Constructed World,* pt. 2.

19. See Richard Wollheim, *Art and Its Objects,* 2d ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

20. See, for instance, E. D. Hirsch, Jr., *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967).

21. See W. V. Quine, "Epistemology Naturalized," *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969); Donald Davidson, "A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge," in Ernest Lepove, ed., *Truth and Interpretation: Perspectives on the Philosophy of Donald Davidson* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986).

22. See Joseph Margolis, "The Politics of Predication," *Philosophical Forum* 27 (1996): 195–219.

23. See Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions,* 2d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), section 10.

7

Art and Meaning

ARTHUR C. DANTO

Throughout the history of philosophical speculation on art, it was tacitly assumed that works of art have a strong antecedent identity, and that one could tell them apart from ordinary things as easily as one could tell one ordinary thing from another—a hawk from a handsaw, say. So obvious was the distinction between art and everything else that the Greeks evidently did not require a special word for designating artworks, which they nevertheless undertook to account for in the grandest metaphysical terms. There have, especially in modernist times, been efforts to transform the term "art" into a normative concept, according to which "good art" is tautologous since nothing can be both art and bad. New York critics were known to say of something they disapproved of that it was not really art, when there was very little else but art that it could be. Any term can be normativized in this way, as when, pointing to a certain handsaw, we say, "That's what I call a handsaw," meaning that the tool ranks high under the relevant norms. But it would seem queer for objects which rank low under those norms to be exiled from the domain of handsaws, and in general normativization must drop out of the concept, leaving a descriptive residue. It is with reference to this residue that works of art were tacitly held to be recognizable among and distinguishable from other things.

At the beginning of the modernist movement, say in the mid-nineteenth century, certain problems arose at the boundaries of the concept, initially, perhaps, with photographs, which were unmistakably pictures though produced, as the co-inventor of the process, Fox Talbot, phrased it, by The Pencil of Nature. There was a double history until very recent times as photographers attempted to emulate paintings, and painters began to distance their work from photography by one or another of the stylistic matrices of modernism—Cubists, Futurists, Dadaists, Fauves. Photography was still an outcast in the era of Stieglitz's *Camera Work*, and perhaps its claim to

art became vindicated only when the Museum of Modern Art opened the first photography gallery under Edward Steichen. When that happened, the distinction between pictures drawn by Nature's Pencil and those by the hand-held pencils of painters dropped out of the concept of art. And articulating the logical structures of that concept proved to be more exacting than anyone might have believed, when it had been taken for granted that artworks constituted a relatively homogeneous class of things, the members of which could be picked out easily and immediately. It was consistent with this assumption that the borderlines expanded and dilated under pressures of various sorts: articles of furniture, for example, would have been considered works of art in the eighteenth century, when made of precious veneers and elegantly designed by master *ébénistes*. But when Jacques-Louis David, associating these luxurious objects with the aristocracy, drew a sharp line between High Art and practical art, objects of *vertu* had to emigrate, like their noble patrons, and became craft instead of art. The distinction remains in effect today, so that one dismisses as art anything that carries an aura of utility, leaving behind the uncomfortable idea that works of art can have no function, which is a desperate way of keeping borders closed. This leaves intact the assumption that artworks are a special class of things, and that one could walk through any space whatever and pick the artworks out with a high probability of attaining a perfect score. In this respect the distinction between art and anything else was understood as in no way different from the distinction between any pair of classes—hawks and handsaws, once again. From that perspective, the question "What is art?" was never understood as "Which are the artworks?"—to which it could be assumed that we knew the answer—but rather "What are art's essential features?"

What set my book *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* apart from that philosophical tradition was its recognition that the distinction between works of art and ordinary things could no longer be taken for granted.[1] The question with which the book wrestled was, "Given two things which resemble one another to any chosen degree, but one of which is a work of art and the other an ordinary object, what accounts for this difference in status?" This would not have been a question philosophers could have asked when the difference between artworks and ordinary objects seemed for the most part obvious and uncontroversial. They would not have asked it, I think, because the issue had never arisen. In the twentieth century, however, through certain internal transformations in the history of art, works of art began to appear which either were, or appeared to be, objects of daily life and use. Duchamp's readymades (1915–17) were ordinary snow shovels, bottle racks, grooming combs, and, in one famous case, a urinal, and these, before Duchamp, would certainly have been considered as entirely outside the scope of art. My favorite example was Andy Warhol's

Brillo Box, a photograph of which would be indiscernible from one taken of the commonplace containers in which the soap pads were shipped to supermarkets. So why was one art and the other not, since they looked as much alike as anyone cared to make them? So much alike that the assumption that we could pick the artworks out was put ineradicably in doubt.

The Transfiguration sought to answer this question, and it arrived at a provisional formulation of part of the definition of art. I argued, first, that works of art are always about something, and hence have a content or meaning; and second that to be a work of art something had to embody its meaning. This cannot be the entire story, but if I could not get these conditions to hold, I am unclear what a definition of art without them would look like. So let me first respond to certain philosophical objections meant to put my meager set of conditions in doubt.

George Dickie, founder of the institutional theory of art, insists that there are counterinstances to my first claim, offering nonobjective paintings as his example.[2] It would be extremely interesting to consider what nonobjective paintings Dickie could have had in mind. The Guggenheim Museum in New York was originally called the Museum of Non-Objective Art, and it displayed work by Kandinsky, Mondrian, Malevich, and Rudolph Bauer, at the time the lover of Baroness Hilla Rebay, the museum's director. The term nonobjective, if not first used by Rodchenko, was certainly used by Kandinsky to designate a pure art that seeks to express only "inner and essential feelings"—and the phrase "nonobjective" is closely synonymous with the word "subjective." The paintings present a reality, albeit an inner reality, or if an outer reality, then one which has the same spiritual identity as inner reality. And this, to take the other seemingly difficult case, was Schopenhauer's view of music: it is the language of our noumenal being. Similar stories could be told about Suprematism and what Mondrian termed Neo-Plasticism. The inner atmosphere of the Museum of Non-Objective Art endeavored to make objective the spirit embodied in the redemptive paintings in which Baroness Rebay believed, which hung on its gray velvet walls, washed over by the music of Bach. Malevich perhaps invented monochrome painting, but would have been astonished to be told that his *Black Square* was not about anything. Robert Rauschenberg's all-white painting was about the shadows and the changes of light which transiently registered on its surface, and in that sense about the real world. To be sure, I cannot account for every historical example, but I am fairly convinced that I could if presented with any historical case. So we are in the realm of the philosophical counterexample, leached of any content, namely, "What about a painting about nothing?" I would want to know if it had geometrical forms, nongeometrical forms, whether it was monochrome or striped or what—and from this information it is a simple matter

to imagine what the appropriate art criticism would be, and to elicit the kind of meaning the work could have. Sean Scully's paintings are composed chiefly of stripes, but they are meant to assert propositions about human life, about love, about, even, death. We can of course imagine someone in the spirit of philosophical counterinstantiation painting a work about nothing. But there is a problem of distinguishing between not being about anything and being about nothing, and I incline to the view that nothing is what the painting is about, as in an essay by Heidegger. So my challenge to Dickie would be: give me an example, and I will deal with it. Without some specificity, the game of counterinstances gets pretty tiresome.

The second condition was that a meaning is materially embodied in artworks, which *show* what they are about. This, if true, must put me in conflict with Hegel's formulation of what he terms "symbolic art," the meaning of which, as with a name, is external to, rather than embodied in, the object, though he and I would be in harmony in respect to the other two forms he distinguishes, classical and Romantic art. Since his example of symbolic art is the pyramid, it can certainly be questioned whether the shape, dimensions, and vectors do not embody the meaning appropriate to its mummified tenant. But there is a more immediate objection to my second condition, namely, that something can at once possess aboutness, and embody its meaning, and yet not be a work of art. It has, for instance, been pointed out that the ordinary boxes of Brillo in the stockrooms of supermarkets are about something—Brillo—and that they embody their meanings through the designs on their surfaces. Since I wanted a definition that would distinguish artworks from real things, however something looked, I cannot have succeeded, since the definition, while it fits Warhol's box, fits equally well the ordinary boxes from which I was anxious to distinguish it. This was raised as a friendly criticism by Noël Carroll, and it requires a somewhat intricate answer.[3]

There are two senses of "content," that in which Brillo cartons physically contain soap pads, and that in which we may speak of the content of a work of art, which may in no physical sense whatever be "in" the work. What the *content* of *Brillo Box* as a work of art might be was a matter of interpretation, having nothing to do with opening the box to see what was there. The "combines" of Robert Rauschenberg possess content in both senses: they physically incorporate ordinary objects—cans, funnels, brooms, Coke bottles—which then contribute to whatever larger meaning the works may convey. The way in which these ordinary objects get taken up and transfigured is, in Rauschenberg's case, partly achieved by heeding what one might call the poetry of the commonplace. The objects of the household, for example, are dense with meanings we begin to grasp when they are lost or broken or worn out. They define the structures of life as it is lived, and, if we

know how to read the objects of vanished forms of life, we have access to what it meant to live those forms, and hence to the minds of those who lived them. Indeed, we can learn a great deal more about those forms of life from what Rauschenberg's pieces appropriate than from those pieces themselves, which were exceedingly strange when they first appeared in galleries in the 1950s, for example, a stuffed goat ringed with an automobile tire, which call upon interpretative responses only tangentially connected with our antecedent ability to recognize automobile tires and stuffed goats.

It follows from these considerations that it becomes quite out of the question that one identify the content of works of art on the basis of their visual qualities, and this applies not merely to contemporary or near contemporary art, but to art of the distant past, inasmuch as it is always possible to imagine objects indiscernible from given works of art but caused by factors in terms of which they cannot mean what the works which resemble them mean. Though this did not occur to writers in the period in which the definition of art was a less vexed question than it has become in our own century—whole books today are published on the question of art's definition!—there are aspects of the concept of art which have, from the beginning, made it clear that people were worried about fakes and copies, and these preoccupations can always be phrased in terms of indiscernibles, even if it is thought, as with Nelson Goodman, that differences will sooner or later emerge, and we will wonder, as we now do with the paintings of Van Meegeren, how anyone could have supposed them original. It was important, for complex motives, that Van Meegeren not be told apart from Vermeer since he was anxious to be considered as good a painter as Vermeer himself was, by common consensus. Perhaps the discernibility would have been obvious, were it not for the experts, such as the unfortunate specialist Professor Bredius of the Netherlands, who knew more about Vermeer than anyone then living. He surmised that there had to have been an Italian trip and an encounter with Caravaggism—to which Van Meegeren's first painting appeared perfectly to point. So Bredius was more capable of being fooled through his specialized knowledge than others who knew far less—but who accepted Bredius as the great expert. So beware of experts! Of course it is a crazy painting, but what Van Meegeren meant in painting it was profoundly different from what Vermeer could have meant, had he, per impossibile, produced one indiscernible from it. In fact Van Meegeren's *Christ at Emmaeus* is a vaudeville of Vermeer-like mannerisms: one of the heads is exactly like an authentic head by Vermeer, and those little dots of light which we see in *View of Delft* are used in ways having nothing to do with the dots in the great landscape, where for some they imply the use of a camera obscura. Another dimension of concern arose in connection with restoration, as with the Sistine ceiling. Is it the same work

Michelangelo painted, or has it been changed by the removal of something essential to its meaning? When the painter Morris Louis died, he left upward of six hundred painted canvases with no indication of how they were to be stretched. He stained his canvas by pouring, and when the paint was dry, he rolled it up and stored it. It was decided that Clement Greenberg, who knew the work well, should be the authority as to where the stretcher marks should be drawn, and this unsettled the art world, in which some held that these were not Louis's but Greenberg's works. No need to settle the matter now, but it is clear that some decision has to be made, even if we have no clear idea what Louis would have done had he lived. In any case it may be assumed that there were enough actual differences between *Brillo Box* and Brillo boxes that we can even now tell them apart easily. But those differences will not tell us which of them is an artwork, and in implying that they both are, the force of Carroll's objection is to explain how we are to account for their difference. This I will now seek to do.

In my original discussion, I used the two boxes to raise the question of why one was art and the other not, and hence to ask how to draw a philosophical line between art and reality. But it has since come clear to me that the "real" Brillo boxes might themselves indeed be considered art, and that what set them apart from what Warhol fabricated was the difference between fine and commercial art, comical as it might have sounded to anyone but myself to think of Warhol's boxes as fine art in 1964 when they were first made and shown. I was obliged to make this concession when it became undeniable that the cartons satisfied my two conditions, which would require me to find a third condition to get rid of the problem, or just accept that the distinction between fine and commercial art was no more and no less pressing than the parallel distinction between fine art and craft. The cartons were certainly about something; and since I was using aboutness to distinguish art from reality, the cartons would make the first cut. And it seemed to me no less clear that they would make the second cut as well, that of embodiment. The upshot was that the cartons made an unsatisfactory paradigm for a real object, since they were after all embedded in a system of meanings, as I shall argue in a moment. It then became a problem to determine what paradigm to use for a real object, and that turns out not to be so easy. It would require finding something which does not derive some part of its identity from a network of meanings, and it is not clear that any can be found—it is like seeking for something that is not in the mind in an effort to rebut the claims of Bishop Berkeley: the moment you find it, it is no longer outside the mind. It was not important for me to step off the edge into metaphysics, since the philosophical tradition used as its generating paradigm beds painted by artists and beds built by carpenters—and no one can deny the aura of meanings surrounding the bed as a site of

suffering and joy. So the line between commercial art and fine art became a problem. In my early essay "The Art World" I invoked a knowledge of the theory and the history of art to solve the problem, and while this tactic worked, I now think we might talk as well about different structures of art criticism connected with the two objects.

Or *three* objects, if we expand our group to include the Brillo box by the appropriationist artist Mike Bidlo, who, in an exhibition at the Bruno Bishofsburger Gallery in Zurich, installed, in the same configuration in which they were shown at the Pasadena Museum of Art in 1968, eighty-five Brillo boxes, which he had fabricated. The show was called *Not Andy Warhol*. So let us mount the usual exhibition I try to imagine when I discuss these matters—the Warhol box, the Not Warhol box, and the "real" Brillo box made famous by Warhol but also not Warhol, but not Not Warhol either. I ask you to grant me their relative indiscernibility, in that the differences between the objects do not penetrate the differences between the works, since they could as readily be imagined as belonging to the others instead of the one they belong to in fact. If you look at Warhol's box, there is a kind of dripping where the paint is stenciled on, showing a certain indifference to clean edges. But the Warhol could be clean and the Bidlo dripping. Or they could both be clean and the real Brillo box be dripping—or at least some of them, say a bad batch. There is no reason to protract this reasoning. So let us apply the structures of art criticism to the three, and imagine that they look entirely alike, and that no visual basis is to be invoked for discriminating the two examples of fine art from the one example of commercial art, or, for the matter, discriminating between the appropriation and the appropriated.

It is now well known that one of the reasons the design of the Brillo box is so good is that it was done by a fine artist who was obliged to practice commercial art when Abstract Expressionism faded in the early sixties. This was Steve Harvey, about whom I would like to know a great deal more than I do. In any case, his Brillo carton is not simply a container for Brillo pads: it is a visual celebration of Brillo. The box is decorated with two wavy zones of red separated by one of white, with blue and red letters. Red, white, and blue are the colors of patriotism, as the wave is a property of water and of flags. This connects cleanliness and duty, and transforms the side of the box into a flag of patriotic sanitation. It gives two connected reasons for using Brillo, which is printed in proclamatory letters B-R-I-L-L-O, the consonants in blue, the vowels—I and O—in red. The word itself is dog Latin, namely, "I shine!"—which has a double meaning, one of which is consistent with the condition of embodied meaning. The word conveys an excitement which is carried out in the various other words, in which the idioms of advertising are distributed upon the surfaces of the

box, the way the idioms of revolution or protest are boldly blazoned on banners and placards carried by strikers. The pads are GIANT. The product is NEW. It SHINES ALUMINUM FAST. The carton conveys excitement, even ecstasy, and is in its own way a masterpiece of visual rhetoric, intended to move minds to the act of purchase and then of application. And that wonderful band of white, like a river of purity, has an art-historical origin in the hard-edged abstraction of Ellsworth Kelly and Leon Polk Smith. It could not have been done before that movement, the clean edges of which give a certain palpable contemporaneity to Brillo. Even in 1964 it was urgent to belong to the Pepsi Generation of with-it youth. Harvey deserved a prize, and Warhol, who had won prize after prize as one of New York's leading commercial artists, would have been the first to appreciate its value.

That, in general, is a sketch of the art criticism for Steve Harvey's Brillo cartons, and you can see how meaning and embodiment are connected. What Harvey would never have thought was that it might be fine rather than commercial art, in part, I suppose, because fine art by his criteria would have been the paintings he admired by Pollock and de Kooning and Rothko and maybe Kline. So what Warhol did was to make something visually of a piece with his, but which *was* a work of fine art. And one will have to note that none of the art criticism appropriate to Harvey's box is appropriate to Warhol's at all. Warhol was not influenced by hard-edge abstraction: he reproduced the forms of an artist who was, only because they were there, the way the logo of the Union of Orthodox Rabbis was there, certifying that Brillo was kosher (as it was in 1964). It was essential that he reproduce the effects of whatever caused Harvey to do what he had done, without the same causes explaining why they are there, in his *Brillo Box* of 1964. So where does art criticism come in? It comes in because commercial art was in some way what Warhol's art was about. He had a view of the ordinary world as aesthetically beautiful, and admired greatly the things Harvey and his heroes would have ignored or condemned. He loved the surfaces of daily life, the nutritiousness and predictability of canned goods, the poetics of the commonplace. After all, the Brillo box was but one of the cartons he appropriated for that first show at the Stable Gallery, all of which had their rhetoric but none of which were as successful as Steve Harvey's Brillo box. By 1964 real objects had penetrated art as subjects for realistic depiction: a case in point is the sign for Mobile gasoline, the Flying Red Horse, in a characteristically haunting painting by Edward Hopper. And that crossing the line shows a philosophical shift from rejection of industrial society—which would have been the attitude of William Morris and the Pre-Raphaelites—to endorsement, which was what one might expect from someone born into poverty and in love with the warmth of a kitchen in which all the new products were used. So the cartons are

as philosophical as the wallpaper of William Morris, meant of course in Morris's case, to transform rather than celebrate daily life, and to redeem its ugliness into a kind of medievalized beauty. Warhol's boxes were a reaction to Abstract Expressionism, but mainly with respect to honoring what Abstract Expressionism despised. That is part of the art criticism of *Brillo Box,* and there is a great deal more. But the two pieces of art criticism are disjoint: there is no overlap between the explanation of Harvey and the explanation of Warhol. Warhol's rhetoric has no immediate relationship to that of the Brillo boxes at all.

And this is true of Bidlo's work as well. Bidlo appropriates famous works in order to understand what it must be like to make them—what would it feel like. This helps him understand the object. He is currently making urinals, since the entire generation of urinals from which Marcel Duchamp drew his notorious *Fountain* (1917) has disappeared from the face of the earth. He is making, so to speak, handmade readymades. He did the same in painting Morandis and Picassos and Legers. It happens that his boxes look as much like Harvey's as like Warhol's, but they are about Warhol's and not about Harvey's, and they are about what Warhol made with no special further interest in why he made it. It is central to Bidlo's project that the number and array of his boxes be connected with the number and array of Warhol's boxes in Pasadena. In Warhol's case, by contrast, the number may have been adventitious and the arrangement a matter of indifference. Bidlo's was in some way an installation, whereas Warhol's was just a number of artworks.

I do not want to prolong my discussion past this point. The claim is that all of these differences are invisible, that the actual box before you underdetermines which work it is, Warhol, Harvey, Bidlo. It is important to the problem that in all relevant visual respects, they are entirely alike. That is what I have meant in saying so often that what makes something art is not something that meets the eye. And that makes clear as well why so much rests on meaning, which it is the task of art criticism to make explicit. The works are not, as it were, synonymous. This is not to say there are not visible marks by which to tell Warhol from Bidlo and Bidlo from Harvey. There are, and these would be enlisted in the connoisseurships so important to collecting and selling art and, after all, to how we look at these things and think about them. We don't want to discover that we were thinking about the Bidlo when we thought we were thinking about the Warhol. Still, telling a Harvey from a Warhol from a Bidlo, while it is telling a work of fine art from a work of commercial art, and an original from an appropriation, is not in any further sense telling the difference between fine art and commercial art, which rests instead upon philosophy. And this is true even if you are telling the difference between a work of fine art and

one not a work of fine art. The criteria may depend upon measurements, paint samples, mode of imprinting, and the like, none of which pertains to the conceptual division between these various objects. The definition of art remains a philosophical problem.

And we can confirm this if we think for a moment on how the flagged properties of the connoisseur are precisely those on the basis of which fakes are constructed. The forger is in constant symbiosis with the connoisseur, attempting to outflank him by incorporating as many of the relevant properties into his fabrications as can be found. The great Morelli based connoisseurship on properties no one had paid attention to, which opened possibilities up for forging Fra Lippo Lippi in such a way that a Morelli could mistake it for Filippino Lippi. Bidlo, doubtless in order to demonstrate the irrelevance of connoisseurship to distinguish his work from Warhol's, made no effort to duplicate the latter millimeter for millimeter, or to employ just the same plywood Warhol used—which by now would probably be as difficult to find as a token of the same Mott Works urinal type to which *Fountain* belonged. But the point is that telling art from nonart, if we can identify the latter at all, is not like distinguishing two works from one another when their status as art is not in question—as with Lippo and Filippino. But this returns me to the distinction between art and reality, from which the recognition of commercial art diverted me.

I have argued that with the emergence of indiscernibles, the true philosophical question was recognized this way: given two indiscernible objects, one art and the other not, what accounts for the difference? The insufficiently considered case of commercial art did not belong to this question, though an analogous problem arose in case someone thought that commercial art must in every instance look different from fine art. My view, in any case, was that once the question arose, anything could be an artwork, and that, in consequence, the history of art, construed as the quest for self-consciousness, had reached its end. But I would like to make an observation concerning aesthetic responses to objects in the post-historical period, as I have come to call the history of art since it achieved what I think of as philosophical self-awareness. What does it mean to live in a world in which anything could be a work of art? A family snapshot, a most-wanted poster, an aluminum kettle, a hawk, a handsaw? For me, it is to invent a suitable art criticism for an object, whether or not it is a work of art, though if it is not one—if, for instance, it is not about something—the criticism is void. It is to imagine what could be meant by the object if it were the vehicle of an artistic statement.

I recently visited the Museum of Modern Art in San Francisco and went the next afternoon to lunch with the graduate students in art history at Berkeley. As I headed for the elevator, I passed a room on the first floor

which was clearly being remodeled. There were planks and sawhorses and tipped steel shelves and Sheetrock, as well as some power tools here and there, and I thought: I could have seen something exactly like this in the museum! Had I done so, I might in truth have been thrilled, and would have thought of the meaning of such an installation. Not long ago I saw an installation by Haim Steinbach at the Sonnabend Gallery in Soho in which a room was lined with mostly empty steel shelves of the kind we might see in a storeroom. On one there was a pair of running shoes. On another a television set. In one corner there was a random stack of drab office chairs, beneath which there was a pile of sand. There was something melancholy about it, and my companion observed that it looked just like some political headquarters in the Negev. With this the possibility of a meaning came into view, concerning the state of Israeli culture. To be sure, the headquarters themselves are eloquent on that matter, all the more so if they resemble Steinbach's work. The former's disarray and barrenness express the attitudes that the latter represents through exemplification. It is clear that a distinction between two modes of aboutness is what we now require, but drawing it can safely be left to the profession as a way of bringing the definition of art into line with actual practice.

NOTES

1. Arthur C. Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981).

2. George Dickie, "A Tale of Two Artworlds" in *Arthur Danto and His Critics*, ed. Mark Rollins (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), 73–78.

3. Noël Carroll, "Danto's New Definition of Art and the Problem of Art Theories," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 37 (1997): 386–92.

8

A Sustainable Definition of "Art"

MARCIA MUELDER EATON

About a decade ago, I somewhat presumptuously decided to attempt to develop a definition of the term "work of art." The presumptuousness lay not merely in the fact that the field of the philosophy of art is strewn with failed attempts to define this crucial concept, but in the fact that many philosophers for whom I have the utmost respect have argued forcefully that such a definition cannot in principle be articulated.

Nonetheless I believed then, and I believe now, that philosophers' insistence that we cannot define key terms in a variety of areas has not diminished practical needs for at least working definitions outside of the academy. As David Hume insisted, one can be a skeptic, but only in one's closet can one preach and practice pure skepticism. As soon as one goes out into the real world, one must act as if one knows certain things—and this includes knowing what certain words mean and what crucial concepts entail. There are political, educational, social, economic, and other decisions that require an understanding of how "art" is used, what it means, and what one implies when one uses it in one way rather than another. What activities should be supported, for example, by the National Endowment for the Arts? The shrinking budget of that institution is itself evidence of debate concerning the nature of art. What sorts of things should be presented in museums, in concert halls, in magazines, on TV? What should be taught in our schools' art classes? What monetary value could and should be placed on objects that go by or try to go by the name "art"? Related questions arise as one tries to deal effectively with environmental issues—many of which involve conflicts between aesthetic, economic, and ecological values. Aestheticians, I believe, have some responsibility to help answer these practical public questions. They have an equally strong responsibility, I believe, to help people deal with the confusion they often feel when they encounter puzzling objects and events in museums, concert

halls, or other venues where it is, supposedly, *art* that is being presented. I do not see how we as aestheticians can fulfill either responsibility without making some attempt to characterize what functions are being fulfilled when the term "work of art" is used; or, to put it more presumptuously—to attempt to define the term "work of art."

My own work in aesthetics has been greatly affected by events in the real world—or at least in the real art world. In 1971, I was teaching at the University of Copenhagen when an exhibit opened at Denmark's prestigious Louisiana Museum. The exhibit consisted of parts of a slaughtered horse displayed in jars. This "show" created, not surprisingly, a public uproar. I decided then that it is a mistake for aestheticians to remain outside of or at the margins of such controversies; so I set out to answer, at least for myself, whether, or to what extent, jars of horse parts deserve to be dubbed "works of art."

In this chapter I want to revisit the definition I suggested in the book that resulted, *Art and Nonart: Reflections on an Orange Crate and a Moose Call.* I have made some key revisions since that volume appeared that I want to explain. I have also worked to analyze further certain key terms in the original definition, and the definition becomes clearer in light of this additional work, I hope. On the whole, my definition has proved to be sustainable, I believe. I have also applied the definition in areas for which it was not originally intended, in particular to environmental issues, and I shall show how it can be useful there as well. Indeed I want to address in general the question of whether and how such a definition is helpful. Finally, I want to show how my answer to the question "What is art?" suggests an answer to the equally important (and difficult) question "What is *good* art?" It is in this context that we discover how matters of *sustainability* are central.

The definition of "work of art" that I suggested in my book *Art and Nonart: Reflections on an Orange Crate and a Moose Call* in 1983 was this:

> x is a work of art if and only if (1) x is an artifact and (2) x is discussed in such a way that information concerning the history of production of x directs the viewer's attention to properties that are worthy of attention.[1]

The first condition, artifactuality, is essentially intended to capture the "work" part of the term: artworks are objects or events that result from some kind of intentional action that produces something or alters a medium in some way. Typically this action is complex—in the case of symphonies or frescoes, for instance. In the twentieth century, the action has often been minimal (digging a hole, or picking up a piece of driftwood, taking it home, and putting it over the fireplace). Indeed, it is this minimalism that is in large part responsible for creating the need to define "art" at all.

The second condition is much more complicated, and involves several other concepts that call for further explanation. I shall not repeat the discussion from my earlier book. Briefly my argument is this: If one surveys discussions of art—ranging from erudite art history to letters to daily newspaper editors bemoaning the state of painting—one fails to find any special vocabulary or topic that provides necessary and sufficient conditions for something's being an artwork. There is talk about formal properties (colors, rhythms, stylistic devices, etc.), subject matter, an author's biography, a work's social and historical context or purpose, audience response, and so on. But none of these is always present in art talk, nor must any of them always be present in order for us to know that it is art and not something else that is under discussion. Thus a definition of "work of art" is not forthcoming when one looks for it in WHAT is said about art. If, however, one considers WHY the things that are said about art are said, clues about the nature of art do begin to appear. When one describes a work's balance or content or genesis or consequences—when one provides information that I refer to with the umbrella term "history of production"—one is always pointing to the work, and, in particular, to properties of the object or event that are thought worthy of pointing to. They are properties considered worthy of attention—worthy of perception and reflection. Thus I characterized "artworks" as those artifacts that are discussed in ways that direct attention to these properties.

