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# PART 9

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## Philosophy of Art

### Introduction

GABRIELA SAKAMOTO

The philosophy of art is a branch of inquiry that seeks to explore the nature of artworks and our relationship to them. Work in the philosophy of art is as diverse as art itself, and it would be inaccurate to say that there is presently a single set of issues or concepts defining this field. Rather than attempt to capture such diversity, the readings in this section focus on two central questions in the philosophy of art: can art be defined? Are aesthetic responses and judgments merely subjective?

Although most of us can cite examples of paintings, movies, pieces of music, works of literature, etc. that we would consider to be works of art, specifying what makes these things art is extremely difficult. Attempts to define this category of objects have ranged from appeals to imitation, to expression, and to formal properties of the work. According to Morris Weitz, however, any attempt to define art is misconceived. The very nature of art and of creativity, Weitz argues, demands that art is an “open concept,” that there be no necessary and sufficient conditions for its application.

In opposition to Weitz, George Dickie contends that art can be defined and, moreover, defined in such a way that does not undermine “the expansive, adventurous character of art.” For Dickie, an artwork is any artifact that an art-world public (audiences, critics, curators, artists, etc.) deems a candidate of appreciation. Arthur Danto has a similar approach toward understanding the nature of art. For Danto, it is an object’s place in a specific historical and theoretical context that gives it the status of art. It is this kind of “art world” that gives artworks their meaning. Once this history has run its course, Danto suggests, the notion of art will also come to an end. Theories of art that rely on the importance of history and social context to define art, however, may not be without problems. As Peg Zeglin Brand argues in her essay, such theories may, in fact, perpetrate traditional prejudices against certain kinds of art and artists by relying on male-dominated paradigms of aesthetic production and reception.

Brand’s skepticism that our understanding of what art is may not have a basis in objective fact raises a more general question concerning the ground for any judgment of aesthetic value and significance. Can aesthetic judgments ever be correct or incorrect? Or are art and beauty,

as the saying goes, merely in the eye of the beholder? The selections by David Hume and Immanuel Kant represent two of the most important discussions on this issue. Both Hume and Kant hold that judgments of taste are grounded in feelings of pleasure. Yet for neither thinker does it follow that there are no norms for such judgments, that our feelings cannot be said to be proper or improper or that we can never demand agreement from others. For Hume, widespread differences of feeling in matters of taste are generally a result of prejudice, lack of sensibility, or lack of knowledge. Only those immune to such defects can be said to be "true judges," and for Hume, it is precisely in the "joint verdict" of a community of such judges that we find standards of correctness.

Kant, on the other hand, locates the basis for agreement in the nature of aesthetic judgments themselves. For Kant, true judgments of taste or beauty are "disinterested," completely free of any desire for or interest in the object perceived. So, while aesthetic judgments are grounded on individual feeling, there is nothing in them that accounts for one person's judgment differing from another's. This is why a person making such a judgment can insist that his or her pleasure in an object is of universal assent, that others ought to feel and thus judge the object in the same way.

Kendall Walton's essay "Categories of Art" is a contemporary reflection on issues raised by Hume and Kant. For Walton, our interpretations of a work are dependent on the categories in which we see it. In order to make adequate judgments of aesthetic value, we need to know whether the work is a painting, a poem, a symphony, etc. Of course, there can be much debate as to what the defining essence, and thus value, of a particular medium is. Ted Cohen argues, for example, that it may be misleading to place too much aesthetic significance on the idea that photographs, unlike other forms of pictorial representation, stand in a direct relationship to reality or that they are produced by a mechanical process.

For Walton, insofar as there exist criteria for belonging to a certain category, only persons who see the work in the appropriate category are in a position to make correct judgments about it. While this is Walton's way of solving the problem that faced both Hume and Kant, the implications of Walton's view are different. First, aesthetic judgments require specialized knowledge. Understanding art involves more than just developing a keen perceptual sensibility—we must also know about the conditions and history of particular media. Second, contrary to Kant's view, responding appropriately to an artwork demands some degree of conceptualization or even guided interest, for without some prior idea as to what category the artwork belongs, in what way it fits or fails to fit with the history and conditions of its medium, no aesthetic judgment can get off the ground.

In the end, this suggests that it may be wrong to think there exists a philosophy of art at all. Rather, it may be better to think in terms of philosophies of art. Yet whether one chooses to think of the individual arts as connected by a common essence or as largely independent categories, what matters, of course, is that our debates over art continue. If Morris Weitz is right, the very possibility of art and our enduring interest in it is a direct consequence of art always changing. To a large extent, it is philosophical inquiry and reflection that keep it so.

# The Role of Theory in Aesthetics



MORRIS WEITZ

Morris Weitz (1916–1981) was Richard Koret Professor of Philosophy at Brandeis University. He was one of the first to apply the methods of analytic philosophy to problems in aesthetics. Among his numerous writings in the philosophy of art are *Hamlet and the Philosophy of Literary Criticism* and *The Opening Mind*.

Theory has been central in aesthetics and is still the preoccupation of the philosophy of art. Its main avowed concern remains the determination of the nature of art which can be formulated into a definition of it. It construes definition as the statement of the necessary and sufficient properties of what is being defined, where the statement purports to be a true or false claim about the essence of art, what characterizes and distinguishes it from everything else. Each of the great theories of art—Formalism, Voluntarism, Emotionalism, Intellectualism, Intuitionism, Organicism—converges on the attempt to state the defining properties of art. Each claims that it is the true theory because it has formulated correctly into a real definition the nature of art; and that the others are false because they have left out some necessary or sufficient property. Many theorists contend that their enterprise is no mere intellectual exercise but an absolute necessity for any understanding of art and our proper evaluation of it. Unless we know what art is, they say, what are its necessary and sufficient properties, we cannot begin to respond to it adequately or to say why one work is good or better than another. Aesthetic theory, thus, is important not only in itself but for the foundations of both appreciation and criticism. Philosophers, critics, and even artists who have written on art agree that what is primary in aesthetics is a theory about the nature of art.

Is aesthetic theory, in the sense of a true definition

or set of necessary and sufficient properties of art, possible? If nothing else does, the history of aesthetics itself should give one enormous pause here. For, in spite of the many theories, we seem no nearer our goal today than we were in Plato's time. Each age, each art-movement, each philosophy of art, tries over and over again to establish the stated ideal only to be succeeded by a new or revised theory, rooted, at least in part, in the repudiation of preceding ones. Even today, almost everyone interested in aesthetic matters is still deeply wedded to the hope that the correct theory of art is forthcoming. We need only examine the numerous new books on art in which new definitions are proffered; or, in our own country especially, the basic textbooks and anthologies to recognize how strong the priority of a theory of art is.

In this essay I want to plead for the rejection of this problem. I want to show that theory—in the requisite classical sense—is *never* forthcoming in aesthetics, and that we would do much better as philosophers to supplant the question, "What is the nature of art?" by other questions, the answers to which will provide us with all the understanding of the arts there can be. I want to show that the inadequacies of the theories are not primarily occasioned by any legitimate difficulty such as, e.g., the vast complexity of art, which might be corrected by further probing and research. Their basic inadequacies reside instead in a fundamental misconception of art. Aesthetic the-

ory—all of it—is wrong in principle in thinking that a correct theory is possible because it radically misconstrues the logic of the concept of art. Its main contention that “art” is amenable to real or any kind of true definition is false. Its attempt to discover the necessary and sufficient properties of art is logically misguided for the very simple reason that such a set and, consequently, such a formula about it, is never forthcoming. Art, as the logic of the concept shows, has no set of necessary and sufficient properties; hence a theory of it is logically impossible and not merely factually difficult. Aesthetic theory tries to define what cannot be defined in its requisite sense. But in recommending the repudiation of aesthetic theory I shall not argue from this, as too many others have done, that its logical confusions render it meaningless or worthless. On the contrary, I wish to reassess its role and its contribution primarily in order to show that it is of the greatest importance to our understanding of the arts.

Let us now survey briefly some of the more famous extant aesthetic theories in order to see if they do incorporate correct and adequate statements about the nature of art. In each of these there is the assumption that it is the true enumeration of the defining properties of art, with the implication that previous theories have stressed wrong definitions. Thus, to begin with, consider a famous version of Formalist theory, that propounded by Bell and Fry. It is true that they speak mostly of painting in their writings but both assert that what they find in that art can be generalized for what is “art” in the others as well. The essence of painting they maintain, is the plastic elements in relation. Its defining property is significant form, i.e., certain combinations of lines, colors, shapes, volumes—everything on the canvas except the representational elements—which evoke a unique response to such combinations. Painting is definable as plastic organization. The nature of art, what it *really* is, so their theory goes, is a unique combination of certain elements (the specifiable plastic ones) in their relations. Anything which is art is an instance of significant form; and anything which is not art has no such form.

To this the Emotionalist replies that the truly essential property of art has been left out. Tolstoy, Ducasse, or any of the advocates of this theory, find that the requisite defining property is not significant

form but rather the expression of emotion in some sensuous public medium. Without projection of emotion into some piece of stone or words or sounds, etc., there can be no art. Art is really such embodiment. It is this that uniquely characterizes art, and any true, real definition of it contained in some adequate theory of art, must so state it.

The Intuitionist disclaims both emotion and form as defining properties. In Croce’s version, for example, art is identified not with some physical, public object but with a specific creative, cognitive, and spiritual art. Art is really a first stage of knowledge in which certain human beings (artists) bring their images and intuitions into lyrical clarification or expression. As such, it is an awareness, non-conceptual in character, of the unique individuality of things; and since it exists below the level of conceptualization or action, it is without scientific or moral content. Croce singles out as the defining essence of art this first stage of spiritual life and advances its identification with art as a philosophically true theory or definition.

The Organicist says to all of this that art is really a class of organic wholes consisting of distinguishable, albeit inseparable, elements in their causally efficacious relations which are presented in some sensuous medium. In A. C. Bradley, in piecemeal versions of it in literary criticism, or in my own generalized adaptation of it in my *Philosophy of the Arts*, what is claimed is that anything which is a work of art is in its nature a unique complex of interrelated parts—in painting, for example, lines, colors, volumes, subjects, etc., all interacting upon one another on a paint surface of some sort. Certainly, at one time at least it seemed to me that this organic theory constituted the one true and real definition of art.

My final example is the most interesting of all, logically speaking. This is the Voluntarist theory of Parker. In his writings on art, Parker persistently calls into question the traditional simpleminded definitions of aesthetics. “The assumption underlying every philosophy of art is the existence of some common nature present in all the arts.”<sup>1</sup> “All the so popular brief definitions of art—‘significant form,’ ‘expression,’ ‘intuition,’ ‘objectified pleasure’—all fallacious, either because, while true of art, they are also true of much that is not art, and hence fail to differentiate art from

other things; or else because they neglect some essential aspect of art."<sup>2</sup> But instead of inveighing against the attempt at definition of art itself, Parker insists that what is needed is a complex definition rather than a simple one. "The definition of art must therefore be in terms of a complex of characteristics. Failure to recognize this has been the fault of all the well-known definitions."<sup>3</sup> His own version of Voluntarism is the theory that art is essentially three things: embodiment of wishes and desires imaginatively satisfied, language, which characterizes the public medium of art, and harmony, which unifies the language with the layers of imaginative projections. Thus, for Parker, it is a true definition to say of art that it is "the provision of satisfaction through the imagination, social significance, and harmony. I am claiming that nothing except works of art possesses all three of these marks."<sup>4</sup>

Now, all these sample theories are inadequate in many different ways. Each purports to be in a complete statement about the defining features of all works of art and yet each of them leaves out something which the others take to be central. Some are circular, e.g., the Bell-Fry theory of art as significant form which is defined in part in terms of our response to significant form. Some of them, in their search for necessary and sufficient properties, emphasize too few properties, like (again) the Bell-Fry definition, which leaves out subject-representation in painting, or the Croce theory, which omits inclusion of the very important feature of the public, physical character, say, of architecture. Others are too general and cover objects that are not art as well as works of art. Organicism is surely such a view since it can be applied to *any* causal unity in the natural world as well as to art.<sup>5</sup> Still others rest on dubious principles, e.g., Parker's claim that art embodies imaginative satisfactions, rather than real ones; or Croce's assertion that there is nonconceptual knowledge. Consequently, even if art has one set of necessary and sufficient properties, none of the theories we have noted or, for that matter, no aesthetic theory yet proposed has enumerated that set to the satisfaction of all concerned.

Then there is a different sort of difficulty. As real definitions, these theories are supposed to be factual reports on art. If they are, may we not ask, Are they empirical and open to verification or falsification? For example, what would confirm or disconfirm the

theory that art is significant form or embodiment of emotion or creative synthesis of images? There does not even seem to be a hint of the kind of evidence which might be forthcoming to test these theories; and indeed one wonders if they are perhaps honorific definitions of "art," that is, proposed redefinitions in terms of some *chosen* conditions for applying the concept of art, and not true or false reports on the essential properties of art at all.

But all these criticisms of traditional aesthetic theories—that they are circular, incomplete, untestable, pseudo-factual, disguised proposals to change the meaning of concepts—have been made before. My intention is to go beyond these to make a much more fundamental criticism, namely, that aesthetic theory is a logically vain attempt to define what cannot be defined, to state the necessary and sufficient properties of that which has no necessary and sufficient properties, to conceive the concept of art as closed when its very use reveals and demands its openness.

The problem with which we must begin is not "What is art?" but "What sort of concept is 'art'?" Indeed, the root problem of philosophy itself is to explain the relation between the employment of certain kinds of concepts and the conditions under which they can be correctly applied. If I may paraphrase Wittgenstein, we must not ask, What is the nature of any philosophical *x*? or even, according to the semanticist, What does "*x*" mean?, a transformation that leads to the disastrous interpretation of "art" as a name for some specifiable class of objects; but rather, What is the use or employment of "*x*"? What does "*x*" do in the language? This, I take it, is the initial question, the begin-all if not the end-all of any philosophical problem and solution. Thus, in aesthetics, our first problem is the elucidation of the actual employment of the concept of art, to give a logical description of the actual functioning of the concept, including a description of the conditions under which we correctly use it or its correlates.

My model in this type of logical description or philosophy derives from Wittgenstein. It is also he who, in his refutation of philosophical theorizing in the sense of constructing definitions of philosophical entities, has furnished contemporary aesthetics with a starting point for any future progress. In his new work,

*Philosophical Investigations*,<sup>6</sup> Wittgenstein raises as an illustrative question, What is a game? The traditional philosophical, theoretical answer would be in terms of some exhaustive set of properties common to all games. To this Wittgenstein says, let us consider what we call “games”: “I mean board-games, card-games, ball-games, Olympic games, and so on. What is common to them all?—Don’t say: ‘there *must* be something common, or they would not be called “games”’ but *look and see* whether there is anything common to all. For if you look at them you will not see something that is common to *all*, but similarities, relationships, and a whole series of them at that. . . .”

Card games are like board games in some respects but not in others. Not all games are amusing, nor is there always winning or losing or competition. Some games resemble others in some respects—that is all. What we find is no necessary and sufficient properties, only “a complicated network of similarities overlapping and crisscrossing,” such that we can say of games that they form a family with family resemblances and no common trait. If one asks what a game is, we pick out sample games, describe these, and add, “This and *similar things* are called ‘games.’” This is all we need to say and indeed all any of us knows about games. Knowing what a game is is not knowing some real definition or theory but being able to recognize and explain games and to decide which among imaginary and new examples would or would not be called “games.”

The problem of the nature of art is like that of the nature of games, at least in these respects: If we actually look and see what it is that 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.

But the basic resemblance between these concepts is their open texture. In elucidating them, certain (paradigm) cases can be given, about which there can be no question as to their being correctly described as “art” or “game,” but no exhaustive set of cases can be given. I can list some cases and some conditions under which I can apply correctly the concept of art but I cannot list all of them, for the all-important rea-

son that unforeseeable or novel conditions are always forthcoming or envisageable.

A concept is open if its conditions of application are emendable and corrigible; i.e., if a situation or case can be imagined or secured which would call for some sort of *decision* on our part to extend the use of the concept to cover this, or to close the concept and invent a new one to deal with the new case and its new property. If necessary and sufficient conditions for the application of a concept can be stated, the concept is a closed one. But this can happen only in logic or mathematics where concepts are constructed and completely defined. It cannot occur with empirically descriptive and normative concepts unless we arbitrarily close them by stipulating the ranges of their uses.

I can illustrate this open character of “art” best by examples drawn from its sub-concepts. Consider questions like “Is Dos Passos’ *U.S.A.* a novel?” “Is V. Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse* a novel?” “Is Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake* a novel?” On the traditional view, these are construed as factual problems to be answered yes or no in accordance with the presence or absence of defining properties. But certainly this is not how any of these questions is answered. Once it arises, as it has many times in the development of the novel from Richardson to Joyce (e.g., “Is Gide’s *The School for Wives* a novel or a diary?”), what is at stake is no factual analysis concerning necessary and sufficient properties but a decision as to whether the work under examination is similar in certain respects to other works, already called “novels,” and consequently warrants the extension of the concept to cover the new case. The new work is narrative, fictional, contains character delineation and dialogue but (say) it has no regular time-sequence in the plot or is interspersed with actual newspaper reports. It is like recognized novels, A, B, C . . . , in some respects but not like them in others. But then neither were B and C like A in some respects when it was decided to extend the concept applied to A to B and C. Because work N + 1 (the brand new work) is like A, B, C, . . . N in certain respects—has strands of similarity to them—the concept is extended and a new phase of the novel engendered. “Is N + 1 a novel?,” then, is no factual, but rather a decision problem, where the ver-

dict turns on whether or not we enlarge our set of conditions for applying the concept.

What is true of the novel is, I think, true of every sub-concept of art: "tragedy," "comedy," "painting," "opera," etc., of "art" itself. No "Is X a novel, painting, opera, work of art, etc.?" question allows of a definitive answer in the sense of a factual yes or no report. "Is this *collage* a painting or not?" does not rest on any set of necessary and sufficient properties of painting but on whether we decide—as we did!—to extend "painting" to cover this case.

"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 similarity 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 to invent a new concept. (E.g., "It's not a sculpture, it's a mobile.")

What I am arguing, then, is that the very expansive, adventurous character of art, its ever-present changes and novel creations, make it logically impossible to ensure any set of defining properties. We can, of course, choose to close the concept. But to do this with "art" or "tragedy" or "portraiture," etc., is ludicrous since it forecloses on the very conditions of creativity in the arts.

Of course there are legitimate and serviceable closed concepts in art. But these are always those whose boundaries of conditions have been drawn for a *special* purpose. Consider the difference, for example, between "tragedy" and "(extant) Greek tragedy." The first is open and must remain so to allow for the possibility of new conditions, e.g., a play in which the hero is not noble or fallen or in which there is no hero but other elements that are like those of plays we already call "tragedy." The second is closed. The plays it can be applied to, the conditions under which it can be correctly used are all in, once the boundary,

"Greek," is drawn. Here the critic can work out a theory or real definition in which he lists the common properties at least of the extant Greek tragedies. Aristotle's definition, false as it is as a theory of all the plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, since it does not cover some of them,<sup>7</sup> properly called "tragedies," can be interpreted as a real (albeit incorrect) definition of this closed concept; although it can also be, as it unfortunately has been conceived as a purported real definition of "tragedy," in which case it suffers from the logical mistake of trying to define what cannot be defined—of trying to squeeze what is an open concept into an honorific formula for a closed concept.