A word about the phrase "worthy of attention" is in order. Throughout the history of the philosophy of art, theorists have differed as to whether "art" is a normative or descriptive term or both. If one believes that *bad art* is impossible—that if something is a work of art at all it must be at least a little good—then one will insist that any adequate definition of "art" must account for its evaluative functions. It might even appear inconsistent for me to want to make room for purely descriptive uses of "work of art"; the phrase "worthy of attention" in my definition seems to necessitate that all artworks are *worthwhile*—a clearly normative notion. I have explained elsewhere how my definition is consistent with a purely descriptive use of "work of art."[2] Briefly it depends upon seeing that an object or event may have the sort of properties (shape, images, rhythms, plot, proportion, etc.) considered worthy of attention in a culture without having them "well"—without possessing them in such a way that the properties are salient or pleasing. The coloring may be dull, the plot muddled, or the rhythm boring. Other properties may overwhelm these completely. However, although I believe that "art" can be used purely descriptively (simply to pick out a member of a class without implying anything about its value), I also think that an adequate definition will shed light on the honorific uses

of the term. At the very least, it is hard to see how a culture would come to consider properties worthy of attention if there were no objects or events that presented them in satisfying or interesting ways.

I believe that I was on the right path in my original articulation of a definition of "art." However, as the definition was initially stated there were two serious weaknesses. One was an obvious mistake, the other a vagueness. My revisions of the definition have been directed at these weaknesses.

First, the mistake. A key term in the definition is "discuss." Something cannot be a work of art, according to the early version, unless people talk about it. This is fine in cultures where in fact much of the activity surrounding art does involve talk. But there are cultures—certain Native American cultures, for example—in which discussion is not a central part of the activity surrounding art. Indeed, as was pointed out to me soon after I had published the definition, in some cultures art is considered sacred, and, indeed, so sacred that it is a sacrilege to name or talk about it. Thus, unwittingly, I had made art impossible in all such cultures. In one sense this mistake was easily rectified. I could substitute "treated" for "discussed" in the wording of the definition. For in those cultures in which it is taboo to talk about artistic artifacts, there are nonetheless always ways in which those artifacts receive the special treatment necessary to distinguish art from nonart.

In another sense, the mistake was less easily rectified, and in dealing with this problem I have been forced to confront the vagueness problem. The mistake of including "discussed" came from a Western or Eurocentric bias. (This bias is also apparent in the many examples that I present in *Art and Nonart*.) Thinking about this bias intensified my awareness of a vagueness in the definition: What, precisely, are the properties to which special discussion or treatment directs attention? And given that artistic institutions and practices differ so much from one culture to another, who gets to decide what properties are worthy of attention? In one sense the answer is simple: within any culture what are drawn attention to are *aesthetic* properties. But, of course, in another sense what counts as an aesthetic property is exactly what needs to be explained in detail in order to remove the vagueness.

Cultures and subcultures differ tremendously in what they take to be properties worthy of attention. Aesthetic properties are a subclass of these. In spite of the differences in specific properties considered valuable, what all aesthetic properties have in common, I argue, is the fact that they are *intrinsic* to the objects or events. Aesthetic attention is directed to properties *in* things that are regarded as repaying the perception and reflection that characterize those responses that we identify as aesthetic responses. One pays attention to the color of a sunset, the harmonies of a song, the

rhythm of a poem, the shape of a statue, the plot of a movie, and so on. Not all instrinsic properties of any particular object or event are considered worthy of attention. The precise number of eighth notes in a symphony is not something most listeners pay attention to. The shape of words on a page is (usually) irrelevant when one reads a novel. (I will say more about what makes something relevant later.)

The observation that aesthetic properties differ from culture to culture but are nonetheless always some subset of something's intrinsic properties results in the following definition of "aesthetic property."

F is an aesthetic property of *O* if and only if *F* is an intrinsic feature of *O* and *F* is culturally identified as a property worthy of attention (i.e., of perception or reflection).

Being intrinsic, being "in" something, has usually been interpreted metaphysically. But I prefer to interpret it epistemologically. Since perception and reflection are at the center of aesthetic experience, what matters most is that someone be cognitively engaged with an object or event. One looks, listens, touches, tastes, smells something's properties and considers the nature of these properties and ways in which they are arranged and otherwise related. Just which set of properties one cares about is determined by one's culture or subculture. Wine connoisseurs pay close attention to intrinsic features of what they drink—features that may be completely overlooked by nonconnoisseurs. This is not because of the metaphysical nature of the wine; it is because of the cognitive set of the taster. In general, the aesthetic traditions of a culture determine what members of that culture look or listen for. Of course, the nature of the object is important, but just as important is the nature of the experiencer. Thus I define "intrinsic" as follows:

F is an intrinsic property of *O* if and only if direct inspection of *O* is a necessary condition for verifying the claim that *O* is *F*.

The wine example is again helpful. One must taste the liquid to know if it is tannic. It is the same with all aesthetic properties. One must perceive a work for oneself, and appropriate perception is all (and often everything) it takes to make the aesthetic judgment.[3]

The perceiving, however, is culturally bound. Again, the wine example is a good one. Not everyone would agree that wine tasting is an aesthetic activity. Thus not everyone would agree that being tannic is an aesthetic property. But among those cultures that regard wine as having intrinsic properties that repay serious perception and reflection and that identify tannin as relevant, there is no question. Again we can generalize. Artworks or other aesthetically valuable objects or events (e.g., sunsets or thunderstorms for many people) are valuable precisely because they have intrinsic properties

considered worthy of attention. But the valuing is cultural. The flow of lines in a female nude statue will not be thought (at least publicly) to repay attention in cultures where women are supposed to be covered from head to foot. The meaning of "harmonic" is quite different in Eastern and Western music. What is found humorous varies not only from culture to culture; it also varies from family to family within cultures. Cultural boundedness is at least a partial explanation of the fact that so many people believe that the most basic aesthetic property, beauty, is always in the eye of the beholder.

Since attending to intrinsic properties considered worthy of attention within a particular community or culture[4] is at the heart of aesthetic experience, whatever brings that attention about is aesthetically relevant.[5] That is, whatever one can say or do that causes someone (or oneself) to perceive or reflect upon traditionally valued intrinsic properties will "matter" aesthetically. Although there are standard ways of describing (or otherwise treating) art forms—for example, pointing to colors or tempos or proportions or plots or metaphors—a priori nothing can be said to be aesthetically irrelevant. One can create scenarios in which comments most likely to be non sequiturs will in fact get someone to notice an intrinsic property that might otherwise have been overlooked. "It was written in Cairo" or "My grandmother used to pick her berries there" or "Lincoln slept here" may qualify. All one needs to do is show that the remark directs attention at aesthetic properties. What makes something aesthetically relevant is not the content of the remark (or gesture), but rather the fact that one realizes that the response it initiates is directed at and caused by intrinsic properties of the object or event. If I am delighted (or repulsed) by an object's color, for instance, then it matters not whether you have gotten me to notice the color by saying, "Look at the color" or by saying, "Lincoln slept here."

Given these revisions and expansions, my original definition can be restated: x is a work of art if and only if

1. x is an artifact and
2. x is treated in aesthetically relevant ways; that is, x is treated in such a way that someone who is fluent in a culture is led to direct attention to intrinsic properties of x considered worthy of attention (perception and/or reflection) within that culture and
3. when someone has an aesthetic experience of x, he or she realizes that the cause of the experience is an intrinsic property of x considered worthy of attention within the culture.

Though ready to revise it if convinced in the future that I must again go "back to the drawing board," I am happy with the definition as it now stands. Challenges remain, however. Two theorists for whom I have the greatest respect, Arthur Danto and Ted Cohen, have questioned not this

definition per se but the project of defining as I have conceived it. Danto has proclaimed the "end of art"; so definitions of it might seem at most ephemeral. Cohen thinks that the enterprise of seeking definitions wastes time, for even if discovered, definitions do no real work, in his opinion. In both cases, one must be ready to answer the question "Why bother trying to define 'art'?"

It is a bit easier to deal with Danto, since he describes himself as "an essentialist" in art theory and hence is more sympathetic than Cohen toward attempts to capture the nature of art. In his recent book *After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History,* Danto argues not really that art has ended, but that developments in art in the latter half of the twentieth century (particularly in the visual arts—the art form in which he is most interested) have destroyed the possibility of a certain kind of art history. In the West from the fifteenth to the twentieth century, art history consisted in providing causal, chronological narratives. One period was construed as following and as being, to a great extent, explained by the period(s) preceding it. Now we have reached a point in our culture when, as Danto puts it, "There are no more periods in some master narrative of art. . . ."[6]

People continue to do and make things that we and they call "art." Thus the word continues to have a meaning, both an intension and an extension. The meaning, according to Danto, is determined not by manifest properties of objects or events (the sort of thing I include under the term "intrinsic properties"), but by theories developed within the artworld—the loose collection of practices and institutions surrounding art. "Art," then, is a theory-bound notion, and as long as making or doing falls under or is compatible with a theory, "anything goes."[7] From holes in the ground to standing still, anything can be art, and there is no narrative, Danto claims, that can causally connect them any longer.

Still, Danto insists that we can define "art." As diverse as theories are and can be, "To be a work of art is to be (i) about something and (ii) to embody its meaning."[8] Where he speaks of "embodying meaning," I speak of properties considered worthy of attention located *in* an object or event. I am also inclined to agree that works of art are *about* something, at least if this is construed broadly—if, for instance, what a work is about might be as simple as instantiating properties a culture enjoys perceiving or reflecting upon.

There is much in Danto's position with which I agree. However, the theory-boundedness of art is, I believe, specific to certain technologically advanced secular and materialist cultures. It is not true in all end-of-the-twentieth-century societies. Perceiving and reflecting upon ways in which theories make possible almost anything is something that rewards the attention of only certain cultures. My own definition allows for such satisfaction within specific cultures, but it makes room for other cultures' ruling it

out. More to the point of this chapter, the "end" that Danto attributes to art precludes neither his nor my attempting to define it.

Ted Cohen's objection is very different. He has argued that the question of whether or not something is a work of art does not really matter. I think it does; for only when one knows that one is dealing with art and not something else will the right sort of attention (second condition in my definition) grounded in the right sort of realization of its source (third condition) be likely to manifest itself. But before I explain this more fully, it is helpful to see why Cohen is skeptical that distinguishing art from nonart can help us much.

Cohen believes that determining whether something is really, truly a work of art, even if possible, will not do any really, truly important work. "If you want a thing to make no claim on you and your sensibilities, or no further claim, you can either admit that it's art and judge it either poor or at least without interest for you, or you can deny that it is art at all. What is the difference," he asks.[9] What really matters is whether or not one undertakes "a certain kind of relationship," whether, that is, "You take a responsibility for apprehending it with seriousness, and it is responsible to you for making this engagement significant."[10] Just as we can choose whether or not to form relationships with other persons, so we can choose whether or not to form relationships with objects or events, Cohen asserts. This is what happens when we choose to treat and respond to certain things as jokes or sports, and trying to capture these relationships with definitions is not nearly so important as understanding the relationships themselves; in fact it is probably futile to try to find a *definition* that captures the importance. What I think Cohen has in mind is something like this. One might try to define, say, "mother"; but so doing will in no way ensure that one understands that relationship, let alone ensure that someone will learn how to be a good mother or child. The "important work," as Cohen puts it, remains untouched by anything that can be stated in twenty-five words or less.

The irrelevance of determining whether something is "art" does not imply, Cohen insists, that individuals make the decision to enter into the art relationship all by themselves. There is a kind of community of appreciators, a group of people who share a sense of what the relation entails. Just as what constitutes being a proper or good mother is based in communal traditions, so being good or even proper art depends upon the shared understanding of a culture (or subculture). Cohen unabashedly, even courageously, refuses to allow all comers. For example, Duchamp's urinal and certain "works" by John Cage are such that it is impossible for Cohen to have the proper relation with them, he reports. Even if Duchamp and Cage insist that their creations are "art," Cohen does not feel compelled to agree, "because I can't see what to do with them if they are."[11]

Clearly in defining "work of art" I, like Cohen, stress the relationship between objects, individuals, and individuals-in-communities. Where I disagree with Cohen is in the importance of the very act of naming something "art." Cohen thinks that like roses, art by any name will either smell sweet or otherwise. I believe that there is a crucial role for naming.

On a very warm and humid August day, my family prepared to visit my paternal grandmother. Watching my father don a coat and tie, my brother asked, "Dad, why are you putting on those hot clothes?" "It is my mother we are going to visit," he replied. Obviously it was the relationship that he was honoring; but naming the relationship helped others to understand the particular practice in which my father engaged. So it is with art. Naming something a "work of art" helps to point out what is expected of one when he or she is in or attempts to be in the right sort of relation. Cohen recognizes that community expectations are at work. He writes, "My thesis is this: To decide (or discover) that something is art is to understand that this thing is an object for a community of auditors, and that you belong to this community."[12] Artworks bind us together. I would go further and say that we have an obligation to seek such bonding. Or at least we have an obligation to respect the ties that bind members of other communities together. This will require that we know what other communities identify as "art." Cohen may not care whether those things he relates to as art are the same as those things which others relate to as art, and conversely. But Cohen is, and knows he is, already a fully fledged member of a community of appreciators. He knows what is asked of him when he enters into the art relation. Not all are so lucky. Children often do not know what is expected of them; naming helps. "Treat her as you would (should) treat a mother" or "Treat this as you would (should) a symphony." Cohen can refuse to treat Cage's work as a work of music only because he already knows so well what "music" usually refers to. It doesn't matter to him whether we call something "art" precisely because he already understands the art relation. But to those who are curious as to whether they are being asked to enter into a special sort of relation, "It's a work of art" may be very helpful indeed. It will indicate that one must attend to intrinsic properties of an artifact considered worthy of appreciation within a particular culture.

Put and interpreted simplistically, the "What is art?" question can be dismissed, as it is by Cohen, as not mattering—as a question the answering of which does no important work. But put and interpreted as "How am I required, or at least requested, to treat a particular object or event?" it can generate more intelligent debates about the practical, political, social, economic, or educational questions I gave examples of above, and can help people who are confused (and often feel demeaned) by objects and events presented to them as "art."

I am myself often one of "the confused." I once attended a concert of contemporary music by the Chicago Symphony on the campus of the University of Chicago. During the intermission, several of the musicians mingled with members of the audience (probably as part of an educational exercise). I asked a violinist whether there would be anything beautiful in the second half. He merely laughed (at me, I supposed) and said something to this effect: "This is contemporary music—don't expect beauty. The most you get is interesting." I was not helped. How might my own definition help in such specific cases? I offer another bit of autobiography as an example.

As an aesthetician operating—as many of us do—at the fringe of the contemporary art scene, I was, in the 1980s, vaguely aware of the work of Jenny Holzer. Students of mine wore T-shirts displaying some of her "Truisms": "A Strong Sense of Duty Imprisons You," "Abuse of power comes as no surprise," and "Murder has its sexual side." These mottoes, I knew, were some of four hundred statements that Holzer had pasted on New York City walls and fences next to posters and advertisements. But why, or how, were they considered art? They seemed no different to me from advertisements for a Hard Rock Cafe or a motto like "A woman without a man is like a fish without a bicycle" that also adorn the T-shirts that are omnipresent in American culture—clever perhaps, but certainly not in a class with Rembrandt's self-portraits or Picasso's *Guernica.* Holzer's Times Square board announcement, "Protect me from what I want," was, perhaps, more profound than the admonitions to "Smoke Camels" on the same board. But if the former was art, the cigarette advertisement, it seemed to me, should be too; and this I was not prepared to accept. When Holzer was asked to represent the United States at the Venice Biennale in 1990 and subsequently won that exhibition's Golden Lion Award for Best Pavilion, I simply shook my head with lots of other people.

But in December 1993, I went with some nonaesthetician friends to the Dallas Museum of Art where one of Holzer's rooms from *The Venice Installation* had been re-created. My friends' response was not atypical, I'm sure. "What's this doing here?" (Expletives deleted.) "Is this art?" Knowing my line of work, they turned to me for help. But this time, instead of just shaking my head, I actually asked myself if my own definition of "work of art" could help—could it, in Cohen's terms, do any real work?

Clearly we had an artifact. But were there intrinsic properties of this artifact that could, in our culture—that is, the culture of me and my friends—be considered worthy of perception and/or reflection? In our attempt to answer this question we were greatly aided by an informational brochure that the museum staff had provided.[13] Here are some of the traditionally grounded intrinsic properties to which our attention was called by the subculture composed by that staff—a subculture whose set of values

intersected sufficiently with my group's values to allow us to develop some interest in, and even derive some pleasure from, the installation:

Holzer works in the tradition of incorporating language fragments for both composition and content that has had prominence since the Cubists and Dadaists.

Holzer's medium is language, but language as it has been embodied in stone, electric light ink, and LED.

Holzer's huge rooms exploit features of the space (e.g., the high ceilings and marble floors of the Dallas Museum) that express the intimidation one often feels in the chambers of the powerful.

Holzer's work is "sublime" in the sense Edmund Burke theorized about, where fear provides the basis of delight.

The raw truthfulness of Holzer's truisms is matched by the raw medium: LED or neon, for example.

When one of my friends compared and contrasted Holzer's plaques to the colorfully embroidered "Bless This House" that hung in her grandmother's living room, it is fair to say, I think, that she was engaging in *art* criticism. Cigarette advertisements could, I suppose, generate such discussion; typically they do not—neither the works nor their makers do much in the way of inviting one to treat them as works of art.

My definition of "work of art" can, then, help people to enter into the relationship that Cohen rightly asserts characterizes our encounters with some artifacts. It can do more. Near the beginning of this chapter, I mentioned the fact that I have used my definition of "work of art" in contexts where I did not myself think of using it when I originally articulated it. Its wider applicability not only endorses its usefulness, and, I hope, its correctness; it further indicates how important having such a definition is.

Complex public policy decisions involving aesthetic issues are not required only with regard to what counts as art or who deserves support as artists. Aesthetic questions also play an increasingly important role in discussions about how to manage and preserve the environment. Legislation—at both the national and local level—often includes explicit mention of aesthetic value. The Environmental Policy Act of 1969, for instance, demands "due attention to aesthetic value" as part of environmental impact studies. Many cities have what can clearly be called "aesthetic ordinances"—stipulations about mowing grass or about the sort of landscaping one can have in one's own front yard.

The EPA condition—proof that one has attended to *aesthetic* concerns—has caused considerable controversy. Designers, landscape architects, foresters, etc. are often at odds about what this entails. How does one know that one has provided an *aesthetic* analysis? Suppose one knows that a par-

ticular spot is popular with tourists. Can one automatically infer that it is popular for *aesthetic* reasons? Obviously not. Certain things must go on—the tourist must engage in special kinds of actions, for instance—before one can know whether he or she has sought out the location because it has aesthetic value (is beautiful, sublime, etc.) and not because it is a good place to ski or to go mushrooming or just to be seen by others. That is not to say that skiing or mushrooming or seeking social status is incompatible with aesthetic experience. Human beings are capable of doing more than one thing at once—of skiing *and* admiring the scenery, for instance. But if we want to *know* whether a spot has aesthetic value for people, then we must *know* that they are acting and responding in aesthetic ways.

I believe that we know a landscape has aesthetic value to people because they act toward and respond to it in ways similar to ways they act toward and respond to works of art; namely, they attend to intrinsic properties of the landscape that have been identified within their culture as worthy of attention. There are many differences between works of art and nature; the former but not the latter are produced intentionally by a human creator, for one thing.[14] But most landscapes that we experience at this point in human history are not truly pristine, completely untouched by or affected by human hands. Obviously gardens, rural landscapes, or national parks are what they are as a result of a tremendous degree of human manipulation. Some properties are unintentional—the consequence of air pollution, for instance; but much is intentional. Indeed, many landscapes fit my definition of "art" very closely: they are artifacts whose intrinsic properties are attended to because they are considered worthy of perception and reflection within a particular culture and the attenders expect those properties to cause aesthetic pleasure.

How do we know when tourists visit a spot for aesthetic reasons? Precisely when we know that they expect to be rewarded by attending to the spot's intrinsic properties. These expectations are, of course, culturally shaped. And, again, they can (usually probably do) coexist with other expectations—the hope of being rewarded with exciting ski slopes, an abundance of rare and edible mushrooms, interesting history, increased social status. What is essential is that aesthetic impact studies will be valid only if one can show that people do in fact attend to culturally preferred intrinsic properties, and respond favorably or unfavorably to them. One must be able to show that people respond to and value landscapes not exactly as they respond to and value works of art, but nonetheless in a way similar enough to the "ways of art" that it counts as aesthetic at least in part. So, again Cohen to the contrary, being able to answer the question "What is art?" does have important consequences.

Cohen does offer an important insight when he insists that treating some-

thing as art involves putting oneself into a certain kind of relationship with an object or event. I have said that this relation consists of attending to intrinsic properties. More needs to be said about this, however. Being in a relationship is an active pursuit. The artifact acts on me—causes me to have certain kinds of perceptual and reflective experiences. These experiences in turn act upon the artifact—certain features of it are brought into focus, details are selected for further attention. Aesthetic experience should not be thought of as simply perceiving properties that are available; for perceiving and, especially, reflection are much more complex. The particular nature of perceiving and reflecting will, of course, depend upon the cultural traditions that one brings with one. Like everyone else, I speak from my own cultural background, in my own case a background that is primarily Eurocentric. However, the bits and pieces I have learned about other cultures lead me to believe that much of what I say applies across cultures.

Perception and reflection typically are at the heart of what we ordinarily call *interpretation*. In fact, one way to think about what art is might be to call works of art "interpretation delivery devices." The (or at least one) relation that we establish with objects and events that we consider art almost always (indeed I am inclined to say always) is one in which the artifact calls for an interpretation, and we respond in ways that often lead to the artifact's generating further calls for interpretation. In Western art history in much of the twentieth century, the intrinsic properties considered worthy of perception have tended to be formal properties—balance, shape, proportion, structure, or rhythm. But *reflection* has never really strayed far from the ideas works present. Manipulating and relating thoughts are as important as arranging shapes, colors, tones, or metaphors. A variety of questions are posed: "What is this about?" "What does this express?" "What is the artist trying to do here?" "What's going on here?" "What's the point?" "Why is this here, rather than there?" "Why is this here at all?" The best works of art "grab" us—they make answering these and other questions compelling. "Is the ship coming toward the raft or moving away?" "Is this section grieving or heroic?" "If the ghosts are figments of her imagination, how can others identify them when she describes them?" "If there's no music, can this really be a dance?" We interpret, we examine intrinsic properties again, we reflect, we reinterpret, we go back for another look or listen, we think some more (about love or life or evil or the nature of the relationship between music and dance), we revise our interpretation, we consider what others have to say about the work, we reinterpret, and so on and so on.

In my own experience, I have often benefited by being told that something is *art;* it alerts me to stop and ask whether I want to enter the relationship—whether I want to give the artifact a chance to deliver the plea-

sures of interpretation. Even when I do not like something, or even when I have been repelled by it, when someone else tells me it is art, I have found that making myself stop, perceive, and reflect pays off. Just asking myself, "Why do I dislike this?" or "Why does this turn me off so much?" is a way of making interpretation delivery more probable. It helps in dealing with things that I don't understand, in my own or from another culture.

If something does not call for an interpretation, I am inclined to think that it is not art. I am sure there are those who will find this view much too cerebral or cognitive. "What about the role of emotion?" they will ask. As someone who regularly enjoys crying at movies and considers the disposition to evoke such response an intrinsic property worthy of attention (an attitude shared by many in my culture!), I do not, in emphasizing the role of interpretation, intend to negate thereby the contribution of emotion to aesthetic experiences. I pick out the role of interpretation because I believe it is so crucial to our *maintaining* and/or *sustaining* the relationship with artifacts that is central to *artistic* experiences.

We have seen that Cohen finds no real use for the question "Is it art?" I, on the contrary, believe that an affirmative answer to the question is an invitation—an invitation to pay attention to intrinsic properties, to advance understanding, to create the foundation for subsequent cognitive and emotional responses. In short, an affirmative (or negative) answer provides the necessary context for knowing how to deal with an object or event, both in one's own culture and as one strives for access to what other cultures have to offer.[15] If an *answer* helps, so must asking the *question*.

Art repays attention; good art repays sustained attention. Interpretation and reinterpretation are at the heart of the sustained attention necessary if one is to remain in a long-term relationship with an artifact (and with other human beings, but that is another topic). I suppose it is possible that one might return again and again to an artwork just for the emotional charge it provides. But if this occurs, I believe it is rare. What typically happens is that one treats an artwork as one treats a friend—as something that bears repeated attention because it repays the attention anew, but also in different ways as the relationship deepens.

A useful metaphor comes from ecological designers who make use of the concept of "one-way flow." John Tillman Lyle writes, "Where nature evolved to a level of infinite diversity, humans have designed readily manageable uniformity and . . . have replaced nature's endless cycling and recycling of materials, processes at the core of the earth's operating system, with an encompassing system of one-way flows, moving the materials that support life in vast quantities from source through consumption to sink."[16] One example of this is nonrecyclable plastic packaging. The plas-

tic covers are removed, discarded, and thrown into a dump where, never used again, they only take up valuable space. Thus energy flows in one way only and ends up in a "sink." Sustainable energy use allows for systemic flow-through, or, put another way, flow-back-and-forth. The use of oxygen by animals who then discard carbon dioxide used by plants which discard oxygen used by animals that discard carbon dioxide (and so on and so on and so on) is an example of flow-through.

Art has sometimes been thought of as a one-way flow system, in the sense that objects and events are seen as providing pleasure for individuals who use them up and then move on. Even the taking up of valuable space finds an analogy in the art world, as museum storage facilities are crammed, and as sounds and sights overload human perceptual and conceptual systems. Certainly there are plenty of artworks that are easily consumed, and that one is willing to throw out rather quickly. All of us have had the experience of hearing songs that initially delight, but that then come to be almost painfully boring upon repetition. Much of what bombards us every day is the aesthetic equivalent of plastic-wrapped fast food.

Sustainable art is a flow-through system, and good art is sustainable art. A work is experienced, the experiencer draws something from it, but then in a very real sense puts something back into the work. Repetition does not result in boredom, for as the experiencer changes, the work changes. Other experiencers' experiences, when one learns about them, also have an input into the system. Instead of taking pleasure in an object and then moving on to the next, one's satisfaction is, as it were, put back into the system. The system is the whole context in which the artwork exists—a community of creators and experiencers who act, react, and interact with the artwork and other members of the community. Activities (such as those that constitute a good art education) that draw attention that is repaid create sustainable relationships as well as repeated pleasures.

Art understood in terms of sustainability goes beyond the sustaining of individual attention, however. I have borrowed the concept of sustainability from other disciplines—particularly from moral philosophy and ecology. In ethics, considerations of duty and/or consequences are increasingly making way for considerations of the factors that contribute to maintainance (i.e., sustainability) of personal relationships—of such things as the legitimacy of showing partiality to family or friends in order to keep the relationships alive, and of the dictates of mercy as well as the dictates of justice. The United Nations defines "sustainability" as follows: "A sustainable condition for this planet is one in which there is stability for both social and physical systems, achieved through meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet

their own needs."[17] A theory of sustainable art has in common with ethics and ecology a realization that at least three interrelated conditions must be fulfilled:

1. What we care about (personal relationships, ecosystems, artworks) must exist and continue to exist.
2. Practices, actions, or institutions must exist that generate and regenerate proper attention to what we care about.
3. Practices, actions, or institutions must not lead to the destruction of what we care about.

Communal practices that invite interpretation help to guarantee that interpretation will not wane, and that aesthetic attention will be sustained. It is *members* of a community, of course, who attend. But they attend to what a *community* values, and this in turn contributes to the sustainability of the community or culture.

A full understanding of the nature of art entails, I believe, recognizing its role in the sustaining of communities or cultures. Ellen Dissanayake has argued that art developed as human beings evolved, and that it played a key role in that evolution. Art both as play and as an element of ritual contributed to the social cohesion necessary for human survival.[18] Whether this is true or not, it is intriguing. Just as intriguing is the question of whether as humans enter the twenty-first century art is still required if communities, and hence individuals, are to survive. According to my definition, art does not exist outside of communities, because the intrinsic properties to which attention is required to be paid, according to my theory, are communally identified. There can be no private art for the same reasons that there can be no private languages; art's very existence depends upon publicly shared conventions, rules, practices, and references. But is the opposite true: can there be no communities without art?

One can only speculate here. Certainly I am aware of no communities without art, but whether or to what extent their existence *depends* upon their art is another, perhaps unanswerable, question. One might turn to history to see if the cultures that survived the longest were the ones with the most or the best art. Or if the shortest-lived had the least and the worst. Would Nazi Germany have lasted longer if its art-educational practices had been less rigid, or if artists and musicians had greater freedom? A former governor of Minnesota asserted that it is sports that hold communities together. Have sports replaced the arts as the social glue in the United States? I will not even pretend to be able to answer such questions. I, at least, can only guess or hope what the answers are. Surely art is one of the things that cultures seek to preserve (along with language, food, dress, etc.) as they try to preserve their identity. What is it about art that makes this so?

Again Cohen's notion of entering into certain kinds of relationships with artworks is suggestive. Art objects enable, even require, one to enter into a relationship with their makers and with other audience members. Surely the survival of communities depends upon persons' being related to one another. The difference between being a resident and merely an inhabitant lies in the way that one relates to others in the same area. Art functions to establish and maintain relationships: through the presentation, instilling, and repetition of important ideas and values, by providing shared avenues of expression of emotion and thought, by creating and perpetuating images, metaphors, myths, and prototypes that are essential for communication.

The social construction of communities involves moral mortar of the sort often provided by great works of art.[19] A colleague of mine, Sandra Peterson, uses George Eliot's *Middlemarch* as a text in her introductory ethics course. As students read the novel along with classics in moral philosophy, they are asked to offer moral advice to the main characters à la Aristotle, Mill, or Kant. I doubt that a Harlequin romance or *The Bridges of Madison County* or the latest rap or country-western hit would work as well as *Middlemarch*. Each generation is challenged to reinterpret Shakespeare because his works reward the perception and reflection of individual members of a community; sharing ideas, in turn, helps to bind the members together, and the community is to that extent sustained. Only time can tell whether artists such as Jenny Holzer or horse parts in jars will succeed at this.

The intrinsic properties that one values are *valued-in-a-community*. Artists, like other members of that community, have responsibilities to it, and to this extent fail or succeed to contribute to the community's sustainability. In this century in Eurocentric cultures, the "artworld" has too often been taken to be a narrow subculture to which only artists and patrons of a certain ilk—a largely economically successful ilk—belong. This seems to be changing as more and more artists and audiences take seriously the ways in which objects and events affect the community at large. Failure to give due regard to what will sustain either an individual's attention or the community itself is seen more and more as an aesthetic failure.

In the twentieth century in Europe two great powers, one in Germany, another in Russia, failed to sustain themselves. It is not, I believe, simply a coincidence that the art preferred by the authorities in these two nations has proved unsustainable. The art theorist and artist David Hickey has said that art "represents our desires."[20] If so, art will be sustainable just so long as those desires are sustainable. In complex technological societies, it is dubious that art alone can create sustainable desires. It does seem to make a contribution. The intrinsic properties singled out by a community as a

source of satisfaction will be at least one determinant of the community's will and ability to survive. If that satisfaction generates perceptive and reflective relationships with others, I am optimistic enough to believe that the community will be sustainable.

NOTES

1. Marcia Muelder Eaton, *Art and Nonart: Reflections on an Orange Crate and a Moose Call* (Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1983). The definition is motivated and discussed there in detail.

2. I discuss this in the final chapter of the book cited above.

3. In previous articles I have argued that direct inspection is a sufficient condition for verifying a claim that an object has a particular aesthetic property, but I have recently given this up. Although direct inspection is usually enough for verification when one knows the meaning of *F*, it is not always the case. If one knows what "tannic" means, all one has to do is drink the wine to see whether it is tannic or not (assuming one pays attention, has functioning taste buds, etc.). But there are aesthetic properties, e.g., "represents Aunt Mabel," that may require some information beyond that provided by direct inspection. Nonetheless, direct inspection is necessary. I discuss this in "Intention, Supervenience, and Aesthetic Realism," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 38 (1998): 279–93.

4. I will equivocate on the terms "community" or "culture." Both are widely used but neither has a very clear meaning. Communities are perhaps more like "subcultures," which have a culture of their own, and since this is what I generally have in mind, in my current writing I tend to use the term "community" in place of "culture."

5. In an endnote in a recent article, John Bender says, "For Eaton, 'aesthetic property' seems to refer to any feature awareness of which might be relevant to making aesthetic judgments of the work." This is exactly what I think. John Bender, "Realism, Supervenience, and Irresolvable Aesthetic Disputes," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 54 (1996): 380.

6. Arthur C. Danto, *After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 10.

7. This is further discussed in Arthur C. Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981).

8. Danto, *After the End of Art*, 194.

9. Ted Cohen, "The Very Idea of Art," *National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts Journal* 9 (1988): 7.

10. Ibid., 8.

11. Ibid., 13.

12. Ibid., 10.

13. I am grateful to Cathy Zick of the Mayer Library at the Dallas Museum of Art for providing me with materials from the exhibit.

14. For more on differences between art and nature and the appreciation thereof, see Allen Carlson, "Nature, Aesthetic Appreciation, and Knowledge," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 53 (1995): 393–400.

15. I have argued elsewhere that an excellent art education should issue such invitations and help students to come to accept them. This is why I support art curricula such as Discipline Based Art Education, which integrates criticism, history, and aesthetics with artistic production. For a discussion of this, see my "Content, Criticism, and Art Education: Putting Meaning into the Life of Sisyphus," *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 24 (1990): 97–110.

16. John Tillman Lyle, *Regenerative Design for Sustainable Development* (New York: John Wiley, 1994), 5.

17. This definition and discussion of it and other interpretations of ecological sustainability can be found in Richard Forman, "Ecologically Sustainable Landscapes," in *Changing Landscapes: An Ecological Perspective,* ed. Isaak S. Zonneveld and Richard T. Foreman (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1990), 262.

18. Ellen Dissanayake, *What Is Art For?* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988).

19. I discuss these notions in "The Social Construction of Aesthetic Response," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 35 (1995): 95–107, and "Aesthetics: The Mother of Ethics?" *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 55 (1997): 355–64.

20. Hickey made this remark in an address at the University of Minnesota in the fall of 1996.

9

Art: Life after Death?

GEORGE W. S. BAILEY

> Paradox though it may seem—and paradoxes are always dangerous things—it is nevertheless true that Life imitates Art far more than Art imitates Life.
>
> Oscar Wilde

> Stated bluntly, the task of theory in the age of the avant-garde has been, in fact, to provide the means for explaining how the myriad of modern subversions of traditional expectations about art—or at least some subset thereof—could count as art.
>
> Noël Carroll

I

If anyone is in doubt about the importance of the question "What is art?" he or she should reflect on the following: It is widely held that we now are in a postmodern, pluralist period in art history. This view of our current situation is not neutral to what art is. Just the opposite: it takes for granted a relatively narrow and highly problematic answer to "What is art?" Such an answer assumes even greater significance when used to justify the claim that in making the transition to postmodernism we have reached the end of art as a significant period in human history.[1] But we are not at the end of art. The historical situation we are in is one that requires an account of what art is in order to explain why art survives.

What is it about contemporary painting, for example, that keeps art alive?[2] It is not just that people continue to paint or that we continue to label what they paint "art." Art survives not simply because people keep painting, but because historically individuated sets of paintings (and a wide variety of other types of objects) continue to be the focus of a complex enfranchising normative social practice. The details of this social practice and the types of things upon which it is focused provide an answer to the question "What is art?" In turn, the answer to this question enables us to understand why art has lost none of its significance.

Explaining why we are not at the end of art requires understanding art status as a normative social phenomenon and relating this phenomenon to the notion that art has a proper function. If we assume that when we call vastly different things art we are attempting to locate them in the same category, a category that involves specific interests in and concerns with all of the things we call art, then whatever it is that keeps this category alive must in some way apply to the wide diversity of the kinds of things that are art. This "wide diversity" must include both work that conforms to the notion that art is an essentially progressive activity[3] and work that sustains the view that "in art there is no such thing as progress, there is only change."[4]

II

Stated in its most generic form, the answer provided here to the question "What distinguishes art from nonart?" is that art is a type (strictly, a metatype) and that sets of objects of various types (realist paintings by Harold Bruder or Dada appropriations such as *R. Mutt 1917,* by Duchamp, for example) are instances of this metatype. Specific types and their instances are art in virtue of being the focus of a network of normative attitudes and behaviors that, in turn, are grounded in certain kinds of beliefs. I refer here to a set of attitudes focused on the objects referred to by "art" and its cognates, but not collectively focused on things categorized as nonart. These attitudes constitute a normative base to which elements are added and removed over time without so altering the concept of art as to make it more reasonable to say that an altogether new concept has come to be associated with the word "art." The attitudes making up this normative base are focused upon the things that people who accept the distinction between art and nonart classify as art. Here "people" refers to people in general, not just to artists, art historians, art critics, or philosophers of art.

Less generically, something's being art consists in its being an instance of a (primarily autographic) type whose members are (or will be) the focus of a network of rights and responsibilities for the right reasons. Understanding what makes reasons right reasons involves applying an analog of Ruth Millikan's notion of proper function,[5] familiar intentional and/or functional analyses of art such as the view developed by Arthur Danto,[6] and, last, Noël Carroll's notion of historical narratives.[7] The position presented here is a variant of a social concept of art, and so is indebted to the pioneering work of George Dickie.[8]

Understanding the thesis that something's being art consists in its being the focus of a network of rights and responsibilities for the right reasons requires understanding which are the relevant kinds of rights and responsibilities, and understanding what is required for their cultural emergence

and survival as attitudes and behaviors. The question as to what is the actual content of the network of rights and responsibilities existing at a time primarily is a historical question. In attempting to describe the present state of this network, I reveal an additional source of content for social theories of art. This is so, whether or not all of the claims made here about specific rights and responsibilities accurately reflect current practice.

Something is art rather than nonart in part in virtue of having or deserving a social status denoted here by "art-status." Something has art-status when it is the focus of the appropriate network of rights and responsibilities. Some items constitutive of this network are more central at a time than others. Whether any given item is a member of the network is contingent. Being contingent, questions about past or current membership in the network are answered not by traditional conceptual analysis, but rather by observing practice, where observation is guided by the theoretical definition of art's proper function. The items that currently seem to play a central role in the network of rights and responsibilities that constitute art-status and so, in part, fix what it is for something to be art (now) fall into three general categories. These categories are grounded in obligations undertaken by people toward authors and works, and obligations undertaken by authors. One category involves rights and responsibilities accorded to something's author (creator, etc.). A second category focuses directly on the object itself, and a third involves everyone other than the object's creator.

In the first category we find the following: something's being art involves its author's having the right to credit for certain of its artistic virtues (if any) and responsibility for their absence. Where X is a work by S, categorizing X as art in part involves consenting to X's art-status. Consenting to X's art-status consists in part in consenting that S has a right to credit for X's artistic merits and responsibility for X's artistic shortcomings. In categorizing X as art, we participate in a normative social practice in virtue of which we assume a responsibility for granting S credit for X's artistic virtues. We can be (and sometimes are) rightly criticized if we intentionally give credit to someone other than S for X's artistic merits. When S's identity is in doubt, in recognition of our responsibility we take pains to identify S. This is one illustration of the kind of concern that Flint Schier, for example, indicates is internal to the notion of art when he writes:

> Applying "art" to X carries with it certain commitments. In particular, it seems to me internal to the notion of "art" that in applying it to something, we are offering a reason for a certain sort of interest in, and concern with, that thing. . . . If we pretend that we can apply "art" to an object without incurring these commitments, we are simply suffering from a kind of transcendental illusion.[9]

The commitments to which Schier refers are moral commitments. For example, we have a moral commitment to take pains not to attribute works to people who did not create them. In categorizing something as art, we morally commit ourselves not to attribute it to someone who did not create it. This is one aspect of the social practice that fixes what it is for something to have art-status. Moral commitments determined by this social practice thus are internal to the notion of art.

A second item in the first category (the rights of and our responsibilities toward something's author) is the author's right to control the dissemination of replicas of his or her work. This right is one basis for copyright law. A third item is the author's right to have his or her artistic activities understood in light of one or another description of his or her art-historical context. Art history is relevant not merely as a description of art's past, but because art-historical descriptions in part determine how we ought to relate (in a variety of ways) to the author of a specific body of work. An example of this is an author's right to credit for his or her work's influence on the character of other artifacts, where such influence exist. In categorizing something as art, we assume a responsibility for crediting its author for influencing other work when such influence is discovered.

Giving brief descriptions of some of the items that make up the second category of rights and responsibilities is accomplished here with descriptions that focus directly on works. This is simpler than explicating this aspect of art-status by describing some of the obligations people undertake toward something when they categorize it as art. However, the rights described here derive from such obligations. In the second category we find the following: something's being art involves its being granted a prima facie right to be taken as being more special than most human artifacts (in some unspecified way). This aspect of art-status is manifest when the State of New York passes a tort law entitling artists to sue for damages if someone who purchases their work alters its appearance or allows it to deteriorate. No other category of artifact enjoys this unusual form of protection.

Part of the right to be considered special and taken seriously is conditioned by a corresponding promise on the work's part to engage a special kind of historicity that looks both backward and forward. As art, an object both promises to be and is something that ought to be located historically, and is something that ought to be so understood. Also involved in this category is a right of the object or its traces (as in the case of performance art, for example) to be preserved not just for the immediate future but for the indefinite future (for its loss may well be a loss in an evaluative and not just a quantitative sense, if not to us, to others or to future generations). Further, these conditions entail the appropriateness of locating the object not

only in history but also with respect to theories in the philosophy of art. The point is not that artist's are obligated to take the philosophical dimensions of their work seriously (though perhaps some artists are obligated to do so), but rather that enfranchising something as art endorses the existence and importance of certain relations between the object and art theory.

The third category involves the rights and responsibilities of people other than the object's author. Schier describes one dimension of this third category of the social practice engaged when classifying something as art when he reflects that "treating a canvas as a work of art necessarily involves being prepared to take it seriously."[10] Also in this category are the responsibility to ensure the work's survival or the survival of its traces, the responsibility to make some effort to understand the object (which includes fixing its location in history and philosophy), the right to critique the object, the right to hold its creator responsible for certain of its values or for their absence, and so on. Again, what is listed here and under the two previously cited (and partly reciprocal) categories is not meant to be exhaustive. It is presented to provide insight into the kinds of rights and responsibilities that, when appropriately focused on an object, give it art-status, and so in part constitute what it is for the object to be art.

III

The kinds of rights and responsibilities just described are instantiated in a culture at a certain time in virtue of people implicitly consenting to the obligations that ground these rights and responsibilities in their interactions with one another and with things. Consent to or otherwise undertaking these obligations is analogous to but weaker than undertaking obligations by promising, for example. It is akin to the degree of obligation undertaken when one gives a present, an action that, for example, engenders a degree of obligation not to take the present back (this being part of the particular social practice that makes the existence of presents possible). In the case of art-status, the focus of this relevant consent is, for example, the objects speakers of English refer to with the word "art" and its cognates. Since consent that creates obligation is a species of action even when attributed to someone implicitly in virtue of the relation of his or her explicit (mental and behavioral) characteristics to a specific social practice, and since being the focus of consent gives something a special social status, the specific kind of consent described here gives meaning to the notion of the enfranchisement of objects as art (one of Danto's favored expressions). Consent for the right reasons enfranchises something as art. I will illustrate this with an example from each of the categories of rights and responsibilities described previously.

First, something's enfranchisement as art involves people's consenting that its author deserves credit for certain of its virtues (if any), and behaving accordingly (as, for example, when people acknowledge cases of plagiarism). Second, this enfranchisement involves people's consenting that the object deserves to be taken seriously (even if terrible by their standards), and behaving accordingly, as a gallery director does when she presents a show juror with a particular submission she is confident that the juror will agree is without redeeming qualities, rather than setting the submission aside so as not to waste the juror's time. Third, this enfranchisement involves our consenting that we ought to attempt to understand the object, and to behave accordingly, as people do when they refrain from forming evaluative beliefs about an object until they have learned something about its history. In each of these examples, the existence of the normative network of attitudes and behaviors that in part distinguishes art from nonart is a function of implicit consent of a sort possible within the context of the relevant social practice. Nothing is or was art in the current sense of this notion before it became a historical actuality for objects to be the focus of such consent. Here the expression "such consent" includes also networks of attitudes and behaviors existing in the past from which the examples presented here evolved. Tracing this history reveals that works from ancient times that are art were in their own times the focus of networks of rights and responsibilities (grounded in social consent) from which our current network evolved. (This is not to say that these objects were classified or otherwise understood as art in their own times.) The existence of the attitudes and behaviors constitutive of this consent does not require that people be aware that what they are doing can be described as it is here; all that is required is that people think and act in the appropriate ways. The currently existing network of rights and responsibilities arising through implicit consent made possible by a social practice is part of the content of the social structure that Dickie and others attempted to describe when they concluded that something's being properly located in a social practice is part of what it is for it to be art.

IV

Being the focus of the social practice I describe here gives something art-status. In order for something to be art it must have art-status for the right reasons. Explaining what makes a reason a right reason requires introducing an analog of Ruth Millikan's notion of proper function. Millikan gives a recursive definition of "proper function" according to which *A* has *F* as its proper function only if either (1) *A* is a reproduction or copy of some prior item(s) with properties *K* that are reproduced in *A*, and the items

copied/reproduced have performed *F* because of properties *K*, and *A* exists because of this/these performances, or (2) *A* originated as the product of some prior device that, given its circumstances, had performance of *F* as a proper function and that, under these circumstances, normally causes *F* to be performed by means of producing an item like *A* (this is a derived proper function).[11] One item is a reproduction or copy of another in virtue of the two items sharing appropriate structural and etiological characteristics. Millikan's working example is a heart.

A heart's proper function is circulating blood because each heart is a reproduction or copy of an organ that existed before hearts existed and that possessed the properties necessary to circulating blood; these properties are reproduced in a heart; the organs existing prior to a heart that are reproduced or copied by a heart circulated blood because of these properties; and hearts exist now in part because these organs circulated blood. Millikan stresses the teleological import of this notion of proper function and states that both natural kinds and artifacts have proper functions. She notes that her "definition of proper function may also be read as a theoretical definition of 'purpose.'"[12]

The following is a hypothetical example of the proper function of an artifactual type rather than a natural kind such as the heart. Suppose that a buggy whip factory stayed in business after the rise of the automobile by selling its products as radio antennas. Suppose the devices that continue to be produced by the once-upon-a-time buggy whip factory are reproductions or copies of a buggy whip the factory used to make that possessed the properties necessary to receive radio waves, and suppose these properties are being reproduced in the devices. Suppose that some of the buggy whips copied by these devices have received radio waves because of these properties (the buggy whips of which it was first discovered that they had the properties necessary to receive radio waves, to the salvation of the economically failing buggy whip factory). Suppose the devices currently being produced by the factory are being produced because the ancestral buggy whips received radio waves. Under these conditions, Millikan's notion of proper function fits the devices currently being produced by the factory that are reproductions of the buggy whips it used to produce. The proper function of the devices being made by the factory is to receive radio waves, although this was not the proper function of the devices's ancestor, the buggy whip. This explains why it is appropriate to classify these devices as antennas rather than as buggy whips, and provides a basis for answering "When did the devices produced by the factory become antennas?"

When attempting to characterize art in the manner being developed here, we must remember that an artifactual type need not share its proper function with its artifactual ancestor. This is important because of the general

concern that social concepts of art cannot be correct because they entail that there could be no first work of art. The argument is that the coming into being of the social practice that must precede anything's being art can arise only in response to the presence of art in society. Utilizing Millikan's notion of proper function, we can account for the rise of the practices that make art's existence possible by reference to the properties art shared with its nonart ancestors. Arguably, these ancestral artifacts include, for example, some of the masks and other artifacts people created many centuries in the past solely for religious purposes, objects we have every reason to believe did not have art's proper function in the context in which they were originally created and used. An analogue of the use of the notion of proper function to understand the hypothetical relation of buggy whips to materially indiscernible antennas provides a basis for understanding the actual relation of some nonart religious and other artifacts to art.

The notion of proper function ascribed here to art is an analog of Millikan's notion. There are important respects in which the notion of proper function applied to art as a metatype for a category of artifacts of widely varying kinds differs from the notion as applied to biological kinds. For example, Millikan's requirement that something be a reproduction or copy identifies the set of items to which a specific proper function is attributed in terms of assumptions about the biological genesis and physical structure shared by members of the set. While these assumptions arguably may apply to premodern art, they do not strictly or narrowly apply to modern and postmodern art. What does apply is the identification of art's proper function in terms of the complex relational properties common to the variety of kinds of things that are art where said properties explain why the newly created objects of these various kinds survive as art. Examples of the complex properties being referred to will be provided shortly. (It is important to note here that not all of the members of a type have to fulfill the function ascribed to the metatype in order to be members of the metatype. Were this not so, bad art would not be a possibility.)

As understood here, an artifactual type has something, x, as its proper function when its having (doing/being) x explains its continued existence (its survival over time). Art's proper function is the function it has (if any) that in fact explains why art continues to survive. This suggests that art's proper function will turn out to be having positive aesthetic properties, or being expressive, or being a metaphor for the artist's statement, or even being properly located within some theory of art. Each of these alternatives presents interesting possibilities. A disjunctive thesis employing these alternatives and describing art's evolution from one such proper function to another is perhaps even more enticing.[13] However, while different works of art may be seen as having one or another of these functions, art has

not and does not survive because its instances have had or currently have these or other of the familiar functions that philosophers argue are necessary and/or sufficient conditions for something's being a work of art. On the other hand, the notion that art has had or does have such functions, and our ability to experience objects as performing such functions, play a crucial role in explicating art's primary function and in explaining what makes a reason a right reason for making one object but not others the focus of the social practice definitive of art-status (Warhol's *Brillo Boxes* but not real Brillo boxes, for example).

Art has survived the amazingly many changes it has undergone because people did and continue to infuse objects with art-status. People engage in this enfranchising consent because what they believe about art enables them to see objects as, for example, bearers of aesthetic properties[14] or expressions of emotion[15] or metaphors for an artist's statement.[16] When people endow something with art-status for the right reasons, such as, in part, believing generally that art is a metaphor for the artist's statement and seeing a specific object as such a metaphor, they enfranchise the object as a work of art. Art's proper function, then, broadly described, is to engender this enfranchising consent—consent for the right reasons. (Why not consent for the wrong reasons? Because in the long run this will not sustain art as a significant human activity.)

Saying, broadly, that art's proper function is to engender consent for the right reasons is not to say what is involved in making consent possible and actual in specific cases. In part, what is involved is the creation of historical narratives and related theories of art that make it possible for people to engage in the task of seeing some things but not other things as objects with the requisite historical identity, theoretical significance, and so on. Art's proper function is to make possible and actual the complex social practice that makes art's existence possible and actual. Thus, in a manner of speaking, art's proper function is to exist for its own sake. Considered in light of the assertion that art is at an end, the proper function of art is the survival of art for the sake of the survival of art. Were people in general to come to see individual works merely as objects whose proper function as art was the survival of art for the sake of the survival of art, this might not promote art's survival. Hence the significance of being able to see an individual work of art as an expression of the artist's feelings, or as a metaphor for the artist's statement, or as an aesthetic object, and so on. Art's proper function is to engender consent for the right reasons.

Saying that art's proper function is to engender consent for the right reasons also is not to say what distinguishes reasons as right reasons. Right reasons involve historical narratives. Whether art really survives Warhol's *Brillo Boxes* remains to be seen. But if it does, this will be because the his-

torical narratives that fix upon *Brillo Boxes* and other such objects that can be classified as "by Warhol" enable and condition our ability to see these objects as, for example, metaphors for Warhol's statements about consumerism. Narratives ground enfranchising consent by linking to specific works and bodies of work the functions they emphasize as consequences of the historical etiologies they describe, in much the manner described by Noël Carroll. Consequently, both people's beliefs about necessary or sufficient conditions (usually understood as artistically relevant functions or as an artist's intentions regarding such functions) and the narratives in which such beliefs are located are crucial components of what it is for something to be art (components of what actually distinguishes art from nonart).

V

Since I am borrowing part of what Carroll tells us about the importance of historical narrative to art (to identifying art, in his case), I must emphasize where the use to which I put his ideas differs significantly from his own use. Carroll aims to reveal the structure of art's historicity with the following: "x is an identifying narrative only if x is (1) an accurate and (2) time-ordered report of a sequence of events and states-of-affairs concerning (3) a unified subject (generally the production of a disputed work) which (4) has a beginning, a complication, and an end, where (5) the end is explained as the outcome of the beginning and the complication, where (6) the beginning involves the description of an initiating, acknowledged art-historical context, and where (7) the complication involves tracing the adoption of a series of actions and alternatives as appropriate means to an end on the part of the person who has arrived at an intelligible assessment of the art-historical context in such a way that she is resolved to change (or reenact) it in accordance with recognizable and live purposes of the practice."[17] Carroll's view is that in order for a historical narrative to identify, the narrative must be true. I disagree with Carroll on this point. I believe that strict adherence to truth is not crucial to the role played by historical narratives in something's being art. It might be that narratives would not function as they do were they not believed to be true, in some weak sense of "believed to be true," but this is not obvious. Narratives enable and condition our seeing objects and events as fulfilling specific functions and playing specific roles in specific historical contexts. It is not clear to what extent our seeing objects as such requires a firm commitment to the truth of the propositions that, strictly speaking, are logical implications of the views about the nature and history of art that make such "seeing as" possible. The artistry of deception and especially of self-deception is a very sophisticated dimension of human culture. Strictly speaking, narra-

tives that create what Jerry Fodor once described as virtual histories are just as effective as real histories in producing beliefs about art's function that in the context of such narratives enable an appropriate form of "seeing as" and so ground people's consenting to certain rights and responsibilities toward something whose arthood previously was an open question. Real or virtual, such narratives play a key role in keeping art alive.

Consider, for example, the question of the accuracy of Arthur Danto's historical narratives. Daniel Herwitz maintains that Danto's case studies of the avant-garde misrepresent art-historical events in several significant ways.[18] Suppose Herwitz is right. It nonetheless is true that what Danto has created in the way of historical narrative in defense of his theory of art actually has caused people to give art-status to objects they otherwise would not have noticed, or would have discounted as art. People did and do this in part because Danto's narrative enables their accepting as artistically relevant the functions Danto attributes to the object or objects in question. For example, Danto enables people to see an object that is indiscernible from the ordinary manufactured can opener it once was as a work of art whose "ominous blade-like extremity, embodying aggressiveness and masculinity, contrasts formally as well as symbolically with the frivolous diminishing helix, which swings freely (but upon a fixed enslaving axis!) and is pure, helpless femininity."[19] He enables people coherently to experience this work of art in this way while withholding these same attributions from ordinary indiscernible can openers. The perspective Danto thus provides reshapes how such people experience a multitude of objects, past, present, and future. When enfranchised by art-status, a host of objects of kinds such people previously were incapable of seeing as, for example, historically and theoretically situated metaphors addressing subtle philosophical issues are transfigured and can no more be seen as mere commonplace real things. This enfranchisement occurs in consequence of such people's internalization and expression in practice of Danto's theory of art, as presented by him in his extensive, carefully developed art-historical narratives. The question of whether Herwitz's criticisms of these narratives are literally correct has no direct bearing on the adequacy of the account of the nature of art and the explanation of art's survival (thus far) being presented here.

The phenomenon I am describing was not initiated by Danto, and does not usually begin with any philosopher of art. Viewed in the short term, it begins with the creation or appropriation of the featured object, an event that either elicits art-status through conforming to our current expectations or presents us with a decision as to whether or not to consent to something's art-status. This decision cannot coherently be made independently of someone's possessing a narrative that effectively locates the object's function (or intended function) within an evolving set of histori-

cal events. Danto has been influential in people's enfranchising objects as art by suggesting functions grounding this act in a historical narrative. In Danto's case it is natural that the philosophical dimension of the work infuses his understanding of both artistic function and art history. As Oscar Wilde once said, life imitates art, and art tells captivating lies.[20]

VI

Thus far, what is being maintained is that, in part, art's proper function is generating the narratives that in turn create a difference between just any reasons for which people might consent to something's art-status (its being economically profitable to do so, for example), and right reasons for such consent. A fair question at this point is why should anything more be involved than merely identifying something as art relative to a historical narrative? Why insist that being art involves being the focus of a network of normative attitudes and behaviors, much less ones engaged for the right reasons? The short answer to this question is that the purely historicist view is not sufficient to account for art's survival (which, as Tolstoy emphasized, is something accomplished at some expense, both monetary and social). A longer answer is based on an observation made by Carroll in objecting to Dickie's institutional theory of art.

Carroll notes that Dickie's theory does not provide sufficient content to the social structure it describes to rule out its application to nonart social practices. The same can be said of trying to characterize art merely in terms of an identifying narrative in which a major role is played by beliefs about specific artistic functions that are the "ends" or "live purposes of the practice," as in Carroll's attempt to capture the structure of his notion of historicity. Almost all (if not all) of the functions (ends, purposes) actually appealed to by artists, historians, and philosophers in their discussions of art are individually or collectively shared as the defining functions of some nonart kinds, many of which also are understood historically (kinds as different as philosophy and politics, for example). Since Carroll's express aim is to use identifying narratives only to identify art, my present concern raises no problems for him provided that identifying art really is conceptually independent in nontrivial ways from understanding what it is for something to be art. But if we wish to use identifying narratives to understand what it is for something to be art, as we do here, then we need more than identifying narratives. The addition required is what is described above—the notion of something's being the focus of a normative social practice that involves consenting to something's art-status for the right reasons.