What is supremely important, if the critic is not to become muddled, is to get absolutely clear about the way in which he conceives his concepts; otherwise he goes from the problem of trying to define "tragedy," etc., to an arbitrary closing of the concept in terms of certain preferred conditions or characteristics which he sums up in some linguistic recommendation that he mistakenly thinks is a real definition of the open concept. Thus, many critics and aestheticians ask, "What is tragedy?," choose a class of samples for which they may give a true account of its common properties, and then go on to construe this account of the chosen closed class as a true definition or theory of the whole open class of tragedy. This, I think, is the logical mechanism of most of the so-called theories of the sub-concepts of art: "tragedy," "comedy," "novel," etc. In effect, this whole procedure, subtly deceptive as it is, amounts to a transformation of correct criteria for *recognizing* members of certain legitimately closed classes of works of art into recommended criteria for *evaluating* any putative member of the class.

The primary task of aesthetics is not to seek a theory but to elucidate the concept of art. Specifically, it is to describe the conditions under which we employ the concept correctly. Definition, reconstruction, patterns of analysis are out of place here since they distort and add nothing to our understanding of art. What, then, is the logic of "X is a work of art"?

As we actually use the concept, "Art" is both descriptive (like "chair") and evaluative (like



“good”); i.e., we sometimes say, “This is a work of art,” to describe something and we sometimes say it to evaluate something. Neither use surprises anyone.

What, first, is the logic of “X is a work of art,” when it is a descriptive utterance? What are the conditions under which we would be making such an utterance correctly? There are no necessary and sufficient conditions but there are the strands of similarity conditions, i.e., bundles of properties, none of which need be present but most of which are, when we describe things as works of art. I shall call these the “criteria of recognition” of works of art. All these have served as the defining criteria of the individual traditional theories of art; so we are already familiar with them. Thus, mostly, when we describe something as a work of art, we do so under the conditions of there being present some sort of artifact, made by human skill, ingenuity, and imagination, which embodies in its sensuous, public medium—stone, wood, sounds, words, etc.—certain distinguishable elements and relations. Special theorists would add conditions like satisfaction of wishes, objectification or expression of emotion, some act of empathy, and so on; but these latter conditions seem to be quite adventitious, present to some but not to other spectators when things are described as works of art. “X is a work of art and contains *no* emotion, expression, act of empathy, satisfaction, etc.,” is perfectly good sense and may frequently be true. “X is a work of art and . . . was made by no one,” or “. . . exists only in the mind and not in any publicly observable thing,” or “. . . was made by accident when he spilled the paint on the canvas,” in each case of which a normal condition is denied, are also sensible and capable of being true in certain circumstances. None of the criteria of recognition is a defining one, either necessary or sufficient, because we can sometimes assert of something that it is a work of art and go on to deny any one of these conditions, even the one which has traditionally been taken to be basic, namely, that of being an artifact: Consider, “This piece of driftwood is a lovely piece of sculpture.” Thus, to say of anything that it is a work of art is to commit oneself to the presence of *some* of these conditions. One would scarcely describe X as a work of art if X were not an artifact, or a collection of elements sensuously pre-

sented in a medium, or a product of human skill, and so on. If none of the conditions was present, if there were no criteria present for recognizing something as a work of art, we would not describe it as one. But, even so, no one of these or any collection of them is either necessary or sufficient.

The elucidation of the descriptive use of “Art” creates little difficulty. But the elucidation of the evaluative use does. For many, especially theorists, “This is a work of art” does more than describe; it also praises. Its conditions of utterance, therefore, include certain preferred properties or characteristics of art. I shall call these “criteria of evaluation.” Consider a typical example of this evaluative use, the view according to which to say of something that it is a work of art is to imply that it is a *successful* harmonization of elements. Many of the honorific definitions of art and its sub-concepts are of this form. What is at stake here is that “Art” is construed as an evaluative term which is either identified with its criterion or justified in terms of it. “Art” is defined in terms of its evaluative property, e.g., successful harmonization. On such a view, to say “X is a work of art” is (1) to say something which is taken *to mean* “X is a successful harmonization” (e.g., “Art is significant form”) or (2) to say something praiseworthy *on the basis* of its successful harmonization. Theorists are never clear whether it is (1) or (2) which is being put forward. Most of them, concerned as they are with this evaluative use, formulate (2), i.e., that feature of art that *makes* it art in the praise-sense, and then go on to state (1), i.e., the definition of “Art” in terms of its art-making feature. And this is clearly to confuse the conditions under which we say something evaluatively with the meaning of what we say. “This is a work of art,” said evaluatively, cannot mean “This is a successful harmonization of elements”—except by stipulation—but at most is said in virtue of the art-making property, which is taken as a (the) criterion of “Art,” when “Art” is employed to assess. “This is a work of art,” used evaluatively, serves to praise and not to affirm the reason that it is said.

The evaluative use of “Art,” although distinct from the conditions of its use, relates in a very intimate way to these conditions. For, in every instance of “This is a work of art” (used to praise), what happens

is that the criterion of evaluation (e.g., successful harmonization) for the employment of the concept of art is converted into a criterion of recognition. This is why, on its evaluative use, "This is a work of art" implies "This has P," where "P" is some chosen art-making property. Thus, if one chooses to employ "Art" evaluatively, as many do, so that "This is a work of art and not (aesthetically) good" makes no sense, he uses "Art" in such a way that he refuses to *call* anything a work of art unless it embodies his criterion of excellence.

There is nothing wrong with the evaluative use; in fact, there is good reason for using "Art" to praise. But what cannot be maintained is that theories of the evaluative use of "Art" are true and real definitions of the necessary and sufficient properties of art. Instead they are honorific definitions, pure and simple, in which "Art" has been redefined in terms of chosen criteria.

But what makes them—these honorific definitions—so supremely valuable is not their disguised linguistic recommendations; rather it is the *debates* over the reasons for changing the criteria of the concept of art which are built into the definitions. In each of the great theories of art, whether correctly understood as honorific definitions or incorrectly accepted as real definitions, what is of the utmost importance is the reasons proffered in the argument for the respective theory, that is, the reasons given for the chosen or preferred criterion of excellence and evaluation. It is this perennial debate over these criteria of evaluation which makes the history of aesthetic theory the important study it is. The value of each of the theories resides in its attempt to state and to justify certain criteria which are either neglected or distorted by previous theories. Look at the Bell-Fry theory again. Of course, "Art is significant form" cannot be accepted as a true, real definition of art; and most certainly it actually functions in their aesthetics as a redefinition of art in terms of the chosen condition of significant form. But what gives it its aesthetic importance is what lies behind the formula: In an age in which literary and representational elements have become paramount in painting, *return* to the plastic ones since these are indigenous to painting. Thus, the role of theory is not to define anything but to use the

definitional form, almost epigrammatically, to pinpoint a crucial recommendation to turn our attention once again to the plastic elements in painting.

Once we, as philosophers, understand this distinction between the formula and what lies behind it, it behooves us to deal generously with the traditional theories of art; because incorporated in every one of them is a debate over and argument for emphasizing or centering upon some particular feature of art which has been neglected or perverted. If we take the aesthetic theories literally, as we have seen, they all fail; but if we reconstrue them, in terms of their function and point, as serious and argued-for recommendations to concentrate on certain criteria of excellence in art, we shall see that aesthetic theory is far from worthless. Indeed, it becomes as central as anything in aesthetics, in our understanding of art, for it teaches us what to look for and how to look at it in art. What is central and must be articulated in all the theories are their debates over the reasons for excellence in art—debates over emotional depth, profound truths, natural beauty, exactitude, freshness of treatment, and so on, as criteria of evaluation—the whole of which converges on the perennial problem of what makes a work of art good. To understand the role of aesthetic theory is not to conceive it as definition, logically doomed to failure, but to read it as summaries of seriously made recommendations to attend in certain ways to certain features of art.

## NOTES

1. D. Parker, "The Nature of Art," reprinted in E. Vivas and M. Krieger, *The Problems of Aesthetics* (New York, 1953), p. 90.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 93–94.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 94.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 104.

5. See M. Macdonald's review of my *Philosophy of the Arts, Mind*, October 1951, pp. 561–564, for a brilliant discussion of this objection to the Organic theory.

6. L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, tr. E. Anscombe (Oxford, 1953); see especially part I, sec. 65–75. All quotations are from these sections.

7. See H. D. F. Kitto, *Greek Tragedy* (London, 1939), on this point.

# Defining Art



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In recent years it has been argued that the expression "work of art" cannot be defined and Morris Weitz has even argued that *being an artifact* is not a necessary condition for being a work of art.<sup>1</sup> More recently, however, Joseph Margolis has offered a definition<sup>2</sup> and Maurice Mandelbaum has made tentative suggestions about defining "art."<sup>3</sup>

I shall not repeat the well-known argument of Weitz, whose views I take to be representative of those who maintain that "art" cannot be defined, but shall state his main conclusion and comment on one of his arguments. Neither shall I repeat the arguments of Margolis or Mandelbaum, but I do want to note (1) that they agree that artifactuality is a necessary condition of art, and (2) that Mandelbaum points out the significance of the *non-exhibited* characteristics of art for the definition of "art."

Weitz's main conclusion is that there are no necessary and sufficient conditions for the definition of "art" or for any of the subconcepts of art, such as "novel," "tragedy," "painting," and so on. All of these notions are open concepts and their instances have "family resemblances."

Weitz rejects artifactuality as a necessary condition of art because we sometimes make statements such as "This driftwood is a lovely piece of sculpture."<sup>4</sup> We do sometimes speak this way of natural objects, but nothing follows from this fact. Weitz is confused because he takes the driftwood remark to be

a descriptive statement and it is not. Weitz himself, quite correctly, distinguishes between an evaluative use and a descriptive use of "work of art,"<sup>5</sup> and once this distinction is understood it can be seen that the driftwood remark is an evaluation of the driftwood. But it is, of course, the descriptive sense of "work of art" which is at issue when the question of whether "art" can be defined is raised. I maintain that the descriptive use of "work of art" is used to indicate that a thing belongs to a certain category of artifacts. By the way, the evaluative sense can be applied to artifacts as well as nonartifacts, as when we say, "That painting is a work of art." Such remarks are not intended as tautologies.

Before going on to discuss the second condition of the definition of the descriptive sense of "art," it will be helpful to distinguish the generic concept of art from the various subconcepts which fall under it. It may very well be the case that all or some of the subconcepts of art, such as novel, tragedy, ceramics, sculpture, painting, and so on, may lack necessary and sufficient conditions for their application as subconcepts and it still be the case that "work of art," which is the germs of all these subconcepts, can be defined. For example, there may not be any characteristics which all tragedies have which would distinguish them from comedies, satyr plays, happenings, and the like within the domain of art. Even if this were the case, in the light of the foregoing, tragedies

and all other works of art would have at least one characteristic in common, namely, artifactuality. Perhaps artifactuality and some one or more other features of works of art distinguish them from nonart. If all or some of the subconcepts of art cannot be defined and, as I think is the case, "art" can be, then Weitz is right in part.

Assuming that artifactuality is the genus of art, the differentia is still lacking. This second condition will be a social property of art. Furthermore, this social property will, in Mandelbaum's terminology, be a nonexhibited, relational property.

W. E. Kennick contends that such an approach to the definition of "art" is futile. He argues from such facts as that the ancient Egyptians sealed up paintings and sculptures in tombs to the conclusion that "The attempt to define Art in terms of what we do with certain objects is as doomed as any other."<sup>6</sup> There are several difficulties with Kennick's argument. First, the fact that the Egyptians sealed up paintings and sculptures in tombs does not entail that they generally regarded them differently from the way in which we regard them. Indeed, they might have put them there for the dead to appreciate, or simply because they belonged to the dead person, or for some other reason. The Egyptian practice does not prove a radical difference between their conception of art and ours such that a definition which subsumes both is impossible. Secondly, there is no need to assume that we and the ancient Egyptians (or any other group) share a common conception of art. I would be happy to be able to specify the necessary and sufficient conditions for the concept of art which we have (we present-day Americans, we present-day Westerners, we Westerners since the organization of the system of the arts in or about the 18th century—I am not sure of the exact limits of the "we"). Kennick notwithstanding, we are most likely to discover the differentia of art by considering "what we do with certain objects," that is, "works of art." But, of course, there is no guarantee that any given thing we or an ancient Egyptian might possibly do with a work of art will throw light on the concept of art. Not every *doing* will reveal what is required.

Arthur Danto's stimulating article, "The Art-

world,"<sup>7</sup> is helpful here. In speaking of Warhol's Brillo Carton and Rauschenberg's *Bed*, he writes, "To see something as art requires something the eye cannot de[s]cry—an atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of history of art: an artworld."<sup>8</sup> What the eye cannot descry is a complicated non-exhibited characteristic of the artifacts in question. The "atmosphere" of which Danto speaks is elusive, but it has a substantial content. Perhaps this content can be captured in a definition. I shall first state the definition and then go on to defend it. *A work of art in the descriptive sense is (1) an artifact (2) upon which some society or some sub-group of a society has conferred the status of candidate for appreciation.*

The definition speaks of the conferring of the status of *candidate* for appreciation: nothing is said about actual appreciation and this leaves open the possibility of works of art which, for whatever reason, are not appreciated. Also, not every aspect of a work is included in the candidacy for appreciation, for example, the color of the back of a painting is not ordinarily an object of appreciation. The problem of *which* aspects of a work of art are to be included within the candidacy for appreciation is a question which I have pursued elsewhere.<sup>9</sup>

Just how is the status of candidate for appreciation conferred? An artifact's hanging in an art museum, a performance at a theater, and the like are sure signs that the status *has been conferred*. But many works of art never reach museum walls and some are never seen by anyone but the artist himself. The status, therefore, must be conferrable by a single person's treating an artifact as a candidate for appreciation, usually the artist himself, although not always, because someone might create an artifact without ever considering it as a candidate for appreciation and the status be conferred by some other person or persons. But can status be conferred so easily? We associate status with ceremony—the wedding ceremony and the status of being married, for example. However, ceremony is not the only way of getting married, in some jurisdictions common-law marriage is possible—a status acquired without ceremony. What I want to suggest is that, just as two persons can acquire the status of common-law marriage within a legal system, an artifact can acquire the status of a

candidate for appreciation within the system which Danto has called “the artworld.”

A number of questions arise about this notion of status of candidate for appreciation and perhaps the whole matter can best be clarified by stating them and trying to answer them. Probably the first question is: what *kind* of appreciation? Surely the definition does seem to suggest that there is a special kind of “aesthetic” appreciation. Appreciation is not crucial, but something should be said about it to prepare the way for the crucial point. The kind of appreciation I have in mind is simply the kind characteristic of our experiences of paintings, poetry, novels, and the like. This remark seems to collapse the definition into circularity, but it does not because “work of art” (the term defined) does not appear in the explanation of appreciation, only subconcept terms appear. Another apparent problem is that works of art differ so much from one another—for example, comedies are very different from tragedies—that it seems unlikely that the appreciation characteristic of our experience of one kind of work has something in common with the appreciation characteristic of our experience of another kind of work. But paintings, poems, and plays are the *objects* of our appreciation and the fact that the objects differ considerably does not mean that the various appreciations differ. Indeed, if we mean by “appreciation” something like “in experiencing the qualities of a thing one finds them worthy or valuable,” then there is no problem about the similarity of the various appreciations.

It can now be seen that appreciation will not serve to pick out the subclass of works of art from the class of artifacts—it is too broad: many artifacts which are obviously not works of art are appreciated. To pick out the class of works of art one must stress the conferring of the status of candidate rather than appreciation. When, for example, a salesman of plumbing supplies spreads his wares before us, he presents them for our appreciation all right, but the presenting is not a conferring of status of candidate, it is simply a placing before us. But what is the difference between “placing before” and “conferring the status of candidate?” The difference is analogous to the difference between my uttering “I declare this man to be a candidate for alderman” and the head of the election board uttering

the same sentence while acting in his official capacity. When I utter the sentence it has no effect because I have not been vested with any authority in this regard. Of course the analogy is not a complete one—lines of authority in the politico-legal world are by and large explicitly defined and incorporated into law, while lines of authority (or something like authority) in the art-world are nowhere codified. The artworld carries on its business at the level of customary practice. Still there *is* a practice and this defines a social institution. To return to the plumbing line, the salesman’s presentation is different from Duchamp’s superficially similar act of placing a urinal which he christened “Fountain” in that now famous art show. The point is that Duchamp’s act took place within a certain institutional setting and that makes all the difference. Our salesman of plumbing supplies could do what Duchamp did, that is, convert a urinal into a work of art, but he probably would not—such weird ideas seem to occur only to artists with bizarre senses of humor. Please remember that when I say “Fountain” is a work of art, I am not saying it is a good one. And in making this last remark I am not insinuating that it is a bad one either.

Duchamp’s “ready-mades” raise the question—“If urinals, snowshovels, and hatracks can become works of art, why can’t natural objects such as driftwood become works of art?” and, of course, driftwood and other natural objects can become works of art if any one of a number of things is done to them. One thing which would do the trick would be to pick it up, take it home, and hang it on the wall. Another thing which would do the trick would be to pick it up and enter it in an exhibition. (I was, by the way, assuming that Weitz’s sentence about driftwood referred to a piece of driftwood in its ordinary situation on a beach and untouched by human hand.) This means that natural objects which become works of art acquire their artifactuality (are artifactualized) at the same time that the status of candidate for appreciation is conferred on them. But perhaps a similar thing ordinarily happens with paintings, poems, and such; they come to exist as artifacts at the same time that they have conferred on them the status of candidate for appreciation. (Of course, being an artifact and being a candidate for appreciation are not the same thing—they are two

properties of a single thing which may be acquired at the same time.) A somewhat more complicated case would be an artifact from a primitive culture which played a role in a religious system and which had no artistic function in the sense developed here. Such an artifact might become a work of art in our culture in a way similar to that in which driftwood might become a work of art. However, such a religious object which becomes a work of art would be an artifact in two senses, but the driftwood in only one. (I am not suggesting that something cannot be a religious object and work of art at the same time—there are many counter-instances to this in our own culture.)

A question which frequently arises in connection with discussions of the concept of art is “How are we to conceive of paintings done by individuals such as Betsy the chimpanzee from the Baltimore Zoo?” It all depends on what is done with the paintings. (Note that I unhesitatingly call the objects paintings, although I am uncertain about their status as works of art.) For example, The Field Natural History Museum in Chicago recently exhibited some chimpanzee paintings. In the case of these paintings we must say that they are not works of art. However, if they had been exhibited a few miles away at the Chicago Art Institute they would have been works of art. (If, so to speak, the director of the Art Institute had gone out on a limb.) It all depends on the institutional setting.

In concluding, it may be worthwhile to consider in what ways the definition offered here differs from some traditional definitions. (1) It does not attempt to smuggle a conception of good art into the definition of “art.” (2) It is not, to use Margolis’ term, “overloaded,” as is the one Margolis cites as a horrible example: “Art is a human activity which explores, and hereby creates, new reality in a suprarational, visional manner and presents it symbolically or metaphonically,<sup>10</sup> as a microcosmic whole signifying a macrocosmic whole.”<sup>11</sup> (3) It does not contain any commitment to any metaphysical or unempirical theory, as contrasted with, for example, the view that art is unreal. (4) It is broad enough so that those things generally recognized as art can be brought under it without undue strain, as contrasted with, for example, the imitation definition which involves enormous

strain in trying to show that every work of art is an imitation of something or other. (5) It takes into account (or at least attempts to) the actual practices of the artworld of the past and of the present day.

Now what I have been saying may sound like saying, “a work of art is an object of which someone has said, ‘I christen this object a work of art.’” And I think it is rather like that. So one *can* make a work of art out of a sow’s ear, but of course that does not mean that it is a silk purse.

## NOTES

1. Morris Weitz, “The Role of Theory in Aesthetics,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 15 (1956), pp. 27–35; reprinted in *Philosophy Looks at the Arts*, ed. by Joseph Margolis (New York, 1962); Paul Ziff, “The Task of Defining a Work of Art,” reprinted in *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Criticism*, ed. by Marvin Levich (New York, 1963); William Kennick, “Does Traditional Aesthetics Rest on a Mistake,” *Mind*, vol. 66 (1958), pp. 317–334.