VII

Right reasons, as this notion is used here, ground an act of consent that is focused upon something (the consent I claim it is art's proper function to ensure). As long as our understanding of art is limited to the dimensions of art's historicity, as Carroll theorizes, we do not understand what it is for something to be art as well as we might. We may know that something's being art involves people's beliefs about artistic functions informed through historical narratives. But we do not understand how these things pull together as right reasons that ground enfranchising normative consent. And so, typically, philosophers misidentify one or another of the relevant functions, such as being (intended to be) expressive or having aesthetic value, as a logically necessary (or sufficient) condition for something's being art. Or, if this seems unworkable, philosophers ignore such functions altogether and try for a social account of what distinguishes art from nonart that limits itself to appealing to ungrounded consent of some sort or, worse, that appeals to nonnormative social practices such as merely being presented as a candidate for appreciation. Neither of these alternatives does justice to the complexities of the past or present practices that make it possible for something to be art rather than just another artifact, and that make art's survival possible.

But what makes reasons right reasons? Which narrative-specific beliefs about functions count, and which do not? Ultimately, this is a question about which narratives ensure art's survival. If the view described herein is correct, then the question of most importance is which reasons are the right reasons for consent. Answering this question requires determining which historical narratives (real or virtual) suffice to provoke consent in such a way that art's longevity is enhanced rather than undermined. Working within this framework, someone like Nick Zangwill (a recent Beardsley convert who believes that the only genuine artistic value is aesthetic value)[21] will maintain that the only narratives that will ensure art's survival over the long run are narratives that give center stage to a Beardsleyean notion of aesthetic value.[22] In opposition, other philosophers will insist that if Beardsley-style aesthetic narratives were to gain exclusive dominance, they would be the end of art. These philosophers will maintain that art's survival requires a continually evolving series of beliefs about artistic functions, each located within its own compelling narrative and unified under the gray umbrella of a Hegelian metanarrative.

It is an empirical question whether either of these alternatives or some other or any other will continue into the future our current practice of focusing upon things we otherwise would neglect normative attitudes that, when held for the right reasons, enfranchise these objects as art. For the

immediate present and the very recent past we cannot yet apply our criterion for whether reasons are right reasons. We must wait and see whether our current narratives suffice to ensure art's survival. What is clear in the present is that we have not yet reached the end of art as a historically significant phenomenon.

NOTES

1. See especially Arthur C. Danto, *After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

2. For simplicity, often I will refer to paintings by way of example, recognizing that what is said of paintings applies to other art forms.

3. Arthur C. Danto, *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 85.

4. Harold Bruder, "Realism: High, Low, In, Out," presentation at East Carolina University School of Art, October 30, 1997.

5. Ruth Garrett Millikan, *Language, Thought, and Other Biological Categories* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1984).

6. See, for example, Arthur C. Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981).

7. Noël Carroll, "Identifying Art," in *Institutions of Art: Reconsiderations of George Dickie's Philosophy*, ed. Robert J. Yanal (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 27.

8. George Dickie, *The Art Circle: A Theory of Art* (New York: Haven, 1984). For further development of this approach, see also Stephen Davies, *Definitions of Art* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991); and Yanal, *Institutions of Art*.

9. Flint Schier, "Painting after Art: Comments on Wollheim," in *Art in Theory, 1900-1990*, ed. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 1116.

10. Ibid., 1114.

11. Ruth Garrett Millikan, "In Defense of Proper Functions," *Philosophy of Science* 56 (1989): 288-302.

12. Ibid., 291.

13. Such a notion differs significantly from Robert Stecker's thesis that "an item is an artwork at time *t* if and only if it is in one of the central art forms at *t* and is intended to fulfill a function art has at *t or* it is an artifact that achieves excellence in fulfilling such a function." For one thing, that something has a given proper function is independent of whether it was intended to have that proper function and is independent of whether it achieves excellence in fulfilling its proper function. See Robert Stecker, *Artworks: Definition, Meaning, Value* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 4.

14. See, for example, Monroe C. Beardsley, *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism*, 2d ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1981).

15. For a compelling critique of the continuing appeal of expression theories of

art, see Stephen Davies, "The Expression Theory Again," *Theoria* 52 (1986): 146–67.

16. See, for example, Danto, *Transfiguration of the Commonplace.*

17. Carroll, "Identifying Art," 27.

18. Daniel Herwitz, *Making Theory/Constructing Art: On the Authority of the Avant-Garde* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

19. Arthur C. Danto, "Artworks and Real Things," *Art and Philosophy: Readings in Aesthetics,* ed. W. E. Kennick (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979), 101.

20. Oscar Wilde, "Nature's Imitation of Art," in *A Modern Book of Aesthetics,* ed. Melvin Rader (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1979), 26.

21. Nick Zangwill, "Doughnuts and Dickie," *Ratio 7* (1984): 63–80.

22. Beardsley, *Aesthetics.*

10

Glaring Omissions in Traditional Theories of Art

PEG ZEGLIN BRAND

Within current philosophical aesthetics, various theories of "art" continue to be proposed in spite of mid-century misgivings and against the backdrop of early Greek origins rooted in the term *techne* (meaning "craft" and not "art"). When Wittgenstein questioned the very enterprise of defining as the purview and purpose of philosophy, he broke the historical chain—dating back to Plato and Aristotle—that sought to identify the essence of that uniquely human activity now collectively labeled "art." The common perception that philosophical aesthetics began at some undetermined point in time and progressed triumphantly and predictably toward some goal until its recent demise (Arthur Danto's "end" of art; Victor Burgin's "end" of art theory) is a myth.[1] It invariably portrayed Wittgenstein's influence on the field—evidenced in the writings of Morris Weitz and others—as an irreparable and cataclysmic break in the chain. The resistance of Weitz to "any attempt to state the defining properties of art" constituted a severing of stasis in the ongoing theorizing about art; a break in the narrative of "art"; a collapse of the long-standing institution. In no uncertain terms, Weitz argued that "theory—in the requisite classical sense—is *never* forthcoming in art."[2] If this pronouncement had been accepted as true, there would have been no post-Wittgensteinian proliferation of theories about art. But there has been, and analytic aesthetics has been quick to revise its picture of past philosophizing about art and Wittengenstein's role in it. The break in the chain was reinterpreted as a temporary aberration quickly repaired.

Now, at the end of the twentieth century, we find ourselves not only theorizing about art but also classifying those theories into categories. We live in an age of functional, procedural, historical, and intentional theories of art whereby the former define "art" in terms of the unique function it ful-

fills while the latter cast the creation of art in terms of its accordance with certain rules and procedures. Many theories are also labeled "contextual" since, unlike old-fashioned functional accounts, they utilize an analysis of the art-historical context of the work.

Why are there so many theories? And why particularly—in contrast to fields such as literary theory, feminist art criticism, and subdisciplines of philosophy that have generated influential feminist theories in ethics, epistemology, and philosophy of science—has no feminist theory of art gained prominence in philosophical aesthetics? Why, in light of nearly thirty years of feminist theorizing on art, do gender and race still fail to play a significant role even in recent contextual theories, poised as they are to lead us into the next millennium?

This chapter will investigate the role of feminist theorizing in relation to traditional aesthetics. Section 1 will explore women's art as it has evolved into a separate category of feminist expression and will ask the question "Is there a theory of feminist art?" Noting that feminist artworks have arisen within the context of a patriarchal artworld dominated for thousands of years by male artists, critics, theorists, and philosophers, the second section will look at the history of that context as it impacts philosophical theory by pinpointing the narrow range of paradigms used in defining "art." I will test the plausibility of Danto's vision of a posthistorical, pluralistic future in which "everything is possible": a future that unfortunately rests upon the same foundation as the past concept of "art."[3] The third section will ask, in contrast to the question posed in the first section, what constitutes a feminist theory of art and where might it lead in terms of the future of philosophical theorizing. I will consider Stephen Davies' suggestion that the future of theorizing about art lies in an extension of Dickie's institutional theory: one that relies upon the democratic structure of the institution of art.[4] I will review a sociological approach proposed by Janet Wolff as one way of answering some of the questions posed by Davies, and finally, I will suggest some guidelines for an unconventional feminist theory of art.[5]

IS THERE A THEORY OF FEMINIST ART?

There is art about women and there is feminist art. In addition, some art is created by male artists while some is created by women. Feminist art is nearly always produced by women; one is hard-pressed to think of work by a male artist that has come to be called "feminist" in common parlance. It is a mistake, of course, to think that just because a work of art is produced by a woman, it is necessarily feminist. It is anachronistic, though not totally inappropriate, to call a work "feminist" when it was created before the 1960s and 1970s American and British feminist political movements.

It is controversial to call a work "feminist" when its creator flatly denies it. (Consider the case of Georgia O'Keeffe.) Controversy, however, can fuel good marketing; much of the mystique and popularity of some current artists—Cindy Sherman, Kiki Smith, and Sue Williams—can be attributed to the deliberate use of ambiguity that allows viewers to interpret them as either feminist or not. For example, Arthur Danto has claimed that Cindy Sherman's early black and white film stills "serve as a fulcrum for raising the deepest questions of what it meant to be a woman in America in the late twentieth century."[6] Critic Jeff Perrone assesses her later works differently:

> Sherman poses herself in Playboy like centerfolds, . . . I think some people (men) like it so much because some critics and collectors (men) like a little blonde served up in juicy color. That her photographs are ostensibly about female representation in popular culture seems beside the point.[7]

Gender plays a role in art that is neither subliminal nor secondary to aesthetic concerns, affecting not only the interpretation but also the evaluation of Sherman's work. It plays a crucial role in theorizing about her art. What I hope to show is that this role has been largely ignored in philosophical theorizing about art in general, beginning, as it typically does, with Greek culture as the first and primary example of art.

Since Wittengenstein and Weitz, many theories of art have been proposed that include an art context as the necessary factor distinguishing ordinary objects from their indiscernible art counterparts. Authors of procedural definitions have posted conditions (or rules) that theorize a framework—an "artworld" or an institution of art—by which the distinction can be discerned. Those rules purport to capture the established practices (or conventions) of an ongoing art tradition that have been observed in a neutral, objective way. What is really captured, however, is the history of "art" in (only) the Western world, as perceived by certain people, as they have been privileged to see it and promote it to others. Only certain people have appropriated the authority needed to sanction (only) certain artifacts as art. Beginning with patriarchal Greco-Roman cultures, proceeding through the Renaissance, and evolving into the twentieth century, the world of art has narrowed to an artworld whose conventions have been established and perpetuated by a relatively elite group. The roles of artist, critic, philosopher, and historian have been populated by white males who have successfully controlled the institution of the artworld. What has come down to us is an art of exclusion.[8] Eighteenth-century philosophers set the parameters of aesthetics; nineteenth-century critics and historians opened museums and wrote the history of art. "Art" is broader than their combined efforts would indicate. (Unless, as Davies suggests, there can be more than one artworld.)[9] The glaring omissions in traditional theo-

ries of art are the accomplishments and perspectives of women, persons of color, and cultures that predate and overshadow a narrowly circumscribed European-American artworld context. In other words, when artists are named in traditional theories of art, women are usually omitted. Consider one glaring example: the role of women in the history of art.

The history of women artists is only beginning to be amply documented in essays, catalogues, and books, including some carefully gender-balanced art history texts. The pervasive practice of representing women in art is an indication of their important social role, but it is still unclear how far back the roles of women as creators extends. Looking back, we come across evidence of the persistence of goddess worship from the Paleolithic to the Neolithic periods (40,000–8,000 B.C.E.) in the form of "a series of conventionalized images" that spanned twenty thousand years.[10] Thirty thousand miniature sculptures of clay, marble, bone, copper, or gold that represent the female body have been excavated from a total of three thousand sites in southeastern Europe. One image made famous in art history texts is the small limestone figure originally called the "Venus of Willendorf" and subsequently renamed "Woman from Willendorf," which dates from c. 22,000–21,000 B.C.E.[11] These revolutionary findings, initiated by Marija Gimbutas, proved that the culture called Old Europe (pre-Indo-European culture of Europe from between 6500 and 3500 B.C.E.) was characterized by a dominance of women in a matrifocal and probably matrilineal society that was egalitarian, peaceful, and focused on the worship of a goddess who exclusively incarnated the creative principle as source and giver of all.[12] However, the proto-Indo-European culture that replaced it between 4500 and 2500 B.C.E. was patriarchal, hierarchical, and war-oriented.[13] It subsequently replaced the strong and powerful female deities with predominantly male ones. The long-standing tradition of depicting women in art constituted the earliest convention in artistic creativity, as cultural artifacts focused exclusively on women, their procreative powers, and their dominance within the culture.

In a similar manner, the first written text that survives is of Sumerian origin, dating from the third millennium B.C.E. It is a sacred narrative that tells the cycle of the goddess Inanna, a story focusing on a female protagonist that predates male Greek epic heroes by nearly two thousand years.[14] It is the product of a culture in which women held important legal rights such as owning property and engaging in business. Written in pictographic cuneiform, dozens of carved stone images have been discovered that illustrate the text. Inanna is the main character represented, usually with numerous worshipers in attendance. Cycladic art from the Aegean Islands (2500 B.C.E.) also predates ancient Greek art and consists of images of women. They are the most common form of religious art found in Aegean

graves, sacred hilltop sites, and palace shrines, and may have represented goddesses, priestesses, or female worshipers.

In these cases in which representations of women are clearly predominant, we cannot know who created them, but it is possible that women partook in the creative production in these eras. Even recent theories about the creation of Greek art created in a patriarchal culture maintain that women participated in the studios and workshops of various mediums including sculpture, painting, and pottery making.[15] Whether or not women participated in the actual creation of the thousands of artifacts predating Greek art, these objects show us that the origins of art are steeped in cultural practices that included women as subject matter. Gender now plays an important role in revisionist histories of art (like Stokstad's). They have not, however, been utilized as aesthetic paradigms. Aesthetics has been content to remain tied to the conception of a patriarchal artworld conceivably begun in ancient Greece that included only male artists.

The various roles women played in pre-Greek art were not an isolated occurrence in the history of art. Rather, there is a continuum of women who functioned in the role of artist. Because they ignored the medieval norm of anonymity, we know of women manuscript illuminators: Ende (c. 975), Claricia (who promoted herself in a self-portrait and signature of the bottom part of the letter Q on a page of a twelfth-century German psalter), and Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179), who was not only an abbess of significant repute but also a composer, author, and illustrator of spiritual visions experienced in her sixty years of religious life.

Sofonisba Anguissola was the first woman to gain recognition in the Renaissance, often exchanging her delicate drawings of intimate family settings with Michelangelo. Bologna was a city that boasted a number of women scholars as well as two dozen women painters, including the renowned Lavinia Fontana, who eventually become an official painter of the papal court and a favorite artist of the Habsburgs. As a daughter who apprenticed in her father's studio, Lavinia prefigured a number of artists such as the Baroque Italian painter Artemisia Gentileschi, also a painter of religious scenes. In Holland, Judith Leyster gained repute as a portrait painter. So did her successors Anna Maria Sibylla Merian, a painter of flowers, fruits, birds, and insects, and Rachel Ruysch, primarily a flower painter. The eighteenth century witnessed the achievements of a number of significant women. Elizabeth Godfrey was a renowned London silversmith. Angelica Kauffmann was a history painter who in 1768 became one of only two women among the founding members of the Royal British Academy of Painting and Sculpture. (She and Mary Moser were deliberately excluded from Johann Zoffany's famous painting, *Academicians of the Royal Academy* of 1771–72, represented instead as busts set on a wall

shelf.) Rosalba Carriera, honorary member of Rome's Academy of Saint Luke and member of the Royal British Academy, was known for introducing pastels as a portraiture medium to French artists of the Rococo era. Marie-Louise-Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun was probably the most famous woman artist of the era. As court painter to Marie-Antoinette she was forced to flee the country during the Revolution, but continued painting successfully in Russia and throughout Europe, completing eight hundred portraits in her long career. Her contemporary, Adelaide Labille-Guiard, joined her in being elected in 1783 to the Royal Academy. By then, Marie Thérèse Reboul and Anne Vallayer-Coster were already members.

The proliferation of women in the nineteenth century included sculptors Harriet Hosmer (of mixed race, she lived in France which offered a more receptive audience to her work), Anne Whitney, Edmonia Lewis, and Camille Claudel (model and mistress of Auguste Rodin), the photographer Julia Margaret Cameron, the painter Rosa Bonheur, and the more familiar Berthe Morisot and Mary Cassatt. The twentieth century brought an explosion in numbers and a variety of artistic styles. Some twentieth-century women artists include Paula Modersohn-Becker, Suzanne Valadon, Käthe Kollwitz, Natalya Goncharova, Louise Nevelson, Helen Frankenthaler, Elaine de Kooning (wife of the late Willem), Lee Krasner (wife of Jackson Pollock), Surrealists Dorothea Tanning and Leonora Carrington, Louise Bourgeois, Alice Neel, Florine Stettheimer, Georgia O'Keeffe, Isabel Bishop, Marisol, Hannah Höch, Frida Kahlo, Dorothea Lange, Diane Arbus, Eva Hesse, performance artists Ana Mendieta, Carolee Schneemann, Hannah Wilke, and contemporary artists Judy Chicago, Miriam Schapiro, Susan Rothenberg, Audrey Flack, Nancy Spero, Sherry Levine, Jenny Holzer, Barbara Kruger, Cindy Sherman, Rosemarie Troeckel, Kiki Smith, Sue Williams, Sue Coe, Gladys Nilsson, Adrian Piper, Faith Ringgold, Lorna Simpson, Carrie Mae Weems, and filmmakers Yvonne Rainer, Trinh T. Minh-ha, and Julie Dash.

These artists make up a continuum, a history: one we presume is integral to the canonical history of art (once presumed to be objectively established and promoted). As already noted, these women rarely, if ever, surface in philosophical discussions about the nature and theories of art. Philosophers unfamiliar with them often rationalize their omission by saying, "If women were any good, they would have been included in standard histories of art." It was not until the 1980s that women regained a foothold in the history of art, and have come to be included in greater numbers in basic texts ever since. Even so, many feminist theorists have come up with their own alternative theories to explain what women create and why they have been excluded from the canon and central sources of recognition and funding for so long.[16] In effect, they have developed their own feminist theories

of art. Allow me to explain a few examples of recent feminist scholarship documenting reasons why women have come to achieve only a small measure of recognition and success within art theorizing.

In 1971 Linda Nochlin prompted an entire realm of new scholarship based on an interest in gender by asking the question "Why have there been no great women artists?"[17] She initiated the exploration of accolades which consistently eluded women in the arts. She began investigations into the underpinnings of art-historical rankings and art-critical evaluations. Her work resulted in uncovering the social, economic, and political dimensions of life that precluded women's full participation in the arts through the centuries. She disclosed the conditions by which women were consistently nurtured to be less than creative, autonomous, and independent beings. For example, under the law, women were denied the rights of full citizenship: legal representation, the right to inherit, the right to vote. Often the rationale was based on well-entrenched but unchallenged philosophies by which the status of women in the sixteenth through the nineteenth centuries deviated little from Aristotle's categorization of them as deformed males. They were seen as less rational, less virtuous, and, in line with early and medieval Christian theology, antithetical to the higher pursuits of the mind and spirit.[18] They were the repository of bodily based passions and uncontrollable emotions. Eve was considered the personification of these evils; she was not only secondary to Adam (i.e., man in general) but also the source of his downfall. As less than fully rational, woman was less than fully human. With theories that advanced levels of human nature determined by sex, color, and class, women were consistently assigned an inferior status. It is no surprise that basic rights to education were denied and that when female artists, writers, and musicians appeared, they were considered anomalies and excluded by philosophers from the ranks of "great art."[19]

For these reasons, feminist scholars have considered it futile to assess the productivity of women in terms of male-defined criteria. They have been suspicious of the most basic concepts of art history and art criticism, such as "genius" and "masterpiece" (the latter doubly fraught with sexist and racist overtones), and have questioned the standard parameters of interpretation and judgments of value.[20] They have sought to implement other modes of inquiry in order to try to understand the lack of esteem which women's art has suffered. Theorists Griselda Pollock and Roszika Parker extended the analysis of women artists to issues of class, citing the sexist ideology of early art historians who purposely failed to include women in the official history of art as it came to be recorded.[21] They also unsuccessfully attempted to find a term equivalent to "old masters" as evidenced by their title, *Old Mistresses: Women, Art, and Ideology.*

Most important, feminists have come to designate a particular type of

art as "feminist art." The ensuing debate has been lively. Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard's critical collection of essays, *The Power of Feminist Art,* chronicles the first twenty-five years of feminist art, including a variety of approaches to "defining" feminist art.[22] For instance, artist Judy Chicago suggests,

> True feminist art embodies a value system based on the opportunity for empowerment for everyone, rather than the notion of striving for power over others, which is the patriarchal paradigm.[23]

Critic Lucy Lippard considers feminist art an ideology, a way of life.[24] But according to Linda Nochlin, "There is no such thing as feminist art in general." Mary Kelly concurs, "There is no such thing as feminist art, only art informed by different feminisms." In spite of theoretical suspicions, even young women artists admit the influence of feminism on their work. Ann Hamilton (born in 1956) writes: "You can't separate your life from feminism. How can you know what your life would be like without that kind of context?"[25] At the very least, a characterization of feminist art includes an artist's intention to portray a politically based ideology of gender representation and gender equality. Thus, feminist art is typically defined by work from the 1960s to the present. As stated earlier, it would be anachronistic and mistaken to call earlier works by women "feminist." Prehistoric, Greek, Renaissance, and other works may have been created by women, but they are not considered feminist.

Thus, there have been many feminist theories about women's art without there being one defining theory of feminist art. Nor will there be one forthcoming. It is a mistake to transpose philosophical goals of defining "art" to feminist investigations. As Rita Felski has argued, "feminist criticism does not need *an* (autonomous) aesthetic."[26] It is crucial to recognize that the lack of such a theory does not indicate a significant failure on the part of theorists. It is not that feminists writing about art seek a defining theory that universally, once and for all, defines "art" and sets the parameters for its interpretation and evaluation. Rather, the resistance to one overall theory comes from within feminism itself. As in feminist theorizing in ethics, epistemology, and the philosophy of science, no one theory dominates. Feminist scholarship seeks to avoid essentialism and to allow for a proliferation of views. In their recognition of pluralist critical approaches, feminists naturally fail to agree with each other. Philosophers, of course, disagree as well, but their agenda is radically different. They are still enmeshed in the traditional enterprise of finding the best, most inclusive, universal definition of "art." It is significant to note that the age of pluralism has only recently been acknowledged by Arthur Danto.[27] Feminist and other postmodern theorists have been actively engaged in establishing an age of

pluralism for decades. Feminist art has been explained in terms of context since it began in the 1960s. Any theory of feminist art that differentiates it from *non*feminist art necessarily takes the context of the artworld, its past history, and its continuing conventions and institutions into account. In fact, given its political nature (Lippard once called feminist art "propaganda"), one might say that there can be no theory of feminist art that is not contextual in nature. Given this predisposal of feminist theories toward contextuality, how do standard contextual philosophical theories fare?

PHILOSOPHICAL THEORIES AND DEFINITIONS OF ART

Several issues bear emphasizing when we look back at the history of writing about art in terms of its internal dynamic, complex interactions as well as its interconnections with philosophical aesthetics. At times, one seems to predate and determine the other, while at other times they work in tandem. Artistic and historical criteria for evaluating art did not arise in a vacuum, completely separate and outside philosophical interests. Likewise, the philosophy of art was not immune from overwhelming influences of certain types of art held in high regard. This was especially true during the time in which art history was being "written" in the nineteenth century, with the rise of museums and the demarcation of High Art from low. It is perhaps no coincidence that Hegel's historical theory of art was a product of this time. At no time in these theoretical developments—of museums, art history, philosophical aesthetics—were women artists or theorists allowed to play a real role. One would hope that such insularity was short-lived. But even in the twentieth century, especially with regard to the dominant philosophical theories of art, women's input has been negligible.

The entire history of art has been based on paradigms. It is the history of the "great masters," works of genius, and "masterpieces." The history is clearly traceable back to the Greeks, highlighted with the names of such sculptors as Polykleitos and Praxiteles. In spite of the Renaissance writer Vasari's citing several women in his renowned *Lives of the Artists,* male artists have dominated the established historicizing of art as a scholarly field and academic discipline. Pressure from feminist art historians has forced the canon to become more inclusive, bringing recognition to other artists as well: more examples by artists of color, new explanations of American Indian artifacts and culture, and entire reconceptualizations of the way art history had been previously cast. For instance, the classification of certain peoples as "primitive" has been rethought; the roots of African art have been traced back to the zenith of Egyptian civilization; the art of Asian and Pacific cultures has gained in stature; the collective label of "other" is no longer attached to any culture different from the predominant Western;

and a general dissection of the history-by-paradigm approach has become standard practice in light of charges of elitism, sexism, racism, and homophobia. The history of art has come under scrutiny as has its foundation of aesthetic criteria—criteria established by white males of an upper-class eighteenth-century European society who ushered in the birth of modern aesthetics.

Philosophers, who rarely argue for the artistic status of a work of art that has not already been deemed a paradigm by art critics or art historians, continue to rely upon antiquated versions of art history. Thus, philosophical theorizing is nearly three decades behind in updating its paradigms. Given this fact, it is no surprise to read volumes of writings in aesthetics and find no references to women artists. If one rereads Plato on imitation, beauty is the ideal, but one can only surmise as to whether women—who were allowed a role in the Republic in waging war and governance—would also be allowed to participate in the arts. In reviewing Aristotle on tragedy, we are reminded that it was inappropriate for a female character to be manly or clever due to her inferiority. In addition, "art" defined as imitation ironically excluded women from performing women's roles on stage! When eighteenth-century empiricists introduced gender into aesthetic discourse, nature and art became feminine (the beautiful) or masculine (the sublime).[28] Does it come as any surprise that the sublime was ranked above the beautiful? Woman's role was as passive exemplar of beauty: good only for being looked at. Some well-known theories of art were promulgated by several of the most notorious misogynists in the history of philosophy, namely, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. Hegel, in keeping with Aristotle, claimed that "womankind" is constituted through suppression. This does not mean that their theories of art were necessarily misogynistic, but it certainly insured that their base of artistic examples excluded women as artists on a par with men.

Given these philosophical convictions, women were denied active roles in the establishing of the philosophical foundations of aesthetics, denied recognition as artists in the production of art, and excluded from establishing the criteria for canonizing art-historical styles and personae.[29] Aesthetics was gendered masculine from the beginning. These are strong charges in light of philosophy's claims to pursue criteria for definition and evaluation that are purportedly universal and objective. What feminist scholars have tried to show (and I will continue to argue below) is that any theory purporting to be universal but based on biased criteria with a limited range of applicability is inherently flawed.

Aesthetic theorists placed significant emphasis on the notion of disinterestedness, setting the stage for the advent of aesthetic attitude theories and isolationist theories that precluded contextual data from being relevant

to the aesthetic experiencing of art. Information about the artists' origins and intentions was considered irrelevant, and the theories of Stolnitz and Beardsley, among others, sought to isolate art from its sociohistorical context at all costs.[30] Consistent with their predecessors, twentieth-century aestheticians appropriated their paradigms from the same art history as did previous philosophers. In order to meet the challenge of explaining Duchamp's *Fountain,* Warhol's *Brillo Box,* and other conceptual art—in conjunction with Wittgenstein's anti-essentialism—theories arose that took sociological (institutions of art) and art-historical contexts into consideration. Two main leaders in this move were Arthur Danto and George Dickie. Their writings contained the germ of theories subsequently proposed by Lucian Krukowski, Jerrold Levinson, Noël Carroll, and Marcia Eaton.

According to Stephen Davies' *Definitions of Art,* theories of art divide into three categories: functional, procedural, and historical/intentional. Even within contemporary theorizing about art, however, the range of paradigms he cites is grossly skewed to white male artists. The problem with these theories is not just that women have been left out of the written and conceptual histories of art, nor that they still fail to function within art history, art criticism, and aesthetics as paradigms of "art" or "good art." Rather it's that theorizing about art—as guided by this narrow range of paradigms—is incomplete and conceptually inadequate. It cannot encompass all art because the stipulated precedents from history and criticism preclude the broader spectrum of what counts as human expression and creativity. This explains continual challenges to existing theories: What about the case of driftwood? Salvador Dali's pile of rocks? Aboriginal art? Naive art? Graffiti art? Digital art?

Let us look at some of the language used to stipulate the narrow range of paradigms and the way such paradigms are established. In Dickie's two versions (and related writings) of the Institutional Theory, no woman artist is cited although the definitions appear relatively gender-neutral. In the first definition, a work of art is an artifact that has been bestowed upon it the status of art by someone qualified within the ongoing institution of art.[31] For Dickie, this means the continuum of practices—conventions—that constitute the ongoing practice, or institution, of art. Davies designates Dickie's theory as inadequate and "ahistorical" since it stipulates roles that members of the artworld hold without providing any particulars of those roles. In other words, Dickie fails

> to characterize the roles that generate the structure of that institution—their boundaries, their limitations, the circumstances under which they change, the conditions for their occupancy, and so on.[32]

Thus Dickie has failed to amplify the details of art history which function as the basis of his theory, thereby leaving open to speculation the specifics of who has occupied those roles in the past, who occupies them now, and who will come to occupy them in the future. (More on this in the third section.) That is, in spite of Dickie's oversimplified claim that anyone "could" be an artist within the artworld, some reflection on the sociohistorical restrictions on women such as those described by Parker, Pollock, and Nochlin (see section 1) would prompt us to question his generalization.

The revised version of the institutional theory, although clearer, still falls short for Davies, who seeks more information about the authority of persons in the artworld by which they may confer the status of arthood.[33] Feminists have asked the same type of question for years, though not in the same terminology. They, too, have challenged the authority of the philosophers of taste of the eighteenth century, the historians of art of the nineteenth century, the art critics and theorists of the twentieth century. It appears that philosophers have come rather late to the fundamental questions that challenge the variety of procedures by which definitions of "art" have come to be codified. Given this state of things, the procedural approach may be suspect in all its manifestations.

Let's take another example. In *After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History,* Arthur Danto discusses the "experts" who accorded the status of art to Warhol's *Brillo Box* and Duchamp's *Fountain:*

> The experts really were experts in the same way in which astronomers are experts on whether something is a star. They saw that these works had meanings which their indiscernible counterparts lacked, and they saw as well the way these works embodied those meanings.[34]

Who were these experts? The art critics, we presume, empowered by the artworld (on Danto's theory) and authorized by the institution of art (on Dickie's theory). Who deemed them expert? It is unclear, although the analogy to astronomy implies that these are persons educated and experienced in knowing about art, reminiscent of Hume's qualified person of taste.

The fact that artworks by women fail to be cited as paradigms and women critics fail to be considered "expert" explains why the paradigms remain less than fully representative of the artworld population. This is particularly interesting, given Danto's recent adjustment of his "admittedly somewhat reckless claim" concerning the death of art.[35] In prior writings, Danto claimed that art, in its linear progression (à la Hegel), had reached its end—or had at least reached the point at which it "had nearly turned into philosophy." He has subsequently reconsidered and now defines the present moment in art as "open" and at "the conjunction of essentialism and historicism."

As we seek to grasp the essence of art—or to speak less portentously, of an adequate philosophical definition of art—our task is immensely facilitated by the recognition that the extension of the term "work of art" is now altogether open, so that in effect we live in a time when everything is possible for artists.[36]

Still borrowing from Hegel, he claims that freedom defines our posthistorical period of art; it stipulates our "modalities of history":

The sense in which everything is possible is that in which there are no *a priori* constraints on what a work of visual art can look like, so that anything visible can be a visual work. This is part of what it really means to live at the end of art history.[37]

This should come as good news for women artists who worked outside the "pale of history" (i.e., raced pale/white) for so long and for feminist theorists who developed alternative theories of art that deviated from the canonical norm. If we are truly living at the end of art history, several possibilities lie before us.

One is to consider ourselves at a moment in time when we can say good riddance to the old exclusivity of art history and welcome to the new. But it's not clear what Danto foresees as the new history nor how it will come to be generated. He cites Wolfflin "with his keen sense of historical modalities—of possibility and impossibility" as his guide, but his examples reflect the narrowness of staunch conservative art historians like Kenneth Clark and Robert Hughes.[38] In Danto's vision of the future, the range of possibilities of art still extend no further than Grünewald, Dürer, Terborch, Bernini, Botticelli, Lorenzo di Credi, Caravaggio, Pinturicchio, Courbet, Giotto, Cervantes, Guercino, Feuerbach, Manet, Poussin, the Bolognese "masters," Praxiteles, Van Meegeren, Vermeer, Rubens, Rembrandt, the "postmodern masterpiece" of the American painter Russell Connor and the "masterpiece" of the "true heroes of the post-historical period," the "post-historical masters" Komar and Melamid.[39] It appears that art paradigms in a posthistorical period are no different in terms of gender from ones from a historical period. Danto may simply answer this charge by claiming that women artists implicitly form part of the canon of art, but his negligence in citing them *as paradigms* might lead us to view his response as ad hoc and inadequate. If women artists, critics, and theorists are part of the posthistorical age of pluralism, why are they not mentioned?

More pointedly, given that Connor's work consists of jointly parodying Rubens's *Rape of the Daughters of Leucippus* and Picasso's *Demoiselles d'Avignon*—in which the women being carried off by the two horsemen are imitations of Picasso's women (already an appropriation of African art)—how do we interpret Danto's judgment of this as a "masterpiece" much less as comic? Defining what is funny can be delicately gender- and race-specific.[40] It is questionable to some feminists whether any rape scene can

count as an artistic "masterpiece," much less whether a parodied rape scene can ever be considered "comic"—even if appropriation is fashionable and sometimes funny in the 1990s.

Consider several other historical definitions as well. Lucian Krukowski makes the link of contemporary art with its past and future absolutely explicit.[41] Similar to Danto's theory, his account stipulates that art status is dependent upon sharing aesthetic properties with "established artworks." In other words, what counts as art are those things that share properties with past and future art. If, however, as I have pointed out, what is considered (past) "art" is suspected, then any theory that necessarily links art to the past is similarly suspect. Of course, it could be the case that Krukowski's notion of past art would include quilts by American women, pottery by African natives, and aboriginal bark paintings, but he has not made this explicit, and his reliance upon "established artworks" limits him to the same old traditional canon of art history.

Noël Carroll's theory is necessarily tied to a narrowly defined past as well.[42] His stipulation that art is a cluster of cultural practices directs attention away from past artworks to past practices and the persons responsible for those practices. Like Dickie's institutional theory, Carroll's theory relies upon a model of historical evolution with an emphasis on "well-established" practices. It embeds current theorizing of the notion of "art" in practices structured within the artworld as we know it. This means that inherited biases and narrowness determine the same range of paradigms. Jerrold Levinson's historicist definition of art also relies upon artists' intentions that tie their creation to past art.[43] The artist's intention must be regarded in one of the ways in which past art has been regarded correctly. But the notion of being "regarded correctly" packs a considerable amount of precedent and bias, as in the other theories.

Even Marcia Eaton's theory is suspect. Her theory, which relies upon "talk about art" as both a necessary and sufficient condition in defining "art," stipulates that artifacts not talked about are only "potential" works of art; they do not count as art until they are talked or written about within "aesthetic traditions," that is, within the traditions of history, criticism, and theory.[44] Women's quilts are mentioned as an example of objects "that are finally being recognized as worthy of serious attention," but her theory would inevitably exclude many other works by women that have been so far ignored by those who routinely talk about art. The requirement of an *aesthetic* tradition precludes ordinary talk, for example, talk by women about their quilts, from elevating quilts to the status of art. The silence surrounding women's art leaves innumerable examples of "potential art" dependent on a male-dominated artworld. Thus Eaton's choice of authoritarian figures from the history of art criticism leaves her open to the same charge of narrowness.

Perhaps a simple remedy for the narrowness of philosophical aesthetics is simply to "add women and stir." But to do so is to misunderstand the role of gender in transforming the mainstream, the canon, and the tradition, and to misperceive the possibility of turning theories of feminist art into more complex feminist theories of art. Consider a quote from Arthur Danto regarding the political activities of the subversive artworld group known as the Guerilla Girls.

> The group has been exceedingly radical in its means and in its spirit. It is genuinely collaborative, to the point that the anonymity of its members is a fiercely held secret: appearing in gorilla masks is a metaphor for that. And the art of this superordinate entity is certainly a form of direct action: its members plaster the walls of Soho with brilliant, biting posters. But the message of the posters is that not enough women are represented in museums, in major shows, in important galleries. So it envisages artistic success in the traditional, let us say, using their concept, white male terms. Its means are radical and deconstructive, but its goals are altogether conservative.[45]

Commenting on the "somewhat paradoxical character of the Guerilla Girls," Danto exemplifies a typical misunderstanding of the feminist agenda. The Guerilla Girls have come to symbolize the embodiment of feminist political activity; as strategizers, they are united, determined, and skillful.[46] They are out in force, operating openly in the artworld: planting a banana on a public podium or posting an announcement decrying the oppressive gender politics at the Whitney. They are not only attempting to balance the institutional scales so that gender equity might be achieved in the artworld but they are also attempting to radically alter the artworld itself.

Danto seriously understates their case in terms of both intentionality and political achievement. In asking why they strive for artistic success in traditional, conservative, white male terms, Danto is really asking why they don't just create their own alternative artworld or why they aren't more feminist. The irony is that as women seek the attention, respect, and praise of art critics, often the foothold gained is diminished by what gets said about them. They succeed in securing critical attention while being simultaneously undermined. Their goals are dismissed as "altogether conservative," and their motivation is reduced to a desire to be accepted on "white male terms."

On the contrary, most feminists do not want to break into the artworld as it now exists: traditional, hierarchical, conservative, and founded on "white male terms." Their goals are to be included in museums as those museums start to welcome a variety of works in a true spirit of openness; they want major shows and important galleries to value their work for how it redefines or discards "masterpiece" and "genius." They seek to move be-

yond the pale of art history by creating the next critical era: one that values artworks *because* they diverge from the white, male viewpoint and traditional aesthetic norms of evaluation. (Not only when they acquiesce and uplift, as in the case of Sherman.) A truly new age would include women and artists of color using radical and deconstructive means toward the end of altering (perhaps abolishing) the artworld.[47] In philosophical terms, this would mean the influx of feminist theories of art into aesthetics.

What might such theories look like? One suggested direction, as mentioned earlier, is the institutional theory of art.[48] Davies distrusts Dickie's theory for its lack of clarification about the "artists" who have the authority to confer the status of arthood by virtue of their occupying a role within the artworld to which that authority attaches. He questions how a person comes to acquire such authority at a particular time and not others, and how the artworld "persists through time."

> Dickie needs to say something about the history of art not in order to explain why artworks are as they are now, but rather, to explain why the Artworld is as it is, and hence to explain why the process by which art status can be achieved and the restrictions on who might effectively use this process are as they are.[49]

A quick glance back at Danto reveals that "most if not all people" are able to make something into art. For Dickie to hold the same belief would not be inconsistent with the conditions of his theory. Davies introduces a new term to Dickie's theory, "democratic," intended to characterize the nature of the role of artist in history. According to Davies:

> Dickie should describe the structure of the Artworld, showing how different roles within the institution attract to themselves different amounts or kinds of authority. To that story he should add an account of the organic, historical nature of the institution in order to explain how it might come to have its present "democratic" structure.[50]

Although I recognize the cogency of Davies' (and others') critique of the vagueness of the institutional theory, I beg to differ with his account. The artworld has never been "democratic." This is true for Davies' examples of the fifteenth century when hobby painters could not be artists, as well as the twentieth century. For instance, I would wager that no woman could have produced *Fountain*. That is, even if some woman, for example, Meret Oppenheim or Hannah Höch, had dated and signed a man's urinal, it would never have merited the same attention or acclaim as Duchamp's. (Similarly for *L.H.O.O.Q.* and other masculine Duchampian gestures.) Although Davies dismisses the historian's and social anthropologist's approach, they might be exactly what is needed.

It should be noted at this point that traditional aesthetics has never been eager to undertake a sociological approach to art. Recall Marcia Eaton's

warning and dismissal of sociological accounts of art like that of marxist aesthetics:

> One of the problems with Marxism (and other sociologies of art) is that it assumes a connection between art and social features that has yet to be shown to exist. That is, it presupposes the existence of lawlike connections between social factors and artistic creation.[51]

Given the skepticism about the empirical verification of such connections, Eaton dismisses any such approach as "aesthetic sociology":

> Marxism identifies artworks with their contexts and hence does not allow us to see what is special about them. There is a sense in which Marxist aesthetics ceases to be aesthetics at all.[52]

But maintaining strictures about what counts as "aesthetics" is precisely what impedes progress in pursuing clarification of the social factors surrounding the creation and distribution of art. All contextual theories, including Eaton's, are based precisely on such connections; such connections constitute the foundation of all contextual theories of art. Eaton confirms this when she states that "outside the context of social and cultural practices and conventions, 'art' does not make sense."[53]

What is needed is something like a feminist account of the artworld that has looked seriously at the way the roles of the institution have been meted out to a particular subpopulation across the centuries. If women and persons of color have consistently been denied access to these roles, the artworld cannot call itself democratic. If they continue to be denied, the artworld will never be democratic. The authority by which the artworld proceeds remains institutionally intact. The hierarchy, the privileging of power, and the denial of access remain institutionalized (in the most negative sense of the term): frozen in place. There is no way out other than radical departure from the ongoing social practices. The radical restructuring advocated by the Guerilla Girls and other feminists is precisely what is needed.

For thirty years, feminists have been involved with the process of fleshing out what a variety of such theories might include. German, French, British, and American feminists have debated the integral parts of a variety of approaches to theorizing about art. As far back as the 1970s, Gisela Ecker proposed the following:

> Feminist aesthetic theory must insist that all investigations into art have to be *thoroughly genderised*. . . . A truly genderised perspective would mean that the sex—male or female—of both the artist and the critic is taken into account. This also implies their relation to gender-values in the institutions and within the theories they apply.[54]

Many other theorists have supported this view.

Given the suggestions of Stephen Davies, one promising approach is pro-

vided by Janet Wolff, who argues for a new aesthetic based in a sociological study of the arts: one that addresses not only issues of gender but also class and the influence of political or moral ideals on the ways "art" comes to be defined and artworks valued. In *The Social Production of Art,* she states,

> Understanding art as socially produced necessarily involves illuminating some of the ways in which various forms, genres, styles, etc. come to have value ascribed to them by certain groups in particular contexts.[55]

In other words, Wolff promotes an investigation into "the ways these categories and divisions are historically created and sustained": precisely what Davies called for in the hopes of elucidating philosophical contextual theories such as Dickie's. Wolff provides accounts of the social structure of the institutions of the artworld that indicate how the rise of art criticism, art markets, and the codification of the history of art have come to affect what subsequently assumed "neutral, objective" status within philosophical theory. She argues that artistic production has little to do with "genius" and is much more like other forms of production and human agency, especially in terms of the influence of economic factors. Rejecting a traditional sociological analysis of the concept of "genius," Wolff argues,

> It has *never* been true, and it is not true today, that the artist has worked in isolation from social and political constraints of a direct or indirect kind.[56]

Therefore, she debunks the philosophical notion of the Ur-artist and instead pursues the various strands that make up the social production of art, including the roles of artist, the patronage system, and the "mediators" ("gatekeepers").

In a more recent work, *Aesthetics and the Sociology of Art,* Wolff locates herself between opposing camps: one that denies sociology a role in the analysis of aesthetic value, and the opposite view of reductionists who collapse aesthetic value into social or political value. Although she fails to incorporate the contextual theories of Danto and Dickie into her discussion, she notes that philosophers have "abandoned the field of pure philosophy" by incorporating "the contingent and the social into their analyses":

> The sociological nature of the institutional theory of art is self-evident, for the theory relies on the social roles and institutions in which art is produced and accredited.[57]

Her suggestions, although brief, are directed to the further delineation of a sociological aesthetics, somewhat similar to that promoted by Rita Felski:

> A feminist aesthetic theory, then, must take into account this institutionalized status of art as exemplified in existing ideological and discursive frameworks.[58]

Davies' final suggestions do not sufficiently move such an agenda forward. His call for a proceduralist approach dismisses the functionalist approach by which art is defined and gauged by individuals' reactions to a particular stimulus. To dismiss the functionalist approach is to deny the importance of the diversity of reactions art can inspire. He returns briefly to these matters when he states that the primary function of art is to provide enjoyment and that art can have "far-reaching social benefits" as well. But his claim that "Good artworks, properly approached and understood, afford enjoyment" still invokes a standard of propriety mired in the past. Consider his confirmation of this look backward:

> Standards for the proper approach to artworks are governed by interpersonal conventions of the Artworld [which are] grounded in the history of the practices of the Artworld and are not established by stipulation.[59]

On the contrary, conventions are often established by stipulation: by certain persons, in particular roles, within broader contexts. It is a mistake to think that the social contexts of those who have been allowed to set the standards, establish the practices, and establish the conventions are not relevant and that only history counts. What is enjoyable can also be generalized into what is good. This is the resurfacing of Hume's problem of the standard of taste. But what counts as enjoyable for the African or the Indian appreciator has not become part of the standards of the artworld as institutionalized in the Western world. The democratization of enjoyment has not played a role in the history of art. Members, in a variety of roles within the artworld, have simply refused to allow it.

Finally, Davies claims that intentionality is necessary for something to become an artwork. But he stipulates artists' intentions as follows: the art maker must intend her product "to be viewed in one or another of the ways in which art has been correctly viewed in the past." Again, the past sets the precedent. Even the success of originality depends on the agent's having a "recognized, established position of prominence within the Artworld."[60] On this view most women, feminists, persons of color are automatically excluded. To stipulate prominence in the artworld as a prerequisite for having the authority to create art begs the question. I suggest a return to a more functionalist account, particularly along the following lines.

Given the conventions of the tradition already in place within philosophical aesthetics, an unconventional feminist theory of art would include the following:

1. A recognition that the past history of art, criticism, theory, and philosophy has been dominated by a particular subpopulation with a particular taste and a particular agenda. The artworld has been undemocratic from the start and still continues to be.

2. A recognition that the roles of authority within the artworld have had no basis in objective criteria and that value judgments issued by such "experts" are subjective and idiosyncratic.
3. A recognition that the Hegelian approach to the linearity of "art" is flawed; it fails to recognize "art" from a variety of cultures and across a significant length of time, art that may not fit the narrowing criterion of originality.
4. A recognition that sexist and racist assumptions have permeated philosophical aesthetics as instituted in the eighteenth century and continued into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.
5. A recognition that Ur-roles have been filled in ways that the artworld has failed to recognize.
6. A recognition that gender and race are essential components of the context in which an artwork is created and thus cannot be excluded from consideration in procedural (historical, intentional) definitions of "art."

Far from essentializing a feminist theory of art, these suggestions serve as a starting point for further discussion between philosophers and feminist theorists. The undisclosed conventions of the artworld are only fully coming to light as recent scholarship develops. Suggestions 1–6 stand as markers of acknowledgment: demands for "recognition" (or re-cognizing) of the "interpersonal conventions" called for by Davies. (1) is a general statement calling attention to the demographics of the vast majority of art practitioners who have established and dominated an undemocratic artworld. (2) admonishes the figures who have institutionalized artworld roles of authority predicated upon the presumption of objective, universal criteria. (3) undermines the pervasiveness of a strict, linear concept of "art" that fails to recognize its more complex repetitious and cyclical nature; this conception depended heavily upon the insistance on originality as an artistic criterion, so that whatever is "new" counts as valuable and thus progressive. (4) singles out the legacy of philosophers, especially as they have contributed to the foundations of art criticism and art history, as well as their practice of deriving aesthetic criteria from those institutions and scholarly disciplines. (5) attempts to complicate the philosophical notion of the Ur-work by inviting reflection upon actual archeological evidence, much of which has only tangentially been considered part of the continuum of "art." Toward that end it might be helpful to expand the functions usually attributed to early/Ur-works: beyond the magical, religious, and spiritual. Finally, (6) promotes a more inclusive mode of organizing the components of future contextual theories of art. A corollary might emphasize the various types of theories of feminist art and sociological aesthetics

that have already arisen apart from the analytic tradition. Perhaps a reconsideration of art in terms of gender, race, class, ethnicity, and sexual orientation would add a new dimension to functional accounts of art that might be used in consort with procedural definitions.

Thus, the glaring omissions in traditional theories of art can be corrected. Feminist theories of art can serve as models for expanding the range of paradigms within aesthetics and challenging ingrained cliches. As Hilde Hein reminds us,

> Feminism creates new ways of thinking, new meanings, and new categories of critical reflection; it is not merely an extension of old concepts to new domains.[61]

Perhaps, even within the most historically bound philosophies of art, its time has come.

NOTES

1. See Arthur C. Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981); and Victor Burgin, *The End of Art Theory: Criticism and Postmodernity* (London: Macmillan, 1986).

2. Morris Weitz, "The Role of Theory in Aesthetics," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 15 (1956): 27–35.

3. Arthur C. Danto, *After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

4. Stephen Davies, *Definitions of Art* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991).

5. Janet Wolff, *The Social Production of Art,* 2d ed. (New York: New York University Press, 1993); Wolff, *Aesthetics and the Sociology of Art,* 2d ed. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993).

6. Danto, *After the End of Art,* 148.

7. Jeff Perrone, "Unfinished Business: 1982 New York Overview," *Images and Issues* (January/February 1983): 39.

8. This, in fact, is the title of a text by Albert Boime, *The Art of Exclusion: Representing Blacks in the Nineteenth Century* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990). I intend the term more broadly, that is, to refer to more than just the nineteenth century.

9. Davies, *Definitions of Art,* 97.

10. Marija Gimbutas, *The Goddesses and Gods of Old Europe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 10.

11. Marilyn Stokstad, *Art History* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1995), 39.

12. Males (men and animals) represented "spontaneous and life-stimulating—but not life-generating—powers." Gimbutus, *Goddesses and Gods,* 9.

13. A recent essay gives evidence that disputes this; see Lawrence Osborne, "The Women Warriors," *Lingua Franca* 7 (1998): 50–57.

14. Diane Wolkstein and Samuel Noah Kramer, *Inanna, Queen of Heaven and Earth* (New York: Harper & Row, 1983), xvi.

15. Stokstad notes that several women are mentioned in the ancient writings of Pliny the Elder. See *Art History,* 207.

16. As of 1995, over 50 percent of artists in the United States are women; however, 85 percent of artists who are invited to participate in gallery and museum shows are male. (When shows are blindly juried, the ratio is nearly half and half.) See Rebecca Phillips Abbott, *Women in the Arts* 13 (1995): 2. According to the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, D.C., updated statistics for the 1997–98 season show only 7 out of 45 solo exhibitions at major U.S. museums went to women (again, only 15 percent).

17. The essay is reprinted in Linda Nochlin, *Women, Art, and Power and Other Essays* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988).

18. See Genevieve Lloyd, *The Man of Reason: "Male" and "Female" in Western Philosophy,* 2d ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984, 1993); and Nancy Tuana, *The Less Noble Sex: Scientific, Religious, and Philosophical Conceptions of Woman's Nature* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993).

19. Recall that many of the women listed were members of the Royal Academy in their day, successful artists, and court painters. It is art history and philosophy that have subsequently omitted them from their histories.

20. See Christine Battersby, *Gender and Genius: Towards a Feminist Aesthetics* (London: Women's Press, 1989; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990); or Barbara Hermstein Smith, *Contingencies of Value: Alternative Perspectives for Critical Theory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988).

21. Griselda Pollock and Roszika Parker, *Old Mistresses: Women, Art, and Ideology* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981).

22. Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard, eds., *The Power of Feminist Art: The American Movement of the 1970s, History and Impact* (New York: Abrams, 1994).

23. Ibid., 73.

24. Ibid., 150.

25. Carey Lovelace, "Weighing in on Feminism," *ARTnews* 96 (1997): 142.

26. Rita Felski, "Why Feminism Doesn't Need an Aesthetic (And Why It Can't Ignore Aesthetics)," in *Feminism and Tradition in Aesthetics,* ed. Peg Zeglin Brand and Carolyn Korsmeyer (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 431.

27. Danto, *After the End of Art,* 197.

28. Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful,* ed. J. T. Boulton (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1958).

29. Susanne Langer should not be considered as representing a significant counterexample to this trend. Apart from her popularity with music educators, she is rarely taught in aesthetics classes or included in aesthetics anthologies.

30. See Peg Zeglin Brand, "Feminism in Context: A Role for Feminist Theory in

Aesthetic Evaluation," in *Contemporary Philosophy of Art: Readings in Analytic Aesthetics,* ed. John W. Bender and H. Gene Blocker (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1993), 106–21.

31. George Dickie, *Art and the Aesthetic: An Institutional Analysis* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1974).

32. Davies, *Definitions of Art,* 94.

33. George Dickie, *The Art Circle: A Theory of Art* (New York: Haven, 1984).

34. Danto, *After the End of Art,* 195.

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid., 197.

37. Ibid., 198.

38. Ibid., 199.

39. Ibid., 199–210.

40. See my forthcoming *Parodies as Politics,* which discusses feminist theories of humor in comparison to traditional theories written by Plato, Aristotle, Hobbes, Hutcheson, Kant, Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, Bergson, Freud, and others.

41. Lucian Krukowski, "A Basis for Attributions of 'Art,'" *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 39 (1980): 67–76.

42. Noël Carroll, "Art, Practice, and Narrative," *Monist* 71 (1988): 140–56. Carroll mentions Susanne Langer and Early Modern Dance but the majority of his examples consist of male philosophers and artists.

43. Jerrold Levinson, "Defining Art Historically," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 19 (1979): 232–50.

44. Marcia Muelder Eaton, *Basic Issues in Aesthetics* (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 1988), 94.

45. Danto, *After the End of Art,* 147.

46. See their website at www.guerrillagirls.com.

47. One example of the new diversified approach is Phoebe Farris-Dufrene, *Voices of Color: Art and Society in the Americas* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1997).

48. In an extension of Dickie's theories on evaluation, I have argued for a more workable framework for understanding the type of critical statements traditionally used to devalue works by female artists. See "Evaluating Art: A Feminist Case for Dickie's Matrix System," in *Institutions of Art: Reconsiderations of George Dickie's Philosophy,* ed. Robert J. Yanal (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 87–107.

49. Davies, *Definitions of Art,* 95.

50. Ibid., 97.

51. Eaton, *Basic Issues in Aesthetics,* 87–88.

52. Ibid., 88.

53. Ibid., 96.

54. Gisela Ecker, *Feminist Aesthetics,* trans. Harriet Anderson (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985), 22.

55. Wolff, *Social Production of Art,* 7.

56. Ibid., 27.

57. Wolff, *Aesthetics and the Sociology of Art,* 79.

58. Rita Felski, *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics: Feminist Literature and Social Change* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 158.

59. Davies, *Definitions of Art,* 220.

60. Ibid., 221.

61. Hilde Hein, "The Role of Feminist Aesthetics in Feminist Theory," in *Feminism and Tradition in Aesthetics,* 446.

11

Non-Western Art and Art's Definition

STEPHEN DAVIES

The members of all cultures always have engaged in storytelling, drawing, carving and whittling, song, dance, and acting or mime. Frequently these activities are tied to social functions, such as the production of tools, the enactment of ritual, the preservation of a historical record. Their pervasiveness suggests that they are integral, not incidental, to the social ends they serve. Whenever items with handles are made, those handles are decorated; once pots are thrown, they are marked with depictions or patterns; when a couple is married, there is singing and dancing. Moreover, the skills displayed in the exercise of these activities—for instance, in the carver's treatment of his chosen medium—are widely respected and valued.

It seems evident that these practices arose independently within geographically separated societies, rather than being invented once and subsequently transmitted through cultural contact. No doubt there has long been intercourse between societies concerning such matters, but this must often have dealt with innovations in types of action that already were familiar.

The practices just described can reasonably be called artistic, I believe, and their ubiquity suggests that art is universal. Artistic activity may not be necessary for human social life, but, if not, it appears to be an inevitable spin-off from things that are. Its constant presence indicates that it answers and gives expression to deeply ingrained human needs and patterns of experience.

This first observation should be coupled with another, the significance of which is easily overlooked. We are capable of recognizing that art is made by people in cultures other than our own and of identifying many of their artworks as such. I am impressed by how accessible to Westerners is much sub-Saharan music, Chinese painting, and woven carpets from the Middle East. If art relies on a complex semiotic system, or on an atmosphere of theory, this recognition would be surprising, for such things are culturally

arbitrary. If art were as this view supposes, we might learn or infer that other societies have it, or something like it, through very close contact and study, but as outsiders who are largely ignorant of the beliefs and values prevailing in those societies, we could have no immediate access to their art. That we do have this access suggests that the properties crucial in inviting an art-regard sometimes are ones that can be perceived with very little culture-specific background knowledge.[1]

This is not to deny that there is likely to be much more to the art of other societies than is available to an outsider. After considering ethnographic features of art in ten cultures, Richard L. Anderson concludes: "Art is culturally significant meaning, skillfully encoded in an affecting, sensuous medium."[2] I do not doubt that he is correct in this observation. But even if art "skillfully encodes culturally significant meanings" that the outsider is in no position to appreciate, something more universal and basic must be involved if we are to explain the outsider's response. In this vein, Denis Dutton suggests that Picasso was validly reacting to vivid aesthetic aspects intrinsic to African carvings he viewed at the Palais du Trocadéro in 1907, though he knew little of the context in which they were produced or of the social purposes they served.[3] The outsider might be incapable of fully understanding the artworks of other cultures where these deal in "culturally significant meanings" but, nevertheless, often can recognize the "artiness" of such pieces and enjoy at least some aspects of this.