2. *The Language of Art and Art Criticism* (Detroit, 1965), pp. 37–47. Margolis’ definition is not satisfactory, however: see Andrew Harrison’s review in *Philosophical Books*, vol. 7 (1966), p. 19.

3. “Family Resemblances and Generalization Concerning the Arts,” *American Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 2 (1965), pp. 219–228.

4. Op. cit., p. 57.

5. Ibid., p. 56.

6. Kennick, op. cit., p. 330.

7. *The Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 61 (1964), pp. 571–584.

8. Ibid., p. 580.

9. In my “Art Narrowly and Broadly Speaking,” *American Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 5 (1968), pp. 71–77, where I analyze the notion of *aesthetic object*. The subject of the present essay is the concept of *art* which, although related to the notion of *aesthetic object*, is distinct from it.

10. There are apparently two typographical errors here. Margolis quotes the word as “metaphonically” and the original text reads “metaphonically.” A reading of the original text indicates that it should have been “metaphorically.”

11. Op. cit., p. 44. The passage is quoted from Erick Kahler’s “What is Art?” in *Problems in Aesthetics*, ed. by Morris Weitz (New York, 1959).

## The End of Art



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Art is dead.

Its present movements are not at all indications of vitality; they are not even the convulsions of agony prior to death; they are the mechanical reflex actions of a corpse submitted to galvanic force.

—Marius de Zayas, "The Sun Has Set,"  
*Camera Work* (July 1912), 39:17.

There are philosophical visions of history which allow, or even demand, a speculation regarding the future of art. Such a speculation concerns the question of whether art has a future, and must be distinguished from one which merely concerns the art of the future, if we suppose art will go on and on. Indeed, the latter speculation is more difficult in a way, just because of the difficulties which go with trying to imagine what the artworks of the future will look like or how they will be appreciated. Just think how out of the question it would have been, in 1865, to predict the forms of Post-Impressionist painting, or to have anticipated, as late as 1910, that there would be, only five years in the future, a work such as Duchamp's *In Advance of the Broken Arm*, which, even when accepted as a work of art, retained its identity as a quite ordinary snow shovel. Comparable examples can be drawn from the other arts, especially as we approach our own century, when music and poetry and dance have yielded exemplars which

could not have been perceived as art had anything like them appeared in earlier times, as sets of words or sounds or movements. The visionary artist Albert Robida began in 1882 the serial publication of *Le vingtième siècle*. It meant to show the world as it would be in 1952. His pictures are filled with wonders to come: *le téléphonoscope*, flying machines, television, underwater metropolises, but the pictures themselves are unmistakably of their own era, as is the way much of what they show is shown. Robida imagined there would be restaurants in the sky to which customers would come in airborne vehicles. But the boldly anticipated eating places are put together of ornamental ironworks of the sort we associate with Les Halles and the Gare St. Lazare, and look a lot like the steamboats that floated the Mississippi at that time, in proportion and in decorative fretwork. They are patronized by gentlemen in top hats and ladies in bustles, served by waiters wearing long aprons from the Belle Epoque, and they arrive in balloons Montgolfier would recognize. We may be certain that were Robida to have depicted an underwater art museum, its most advanced works would be Impressionist paintings, if Robida had eyes even for those. In 1952, the most advanced galleries were showing Pollack, De Kooning, Gottlieb, and Klein, which would have been temporally unimaginable in

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1882. Nothing so much belongs to its own time as an age's glimpses into the future: Buck Rogers carries the decorative idioms of the 1930s into the twenty-first century, and *now* looks at home with Rockefeller Center and the Cord automobile; the science fiction novels of the 1950s project the sexual moralities of the Eisenhower era, along with the dry martini, into distant eons, and the technical clothing worn by its spacemen belong to that era's haberdashery. So were we to depict an interplanetary art gallery, it would display works which, however up to the minute they look to us, will belong to the history of art by the time there are such galleries, just as the mod clothing we put on the people we show will belong to the history of costume in no time at all. The future is a kind of mirror in which we can show only ourselves, though it seems to us a window through which we may see things to come. Leonardo's wonderful saying, that *ogni dipintore dipinge se*, implies an unintended historical limitation, as may be seen from Leonardo's own visionary drawings, so profoundly part of their own time. We may imagine *that* all sorts of things will come to be. But when we seek to *imagine* those things, they inevitably will look like things that *have* come to be, for we have only the forms we know to give them.

Even so, we may speculate historically on the future of art without committing ourselves on what the artworks of the future are to be like, if there are to be any; and it is even possible to suppose that art itself has no future, though art-works may still be produced post-historically, as it were, in the after-shock of a vanished vitality. Such indeed was a thesis of Hegel, certain of whose views have inspired the present essay, for Hegel said quite unequivocally that art as such, or at least at its highest vocation, is quite finished with as a historical moment, though he did not commit himself to the prediction that there would be no more works of art. He might have argued that, certain as he was that his astonishing thesis was true, he had nothing to say about those works to come, which might, perhaps must, be produced in ways he could not anticipate and enjoyed in ways he could not understand. I find it an extraordinary thought that the world should have gone through what one might term the Age of Art, parallel to the way in which, accord-

ing to a theological speculation of the Christian theorist Joachim of Flores, the Age of the Father came to an end with the birth of His Son, and the Age of the Son with the Age of the Holy Spirit. Joachim did not claim that those whose historical fulfillment lay in the Age of the Father will become extinct or that their forms of life will abruptly disappear in the Age of the Son: they may continue to exist past the moment of their historical mission, historical fossils, so to speak, as Joachim would have supposed the Jews to be, whose time on the stage of history he believed over with. So though there will be Jews in time to come, whose forms of life may evolve in unforeseeable ways, still, their history will no longer be coincident with the history of History itself, conceived of as Joachim did, in the grandest philosophical manner.

In almost precisely this way, Hegel's thought was that for a period of time the energies of history coincided with the energies of art, but now history and art must go in different directions, and though art may continue to exist in what I have termed a post-historical fashion, its existence carries no historical significance whatever. Now such a thesis can hardly be pondered outside the framework of a philosophy of history it would be difficult to take seriously were the urgency of art's future not somehow raised from within the artworld itself, which can be seen today as having lost any historical direction, and we have to ask whether this is temporary, whether art will regain the path of history—or whether this destructured condition *is* its future: a kind of cultural entropy. So whatever comes next will not matter because the concept of art is internally exhausted. Our institutions—museums, galleries, collectors, art journals, and the like—exist against the assumption of a significant, even a brilliant, future. There is an inevitable commercial interest in what is to come now, and who are to be the important practitioners in movements next to come. It is very much in the spirit of Joachim that the English sculptor William Tucker has said, "The 60's was the age of the critic. Now it's the age of the dealer." But suppose it *has* really all come to an end, and that a point has been reached where there can be change without development, where the engines of artistic production can only combine and recombine known forms, though external pressures may favor



this or that combination? Suppose it is no longer a historical possibility that art should continue to astonish us, that in this sense the Age of Art is internally worn out, and that in Hegel's stunning and melancholy phrase, a form of life has grown old?

Is it possible that the wild effervescence of the art-world in the past seven or eight decades has been a terminal fermentation of something the historical chemistry of which remains to be understood? I want to take Hegel quite seriously, and to sketch a model of the history of art in which something like it may even be said to make sense. Better to appreciate the sense it does make, I shall first sketch two rather more familiar models of art history, for the model which will finally interest me presupposes them in a striking and almost dialectical way. It is an interesting fact that though the first model has application primarily to mimetic art, to painting and sculpture and moving pictures, the second model will include them and include a great deal more of art than mimesis can easily characterize. The final model will apply to art in so comprehensive a way that the question of whether art has come to an end will have as wide a reference as the term "art" itself has, though its most dramatic reference will be to the objects purveyed in what is narrowly known as "the artworld." Indeed, part of the explanation lies in the fact that the boundaries between painting and the other arts—poetry and performance, music and dance—have become radically unstable. It is an instability induced by the factors which make my final model historically possible, and which enables the dismal question to be put. I will conclude by asking how we are to adapt to the fact that the question has an affirmative answer, that art really is over with, having become transmuted into philosophy. . . .

Whatever the case, it has always been possible to imagine, at least grossly, the future of art construed in terms of representational progress. One knew in principle what the agenda was, and hence what progress would have to be if there was to be progress. Visionaries could say such things as "Someday pictures will move," without knowing how it was to be achieved, just as not long ago they could say, "Someday men will walk on the moon," without knowing, again, quite how *this* was to be achieved. But then, and this

has been the main reason for canvassing this entire theory, it would be possible to speak of the end of art, at least as a progressive discipline. When, for every perceptual range *R*, an equivalent could be technically generated, then art would be over with, just as science would be over with when, as was thought to be a genuine possibility in the nineteenth century, everything was known. In the nineteenth century, for example, it was believed that logic was a finished science, and even that physics was, with a few nagging details to mop up. But there is no internal reason for us to think that science, or art, has to be endless, and so there was always a question that would have to be faced, as to what post-progressive life would be like. To be sure, we have more or less abandoned this model in art, since the production of perceptual equivalence no longer much dazzles us, and in any case there are certain definite limits set when narrativization becomes an artistic fact. Even so, as we shall see, the model has an oblique pertinence even today.

Before coming to that, however, I want to raise a philosophical point. So long as the philosophy of art was articulated in terms of success or failure in technologies of perceptual equivalence, it would have been difficult to get an interestingly general definition of art. Aristotle widened the notion of imitation to include the imitation of an action, in order to bring narrative drama into the scope of that concept, but at that point the theory of mimesis parts company with the concept of perceptual equivalences, since it is far from plain that drama presents us with merely perceptual equivalences to what a sort of eyewitness to the action would perceive. And while this is, in the case of dramatic presentations, a mistakenly entertainable ideal, it is not so at all when we consider *fiction* as the description of an action. And when we think of description as against mimesis, we may immediately notice that it is not at all clear that there is any room for the concept of progress or of technological transformations at all. Let me explain this.