In this chapter I discuss non-Western art and, in particular, what follows from the capacity of Westerners to identify and respond to such pieces as art. This commentary has implications for the philosophical definition of art, as I outline in the last section. But before addressing these issues, I look more closely at challenges often raised to the idea that there is non-Western art as such. It might be thought that the notion of art is a Western one that cannot be applied, except ethnocentrically and inappropriately, to the products and practices of other cultures. If this were so, the kind of recognition and response that I have described above would reveal, not the presence of art in other societies, but the tendency of Westerners to impose their conceptual categories upon contexts to which they do not apply.

I

It has been held by some anthropologists that there is no non-Western art.[4] The concept is a Western one. Other cultures have different, possibly parallel, concepts of their own. The artifacts of non-Western cultures become art only by being appropriated by Westerners to their own art institutions.[5]

Now, if the claim is that they have their concepts and we have ours, just as I have my beliefs and you have yours, it is innocuous enough. To make

the Wittgensteinian point, this reveals something about the "grammar" of possessive pronouns. It does not show that the non-Western concept must be *different* from ours, or that we cannot share the same concept. But if the claim is that theirs *is* a different concept—not solely in being theirs as opposed to ours, but also in its content—that needs to be substantiated. (Otherwise the claim looks no less ethnocentric than the position it sets out to debunk in that it assumes that only the West has achieved art creation, which is an activity highly valued as the mark of civilization.) Several arguments that have been offered for this conclusion are reviewed and rejected below.

In the West, art often is distinguished from craft. This dichotomy is stressed in the writings of Plato, Hegel, Tolstoy, and R. G. Collingwood, for example. It is widely claimed that art lacks "utility," being made for contemplation distanced from social concerns; that artists should be indifferent to worldly matters in pursuing their muse; that artworks have an intrinsic value and should be preserved and respected. If these views characterize the Western concept of art, many non-Western societies must lack that concept, for their approach and attitude are different. In them, all artifacts or performances are created to meet socially useful functions—masks are worn in religious rituals, carvings propitiate the gods or decorate items for domestic use, songs lighten the burden of repetitive labor, and so on. Nothing is created *solely* for aesthetic contemplation. Either most people are "artists" or the relevant social roles are occupied by people who are regarded neither as requiring a special spirituality nor as meriting a respect beyond what is due to the skills they bring to their work. In many cases, pieces are discarded once they have served the particular purpose for which they were created.[6]

In reviewing this position we might question whether the Western ideology of art corresponds to its reality. Is it the case that we think artworks are useless? That "artist" names a spiritual calling? That art making is unaffected by the market? That artworks are appreciated only when abstracted from the moral, political, and social settings within which they are generated? If the answer to these questions is "no" (as I believe it to be), this ideology would be exposed as a fiction, irrelevant to the heart of our concept of art.

Rather than develop this line, however, I take a different tack. I accept that the notions listed above characterize what has come to be known as fine or high art. The fine arts were described and typed at the close of the eighteenth century, and the associated notion of the artist as a genius unfettered by the rules of a craft, as well as by social conventions, was presented at much the same time. Along with this went the idea that the aesthetic attitude is a psychologically distinctive state of distanced contemplation.

The creation of art museums and an interest in the works of past eras date from the same period. Prior to that time, Western artists were employed as servants and worked mainly to order. Their art was expected to be functional. Its purposes were to illustrate and instruct, to uplift or delight, to glorify God or art's patrons, to improve the social environment or, at least, to make it more pleasant. Now, if it is silly (as I think it is) to suggest that Bach's music or Michelangelo's statues or Shakespeare's plays became art retrospectively, only when they were appropriated by the art establishment and thereby were abstracted from their original settings and functions, it must be accepted that there is a broader notion of art than is covered by the rubric of fine art. Fine or High Art is art. It is art with a capital *A*. But it is only one kind within a wider genus. So, we can agree with the anthropologist who argues that non-Western cultures do not share the Western notion of fine art without also accepting that this shows them to lack art or its concept. The crucial question is whether non-Western cultures self-consciously create art with a small *a*, something that is properly called art for what it shares with our basic concept, though their practice might not be institutionalized and ideologically freighted to the extent that ours is.

A second argument tending to the conclusion that non-Western societies are without art relies on a linguistic claim: that the languages of these cultures lack a single term that translates readily to our "art."[7] This interpretation of the linguistic data misses what is at issue, however. The crux concerns the *concepts* possessed within non-Western cultures, not the *vocabularies* of their languages. It may be that a culture employs a complex phrase instead of a single word. That we use "second cousin once removed," not a solitary term, does not mean that we have no concept of that familial relationship. Or, more likely, it may be that the culture uses a word with a reference that is apparently too broad, one that covers all ritual artifacts or all crafts as well as artworks. But again, this does not show that it does not make the relevant conceptual distinctions. The ancient Greek *techne* referred both to arts and to more mundane crafts, but the Greeks acknowledged significant differences between the products of the activities covered by the general term. And the French "conscience" corresponds to both "conscience" and "consciousness," but this does not entail that the French do not discriminate between morality and mentation.

A third and final argument claims that members of traditional societies are unconscious of their culture. Simply, they do what they do, regarding it as natural while remaining oblivious of the history of their practices, of the influences that shaped them, and of the "latent functions"[8] served by the maintenance of their traditions. It is only in confrontation with the "other," with an intrusive alien presence, that the society is forced to define

itself, to reflect on its own character.[9] "Construction of culture," creative self-definition through contrast, is the result.

The view is exemplified in this passage by Adrian Vickers:

> Tourism defines what Balinese culture is in a context where such definitions have hitherto not been needed. . . . Tourism encourages Balinese to reflect on their own culture. Members of a culture usually learn and express their culture unconsciously—it is something they have grown up with, a matter of habit. Balinese culture has long been an object of study. For over a century various Balinese have had to make statements to outsiders, first Dutch scholars and civil servants, then tourists, describing their culture and the elements of their religion. This process of articulation has meant that the Balinese have had to be conscious of their own culture, producing both a sense of pride in their cultural identity as Balinese, and an ability to sum up what may be considered as the essential aspects of culture . . . in a way that can be conveniently understood by others. Tourism is only one element in this process of externalising culture, and nowadays the Indonesian Government plays as big a role as tourism in the process, since the government requires formal rationalisations and criteria in order that cultural and artistic activities can be bureaucratically described and supported.[10]

Now, if the creation of art must be self-conscious, it will follow that members of non-Western societies, in being blind to their own cultures, could have no basic concept of art as such. If they acquire one, it will be through exposure to Western views, and their notion will be affected by ours. Moreover, their artlike cultural practices will have no defense against outside influences, whether good or bad. According to Maud Karpeles,[11] folk music develops mainly unconsciously, with cultural insiders lacking awareness of the history and values of their tradition. As a result, untutored singers (in the Appalachians early this century) adapt indiscriminately from traditional and external sources; the natural selection by which the folk tradition evolves then cannot operate freely, because the ordinary process of musical change is continuously subverted.

I regard this third argument to be insupportable. The enactment of culture might be largely unconscious in that a society's members do not have to describe to themselves, or to those who share their cultural habits, what they are doing, or why, as they act. They call on behavioral repertoires and values that have been thoroughly assimilated and which, therefore, do not need to be justified or worked out each time they are pressed into service. Also, the transmission of culture clearly depends more on imitation and rote learning than on social analysis. It does not follow, however, that a society's members are unconscious of their culture in the further sense of being incapable of articulating, if occasion requires, their practices and mores. (After all, sociology would not exist unless Westerners could do

this!) Neither does it follow that they are unable to reflect on the bases and functions of the strands that make up their social fabric. Social practices may be "unconscious" in one sense, that of being enacted unthinkingly under normal circumstances, but not in another, that of being beyond the agent's ken. In fact, surely the evidence suggests not that societies are indifferent to their own histories and values, or that they are insensitive to outside influences, but the reverse.

Even if it is accepted that cultural self-consciousness inevitably presupposes awareness of the "other," of the outsider, it is hard to imagine the society that is without this. The most closed groups recognize distinctions of sex, tribe, clan, and family. And most have long known of the wider world. To take Vickers's example, the Balinese have been explaining their culture to outsiders, such as the Javanese (with their different languages, religion, customs, music, dance, carving, and so on), for more than five centuries.[12]

More particularly, we should challenge Karpeles's assumption that a mindless process of evolution explains the maintenance of, and change in, folk traditions. Her line, like that of the anthropologists who conceive of their studies as dealing with "latent functions" not appreciated by their subjects, reduces the artifacts produced within these cultures to the level of aesthetically pleasing objects shaped by the forces of nature. Denis Dutton (in discussing analyses of the pottery and rain dances of the Amerindian Hopi) has taken this approach to task for ignoring levels of intention manifest in what is achieved.[13] Although art production does not always involve the explicit articulation of goals and intentions, it does not follow that these are absent. The preservation and development of cultural traditions indicate care, attention, commitment, concentration, and deference—for the material and the heritage of works, genres, and styles—on the part of native practitioners and their audiences. Such traditions survive only by being carefully passed down. (This is not to insist that innovation and novelty must always be excluded from living traditions. Instead, it is to maintain that, where these are sanctioned, it is because they are valued within the history of the tradition in which they occur.)

As just indicated, there is a tendency for those who would deny that non-Western cultures share our concept of art to describe the products of those cultures in a fashion that ignores the artistic goals, intentions, and achievements that such pieces manifest. This kind of reduction creates the conclusion that art is absent from non-Western cultures because it factors out the "artiness" of their artworks. But this reveals more about the methodologies employed than the cultures studied. As illustration, consider Alfred Gell's requirement that the anthropologist adopt "methodological philistinism."

> Methodological philistinism consists of taking an attitude of resolute indifference towards the aesthetic value of works of art—the aesthetic value that they have, either indigenously, or from the standpoint of universal aestheticism. Because to admit this kind of value is equivalent to admitting, so to speak, that religion is true, and just as this admission makes the sociology of religion impossible, the introduction of aesthetics (the theology of art) into the sociology or anthropology of art immediately turns the enterprise into something else. . . . [T]he anthropology of art has to begin with a denial of the claims which objects of art make on the people who live under their spell, and also on ourselves.[14]

Now it may be appropriate for the anthropologist to put aside his own (perhaps ethnocentric) values, but, *pace* Gell, it cannot be appropriate to the study of non-Western art *as art* that he also puts aside a concern with the aesthetic judgments of the local culture, since their art is such only because it possesses the relevant properties. Because he takes his methodological philistinism so far as to reject "the claims which objects of art make on the people who live under their spell," Gell cannot analyze non-Western art on its own terms. In trying to save anthropology from becoming "something else," he turns art into something less than it is. In his view, it is "a component of the technology of enchantment." My point is this: if it is essential to something that it is created to possess properties of a kind that can be recognized only by those prepared to make the relevant judgments, then identifying putative instances of the type requires reference to such evaluations, even if that process of identification does not require the identifier to share the relevant values.

II

If non-Western societies were without cultural self-consciousness, and if their artlike practices were controlled only by natural evolution, rather than human design, then, indeed, there would be grounds for supposing that they do not possess a concept of art. While non-Western cultures and their products have been described in such terms, these accounts are unconvincing (and insulting as well). I have argued above against the claim that non-Western cultures do not have the concept of art and do not create art, small *a*, within their own artworlds. It remains now to offer a positive characterization of non-Western art, and to do so in a way that explains the ability of cultural outsiders to recognize (if not to thoroughly understand) it as what it is.

I begin by considering a position sketched by Arthur Danto. He is impressed by the fact that some Western artworks are perceptually indistinguishable from nonartworks to those who are unaware of their prove-

nance. The most graphic illustration of the point is provided by Duchamp's readymades, in which a "mere real thing" attains the status of art without alteration in its physical properties. This leads Danto to conclude that what differentiates art from other things is "an atmosphere of theory the eye cannot de[s]cry."[15] By this he seems to mean an art-historical context. He applies his idea to non-Western art by means of a "philosopher's example" concerning two nearby but isolated African tribes, the Pot People and the Basket Folk.[16] Both make pots and baskets, and the pots and baskets of the Pot People are not perceptually discriminable from those of the Basket Folk. Nevertheless, the pots of the Pot People are artworks, whereas their baskets are not, and vice versa for the Basket Folk. Whereas the artworks in both cultures have deep spiritual importance for the tribe, symbolizing their relation to the cosmic order, to life and death, and so on, the nonartworks lack special significance, being no more than practical objects. The tale illustrates Danto's theory, as it is designed to do. What makes something art, whether in an African tribe or in the United States, is an "atmosphere of theory," not properties perceptible to someone ignorant of that conceptual context.

Dutton raises this objection to Danto's tale: If a tribe makes pots that have developed over many generations into their most treasured art, they will be meticulous about the construction and decoration of these.

> They would presumably work according to an evolved canon of excellence . . . [P]ot making would be a central element in a whole culture, with much thought and worry going into obtaining the perfect clay for making them, firing them for exactly the right kind of finish. Why? Because people just behave in those ways when they create things that mean something to them.[17]

If a group has a practice they value as art, it has a great importance to them. This is reflected—usually, if not for every instance—in the serious care they invest in its creation and reception. This results in perceptible properties that distinguish most examples of their art types from the products of other, less culturally significant, activities. Contrary to Danto's hypothesis, it is incoherent to imagine that the artworks of a society would be indistinguishable from merely utilitarian objects.

I think that Dutton succeeds in calling into question the plausibility of Danto's scenario. His argument is that artisans take pains over perceptible features of the artifacts that are of central importance to the culture (and that they will be less inclined to do the same with trivially utilitarian objects). As it stands, however, that suggestion would apply as readily to culturally significant nonart items as to artworks.[18] How can we distinguish culturally significant practices in which art is absent from those in which it is present? One suggestion, with which I agree, is developed by Dutton[19]

and H. Gene Blocker[20] as a result of their communications respectively with carvers in New Guinea and Africa. The crucial claim is that, even if non-Western artists' carvings are utilitarian and not created for "distanced" contemplation, those artists (and other members of their culture) are vitally concerned with the aesthetic nature of what is produced. Their work involves achievements that are aesthetic in character. It is appreciated within the culture in light of these, and it is valued for displaying them. As Dutton puts it, art involves accomplishment; it displays persistent intelligence and directedness in realizing aesthetic goals.[21] And Blocker writes,

> The primitive peoples who make and use such artifacts manifest enough of the artistic and aesthetic attitudes and dispositions to warrant and justify us in calling such artifacts "works of art" and treating them as such.[22]

From my point of view, this account displays an important virtue: it stresses aesthetic properties—qualities such as beauty, balance, tension, elegance, serenity, energy, grace, vivacity. Traditionally, philosophical aesthetics has conceived of aesthetic properties not only as central to the character of art, but also as not requiring for their apprehension a detailed knowledge of the social context of production. If (some) non-Western items qualify as art by virtue of displaying humanly produced aesthetic features, this allows us to explain how outsiders, despite their ignorance of the wider sociohistorical context in which such items are created, might recognize them for the artworks they are. To put the claim more broadly: There is a transcultural notion of the aesthetic; aesthetic properties have interest and appeal for humans in general.[23] It is this cultural overlap that licenses the judgment that non-Western cultures make art (small *a*) for, in valuing the attainment of aesthetically pleasing effects, their members reveal themselves to be concerned with the artistic character of their products.

I am inclined to supplement the account offered so far, because I do not think that it is sufficient to distinguish artworks from other items that display humanly created aesthetic properties. I suggest that, in the case of art, the aesthetic effects achieved must be integral to the whole, rather than minor or incidental side features. A tool handle does not become an artwork merely by having a minuscule, but aesthetically pleasing, carving added to it. In addition, I think that the aesthetic character of an artwork must be regarded as essential to its function, so that it cannot be evaluated properly without taking into account the aesthetic achievement it involves. Its function need not be solely that of providing pleasure through the contemplation of its aesthetic properties. Much more often in non-Western cultures, artworks serve socially useful purposes in rituals and the like. They are for *use*, not contemplation. They substitute for gods, serve to ward off spirits, are offerings intended to guarantee the fruitfulness of the mar-

riage at which they are presented, and so on. In this way, art might always be utilitarian. But it remains distinguishable from *mere* craft in terms of the totality and functional significance of the aesthetic properties it is created to possess. Mere craftworks lack aesthetic properties, or are not made to have them, or are made to have them in a manner that is incidental or trivial with respect to their intended function.

Even with the amendments I have suggested, it might be thought that the position I have advocated is too liberal, for it seems to admit to the realm of art such things as fine Italian cars. As a first response, I would grasp the offered nettle. If (and I am not sure about this) their aesthetic attributes are essential to their evaluation as cars, Maseratis, Lamborghinis, and Ferraris are artworks (small *a*). To accept this is not to encourage undue expansion of the concept of art but, rather, to stress that the notion has (always had) a wider scope than that of fine art. Under the influence of the ideology of fine art, the Western notion of art has atrophied. Acknowledgment of the artistic character of these vehicles involves the reclamation of lost ground, not territorial expansion. And a second response builds on this first. Over time, art practices can become regularized and institutionalized. If cars manufactured by Maserati, Lamborghini, and Ferrari do not qualify as art, this could be because they are not created within the context of the Western art institution. But now, if that art institution is best to be seen as establishing a social context for the production of fine art, this concession is not harmful, for I stressed earlier that I was interested in a broader conception of art.

In summary: The care devoted to the production of art typically concerns features of the kind that is called "aesthetic." That is, the creators of art within the culture make some of their choices for the sake of creating qualities that are aesthetically pleasing.[24] Just which aesthetic properties count for the art in question, and how they will be structured and conditioned by conventions, depend on the medium and on traditions and practices established for the relevant genre. The local appreciation and evaluation of such pieces will take some account of the success or otherwise with which they are created to realize the desired properties. This is consistent with the possibility that all artworks have a place in socially important practices, such as religious observances. In discovering whether a people possess the concept of art, what matters is not that they separate art from other important concerns but that they make items presenting humanly generated aesthetic properties which are essential to the main purposes served by those items. Moreover, such artworks often will be recognizable as such to cultural outsiders, who are not prohibited by their ignorance of life within the culture from noting the aesthetic effects they manifest, perceiving that these concern the whole, seeing that they are humanly created, and observing (or

inferring) that such effects are deemed essential to the nature and purpose of the items in question.

III

It remains to investigate the implications of the preceding for the philosophical enterprise of defining art. I consider two questions.

1. If the presence of humanly created aesthetic properties is crucial to our acknowledging that other cultures have art and to our ability to identify at least some of their artworks, must reference to such properties feature in a successful definition? That is, should "aesthetic" definitions be preferred to other varieties?

I answer "no." Though I have stressed the importance of aesthetic properties in addressing the issue of how we know that other cultures have art, it is not my view that the possession of these is *essential* for something's being art. I accept that conceptual pieces can qualify as art, though these do not possess perceptible aesthetic attributes, and I also accept that ordinary objects might be appropriated to the artworld, as Duchamp's readymades were, so that their being art does not depend on the aesthetic properties they happen to display. Indeed, it could be that, over time, art practices change so that the emphasis falls on the creation of theory-dependent, historically conditioned artistic properties that have little to do with aesthetic properties as these were traditionally described. All that follows from my argument is that works that are without aesthetic properties, or that attain their art status for some reason other than their possessing the aesthetic properties they display, will not be identifiable as art by cultural outsiders.

More needs to be said, though, because I do not mean to leave the impression that there could be an art-making tradition that at no time focused on the realization of perceptible aesthetic effects. I do not believe that a culture could have a tradition generating artworks *all* of which are nonaesthetic, or are only incidentally aesthetic, in character. I suspect that a concern with achieving aesthetic effects is *historically* necessary in the development of art practices, though not *logically* necessary to any particular item's being an artwork. It is no more easy to imagine a culture that *begins* with nonaesthetic art than one that develops mathematical calculus before it cultivates counting and measurement.[25] I commented at the outset that the universality of art marks its creation as a response to deep-seated human needs and experiences. At that level—that is, at the level of the lowest denominators common to human existence—it is more likely to be the intrinsic, sensuous appeal of aesthetic properties than the cognitive interest of culturally arbitrary symbols that explains why art making, or the activities that preceded it, first occurred.[26]

2. Do current theories, most of which are prompted by reflection on Western art practice, accommodate non-Western art? That is, can the contemporary crop of definitions be applied perspicuously to the art of other cultures? In discussing these questions, I review the definitions of art proposed by George Dickie and Jerrold Levinson.

Dickie's institutional theory holds that something is art if and only if it is enmeshed within a complex set of institutionally structured social relations.[27] Art status is achieved by an item only if it is appropriately situated within an institutional matrix involving the roles of artist and public, along with artworld practices. What is distinctive to the institution in terms of which art is defined is its structure, not its history or function.[28]

Dickie is exclusively concerned with the institutional aspect of Western art, though he describes this in terms that are rather general. He does not apply his theory to non-Western cultures, but it is easy to see what this would involve. For these cultures to be art-producing ones, they would have to contain art institutions of the kind Dickie outlines. In particular, those institutions would have to manifest the structure that he describes as distinctive to artworlds.

I readily allow of the Western art institution that it is an informal arrangement reaching beyond government councils, official academies, and the like. And I accept that in some non-Western cultures—those of Japan, China, Indonesia, India, Iran, and Iraq, for instance—art has long been formalized and professionalized in some respects. In many other societies, however, I doubt that art is served by a distinctively structured institution; rather, it is an inseparable aspect of wider social practices concerning kinship, religion, commerce, ritual, and government. I conclude, therefore, that the institutional theory is not adequate to explain the presence of art in these cultures. I do not deny the power and attraction of Dickie's theory as one that limns central features of Western fine art, but I do not think that it lends itself to the definition of non-Western art, or of art (small *a*) in general.

Jerrold Levinson offers a recursive account of the extension of "artwork" according to which something is art if it is intended for regard in one of the ways prior artworks have been correctly regarded.[29] He allows that the artist's intention can be referentially opaque; that is, he accepts that something intended for a particular regard would be art in the case where that regard was invited by earlier artworks although the intender was not aware of this fact. On non-Western art, he says this:

> We can only hope to say anything about art in other cultures, or in historically remote circumstances, by trying to understand our own concept as surely as we can, and then gauging the extent to which it can be made to fit with or to illumi-

nate what we find in those cultures and circumstances. To put this more pithily, if another culture has art, it must have art in our sense, more or less—whatever the inevitable differences between its art and ours in terms of materials, structure, expressiveness, ritual-embededness, object-orientedness, and so on.[30]

I agree, though for the sake of political correctness and appropriate emphasis I prefer the wording "if another culture has art, it must be that our two cultures share the same concept."

Levinson's definition makes no explicit appeal to the intender's cultural location. For that reason, it appears to be indifferent to social boundaries and, thereby, to claim a universality that would have it applying to all artworks, whatever their provenance. But this impression is misleading.

Suppose a Chinese person in the fourteenth century intended a piece to be regarded as were European paintings in the thirteenth century, though she was entirely ignorant of the existence of Europe and its artworks, and further, no extant Chinese artworks called for that kind of regard. Levinson's definition would appear to entail that the Chinese person creates an artwork via cross-cultural reference. This result strikes me as extremely implausible, and I doubt that Levinson would embrace it. Quite rightly, he emphasizes that artists' art-regarding intentions usually are self-conscious in invoking or referring to past art. He allows for the case in which the intention is referentially opaque not in order to cut art making adrift from its cultural history but, rather, to acknowledge that the required connection might be made, if not by the artist herself, then by other members of her culture. The recursive character of Levinson's definition aims to stress the extent to which art making is rooted within a historicized, culturally unified practice, not to admit the possibility of cross-cultural art creation that rides roughshod over the artistic traditions of the respective cultures. He means to indicate how art draws on (or sets out to repudiate) its cultural forebears, so that what is possible within the art of a culture depends on what has been previously accepted as art within that same culture. In consequence, Levinson's account must be seen as committed to a kind of cultural relativism in art production, not as espousing universalism. It presupposes a historically continuous tradition to which the art-defining intention relates the newly created piece. His theory assumes the background of a historically and culturally unified body of works to which the artist's intention relates the candidate work. In other words, Levinson makes art relative to what Danto may have had in mind when he coined the term "artworld."[31]

I have already claimed that artworlds are themselves the products of particular cultures with their individual histories. There may be as many independently generated artworlds as there are distinct cultures. The acknowledgment that different cultures produce their own artworks comes pre-

cisely to this. So, if definitions such as Levinson's are committed to seeing art as relative to an artworld, and if they focus narrowly on the Western one, they leave non-Western art and the notion of art in general underanalyzed.

In reply, it might be pointed out that the proposed definition is at a level of generality that allows it to explain, if it is correct, how something might become art within *any* artworld. What makes something art is the maker's intention that it be regarded in a fashion appropriate to the prior artworks of the creator's culture, whether it is the Western artworld or the artworld of some African tribe within which the artist operates, and whether the art regards appropriate to prior art in the one artworld resemble those in the other. According to this suggestion, it is the structure of the intentional relation, not the content of the relevant intention, that is crucial. Something is art within a given culture if it is intended to be regarded as its predecessors were, regardless of the kind of regard that is intended.

As it stands, this approach is inadequate. A definition that characterizes art making as artworld relative and that also concedes the existence of autonomous artworlds must explain how artworlds are of a single type. An account is required of what makes the various artworlds *art*worlds. Without this the definition is incomplete at best. While it might identify a factor necessarily common to artworlds, reference solely to the structure of the intentional relationship—that the maker intends the present object to be viewed as similar predecessors have been—is not sufficient to explain how artworlds are of a distinctive kind. Many practices that are not art-making ones are historically reflexive in a similar way and thereby exhibit the same structure of intention.

Levinson does not apply his definition to the autonomous art of other cultures, but he does consider how his intentional-historical conception of art might assimilate Western activities that are like, but marginal to, Western fine art. (As examples, he mentions handmade furniture, sculpted masks, commercial design, ritual music, and baton twirling.) For that case, he allows that identifying "simply the same structure of connectedness, of intentional invocation, whether immediate or mediate, of predecessor objects or the treatment they were accorded" is too weak to do the job.[32] A stronger suggestion, Levinson thinks, holds that the *content* of the relevant intentions is the same or similar between, say, handmade chairs and art sculptures.[33] That is, not only are both projected for regards appropriate to predecessors of the same ilk, but also the regards invited by handmade chairs include ones paradigmatic for art sculptures.

These remarks show how Levinson would attempt to extend his definition to the case of non-Western art. Probably he would maintain that at least some of the regards intended for artworks are common to all the artworlds there are and that it is this feature that unifies these artworlds as

of a single type. In the case of activities that are marginal to art-making ones, the resemblance in intended regards only needs to be partial. When it comes to artworlds, however, the resemblance in intended regards must be substantial. Only then will it be revealed as a feature possessed independently by each artworld that is essential to its being an artworld.

Is there a kind of regard projected for artworks that is common to all artworlds and that is such as to explain how artworlds can be recognized for what they are? In effect, this is what I aimed to establish earlier in this chapter. The discussion with which I began provides the key element missing from definitions, such as Levinson's, that are artworld-relative but which do not explain what it is that allows us to identify the many artworlds there are. Initially if not always, artworks in all cultures are projected for aesthetic regard—that is, for consideration of the aesthetic achievements they are created to display, where these effects concern the whole and are essential to the function the article is designed to serve. This is to say, there is a historically primary regard for which at least some artworks in all artworlds are intended. And this is such a striking feature of art making, viewed across the spread of human cultures, that it explains how we can perceive all cultures as art-making ones and, hence, as having artworlds.

NOTES

1. George Dickie recently has suggested—in "Art: Function or Procedure—Nature or Culture?" *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 55 (1997): 19–28—that definitions of art might be categorized according to whether they identify the practice as at heart either of a natural-kind or of a cultural-kind. The universality of art making might be consistent with either view, but the capacity of cultural outsiders to recognize the art of other cultures counts for the former approach to art's definition, or so I would maintain.

2. Richard L. Anderson, *Calliope's Sisters: A Comparative Study of Philosophies of Art* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1990), 238.

3. Denis Dutton, "Tribal Art and Artifact," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 51 (1993): 13–21.

4. For examples, see Jacques Maquet, *Introduction to Aesthetic Anthropology* (Reading, Mass: Addison Wesley, 1971), 16; Nelson Graburn, *Ethnic and Tourist Arts: Cultural Expressions from the Fourth World,* ed. Nelson Graburn (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 3–4; and Sidney Kasfir, "African Art and Authenticity: A Text without a Shadow," *African Arts* 25 (1992): 41–53.

In "Mythologies of Tribal Art," *African Arts* 28 (1995): 32–43, 90–91, Denis Dutton sees the denial that non-Western societies make art as part of a "New Mythology," which is a product of poststructuralist dogma that has been uncritically accepted by many anthropologists. Dutton outlines the connections, as well as the

differences, between the Old and New Mythologies and laments the indifference of both to historical fact, artists' intentions, and the like.

5. For an interesting discussion of the criteria that guide the selection of non-Western pieces for inclusion in Western art museums, see Shelly Errington, "What Became Authentic Primitive Art?" *Cultural Anthropology* 9 (1994): 201–26.

6. For the sake of the argument I will accept these observations about non-Western art, but it should be noted that in some cultures, such as those of the Middle East, India, China, Indonesia, and Japan, the view labeled here as "Western" might apply more readily than the alternative.

7. Again, I allow the point for the sake of the argument, though "art" is matched by an equivalent noun in the translation dictionaries for many non-European languages.

8. See Robert K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure*, enlarged ed. (New York: Free Press, 1968), 105, 115–23.

9. See Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).

10. Adrian Vickers, *Bali: A Paradise Created* (Ringwood, Victoria: Penguin, 1989), 198. See also Michel Picard, "Kebalian Orang Bali: Tourism and the Uses of 'Balinese Culture' in New Order Indonesia," *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs* 24 (1990): 1–38.

11. Maud Karpeles, "Some Reflections on Authenticity in Folk Music," *Journal of the International Folk Music Council* 3 (1951): 10–14.

12. The same applies to the Javanese themselves, of course. For an account of the way in which Javanese gamelan has both adapted and resisted external cultural influence over six centuries, see Sumarsam, *Gamelan: Cultural Interaction and Musical Development in Central Java* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

13. Denis Dutton, "Art, Behavior, and the Anthropologists," *Current Anthropology* 18 (1977): 387–94.

14. Alfred Gell, "The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology," in *Anthropology, Art, and Aesthetics*, ed. Jeremy Coote and Anthony Shelton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 42.

15. Arthur C. Danto, "The Artworld," *Journal of Philosophy* 61 (1964): 571–84.

16. Arthur C. Danto, "Art and Artifact in Africa," in *Beyond the Brillo Box: The Visual Arts in Post-Historical Perspective* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1992), 89–112.

17. Dutton, "Tribal Art and Artifact," 17.

18. Larry Shiner—in " 'Primitive Fakes,' 'Tourist Art,' and the Ideology of Authenticity," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 52 (1994): 225–34—notes that Danto does not demonstrate that his hypothetical tribes discriminate art from religion, economics, or politics. Hence, Danto's description does not show either tribe to have art as against religious or other works. But I take it that Danto presumes that they have art, without intending his account to prove that this is so.

19. Dutton, "Tribal Art and Artifact" and "Authenticity in the Art of Traditional Societies," *Pacific Arts* 9–10 (1994): 1–9.

20. H. Gene Blocker, "Is Primitive Art Art?" *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 25

(1991): 87–97, and *The Aesthetics of Primitive Art* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1993). A symposium on Blocker's book appears in *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 29 (1995).

21. Dutton, "Art, Behavior, and the Anthropologists."

22. Blocker, *Aesthetics of Primitive Art*, 21. Blocker's use of "primitive" is unfortunate, perhaps. By the term he means "living in a less developed society."

Studies on or mentioning the aesthetic judgments made within non-Western cultures about their carvings include those by Daniel J. Crowley, "An African Aesthetic," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 24 (1966): 519–24; James W. Fernandez, "Principles of Opposition and Vitality in Fang Aesthetics," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 25 (1966): 53–64; William H. Davenport, "Sculpture of the Solomon Islands," *Expedition* 10 (1968): 4–25, and "Two Kinds of Value in the Eastern Solomon Islands," in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective,* ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 95–109; and Robert Farris Thompson, "Esthetics in Traditional Africa," *ARTnews* 66 (1968): 44–45, 63–67.

23. In "Art, Behavior, and the Anthropologists" and "Authenticity in the Art of Traditional Societies," Dutton argues that, when it comes to the recognition of aesthetic attributes, anthropologists have underrated the ground that is common to different cultures.

Quantified transcultural studies of art are not numerous, however. One is Irvin L. Child and Leon Siroto, "BaKwele and American Esthetic Evaluations Compared," *Ethnology* 4 (1965): 349–60. They found statistically significant agreement between New Haven (Connecticut) art experts and BaKwele (Bantu-speaking people from western equatorial Africa) carvers concerning the aesthetic qualities of photographs of African masks.

24. Here I simplify, for there is no reason to assume that a group always will strive for beauty or attractiveness in its artworks. If the members of a society worship a God of Ugliness, they might tailor their art to suit its tastes. But their pieces then would be made to possess aesthetic attributes; that is, ones they took to be ugly.

25. I do not mean this analogy to imply that non-Western art is less highly evolved than its Western equivalents. To reiterate a point made earlier, there is no reason to believe that the cultural outsider is well situated to understand the sophisticated artistic properties of non-Western art, and these usually are present in abundance. I have claimed only that that person is placed well enough to recognize from its aesthetic character the art status of some of the artworks of non-Western cultures.

26. I provide further argument to the conclusion that the very first artworks depend for their status on their aesthetic character in "First Art and Art's Definition," *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 35 (1997): 19–34.

27. George Dickie, *The Art Circle: A Theory of Art* (New York: Haven, 1984).

28. This point has been reaffirmed by Dickie in a recent paper, "Art: Function or Procedure—Nature or Culture?" It is also apparent in that paper and elsewhere that he does not regard the art institution as transglobal.

29. Jerrold Levinson, "Defining Art Historically," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 19

(1979): 232–50, "Refining Art Historically," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 47 (1989): 21–33, and "Extending Art Historically," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 51 (1993): 411–23.

Some other, recently proposed definitions take a similar form, though they identify the crucial relation between new and past artworks differently. See James D. Carney, "The Style Theory of Art," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 72 (1991): 272–89, and "Defining Art Externally," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 34 (1994): 114–23; and Robert Stecker, "Historical Functionalism and the Four Factor Theory," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 34 (1994): 255–65, and *Artworks: Definition, Meaning, Value* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997). Though he denies that he offers a definition, also see Noël Carroll, "Art, Practice, and Narrative," *Monist* 71 (1988): 140–56, "Historical Narratives and the Philosophy of Art," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 51 (1993): 313–26, and "Identifying Art," in *Institutions of Art: Reconsiderations of George Dickie's Philosophy*, ed. Robert J. Yanal (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 3–38. Many of the criticisms I raise to Levinson's theory could be applied also to these other accounts.

30. Levinson, "Extending Art Historically," 413.

31. One, but only one, of Levinson's examples seems to be at odds with this conclusion. He writes: "Consider a solitary Indian along the Amazon who steals off from his nonartistic tribe to arrange colored stones in a clearing, not outwardly investing them with special position in the world. Might not this also be art (and, note, before any future curator decides that it is)?" "Defining Art Historically," 233. For my part, I think the answer might be "no." (Just what can this guy think he's doing?) Since the tribe is nonartistic, the Indian does not connect his activity to artworks in his own cultural tradition, so it must be that Levinson assumes the Indian to intend (opaquely) that his piece be regarded as some of *our* artworks, ones made prior to his own efforts, are. If that is the claim, then I can see why that might give us a reason for considering whether the piece merits appropriation to our artworld, but I seriously doubt that the intention, on its own, establishes the art credentials of the stone arrangement. The piece may be an artwork, but not for the reason that Levinson's definition specifies. If it is one, and if we can recognize it as such, this is because it displays aesthetic achievements of the kind that I have discussed previously in this chapter.

32. Levinson, "Extending Art Historically," 423.

33. Ibid., 422.

12

"But They Don't Have Our Concept of Art"

DENIS DUTTON

I

In the current discourse on cross-cultural aesthetics, an oft-repeated formula has it that understanding the art of another people may be difficult or impossible because "they have a concept of art different from ours," or "they don't have art in our sense." But what does "the concept of art" denote here? One way to approach this question is to ask what "concept of" adds to the claim that another culture has "a concept of art different from ours." If the claim were merely that they have "an art different from ours," there would be no issue. The added "concept of" seems to want to extend the claim, as though to say that despite outward appearances to the contrary, the meaning art has for these people differs radically from the meaning art has for us, that we may be mistaken even to call it "art." Similarly with the claim that their "sense" of "art" is different from ours.

Such claims represent a style of thinking that has deeply marked cross-cultural aesthetics for the last generation. Whether the area of investigation is the artistic life of small-scale, non-literate societies (so-called tribal or ethnographic arts) or the arts of non-Western civilizations, such as India, the frequent contention is that the aesthetic forms of these cultures are wholly other, and cannot be understood in terms familiarly applied to the arts of the West. I shall turn to tribal cultures later, but I begin by considering an essay in the influential collection *The Traffic in Culture,* edited by George E. Marcus and Fred R. Myers. Lynn M. Hart writes about large decorative paintings on mythological themes made by Hindu women in Uttar Pradesh, sometimes individually, sometimes in groups together, which are part of the activity surrounding marriage celebrations.[1] She de-

scribes the women artists in their working environment; then the appearance of one such painting in a North American dining room; thence to the exhibition of another of these *jyonthi* paintings in the *Magiciens de la terre* show in the Pompidou Center in Paris in 1989. Despite the fact—or perhaps because of it—that *jyonthi* paintings are straightforward, colorfully stylized depictions of Hindu mythological themes (Ganesh, Laksmi and Vishnu, sun and moon, lovebirds, etc.), Hart insists on using "producer" instead of "artist" and "visual image" instead of "art" to refer to this work (if it is "work"). Hart is determined, she explains, to avoid "inappropriate Western terminology." This is important, she thinks, because otherwise Westerners might have trouble appreciating that "the images and patterns themselves are based on religion, ritual, and mythic themes and derive their meaning—and their power—from the religious contexts of their production and use." The indigenous aesthetic principles of this art, or visual image production, are "different from standard Western aesthetics." The excellence of the works from an indigenous perspective, she explains, "is seen to lie in the closeness of the central symbol's approximation to an ideal image, with special attention paid to the style, technique, and materials used. It is important to re-present the symbols used in an adequate way, not to improve upon them, though at the same time the image on the wall should be as beautiful and pleasing as possible"—and so on, all "quite distinct from Western aesthetic canons" (131).

In point of fact, there is nothing in Hart's descriptions that is distinct from Western canons and concepts of art, which variously include in many Western genres and historic epochs the colorful approximation of images from religious mythology, produced with attention to style, technique, and materials. The conservatism of *jyonthi* painting, its prohibition on "improving" on the traditional iconography, may not characterize the Western avant-garde, but it is a feature found through much of the history of European art in the Middle Ages, as well as traditional religious folk arts and women's arts of Europe for the three centuries prior to the present one. The theology might be different, but there's not one thing Hart describes that can't be found in "Western aesthetics." This last point is worth dwelling on, for it seems to me that often when it is said that some other culture has a "different concept of art" from ours, there is implicit in the claim an extremely circumscribed and historically specific definition of the art denoted as "ours." Hart has made no effort to probe the history and traditions of "our" art to see if analogues or similarities might exist for the Uttar Pradesh example.

Hart's claim that *jyonthi* painting cannot be understood by applying to it categories or concepts of Western art is in the end either trivial or false. If the claim means that Western painting does not traditionally include

elements of Hindu mythology, is not painted on whitewashed mud walls by fluent speakers of Hindi as part of the celebration of marriage rites, then indeed, *jyonthi* painting is quite beyond Western categories. But Hart wants more than that; she would have us believe that *jyonthi* painting is not art "in our sense," a claim which is demonstrably false. At one desperate point she attempts to dramatize the cultural difference between *jyonthi* image producers and European artists:

> The Western producer of a painting destined (he or she hopes) for the wall of an art gallery and possibly for the wall of a great art museum is conscious of him- or herself as "artist" making an object that is contrived, posed, set apart from everyday life, just as the short stories and novels of contemporary fiction are contrived, posed, and separate from everyday life. These products proclaim, "Look at me, I'm art!" The producer of the ritual images in a Hindu village is not conscious of herself in this particular way. She is producing an image that derives its meaning from the part it plays in life, rather than as a contrived, posed object. (xx)

While I would challenge the adequacy, indeed the competence, of this as a description of Western art, it is at least clear that Hart is comparing two very different categories of activity. On the one hand, the ambitious Western artist operating in a professional market of agents, dealer galleries, and museums; against this familiar image she pits Indian women who decorate the walls of their houses with conventionalized religious designs as part of making a special occasion of a wedding. Hart says that beyond the careful, conscious use of aesthetic judgment in producing the paintings, there is a further human dimension absent from the Western point of comparison: "A woman, a mother, lovingly creates beautiful, emotion-filled, auspicious, important images for her own children for the purpose of helping them, of supporting them so they can succeed and be happy in the next stage of their lives."

Hart has chosen a false comparison. In fact, the history of the West is replete with countless mothers and prospective mothers-in-law who have labored at embroidery, knitting, and sewing, "producing" beautiful artifacts for their children's weddings, either as part of a trousseau or as decorative elements (e.g., decorated cakes) for the wedding day. These beautiful—or beautified—objects can be as lovingly created by European as by Indian women. Much of this output is cloth or fiber art, but it also would include decorated ceramics and items of household furniture. Some of these objects would embody religious themes. Why has Hart failed to mention comparable Western traditions of dowry or trousseau arts to place in relation to the *jyonthi* paintings of Uttar Pradesh? It is because she is guilty of the very ethnocentrism she accuses others of. She studies a genre of folk art in one culture and, seeing that it is a type of *painting*, looks within Western

culture to discover an analogue. Her mistake is to imagine that the comparison will be *painting* in Western culture. But if you want a comparison for a *jyonthi* painting, it is absurd to look at, say, a Diebenkorn hanging in a Western gallery. *Jyonthi* paintings belong with domestic and dowry arts of cultures worldwide, from beautifully woven Maori feather cloaks for infants to embroidered samplers to knitted blankets and painted cradles in European folk traditions. Elsewhere in her essay, Hart complains of the West's tendency to place a greater value on High Art traditions than on craft traditions. In fact, Hart does exactly that herself: she is so impressed by these Indian forms as *painting* that she fails to acknowledge the women's craft traditions associated with marriage celebrations and trousseaus in her own culture. They too can involve the loving and devoted exercise of skill and aesthetic judgment, and produce objects to help celebrate auspicious occasions and contribute to the success of the next generation.

II

Hart's analysis is an example of a widespread tendency to try to exaggerate cultural difference far beyond reality, to try to make a foreign art form seem more alien than it actually is. In her case the strategy entails taking what should seem to us a familiar art form and estranging it by finding an inappropriate practice in our own culture with which to compare it. Here is another strategy for achieving a similar end: to describe an art form strictly in terms of one of its aspects, omitting to mention features which would render it comprehensible to a Western audience, and from this drawing large conclusions about non-Western or tribal arts. In an essay entitled "The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology," Alfred Gell defends a general thesis about ethnographic arts in terms of the analysis of a single example, Trobriand Island canoe decoration.[2]

Gell begins by noting anthropology's general lack of regard for art, but he says this should be expected: social anthropology ought by its very nature to be anti-art. The aesthetic awe afforded by objects in the Museum of Mankind demonstrates what "is an unredeemably ethnocentric attitude, however laudable in other respects." Gell argues that the anthropological study of art should be carried out under the assumption of a "methodological philistinism," analogous to the "methodological atheism" required of the study of religion. "I would suggest that the study of aesthetics is to the domain of art as the study of theology is to the domain of religion." Just as anthropologists of religion must set aside their religious predilections, so anthropologists of art must ignore the aesthetic attractiveness of the objects and practices they study—the anthropology of art requires "a complete break with aesthetics" (42). With this in mind, Gell invites us to

consider the arts as components of "a vast and often unrecognized technical system, essential to the reproduction of human societies. . . ." He proposes that art be thus understood as a "technology of enchantment," where enchantment is seen not as peculiar only to art, but as a potentiality "immanent in all kinds of technical activity."

This potentiality is essentially magical, and Gell uses as his central example the stunning prow configurations of Trobriand Island canoes that are used for Kula expeditions. With their bright red and white paint and intricate carving sometimes resembling a mushroom, or recalling the scroll-like appendages of an Ionic capital, the prows are designed to dazzle and disorient the spectator, giving a possible trading advantage to the party which arrives in such a decorated canoe. So much is uncontroversial; one thinks of not only the psychological warfare of Kula transactions, but combat equipment, such as the fighting shields of Sepik and Highlands warriors of New Guinea, which often display horrific faces designed to frighten an enemy. It is not the bold effect of such work that impresses Gell, however. Instead, he emphasizes what he calls "the halo effect of technical difficulty" in Trobriand art. As a child, Gell tells us, he was deeply impressed by a matchstick model of Salisbury Cathedral: "from a small boy's point of view it was the ultimate work of art, much more entrancing in fact than the cathedral itself. . . ." He draws from this a very large conclusion about the reaction of all of us to works of art: "I am impressed by works of art in the extent to which I have difficulty . . . in mentally encompassing their coming-into-being as objects in the world accessible to me by a technical process which, since it transcends my understanding, I am forced to construe as magical" (49). Works of art become objects of mystery and fascination by virtue of their incomprehensibility as technical feats.

Gell attempts to reinforce this view by referring to J. F. Peto's 1894 trompe-l'oeil painting popularly known as *Old Scraps*, a highly realistic still life of letters, paper scraps, drawing pins, and faded ribbons tacked to old board. The fascination of this work, he claims, is that its audience cannot comprehend how mere paint could be used to create such a realistic representation. This "technical magic" gives the painting its prestige and value (a value no similar photograph could attain). Moreover, the meaning of *Old Scraps* in our aesthetic lives has analogies in the art of small-scale traditional societies. In the case of a Trobriand canoe splashboard, "it is very difficult to acquire the art of transforming the root-buttress of an ironwood tree, using the rather limited tools which the Trobrianders have at their disposal, into such a smooth and finished product" (54).

Magic is the ideal technology of such societies as the Trobrianders'; it enables one to accomplish a task instantly and effortlessly—rather than with uncertainty and effort. Art also exhibits technological mastery; hence Gell

argues that there is a "convergence" between the aims of ordinary technology, magic, and art—the last two being enchanted versions of the first. Like conjurers, artists who defy ordinary technical understanding are given the ambiguous status of being "half-technician and half-mystagogue." While this puts artists at a disadvantage in modern market societies, Gell claims, it gives them a special status in traditional societies such as the Trobriands'. Gell concludes with a description of Trobriand horticultural magic. The Trobriand garden is "a system of technical knowledge and at the same time a work of art, which produces yams by magic." The technology of enchantment is manifest in garden layout and poetry: "Just as when, confronted with some masterpiece, we are fascinated because we are essentially at a loss to explain how such an object comes to exist in the world, the litanies of the garden magician express the fascination of the Trobrianders with the efficacy of their actual technology which, converging towards the magical ideal, adumbrates this ideal in the real world" (62).

There is no doubt Gell's argument throws light on how some forms of ethnographic art might profitably be understood. However, the connecting of art with magic is plausible only so long as he attends to the general awe felt by audiences; but to appropriate in general the logic of artistic technique to magical technology is wrong. Considering Western art alone, the claim does not stand up. While there are many works of art which fascinate audiences as technical display (Peto's painting is a perfect example), and while technique is for many people virtually the only criterion for artistic value (hence the familiar abuse of modernism: "My kid could do that!"), technical excellence is not the main reason most European audiences are interested in art. At the present time the most popular art period, judged by print and art book sales and exhibition attendances, is French Impressionism, which is not a historical school particularly marked by technical display. Gell mentions that Rembrandt is admired for technical skill, but so are many other seventeenth-century painters who are rated much lower as artists.

That even Gell is uncomfortable with this position is indicated by his strained attempts to expand his conception of technique to include Picasso's bronze baboon whose head is a toy car (1955), and even Duchamp's *Fountain* (1917). This strategy only compounds Gell's error: *Baboon and Young* is a humorous but technically uninteresting piece, while *Fountain* is in part a direct attack on the very idea of technique in art. The point of Duchamp's readymades is that they are ordinary objects to which the artist does nothing except to present them in a gallery. If Gell can include this particular piece of plumbing in the class of technically accomplished works, then he has expanded the definition of "technique" to encompass witty or original gestures which involve no making-skill on the part of the artist.

This is not a load the term can intelligibly carry; *Fountain* is a famous work, but not because it exhibits extraordinary technique. Rather, it purports to show that it is possible for an object to be a work of art while demonstrating no technique whatsoever. The inclusion of Picasso and Duchamp here is not a minor confusion on Gell's part, but in fact undermines his whole effort to show that admiration for technical mastery—and with it a sense of magic and enchantment—is the central component of the aesthetic response.

Turning specifically to ethnographic arts, we encounter further uncertainties. Technical skill is perhaps more obviously admired in, say, Oceanic art traditions than in many European modernist exercises, but not always. Virtuoso carving, such as is seen on Trobriand splashboards, fits Gell's case very well, as would much Maori and Polynesian carving. But consider Sepik: in northern New Guinea wild expressiveness, rather than elaborate finish or virtuoso facility, is frequently the criterion of aesthetic excellence and cultural power. The same could be said of New Guinea Highlands shields, which are powerful as works of art through bold visual impact rather than noticeable technical accomplishment.

Moreover, while some cultures treat artists as a virtual priestly class, as possessors of special magical/aesthetic knowledge, others do not. This suggests another consideration contrary to Gell. He stresses that we are amazed, wondering of the artwork, "How was it done?" True indeed, especially with well-developed European technical traditions: as a sometime pianist, I have trouble conceiving what it takes to perform Liszt's *Transcendental Etudes* the way Georgy Cziffra does, and realistic painting in the style of J. F. Peto is impressive in a similar manner. But many small-scale traditional societies, lacking either the vast population or the extreme specialization of art-technical labor that makes possible the emergence of the likes of Cziffra or Peto, treat the artist not as a master of a kind of technical magic, but as a trained craftsman performing tasks anyone could learn. In the end, despite his universalizing ambitions, Gell fails to establish an acceptable way of looking across the whole range of art in traditional societies, falling into a kind of Trobriand localism.

III

I turn next to Susan M. Vogel, whose writing on tribal arts displays an eloquence and intellectual sophistication considerably exceeding that of the previous authors. Yet in her wonderful book *Baule: African Art, Western Eyes,* she begins with statements reflecting a point of view similar to theirs:

> This book is inspired by my enjoyment of certain objects of Baule material culture as works of art in a Western sense, but it seeks to explore what "artworks" mean

in Baule thinking and in individual Baule lives. For almost a century, Baule art has been recognized in Europe (and later in America) as one of Africa's most significant sculpture traditions. Although Baule art is important in the Western view of African art, the people who made and used these objects do not conceive them as "art," and may equate even the finest sculptures with mundane things, devoid of any visual interest, that have the same function and meaning. . . . "Art" in our sense does not exist in Baule villages, or if it does villagers might point to modern house decorations, rather than famous traditional sculptures still made and used in villages and evoked by the term "African art."[3]

Her support for this contention includes the following observations, among others. First, the Baule will "merge and equate" (*a*) spirits and unseen powers, (*b*) ordinary physical objects in which they dwell, such as a lump of clay, and (*c*) superb sculptures which they may also inhabit. However, only the last are works of art in the Western sense. Second, the Baule "attribute great powers to their artworks—powers that Western culture would mainly relegate to the realm of superstition. . . . Enormous powers of life and death are integral parts of the sculptures we admire in museums, and Baule people do not consider them apart from those powers." Third, and especially emphasized by Vogel, many of the most important artworks of the Baule are not meant to be seen by large audiences, or by just anybody, but are normally hidden from view, "kept in shuttered or windowless rooms that few people enter" or wrapped in cloth and taken out only infrequently. This sharply contrasts with the Western ethos of aesthetic objects which invite "intense, exalted looking" from a large audience (83). Looking itself is for the Baule a privileged and risky act, as the very sight of a sculpture can be fatal for the wrong person. This in turn has to do with the special place held by sight in Baule culture, where "seeing something is potentially more significant, more dangerous and contaminating, than touching or ingesting something" (110). (Thus, Vogel says, a woman inadvertently seeing a sacred men's mask might die from the event, whereas a blind woman who laid her hand on it but didn't realize what she was touching would not necessarily be so threatened; men might find the sight of a woman's genitals fatal.)

Do such considerations as these support the view that the Baule have a different conception of art from the West, that "art" in our sense cannot be found in Baule villages? No, they do not, as Vogel's subsequent account makes abundantly, repeatedly clear. She begins her account by describing masks and figure sculptures that have profound spiritual and intense personal significance to the Baule. These include personal portrait masks and so-called spirit spouses. Among those pieces, spiritual, magical, or personal aspects certainly loom larger in the minds of their owners than their aesthetic qualities, a fact which Western observers must take into account.

But the relationship of an art genre to a spiritual world is a consideration that applies to the arts of Western culture as well. Thus a majority of believers whose religious sentiments were inspired by Giotto's frescos at Padua might have been just as moved by similar frescos which did not approach Giotto's artistry; in other words, the original audience might have possessed little or no appreciation of the comparative *artistic* value, let alone historical importance, of Giotto's frescos, and would have been responding to them as religious narratives. Part of understanding the cultural importance of Giotto for his original audience and its local descendants is grasping the place of his work in a specific economy of *religious* thought, and religion, though often intermingled with art, need not be confused with it. That acknowledged, it is perfectly valid for an art historian to discuss the aspects of Giotto's work which form part of art history—technique, formal excellence, modes of representation—rather than religious or social history. Nor are the aesthetic qualities of Giotto's paintings and frescos accidental by-products of religion, however closely tied to religion that art may be. Their status as works of art is not threatened by their having been treated by most of their audience as mere biblical illustrations, or as colorful backdrops, barely to be noticed, for religious ceremonies.

But even taking into account the privacy and magical properties of Baule spirit carvings—or at least many of the ones most prized by Europeans—they are nevertheless subject by the Baule themselves to the same kinds of aesthetic characterizations applied to art carvings elsewhere. In fact, aesthetic appreciation of Baule carving is, Vogel admits, one of the points of agreement between Baule people and Western connoisseurs: "Baule artists, and the individual owners of objects, certainly sometimes enjoy the beauty of these objects and the skill it took to produce them" (29). Following Herbert Cole, Vogel says that Baule language points away from the "thingness" of art as noun, and emphasizes adverbial forms applied to carvings elegantly made to enhance, embellish, or empower in experience. The nounish sense of the English notion of "art" is not entirely appropriate in the Baule context, where adjectives and adverbs relevant to artistic experience are used as modifiers attached to personal life, moral and physical struggles, and, Vogel says, "the drabness of daily existence" (292). Nevertheless, Baule will refer to outstanding sculptures in Baule equivalents of *sweet, pleasing, beautiful,* and *good.* A common phrase is to praise something or someone as "beautiful as a statue"—recalling the English "pretty as a picture." Conversely, English has no hesitation to apply aesthetic modifiers to nonmaterial objects of appreciation: dances and musical performances, for example. Nor can a vast cultural gap be made of the fact that some of the spirit carvings are neither well nor often seen. As Vogel acknowledges in a note, "many works of European art (ceiling frescoes,

books of hours, hinged altarpieces) and numerous objects from other traditions (Japanese netsuke, Egyptian and other tomb furnishings, Chinese scrolls, Russian icons) were created in the full knowledge that they would be seen in low light, partially or at a distance, or only rarely, or privately by only a few people."

Moreover, beyond the personal and highly charged artworks which dominate the first half of Vogel's book, Vogel explains in a separate chapter that the Baule have a voluminous, purely secular decorative art. This includes doors, gold weights, stools, fans, combs, gong mallets, beautifully carved weaver's pulleys, and other decorated utilitarian objects. Because these sculpted artifacts are sold on their visual appeal, rather than being privately commissioned and kept out of view, they are very often of better technical quality than the more deeply important spiritual carvings. Their aesthetic quality also serves to advertise the skill of their makers, many of whom specialize in specific kinds of domestic object, such as ointment pots. Although increasingly replaced by machine-made objects today, they were, Vogel explains, "once very common, satisfying the basic desire for a pleasing, aestheticized environment" (270).