Thinkers have, from Lao Tzu to the present, lamented or celebrated the inadequacies of language. It is felt that there are descriptive limits, and then important things beyond these limits which language cannot express. But to the degree that this is true, no

expansion of representational possibilities, say by introducing new terms into the language, will remedy the situation, largely because the complaint is against descriptivity itself, which simply is too distant from reality to give us the experience reality itself affords. And it is a mark of the natural languages that whatever can be said in one can be said in any (and what *cannot* be said in one cannot be said in any), allowing always for differences of felicity and degrees of roundaboutness. So there cannot ever have been a technological problem of expanding the descriptive resources of the natural languages: they are equivalently universal.

I do not mean to imply that there are no limits to language, but only that whatever they are, nothing is going to count as progress toward their overcoming, since this would still be within language as a representational system. So there is no logical room for the concept of progress. At no point in the history of literature, for example, would visionaries have been able to prophesy that someday men will be able to say certain things—in part perhaps because in saying what men will be able to say, it is *already* said. Of course someone might have been able to say that someday men will be able to talk about things then forbidden, sex perhaps, or be able to use language to criticize institutions which they are not able to do now. But this would be a matter of moral progress, or political progress, if it is that, and would have as much application to pictures as to words. Whatever the value of doing so, we can today see things in movies it would have been unthinkable to show a generation ago—the star's breasts, say. But this is not *technological* advance.

The linear or progressive model of the history of art thus finds its best examples in painting and sculpture, then in movies and talkies and, if you wish, feelings. There has never been a problem of *describing* motion, or depth, or for that matter palpability. "Her soft and yielding flesh" describes a perceptual experience for which there is no mimetic equivalent. Our next model will make a more general definition possible, since it is not thwarted by the differences between words and pictures. But then it eliminates those factors from the essence of art which made it possible to think of art as a progressive discipline.

I like to surmise that a confirmation of my historical thesis—that the task of art to produce equivalences to perceptual experiences passed, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, from the activities of painting and sculpture to those of cinematography—in the fact that painters and sculptors began conspicuously to abandon this goal at just about the same time that all the basic strategies for narrative cinema were in place. By about 1905, almost every cinematic strategy since employed had been discovered, and it was just about then that painters and sculptors began asking, if only through their actions, the question of what could be left for *them* to do, now that the torch had, as it were, been taken up by other technologies. I suppose that the history of artistic progress could be run backward: we can imagine the projected end state as having been achieved, but now it seems a good idea, for whatever reason, to replace perceptual equivalences with cues to inference—perhaps because a greater value gets put on inference (= Reason) than on perception. Bit by bit cinematography gets replaced with the cues to kinematic motion of the sort we find in Rosa Bonheur or Rodin, and so on, until, I suppose, perceptual equivalence disappears from art altogether and we get an art of pure descriptivity, where words replace perceptual stimuli. And who knows, this may seem too closely tied to experience and the next move might be music. But given the way progress itself *was* conceived, about 1905 it appeared that painters and sculptors could only justify their activities by redefining art in ways which had to be shocking indeed to those who continued to judge painting and sculpture by the criteria of the progressive paradigm, not realizing that a transformation in technology now made practices appropriate to those criteria more and more archaic.

The Fauves are good examples. Consider the portrait by Matisse of his wife done in 1906, in which Madame Matisse is shown with a green stripe down her nose (indeed, the title of the painting is *The Green Stripe*). Chiang Yee told me of a painting done by a Jesuit artist of a Chinese emperor's favorite concubine, which shocked her, since she knew her face was not half black and *he* used shadows. Instruction on how the world really looks would have made her recognize that *she* really looked the way he had shown

her, given the realities of light and shade. But nothing of that sort is going to redeem Matisse's painting for the history of perceptual equivalences, not even if there happened to be a greenish shadow along his subject's nose—for it would not have been *that* particular green. Nor were ladies at that time using nose shadow as those of our time use eye shadow. Nor was she suffering nasal gangrene. So one could only conclude (as people did) that Matisse had forgotten how to paint, had remembered how to paint but had gone crazy, was sane but was perverting his skills to the end of shocking the bourgeoisie, or trying to put something over on the collectors, critics, and curators (who are the three C's of the artworld).

These would have been standard rationalizations of objects, beginning to appear in epidemic quantity just then, which were unquestionably *paintings*, but which fell short by so considerable a degree of perceptual equivalence to anything in either the real world or the artworld, that some explanation of their existence seemed imperative. Until, that is, it began to be grasped that only relative to a theory which may have been put to a challenge was there any discrepancy at all, and that if there was one, well, it might be the fault of the theory. In science, ideally at least, we don't blame the world when our theories don't work—we change the theories until they do work. And so it was with Post-Impressionist painting. It became increasingly clear that a new theory was urgently required, that the artists were not failing to yield up perceptual equivalences but were after something not to be understood in those terms primarily or at all. It is to the credit of aesthetics that its practitioners responded to this with theories which, however inadequate, recognized the need, and a good example of at least a suitable theory was that painters were not so much representing as expressing. Croce's *Estetica come scienza dell'espressione* appeared in 1902. Suppose then that *The Green Stripe* tries to get us to see how Matisse felt about the subject shown, his own wife, calling for a complex act of interpretation on the part of the viewer.

This account is remarkable for the fact that it incorporates the theory of perceptual equivalences in the sense that it presupposes the discrepancies, which it then explains as due to feelings. It acknowledges, as

it were, the intentional character of emotional states, that feelings are *about*, or *toward*, some object or state of affairs; and since Croce supposes art to be a kind of language, and language a form of communication, the communication of feeling will succeed to just the extent that the work can show what object it is toward which the feeling is expressed—e.g., the artist's wife. Then the discrepancies between the way this object is in fact shown and the way it would be shown were mere perceptual equivalence aimed at, no longer marks a distance to be covered by the progress of art or by the artist's mastery of illusionist technique, but rather consists in the externalization or objectification of the artist's feelings toward what he shows. The feeling is then communicated to the viewer to just the degree that the viewer can infer it on the basis of the discrepancies. Indeed, the viewer must generate some hypothesis to the effect that the object is shown the way it is because the artist feels about the object the way he does. Thus De Kooning paints a woman as the locus of slashes, El Greco paints saints as stretched verticalities, Giacometti molds figures as impossibly emaciated, not for optical reasons nor because there really are women, saints, or persons like these, but because the artists respectively reveal feelings of aggressiveness, spiritual longing, or compassion. It would be very difficult to suppose De Kooning is expressing compassion, let alone spirituality, or that El Greco is expressing aggression. But of course the ascription of feelings is always epistemologically delicate.

It becomes particularly delicate when the theory recommends the view that the object represented by the work becomes the occasion for expressing something about it, and we then begin to reconstitute the history of art along these new lines. For we now have to decide to what degree the discrepancies with an ideal perceptual equivalence are a matter of technical shortfall, and to what degree a matter of expression. Obviously we are not to read all discrepancies as expressive, for then the concept of progress no longer applies: we must assume that in a great many cases an artist would eliminate discrepancies if he but knew how. Even so, certain discrepancies which would be laughable from the point of view of representation become artistically fundamental from that of expres-

sion. At the time of the Fauves, the deviations emphasized by apologists of the new art and subscribers to the new theory were made acceptable by pointing to the fact that the artist after all could *draw*: one pointed in evidence to Matisse's academic exercises, or to Picasso's amazing canvases of his sixteenth year. But these anxious questions lost their force after a time as expression seemed more and more to carry the definitional properties of art. Objects became less and less recognizable and finally disappeared altogether in Abstract Expressionism, which of course meant that interpretation of purely expressionist work required reference to objectless feelings: joy, depression, generalized excitement, etc. What was interesting was the fact that since there could be paintings which were purely expressive and hence not explicitly representational at all, representationality must disappear from the definition of art. But even *more* interesting from our perspective is the fact that the *history* of art acquires a totally different structure.

It does so because there is no longer any reason to think of art as having a progressive history: there simply is not the possibility of a developmental sequence with the concept of expression as there is with the concept of mimetic representation. There is not because there is no mediating technology of expression. I do not mean to imply that novel technologies of representation may not admit novel modes of expression: beyond question there are expressive possibilities in cinema that simply had no parallel in the kind of art cinema transformed. But these new possibilities would not constitute a progressive development—viz., there would be no basis for saying that we now can express what we could express badly or not at all before, as we could say that we now can show things we could only show badly or not at all before. So the history of art has no future of the sort that can be extrapolated as it can against the paradigm of progress: it sunders into a sequence of individual acts, one after another. Of course there may be feelings one dare not express at a given time but which in time one can express, but the raising or lowering of the thresholds of expressive inhibition belong to the history of morality. And of course there may be a history of *learning* to express feelings, as

through a kind of therapy, but then this would belong to the general history of freedom, with no particular application to art. Heidegger has said that not one step has been taken since Aristotle's *Rhetoric* in the philosophical analysis of feelings—but this surely is because the range of human feelings can be very little different from what it was in ancient times. There may be new objects for these feelings, even new ways of expressing them—but once more this is not a development history.

There is a further point. Once art becomes construed as expression, the work of art must send us ultimately to the state of mind of its maker, if we are to interpret it. Realistically speaking, artists of a given period share a certain expressive vocabulary, which is why, right or wrong, my casual interpretations of De Kooning, El Greco, and Giacometti seem at least natural. Even so, this seems to me a quite external fact, not at all necessary to the concept of expression, and conceivably each artist could express himself in his own way, so that one vocabulary, as it were, would be incommensurable with another, which makes possible a radically discontinuous view of the history of art, in which one style of art follows another, as in an archipelago, and we might in principle imagine any sequence we choose. In any case we must understand each work, each corpus, in the terms that define that particular artist we are studying, and what is true of De Kooning need have nothing to do with what is true of anyone else. The concept of expression makes such a view possible, relativizing art, as it does, to individual artists. The history of art is just the lives of the artists, one after another.