Through much of her discussion, Vogel is attempting to defamiliarize Baule art in the minds of her Western readers—requiring them to stop and think about the presuppositions they may bring to any appearance of the word "art"—in order that they might see the Baule objects as the magical and spiritual objects they are in the minds of many Baule people. In itself, this demand for a certain kind of "unlearning" of cultural habits is entirely laudable: it vastly extends the Western reader's understanding and appreciation—and, by the way, it is a strategy that could with profit be more often applied to Giotto as well. But it is a strategy that can encourage the false notion that the Baule do not have works of art and that we are ethnocentrically mistaken in calling their works "art." In fact, Vogel does not believe this herself, which is why, having tried to establish the strangeness of the Baule approach to art, she turns around near the end of her book to assure readers of its familiarity: "Nothing described in this book is completely unique to the Baule. In fact, the greatest interest of a tightly focused art study like this one may lie precisely in how much light it can shed on the place of art in other, distant cultures."

IV

How much different from a familiar practice in our culture must an alien practice, x, be in order to merit the designation, "They have a different concept of x from ours"? There is one extreme answer to this question, held earnestly and systematically to my knowledge by no ethnographers,

en hinted at or suggested informally: it is that version of cul-
n (sometimes called contextualism) which claims that since
of any concept is constituted by the other concepts and cul-
ı which it is embedded, concepts can never be intelligibly
compared cross-culturally. As every cultural system/context is different from every other, it follows therefore that any item within a system is strictly incomparable to any item in another system. Although counter to ordinary cross-cultural experience, the kind of thinking suggested by this incommensurability thesis—a rhetoric of cultural uniqueness—is attractive to some ethnographers who have specialized in specific cultures: it affords them a privileged standpoint, as they alone possess superior knowledge of the conceptual world of "their" tribe. The cultural interpretations of an ethnographer who knows the local language of a tribe, and has a grasp of the tribe's web of rarified or esoteric meaning, cannot easily be challenged or criticized by outsiders. And since no concept in any culture could embody exactly the meaning of any concept in any other culture, it follows that the translation of not only poetic language, but any language—along with comparison of political forms or social structures, judicial structures, cooking and eating practices, warfare, and especially works of art—would therefore be impossible.

In the actual realm of day-to-day ethnography, where comparison and the cross-cultural application of concepts are constantly practiced, such incommensurability is never actually advocated or viewed as given fact. Nevertheless, ethnographers will occasionally claim that a tribe "does not have our concept" of some practice or other. It is my contention that the notion of "a different concept" is stretched beyond intelligibility in most such contexts, and I have yet to see it used validly in connection with art. In the first place, the claim that a cultural form is unique, or that the concept which denotes it in our culture is useless or inapplicable in another culture, requires that the person making the claim have a firm command of the potentially comparable practices or meanings in Western culture with which the alien meaning might be analogized. This is not a purely theoretical issue, for it suggests a practical line of interrogation which ought to be applied to any ethnographer claiming cultural uniqueness for an alien meaning: *Are you confident you know enough about your own culture to make an incomparability claim?* This problem is at the core of the essay by Hart: through either ignorance or oversight, she fails to find the proper comparison for *jyonthi* painting, which is not European High Art gallery painting, but traditional religious folk painting practiced in the context of trousseau arts. Broadly speaking, this is a general deficiency of the anthropology of art. Too often, it has transpired that young anthropologists, possessing limited familiarity with the vast range of arts of Western history, perhaps on

their first overseas, let alone ethnographic, experience, set out to explain the subtle and intricate arts of remote tribal cultures. Some anthropologists may achieve descriptive accuracy and aesthetic insight in such an ethnographic exercise; many, however, are simply inadequate to the job.

With the Trobriand and Baule examples presented by Gell and Vogel, on the other hand, the issue is different. The magical powers associated with these arts do not commonly find a literal analogue in contemporary Western art practice (though they remind me in some respects of weeping or healing religious statues that periodically appear even today in Europe and the Americas, or outposts of Christianity, such as the Philippines). Nevertheless, we have no trouble appreciating the carving skill and aesthetic characteristics of Trobriand splashboards and Baule spirit spouse sculptures; we can also understand magical technologies (and economic objectives) as described by Gell as well as comprehend, thanks to Vogel, the psychological utility of the notion of the spirit spouse for the Baule. Combining our general ideas of art—even our nounish concept of a work of art or art-sculpture—with these other aspects of a foreign artistic/magical/religious practice is hardly an insurmountable task for the Western intellectual imagination. Vogel in particular paints a lucidly coherent picture of the world of Baule belief and art. Understanding what she says does not require even the slightest stretching or adjustment of "our concept" of art, however much she extends the category of objects we call art.

Consider by way of comparison another human practice, cooking. Suppose there existed a tribe whose only way of cooking food—any food, ever—was to boil it in water. Everything this people ever prepared and ate was either raw, unheated in any manner, or boiled. Would we say, "They have a different *concept* of cooking from us"? No; they cook food, though within a more limited repertoire of techniques than ours. But a greater range of techniques to carry out a practice does not in itself change the concept of that practice. The invention of the microwave oven did not change the concept of cooking; it provided a new way to do it. Our grandparents had our concept of cooking, even if they cooked different food and never used microwave ovens. Suppose, however, that we discovered a tribe that never heated food, had never heard of heating it, but always passed a spirit wand over it before eating it. Would we say they had "a different concept of cooking from ours"? Again, no; whatever else they are doing—blessing food, sanctifying it, warding off poisons, authorizing the occasion of its being eaten—they are not *cooking* it with a spirit wand (although the wand could act to "cook" symbolically if they already knew what cooking was; but the tribe would have to have the concept of cooking for that).

In parallel fashion, suppose some culture's concept of art included objects which, although sculpted out of wood, were *never* looked at with

amazement, pleasure, or fascination of any kind, in public or in private (or were expected to be looked at even by nonhuman entities, as by gods), were the subject of no critical vocabulary whatsoever, did not represent anything mimetically, were crafted in no discernibly regular style, and although employed as doorstops, were never accorded any attention beyond what was required to place them before open doors or to remove them in order to shut doors. Could we say that this tribe "has a different concept of art from ours"? No; on the evidence so far supplied, whatever else these objects are (doorstops, evidently), they are not "art in a sense different from the Western sense." *They are not works of art at all.* In order to qualify as works of art, in whatever attenuated, distant, strange, or obscure sense we might want to capture, the objects would have to share in *some* of those aspects—sensuous pleasure in experience, created in (or against) a traditional style, involving intense imaginative attention, skillfully made or performed, being symbolic or representative, expressing emotion or feeling, and so forth—that art shares not only in Western culture, but in the great art traditions of Asia and the rest of the world, including tribal cultures of Africa, the Americas, and Oceania. If there is no discernible connection with this established complex of ideas, it is not a new kind of art form; it is rather a category of object or practice distinct from art.

Art is not a technical concept (like "endorsing a check") confined to one culture—ours—and by either patronizing generosity or imperialist ambition extended to others. From a cross-cultural, transhistorical perspective, art is a vast assemblage of related practices—most probably ephemeral, some resulting in material objects, or recorded as texts—which can be connected in terms of analogues and homologies between all known human societies. The similarities and analogies are not difficult to see in comparing one culture with another, and in fact the anthropological literature leaves no doubt that all cultures have some form of art in a perfectly intelligible Western sense of the term. As Francis Sparshott says, the word "art" gestures vaguely "toward an immense, indeterminate, and disparate body of practice and theory with a dense and much-studied history."[4]

V

I note Sparshott's remark from its appearance in an essay by David Novitz, in which Novitz interprets Sparshott as wanting to emphasize the extent to which the concept of art is constructed differently by different cultures.[5] Our decisions about what is and is not art, Novitz argues, do not derive from some "essential nature of art but from certain historical and social contingencies." Such identifications on our part would not be "straightforward" or "undemanding," but would require that we understand "the

history and theory that pervades a tribal culture" (24). As works of art are "cultural, rather than natural kinds," the identification of something as a work of art presupposes cultural knowledge, rather than the noting of mere similarities (Novitz remarks on what a mistake it would be to classify Baule spirit spouses as "art" because they resemble Cubist sculpture). Novitz insists that

> there is no one way that an artifact must be in order to be a work of art; there are shades, degrees, nuances, and subtleties bred of social life, all of which defy straightforward empirical investigation and so cannot be captured in precise formulations and rigorous definitions; still less by appeal to artistic laws or aesthetic universals. Rather, the decision to treat an artifact as a work of art is made in terms of criteria that have much to do with the historically-shaped life of a society; criteria that are of significance only because of their social location—the beliefs, preferences, values, and social arrangements that prevail within a society at a given time, and which make *these* features (rather than *those*) a mark of arthood. (26)

It follows for Novitz that we could not identify a work of art as such without first identifying it as belonging to a culture. As for such objects as the twin surrogate carvings of the Yoruba, they are "difficult to identify as works of art in the prevailing sense of the term," while "it would be at best misleading, at worst inaccurate" to describe Baule spirit spouse carvings as works of art "in any full-blooded sense of the term"; they are not "works of art in our sense of this word."

What, however, is "our" sense of the word "art"? Novitz does not say precisely, though his Western examples—standard paintings and sculptures, Van Eyck, Picasso, Michelangelo—suggest that for him at least the Western sense of "art," at least insofar as it pertains to visual artifacts, refers primarily to conventional museum works. This feeling is reinforced by his passing denial that in our culture banknotes, vintage cars, and postage stamps are works of art. At one point he discusses how we might know "whether a tribal artifact is *art* in our sense of this word," and then adds, "that is, in the only sense of the word we understand." This strikes me as a very odd remark. Even if we accept that our sense of the English word *art* is the only sense we understand, what does that come to? My sense of *art*, the sense I imagine is shared by most educated contemporary speakers of modern European languages (and certainly not only Europeans), does not refer exclusively to European art, but to all things in human history to which the term might reasonably refer, including art objects and artistic activities of non-Western cultures and distant historical times—objects, practices, and performances I've not experienced yet, but will someday. Similarly, we would intend that our concept of language does not refer to our language alone—for example, English—but to all languages, regard-

less of whether we can speak them, know what they are called, or even yet know they exist. (This is so even if the first thing we might think of as an example of a language is our own language; asked to imagine a bird, I might well think first of a sparrow or a robin, but still realize that penguins, kiwis, dodos, condors, and ruby-throated hummingbirds are birds as well.) The "only sense of 'art' we understand" cannot be a sense that refers only to art we already know. Art, in European thinking in any event, is an open concept, and like the concepts of religion, government, or sport, art stands ready to cover new instances and incarnations.

In a famous remark in *Art,* Clive Bell says that "either all works of visual art have some common quality, or when we speak of 'works of art' we gibber."[6] He meant, of course, that they have in common more than being referred to by the same word—there must be a some deep reason why that word is applied to such apparently different objects. This fundamental truth, as Bell realized, has at least as much pertinence in the discourse of cross-cultural aesthetics as it has for disputes about visual art within Bell's (and our) culture. I have the impression many of the theorists who have written of "art in our sense" suppose the meaning of the term is a function of its class of referents; even if they might deny it as a bald assertion, they write implicitly as though "our sense" of the term is governed by "our" referents, "the only ones we know." The two problems suggested by this are, first, that if our sense of "art" were determined by its referents, that sense would therefore be constantly changing, as it is extended daily to refer to objects and performances offered both from within our culture and from beyond it. But, second, how would we even known when to extend the application of "art," if we didn't have some principle of application which validates bringing new objects and performances under it? There must be stable elements in its meaning; to deny this entails that we go about arbitrarily calling anything art.

Although he does not provide a full-blooded definition of art to accompany his mention of the "full-blooded sense of the term," David Novitz does hint at the existence of at least one fundamental criterion for art, basing his view on a suggestive remark by Monroe Beardsley: "in creating works of art we humanize the earth as we can in no other way, we warm it for ourselves, make a place where we belong. . . ." This has a nice, almost Heideggerian ring to it, but as Novitz notes, it does not tell us very much, and in any event it invites the refutation that some paradigmatic art makes its audience feel rather more alienated than at home on the humanized earth. I interpret Beardsley's statement as pointing vaguely toward the rather un-Beardsleyean notion of art as the affirmation of cultural identity. This construal would be consistent with the emphasis Novitz places on culturally constructed ways in which art affects us: "If the capacity of an

artifact to enrich particular lives is not merely incidental to it but derives from its form and content, and if the artifact can be seen to instantiate the values that people live by, so that it somehow *legitimates their existence and enhances their sense of who and what they are,* and if, furthermore, the artifact is valued for this sort of complex reason, we would, given the present moral ethos in which we live, be inclined to endorse the claim (should it be made) that it is a work of art" (25, italics added). Novitz is clearly right about many art objects and the activities associated with them, viewed cross-culturally: they enrich lives and amplify a sense of personal and cultural identity. But many objects and activities which are not art by Novitz's own description—collecting the stamps of one's homeland, perhaps, or tooling about the countryside in one's vintage car—accomplish the same goal nonartistically. Novitz distinguishes art identity-building from nonart identity-building with his qualification that the identity-building capacity of art should derive from its "form and content," rather than content alone. Here he invokes a familiar and quite traditional Western criterion for art: that art's value derives from the fusion of form and content, rather than from content (mere information or practical communication) alone. Yet over all, it seems to me that despite the fact that "the present moral ethos" of contemporary multicultural society may stress the enhancement of a sense of "who and what we are" as an important function for art, there is vastly more going on in the production and enjoyment of art cross-culturally than is even suggested, let alone captured, by such a formulation.

Noël Carroll has remarked on the way that art theories, despite claims to universality, are often rooted in aesthetic issues and debates of their own times. Thus, Carroll says, the theories of Clive Bell and R. G. Collingwood "are defenses of emerging avant-garde practices—neoimpressionism, on the one hand, and the modernist poetics of Joyce, Stein, and Eliot on the other."[7] Susanne Langer can be read as providing a justification for modern dance, while the initial version of George Dickie's institutional theory "requires something like the presupposition that Dada is a central form of artistic practice" in order to gain intuitive appeal. Arthur Danto's near-obsessional theorizing about indiscernible art/nonart objects, such as Warhol and supermarket Brillo boxes, derives from a special, and recent, theoretical problem, and I would add that Novitz's implicit conception of art seems to grow, directly or indirectly, from current preoccupations with personal and cultural identity. None of these kinds of theoretical approach, emerging as they do from the concerns of their originating cultures, seem to me especially appropriate to the arts of small-scale, nonliterate tribal societies, though each has partial relevance.[8]

I would not contend that art theory is explained away by being historicized and relativized to the social conditions or preoccupations of the

theorist. But there is no denying Carroll's gentle suggestion that the artistic interests and preoccupations of a theorist have the potential to affect, intentionally or not, the scope and substance of a theory, and that much of the art theory of this century has been connected to justifications of avant-garde European art, and therefore, I would add, might be of only marginal relevance to understanding the arts of small-scale, nonliterate cultures. Moreover, the insistence by philosophers on trying to hone definitions to the greatest scope combined with the greatest simplicity, understood traditionally as a perspicuous and finite set of necessary and sufficient conditions, may work against understanding in a domain, in particular a domain as ragged and multilayered as that of tribal art. This, in any event, is the conclusion to which I have been forced by my own practical fieldwork and literature research into tribal arts, and in this respect at least I find myself in full agreement with Novitz's remark that "precise formulations and rigorous definitions" are of little help in capturing the meaning of art cross-culturally. Still, just because, as Novitz says, there is "no one way" to be a work of art, in tribal society or any other, it does not follow that the converse "many ways" are so hopelessly numerous as to be unspecifiable. In fact, that they are specifiable, however disputatiously, is required by the very existence of a literature on cross-cultural aesthetics, arguments which make it possible for Novitz or me to publish views on the subject in aesthetics journals.

These considerations persuade me to approach tribal arts as a subject for philosophic inquiry through an indefinite list of features characteristic of art in tribal, small-scale, nonliterate cultures. While I do not claim that any one feature on this list is indefeasibly criterial for art in a tribal context, this list, or something close to it, is what makes possible cross-cultural discourse about art in general. Granting that there may be marginal cases, by arts I mean artifacts (sculptures, paintings, and decorated objects, such as tools or the human body) on the one hand, and performances (dances, music, and the composition and recitation of stories) on the other hand. Features on this list can be found in the work of such writers as Richard L. Anderson,[9] and the ethnographer and philosopher H. Gene Blocker,[10] and are even informally discussed by the philosopher Julius Moravcsik.[11] Although it is intended to apply to every known tribal society, it has larger relevance, since every known society, tribal or large-scale, makes and appreciates some form of art object or artistic performance. Not every element on the list can be associated with or incorporated into every art of a small-scale, nonliterate culture, but most can be.

1. The art object, either narrative story, crafted artifact, or visual and aural performance, is a source of pleasure in itself, rather than a

practical tool or source of information. Its material embodiment may be a tool (a shield, a knife) or a source of information (a sacred poem), but aspects of the embodiment give pleasure in experience aside from these practical or information/communication considerations. (This pleasure is often called aesthetic pleasure; but I avoid the word *aesthetic* as implicitly circular, and in any event unnecessary, in this context.)

2. The making of the object or the performance requires the exercise of a specialized skill. This skill is learned in an apprentice tradition in some societies or in others may be picked up by anyone who finds that she or he "has a knack" for it. Where the skill is acquired by virtually everybody in the culture, such as with communal singing or dancing, there are still to be individuals who stand out by virtue of special talents. Technical artistic skills are noticed in small-scale societies and are generally admired.
3. Art objects and performances (including oral narratives) are made in recognizable styles, according to rules of form and composition. The degree of stylistic determination varies as much in tribal cultures as in the arts of literate civilizations, with some sacred objects and performances being tightly circumscribed by tradition, with others open to free, creative, individual variation. The style may be the culture's, or a family's, or be the invention of an individual; styles involve borrowing and sudden alteration, as well as slow, evolving changes.
4. There exists some kind of indigenous critical language of judgment and appreciation, simple or elaborate, that is applied to tribal arts. This may include the shop talk of art producers or evaluative discourse of audiences. Unlike the arts themselves, which can be immensely complicated, it has often been remarked that this critical discourse is in oral cultures sometimes rudimentary compared with the art discourse of literate European history. It can, however, be elaborate.
5. In widely varying degrees of naturalism, art objects, including sculptures, paintings, and oral narratives, represent or imitate real and imaginary experience of the world. The differences between naturalistic representation, highly stylized representation, and nonimitative symbolism are understood by artists and their audiences in ways directly intelligible to Western observers. (Thus Danto's view that there is "no distortion" in African art is certainly false from an indigenous perspective.[12] Africans understand the distinction between highly realistic representations and stylistically distorted images or symbols; the distinction between naturalistic realism and stylized distortion is not a cultural construction.)
6. The pleasures afforded by the arts of small-scale societies to their

indigenous audiences are consciously intended by the makers of such objects, even if the object's indigenous meaning or importance is primarily utilitarian or nonartistic. Aesthetic or artistic pleasure as an accidental by-product of nonartistic activities is as common or as rare in tribal societies as it is in our society. The suggestion that tribal peoples might generally create things beautiful (to them or to us) without realizing it, or that they make things which are beautiful to us but to which they are wholly indifferent, is certainly false.

7. Works of art and artistic performances are frequently bracketed off from ordinary life, made a special and dramatic focus of experience. While there are plenty of mundane artistic objects and performances (such as decorated parts of Baule looms, or communal singing done to pass the time while mending fishing nets), every known culture has special artworks or performances which involve what Ellen Dissanayake calls "making special." [13] These occasions are often imbued with intense emotion.
8. Finally, and among the more important characteristics, the experience of art in tribal societies is an imaginative experience for both producers and audiences. The carving may realistically represent an animal, but as a sculpture it becomes an imaginative object. The same can be said of any story well told, whether mythology or personal history. The costumed dance by firelight, with its intense unity of purpose among the performers, possesses an imaginative element which transcends mere group exercise. In tribal cultures, as elsewhere in the history of human life, art happens in the theater of the imagination.

There are other potential candidates for this list, items which, though perhaps more marginal or controversial, might warrant inclusion. Blocker, for example, thinks there is a near universality in tribal societies of the idea that the artist is considered "eccentric, or a bit socially awkward." [14] He also thinks the inherent tension between artistic tradition and novelty is a general aspect of tribal arts. I find both of these features appealing as candidates for the list, because they accord strikingly with my experience in the New Guinea village of Yentchenmangua. David Novitz's notion of art as affirming the identity of a culture is also a relevant potential general characteristic, and could be applied especially to the more theatrical, large-scale ceremonial occasions of tribal society, which often seem rather like patriotic rallies. But I shall for now limit the list to the central eight characteristics I have recounted.

In their introduction to *The Adapted Mind,* Jerome H. Barkow, Leda Cosmides, and John Tooby contend that for the last few generations anthropologists have been prone systematically to overemphasize the differ-

ences between world cultures at the expense of recognizing similarities and pancultural universals. They quote with approval Maurice Bloch's remark that anthropologists are guilty of a form of "professional malpractice" in the extent to which they have tried "to exaggerate the exotic character of other cultures." [15] This tendency, as I have noted throughout, has certainly infected the anthropological approach to art. Such mystification in ethnographic aesthetics often consists in focusing attention on what in any event is a marginal instance of art in another culture, or perhaps not art at all, and treating it as though it were characteristic of some exotic aesthetic form undreamt of in our philosophy, and therefore assaulted our aesthetic ethnocentrism. The standard strategy is: find a putative art object in a tribal society about which early ethnographers were wrong, or one which confounds any simple attempt at understanding, and you've demonstrated that "they don't have art in our sense."

Among the Yoruba, twins are minor deities, and there is a genre of wood carvings to honor deceased twins, whose spirits in the older religion inhabit the sculptures. As Susan Vogel explains, however, this tradition is in decline, particularly among Muslim and Christian families.[16] The older carvings, of which there are many stunning examples, are being replaced in some instances by simplified carvings of low relief, and in others by cheap, imported, mass-produced, plastic dolls (with European features). Increasingly, no sculpture appears at all in the twin cult, but rather photographs, where the surviving twin often stands in for its deceased sibling. Both Vogel and David Novitz are impressed by the alacrity with which Yoruba people have been willing to supplant wood sculptures with cheap plastic dolls. Vogel sees these practices as "an updating of the tradition without rupture," as "an imaginative use of imported items as replacements for traditional artworks." Novitz draws from this phenomenon a more radical conclusion: the *ibeji* sculptures, since they are so easily replaced by mass-produced dolls that "most assuredly would not be considered art in our culture," are therefore "appreciated not for their originality, nor for their beauty, nor yet for their proportions; they are appreciated primarily as quasi-religious artifacts that allow the beneficial influence of the deceased twin to persist in the parents' lives" (27). The *ibeji* carvings, Novitz says, "occupy a social space in Yoruba society that is remote from the social space occupied by works of art in our society."

I can see no argument in any of this showing why either the older or more recent *ibeji* carving is not art. Particularly the older *ibeji* sculptures are (*a*) skillfully made objects, (*b*) produced in a recognizable, conventional style, (*c*) subject to a critical vocabulary among carvers and owners, (*d*) treated as very special objects, though in a private sense rather than for public display, (*e*) mimetic representations of the figure of a child, with conventional oversized head, and (*f*) imaginative objects—that is, they stand for the dead

child and are inhabited by its spirit, but do not literally replace it. Taken together, these features are sufficient to call *ibeji* carvings works of art. In this respect I cannot share Vogel's bland acceptance of these changes as an imaginative updating of a tradition. Like the replacement of Pueblo pottery by cheap (and more practical) tin pots in the nineteenth-century Southwest, the invasion of the Yoruba *ibeji* cult by Taiwanese plastic toys does not constitute the further development of an artistic tradition, but its very death. In any event, none of this is relevant to whether historic or contemporary specimens of *ibeji* carving are art. There may be many reasons for the ready acceptance of plastic dolls as *ibeji.* Certainly, the Christianizing of Yoruba life is a major factor. Perhaps there are Yoruba mothers who are too poor to commission carvings, or are simply uninterested in *ibeji* statues as distinctly Yoruba art (thus, incidentally, casting doubt on whether the enrichment or enhancement of Yoruba identity with art makes any difference to them, at least in this case). The brightly colored plastic dolls may even have sheer novelty appeal. But in general, that there are people in any culture who do not care for an indigenous art, or who lose interest in it long enough for it to die out, so far tells us nothing about whether it actually is an art form. To construe the importation of plastic dolls into Yoruba life as showing that they have a different concept of art from us, or that their *ibeji* carvings are not art in our sense, is yet another confounding, exoticizing, and mystifying digression in ethnographic aesthetics.

The concentration by theorists of ethnographic art on dubious cases drawn from the ambiguous margins of the artistic life of tribal peoples (areas where art disappears, or is gradually replaced by ritual, religion, or practical concerns), on misleadingly described artistic practices, or on needless attempts to make foreign arts exotic, has inclined many aestheticians to give up the search for artistic universals, or at best to remain silent on the subject. But neither the universality of art nor the universality of its central features is endangered by the existence of marginal or disputed cases of art in tribal (or European) culture. The investigation of ethnographic arts is only impeded by the dogmatic refusal to discuss and debate their general features. The list I have provided does not insist that each of its eight characteristics will be present in every work of art. I do claim that any human practice which had none of the features enumerated would not be art, and that any human practice which possessed most of them would be art; not "art in our sense," but art in the sense that characterizes it through the whole of human history. If this seems an unacceptably vague conclusion, that may be because the evolved, universal tendency of human beings to have art of some description in their lives does not produce a body of practice and artifact that is amenable to definition in terms precise enough to satisfy some theorists. But as anyone who has attempted figure drawing will attest, the human body, marvelous mechanism that it is, did not evolve

in order to be an easy subject for artists. Nor, *pace* the simplifying impulses of theory, did the arts evolve in order to make life easy for philosophers.

NOTES

1. Lynn M. Hart, "Three Walls: Regional Aesthetics and the International Art World," in *The Traffic in Culture: Refiguring Art and Anthropology,* ed. George E. Marcus and Fred R. Myers (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 127–50.

2. Alfred Gell, "The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology," in *Anthropology, Art, and Aesthetics,* ed. Jeremy Coote and Anthony Shelton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 40–63.

3. Susan Mullin Vogel, *Baule: African Art, Western Eyes* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

4. Francis E. Sparshott, "Art and Anthropology," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 55 (1997): 239.

5. David Novitz, "Art by Another Name," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 38 (1998): 19–32.

6. Clive Bell, *Art* (1913; New York: Capricorn, 1958), 17.

7. Noël Carroll, "Identifying Art," in *Institutions of Art: Reconsiderations of George Dickie's Philosophy,* ed. Robert J. Yanal (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 15.

8. I have in particular objected to Arthur C. Danto's analysis of tribal arts in terms of indiscernible artifacts of the contemporary Western artworld. His essay "Artifact and Art" was first published in *Art/Artifact,* ed. Susan M. Vogel (New York: Center for African Art, 1988). My response is "Tribal Art and Artifact," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 51 (1993): 15–29.

9. Richard L. Anderson, *Calliope's Sisters: A Comparative Study of Philosophies of Art* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1990).

10. H. Gene Blocker, *The Aesthetics of Primitive Art* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1993).

11. Julius Moravcsik, "Why Philosophy of Art in a Cross-Cultural Perspective?" *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 50 (1992): 233–49.

12. "David Hockney once told me that he believed that there is no such thing as distortion, and while I think him wrong in general, he is right about African art, where there are no distortions." Danto, "Artifact and Art," 32.

13. Ellen Dissanayake, *Homo Aestheticus* (New York: Free Press, 1992), chap. 3.

14. Blocker, *Aesthetics of Primitive Art,* 148.

15. Jerome H. Barkow, Leda Cosmides, and John Tooby, *The Adapted Mind: Evolutionary Psychology and the Generation of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 43–44.

16. Susan M. Vogel, "Elastic Continuum," in *Africa Explores: 20th Century African Art,* ed. Susan M. Vogel (New York: Center for African Art, 1991), 32–55, 88–89.

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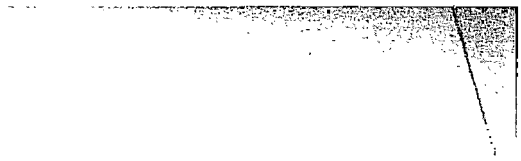

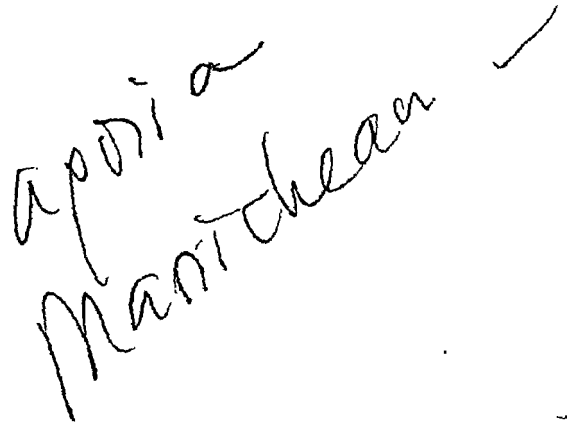

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