It is striking that the history of science is thought of somewhat along these lines today—not, as in the optimism of the nineteenth century, as a linear, inevitable progression toward an end state of total cognitive representation, but as a discontinuous sequence of phases between which there is a radical incommensurability. It is almost as though the semantics of scientific terms were like the semantics of terms like "pain," where each user is referring to something different and speaking in a private idiom—so that to the degree that we understand one another at all, we do so on our own terms. Thus "mass" means something different in each phase of

science, in part because it is redefined with each theory that employs it, so that synonymy between theory and theory is ruled out. But even if we stop short of this extreme lexical radicalism, the mere structure of history might insure some degree of incommensurability. Imagine the history of art reversed, so that it begins with Picasso and Matisse, passes through Impressionism and the Baroque, suffers a decline with Giotto, only to reach its pinnacle with the original of the *Apollo Belvedere*, beyond which it would be impossible to imagine a further advance. Strictly speaking, the works in question *could* have been produced in that order. But they could not have the interpretation, nor hence the structure, we perceive them as having under the present chronology. Picasso, only for example, is constantly referring to the history of art he systematically deconstructs, and so presupposes those past works. And something of the same sort is true of science. Even if scientists are not as conscious of their history as artists are, in truth there are intertheoretic references which assure a degree of incommensurability, if only because we know Galileo and he could not have known us, and to the degree that our uses refer to his, the terms we use cannot have the same meanings his did. So there is an important respect in which we *have* to understand the past in our *own* terms, and there can in consequence be no uniform usage from phase to phase.

There have been philosophies of history which have made these incommensurabilities central, if not for precisely the reasons I have sketched. I am thinking just now of Spengler, who dissolved what had been assumed to be the linear history of the West into three distinct and self-contained historical periods, Classical, Magian, and Faustian, each with its own vocabulary of cultural forms, between which no commensurability of meaning could be assumed. The classical temple, the domed basilica, the vaulted cathedral are less three moments in a linear history than three distinct expressions in the medium of architecture of distinct underlying cultural spirits. In some absolute sense the three periods succeed one another, but only in the way in which one generation succeeds another, with the specific analogy to be drawn that each generation reaches and expresses its maturity in its own way. Each of them defines a dif-

ferent world, and it is the worlds that are incommensurable. Spengler's book was notoriously titled *The Decline of the West*, and it was reckoned exceedingly pessimistic when it first appeared, in part because of the biological metaphors Spengler employed, which required each of his civilizations to go through its own cycle of youth, maturity, decline, and death. So the future of *our* art is very dim, if we accept his premises, but—and how optimistic he after all was—a new cycle will begin, with its own peaks, and we can no more imagine it than *we* could have been imagined from an earlier cycle. So *art* will have a future, it is only that *our* art will not. *Ours* is a form of life that has grown old. So you could look on Spengler as saying something dark or something bright, depending upon how you feel about your own culture within the framework of the severe relativism it, as indeed all the views I have been discussing in this section, presupposes.

And the reason I am stressing this relativism here is that the question I began with, whether art has a future, clearly is antirelativistic in that it really does presuppose a linear history in some sense. This has an absolutely profound philosophical implication, in that it requires an internal connection between the way we define art and the way we think of the history of art. Only, for instance, if we first think of art as representation can we then think of art as having the sort of history which fulfills the progressive model. If, on the other hand, we think of art as simply being expression, or the communication of feelings, as Croce did, well, it just can't have a history of that sort and the question of the end of art can have no application, just because the concept of expression goes with that sort of incommensurability in which one thing just comes after another thing. So that even if it is a fact that artists express feelings, well, this is only a fact, and cannot be the essence of art *if* art has the kind of history within which the question of its coming to an end makes sense. That art is the business of perceptual equivalence is consistent with its having that sort of history, but then, as we saw, it is insufficiently general as a definition of art. So what emerges from this dialectic is that if we are to think of art as having an end, we need a conception of art history which is linear, but a theory of art which is general

enough to include representations other than the sort illusionistic painting exemplifies best: literary representations, for example, and even music.

Now Hegel's theory meets all these demands. His thought requires that there be genuine historical continuity, and indeed a kind of progress. The progress in question is not that of an increasingly refined technology of perceptual equivalence. Rather, there is a kind of *cognitive* progress, where it is understood that art progressively approaches that kind of cognition. When the cognition is achieved, there really is no longer any point to or need for art. Art is a transitional stage in the coming of a certain kind of knowledge. The question then is what sort of cognition this can be, and the answer, disappointing as it must sound at first, is the knowledge of what art is. Just as we saw is required, there is an internal connection between the nature and the history of art. History ends with the advent of self-consciousness, or better, self-knowledge. I suppose in a way our personal histories have that structure, or at least our educational histories do, in that they end with maturity, where maturity is understood as knowing—and accepting—what or even who we are. Art ends with the advent of its own philosophy. I shall now tell this last story by returning to the history of past perceptual art.

The success of the Expression Theory of art is also the failure of the Expression Theory of art. Its success consisted in the fact that it was able to explain all of art in a uniform way—i.e., as the expression of feelings. Its failure consisted in the fact that it has only one way of explaining all of art. When discontinuities first appeared as puzzling phenomena in the progressive history of representation, it was a genuine insight that perhaps artists were trying to express rather than primarily to represent. But after about 1906, the history of art simply seemed to be the history of discontinuities. To be sure, this could be accommodated to the theory. Each of us has his or her own feelings, so it is to be expected that these will be expressed in individual ways, and even in incommensurable ways. Most of us, of course, express our feelings in very similar ways, and there are forms of expression which must in fact be understood in evolutionary, not to say physiological, terms: we are

built to express feelings in ways we all recognize. But then the theory is that these are artists and artists are defined in part through the uniqueness of their feelings. The artist is different from the rest of us. But the trouble with this plausible if romantic account lay in the fact that each new movement, from Fauvism down, let alone the Post-Impressionism from which that derived, seemed to require some kind of *theoretical* understanding to which the language and the psychology of emotions seemed less and less adequate.

Just think of the dazzling succession of art movements in our century: Fauvism, the Cubisms, Futurism, Vorticism, Synchronism, Abstractionism, Surrealism, Dada, Expressionism, Abstract Expressionism, Pop, Op, Minimalism, Post-Minimalism, Conceptualism, Photorealism, Abstract Realism, Neo-Expressionism—simply to list some of the more familiar ones. Fauvism lasted about two years, and there was a time when a whole period of art history seemed destined to endure about five months, or half a season. Creativity at that time seemed more to consist in making a period than in making a work. The imperatives of art were virtually historical imperatives—Make an art-historical period!—and success consisted in producing an accepted innovation. If you were successful, you had the monopoly on producing works no one else could, since no one else had made the period with which you and perhaps a few collaborators were from now on to be identified. With this went a certain financial security, inasmuch as museums, wedded to historical structure and the kind of completeness which went with having examples from each period, would want an example from you if you were a suitable period. As innovative an artist as De Kooning was never especially allowed to evolve, and De Chirico, who understood these mechanisms exactly, painted de chiricos throughout his life, since that's what the market wanted. Who would want a Utrillo that looked like Mondrian, or a Marie Laurencin that looked like Grace Hartigan, or a Modigliani like Franz Kline? And each period required a certain amount of quite complex theory in order that the often very minimal objects could be transacted onto the plane of art. In the face of this deep interplay between historical location and theoretical enfranchisement, the appeal to feeling and

expression seemed just less and less convincing. Even today we hardly know what Cubism was really about, but I am certain that there is a great deal more to it than Braque and Picasso ventilating their surprisingly congruent feelings toward guitars.

The Expression Theory, while too thin by far to account for this rich profusion of artistic styles and genres, has nevertheless the great merit of having approached works of art as constituting a natural kind, surface variations notwithstanding, and to have responded in the spirit of science to what has been a brooding question since Plato—namely, What is Art? The question became urgent in the twentieth century, when the received model collapsed, though that was not even a good model when no one could tell that it was not. But the inadequacy of the theory became year by year—or, if I may, period by period—more apparent as each movement raised the question afresh, offering itself as a possible final answer. The question indeed accompanied each new artform as the Cogito, according to a great thesis of Kant's, accompanies each judgment, as though each judgment raises about itself the question of What is Thought? And it began to seem as though the whole main point of art in our century was to pursue the question of its own identity while rejecting all available answers as insufficiently general. It was as though, to paraphrase a famous formula of Kant, art were something conceptually without satisfying any specific concept.

It is this way of looking at things which suggests another model of art history altogether, a model narratively exemplified by the *Bildungsroman*, the novel of self-education which climaxes in the self's recognition of the self. This is a genre recently and, I think, not inappropriately to be mainly found in feminist literature, where the question the heroine raises, for reader and for herself, is at once who is she and what is it to be a woman. The great philosophical work which has this form is Hegel's astonishing *Phenomenology of Spirit*, a work whose hero is the spirit of the world—whom Hegel names *Geist*—the stages of whose development toward self-knowledge, and toward self-realization through self-knowledge, Hegel traces dialectically. Art is one of these stages—indeed, one of the nearly final stages of spirit's return

to spirit through spirit—but it is a stage which must be gone through in the painful ascent toward the final redeeming cognition.

The culmination of *Geist's* quest and destiny is, as it happens, philosophy, according to Hegel's scheme, largely because philosophy is essentially reflexive, in the sense that the question of what it is part of what it is, its own nature being one of its major problems: Indeed, the history of philosophy may be read as the story of philosophy's mistaken identities, and of its failures in seeing through and to itself. It is possible to read Hegel as claiming that art's philosophical history consists in its being absorbed ultimately into its own philosophy, demonstrating then that self-theoretization is a genuine possibility and guarantee that there is something whose identity consists in self-understanding. So the great drama of history, which in Hegel is a divine comedy of the mind, can end in a moment of final self-enlightenment, where the enlightenment consists in itself. The historical importance of art then lies in the fact that it makes philosophy of art possible and important. Now if we look at the art of our recent past in these terms, grandiose as they are, what we see is something which depends more and more upon theory for its existence as art, so that theory is not something external to a world it seeks to understand, so that in understanding its object it has to understand itself. But there is another feature exhibited by these late productions which is that the objects approach zero as their theory approaches infinity, so that virtually all there is at the end *is* theory, art having finally become vaporized in a dazzle of pure thought about itself, and remaining, as it were, solely as the object of its own theoretical consciousness.

If something like this view has the remotest chance of being plausible, it is possible to suppose that art had come to an end. Of course, there will go on being art-making. But art-makers, living in what I like to call the post-historical period of art, will bring into existence works which lack the historical importance or meaning we have for a very long time come to expect. The historical stage of art is done with when it is known what art is and means. The artists have made the way open for philosophy, and the moment has arrived at which the task must be trans-

ferred finally into the hands of philosophers. Let me conclude by spelling this out in a way which might make it acceptable.

“The end of history” is a phrase which carries ominous overtones at a time when we hold it in our power to end everything, to expel mankind explosively from being. Apocalypse has always been a possible vision, but has seldom seemed so close to actuality as it is today. When there is nothing left to make history—i.e., no more human beings—there will be no more history. But the great meta-historians of the nineteenth century, with their essentially religious readings of history, had rather something more benign in mind, even if, in the case of Karl Marx, violence was to be the engine of this benign culmination. For these thinkers, history was some kind of necessary agony through which the end of history was somehow to be earned, and the end of history then meant the end of that agony. History comes to an end, but not mankind—as the story comes to an end, but not the characters, who live on, happily ever after, doing whatever they do in their post-narrational insignificance. Whatever they do and whatever now happens to them is not part of the story lived through them, as though they were the vehicle and it the subject.

Here is a pertinent summation by that profound and influential commentator on Hegel, Alexandre Kojève:

In point of fact, the end of human time, or History—that is, the definitive annihilation of Man, properly speaking, or of the free and historical individual—means quite simply the cessation of action in the full sense of the term. Practically, this means the disappearance of wars and bloody revolutions. And also the disappearance of Philosophy. For since Man no longer changes essentially, there is no reason to change the (true) principles which are at the basis of his understanding of the world and himself. But all the rest can be preserved indefinitely: art, love, play, etc.: in short, everything that makes man *happy*.

And Marx, in a famous passage upon which there can be little doubt that Kojève based his, describes the life of man when all the contradictions that define history, and which are expressed socially as the class

wars so ominously specified in *The Communist Manifesto*, have worked themselves out through the agony of history, so that society is now classless and there is nothing left to generate more history, and man is deposited on the promised shores of utopia, a paradise of nonalienation and nonspecialization. There, Marx tells us, I can be a hunter in the morning and a fisher in the afternoon and a critical critic in the evening. Post-historical life, for Hegel as for Marx, will have the form of a kind of philosophical *Club méditerranée*, or what used to be known as heaven, where there is nothing left for us to do but—in the phrase of our adolescents—hang out. Or, to take another image, this time from Plato, where, at the end of his *Republic*, he depicts a choosing situation, in which men, purged in the afterlife and ready to reenter the world, have arrayed before them the variety of lives from which they may pick one: and the canny Odysseus chooses a life of quiet obscurity, the sort of life most people live most of the time, the simple dumb existence of the sitcom, village life, domestic life, the kind of life lamented, in a painful episode, by Achilles in the underworld. Only, in Marx and in Hegel, there is no history to rumble beyond the distant horizons. The storms have abated forever. And now we can do what we like, heeding that imperative that is no imperative at all: *Fay çe que voudras*—“Do whatever you want.”

The End of History coincides, and is indeed identical, with what Hegel speaks of as the advent of Absolute Knowledge. Knowledge is absolute when there is no gap between knowledge and its object, or knowledge is its own object, hence subject and object at once. The closing paragraph of the *Phenomenology* suitably characterizes the philosophical closure of the subject it treats of, by saying that it “consists in perfectly knowing itself, in knowing what it is.” Nothing is now outside knowledge, nor opaque to the light of cognitive intuition. Such a conception of knowledge is, I believe, fatally flawed. But if anything comes close to exemplifying it, art in our times does—for the object in which the artwork consists is so irradiated by theoretical consciousness that the division between object and subject is all but overcome, and it little matters whether art is philosophy in action or philosophy is art in thought. “It is no



doubt the case," Hegel writes in his *Philosophy of the Fine Arts*, "that art can be utilized as a mere pastime and entertainment, either in the embellishment of our surroundings, the imprinting of a life-enhancing surface to the external conditions of our life, or the emphasis placed by decoration on other subjects." Some such function must be what Kojève has in mind when he speaks of art as among the things that will make men happy in the posthistorical time. It is a kind of play. But this kind of art, Hegel contends, is not really free, "since subservient to other objects." Art is truly free, he goes on to say, only when "it has established itself in a sphere it shares with religion and philosophy, becoming thereby one mode more and form through which . . . the spiritual truths of widest range are brought home to consciousness." All this and, being Hegel, a good bit more having been said, he concludes, dismally or not I leave it to the reader to determine, "Art is and remains for us a thing of the past." And: "On the side of its highest possibilities [art] has lost its genuine truth and life, and is rather transported to our world of *ideas* than is able to maintain its former necessity and its superior place in reality." So a "science of art," or *Kunstwissenschaft*—by which certainly Hegel meant nothing remotely like art history as practiced as an academic discipline today, but rather instead a sort of cultural philosophy of the sort he himself was working out—a "science of art is a far more urgent necessity in our own times than in times in which art sufficed by itself alone to give full satisfaction." And further on in this utterly

amazing passage he says, "We are invited by art to contemplate it reflectively . . . in order to ascertain scientifically its nature." And this is hardly something art history as we know it attempts to do, though I am certain that the present rather anemic discipline grew out of something as robust in its conception as Hegel meant for it to be. But it is also possible that art history has the form we know because art as we knew it is finished.

Well.

As Marx might say, you can be an abstractionist in the morning, a photorealist in the afternoon, a minimal minimalist in the evening. Or you can cut out paper dolls or do what you damned please. The age of pluralism is upon us. It does not matter any longer what you do, which is what pluralism means. When one direction is as good as another direction, there is no concept of direction any longer to apply. Decoration, self-expression, entertainment are, of course, abiding human needs. There will always be a service for art to perform, if artists are content with that. Freedom ends in its own fulfillment. A subservient art has always been with us. The institutions of the artworld—galleries, collectors, exhibitions, journalism—which are predicated upon history and hence marking what is new, will bit by bit wither away. How happy happiness will make us is difficult to foretell, but just think of the difference the rage for gourmet cooking has made in common American life. On the other hand, it has been an immense privilege to have lived in history.

## Glaring Omissions in Traditional Theories of Art



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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.<sup>1</sup> 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.”<sup>2</sup> 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 Wittgenstein’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 fulfills 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

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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.”<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup>

### 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.”<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup>

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 Wittgenstein 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.<sup>8</sup> Eighteenth-century philosophers set the parameters of aesthetics; nineteenth-cen-

tury 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.)<sup>9</sup> The glaring omissions in traditional theories 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.<sup>10</sup> 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.<sup>11</sup> 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.<sup>12</sup> However, the proto-Indo-European culture that replaced it between 4500 and 2500 B.C.E. was patriarchal, hierarchical, and war-oriented.<sup>13</sup> 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.<sup>14</sup> 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.<sup>15</sup> 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.<sup>16</sup> 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?"<sup>17</sup> 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.<sup>18</sup> 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."<sup>19</sup>

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.<sup>20</sup> 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.<sup>21</sup> 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.<sup>22</sup> 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.<sup>23</sup>

Critic Lucy Lippard considers feminist art an ideology, a way of life.<sup>24</sup> 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 feminism." 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?"<sup>25</sup> 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.”<sup>26</sup> 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.<sup>27</sup> 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 *nonfeminist* 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).<sup>28</sup> 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.<sup>29</sup> 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.<sup>30</sup> 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.<sup>31</sup> 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.<sup>32</sup>

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.<sup>33</sup> 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.<sup>34</sup>

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.<sup>35</sup> 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.<sup>36</sup>

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.<sup>37</sup>

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.<sup>38</sup> 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.<sup>39</sup> 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.<sup>40</sup> 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. . . .

## A FEMINIST THEORY OF ART

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 art-world 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.<sup>41</sup>

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.<sup>42</sup> 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 beyond 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.<sup>43</sup> 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.<sup>44</sup> 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.<sup>45</sup>

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.<sup>46</sup>

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.<sup>47</sup>

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.<sup>48</sup>

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.”<sup>49</sup>

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.<sup>50</sup>

Many other theorists have supported this view.

Given the suggestions of Stephen Davies, one promising approach is provided 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.<sup>51</sup>

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.<sup>52</sup>

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 Sociol-*

*ogy 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.<sup>53</sup>

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.<sup>54</sup>

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.<sup>55</sup>

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.”<sup>56</sup> 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 recog-

nize "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 recognizing) 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 insistence 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 clichés. 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.<sup>57</sup>

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.” Gimbutas, *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 Herrnstein 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. Danto, *After the End of Art*, 147.

42. See their website at [www.guerrillagirls.com](http://www.guerrillagirls.com).

43. 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).

44. 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.

45. Davies, *Definitions of Art*, 95.

46. *Ibid.*, 97.

47. Marcia Muelder Eaton, *Basic Issues in Aesthetics* (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 1988), 87–88.

48. *Ibid.*, 88.

49. *Ibid.*, 96.

50. Gisela Ecker, *Feminist Aesthetics*, trans. Harriet Anderson (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985), 22.

51. Wolff, *Social Production of Art*, 7.

52. *Ibid.*, 27.

53. Wolff, *Aesthetics and the Sociology of Art*, 79.

54. Rita Felski, *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics: Feminist Literature and Social Change* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 158.

55. Davies, *Definitions of Art*, 220.

56. *Ibid.*, 221.

57. Hilde Hein, "The Role of Feminist Aesthetics in Feminist Theory," in *Feminism and Tradition in Aesthetics*, 446.