

INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

UMI

A Bell & Howell Information Company
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor MI 48106-1346 USA
313/761-4700 800/521-0600

4

The Metaphysics of Art
&
The Language of Criticism

A Philosophy of Art and Criticism

By
Daniel Alexander Kaufman

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Philosophy in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

1999

UMI Number: 9917664

**UMI Microform 9917664
Copyright 1999, by UMI Company. All rights reserved.**

**This microform edition is protected against unauthorized
copying under Title 17, United States Code.**

UMI
300 North Zeeb Road
Ann Arbor, MI 48103

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Philosophy in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

January 26, 1994
Date

Steven Cah
Chair of Examining Committee

January 25, 1999
Date

Ernestine Powell
Executive Officer

Professor William James Earle

Professor John Greenwood

Professor Nickolas Pappas

Professor Mary Wiseman

Supervisory Committee

The City University of New York

Preface

In this dissertation, I offer the skeleton of a complete philosophy of art and criticism including: (1) a theory of what art is (an *ontology* of art); (2) a theory of what it is for art to be good/not-good (an aesthetic *axiology*); (3) an account of how critical judgments of good-ness—and all its variants and opposites—are to be confirmed (an *epistemology* for criticism).

What I do not offer is a comprehensive *aesthetic* theory. The theories presented here are concerned solely with the nature of art and the judgments about works of art made by professional critics, or by amateurs seeking to make professional-style critical judgments. An aesthetic theory proper would, in addition to the issues I address, concern itself with the nature of the aesthetic experience, of both artworks and nature, and with other issues concerning the phenomenology of our interaction with artworks. These are extremely important aspects of our experience of art and of things aesthetic, and it is by no means an implication of my dissertation that the sort of judgments about artworks that I discuss are the only sort that we can make or, even, that they are the most important of those that we do make. This work, then, other than providing an account of what art is, only concerns itself with a part of the human experience of art and things aesthetic; the part that has to do with the “science” of art criticism. This is, however, an important part, a significant part; it is the part of our experience with artworks where questions of truth or falsity are most likely to arise.

The motivating force behind this project is the fact that subjectivism seems to have won the day in philosophical aesthetics, a victory, I think, with devastating implications for the practice of art criticism. With very few exceptions, contemporary aesthetic theories treat the aesthetic judgment as a judgment of taste; this, indeed, has been the predominant view throughout the modern era, since, at least, the time of Hume. But construing the aesthetic judgment in this way makes it very difficult to see how such judgments can be taken as *normative*; for if the aesthetic judgment is just an assertion of what one likes or finds beautiful, how can one say that someone else ought—in the objective sense of “ought”—to like it or find it beautiful too? Normativity seems to require an objective standard against which to measure competing aesthetic judgments, but by construing the aesthetic judgment as a subjective judgment of taste, such normativity falls beyond our reach.

The reason why this matters is because of the nature of aesthetic disputes, especially in the professional practice of art criticism. While it may be plausible to construe casual or personal conversations regarding the aesthetic worthiness of artworks as radically subjective, without the implication that our aesthetic judgments exercise normative force over others, it is not plausible to treat professional critical disputes in this manner. Critics go to great lengths to offer justifications for the aesthetic judgments that they make, and they attempt to persuade others to agree with their views on the grounds that their judgments are true, not on non-truth-theoretic grounds, such as appeals to solidarity or emotion. The failure to vindicate the idea that aesthetic judgments can have a normative

component that has objective validity would thus destroy any possibility for a serious art criticism, one that is more than people just proclaiming what they like.

It was the project of the two greatest philosophers of the eighteenth century—David Hume and Immanuel Kant—to attempt to solve this paradox or “antinomy”; that, on the one hand, the aesthetic judgment is thoroughly subjective, a judgment of taste, and yet, on the other hand, it is a judgment that has a normative component, one with objective validity. That is, it is not just that I *want* you to agree with what I find beautiful, but it is also *reasonable* for me to expect that you ought to find beautiful what I do.

Hume, of course, attempts to do this through his larger “comprehensive science of human nature.” Since there is a universal human nature, normally functioning humans—that is, humans who are not malformed or damaged in some other way—will perceive the same things as beautiful, just as normal functioning humans perceive colors and experience other sensations in the same way. It is thus reasonable to say that someone else *ought* find beautiful what one finds beautiful, because it is reasonable to expect that everyone, if they are functioning properly, will find the same things beautiful. Thus, normativity—albeit, an empirical sort of normativity—is preserved, despite the inherent subjectivity of the aesthetic judgment.

Kant goes about solving the paradox in a very different way, a way that is consistent with his larger Critical philosophy. For Kant, the robust normativity of the aesthetic judgment

is not in question; it is a *datum*. The question, then, is not *whether* the aesthetic judgment is really normative, but, rather, given that it *is* normative, how its normativity is possible, given that it is also a thoroughly subjective judgment of taste. Kant does not try, as Hume does, to solve the paradox of the normativity of taste in an empirical way; instead, he offers a transcendental argument for what must necessarily be the case, given the datum (the normativity of the aesthetic judgment) in question. It is his conclusion, not unlike Hume's, that in order for the normativity of the aesthetic judgment to be possible, there must necessarily be supposed a universal "common sense" among sentient beings, one such that it is reasonable, when claiming that X is beautiful, to demand that others find it beautiful too. Again, with such a supposition, normativity is retained, despite the inherent subjectivity of the aesthetic judgment.

It is my belief that both of these solutions to the paradox of the normativity of taste fail and that with their failure the hope to reconcile the construal of the aesthetic judgment as a judgment of taste with its being objectively normative in content and force is dashed.

We are thus left with the original paradox: we can either have our aesthetic judgments as judgments of taste, without objective normative force, or we can have aesthetic judgments with objective normative force, but then we cannot treat them as judgments of taste.

Which choice we make, it seems to me, has profound implications for the practice of art criticism, and it is because contemporary aestheticians have made the wrong choice that I have decided, for the sake of the integrity of critical practice, to weigh in on the question with this dissertation.

The two most powerful strains in contemporary aesthetics, Emotivism and Intuitionism, operate in the ruins of the Humean and Kantian projects, for the history of ideas, rightly or wrongly, bears out my belief that these two great projects have been failures. Though their connections to the Humean and Kantian traditions are complicated, as is the nature of their connection to one another—and it is the aim of this dissertation, in part, to make some of those connections—both Emotivism and Intuitionism have largely held fast to the idea that the aesthetic judgment is a judgment of taste, and both have radically reappraised and reworked the nature of criticism, albeit for different reasons. Both the Emotivist and the Intuitionist agree that when the critic makes an aesthetic judgment and offers a reason in support of that aesthetic judgment, his locutions must be interpreted in a non-literal, *non-transparent* way. That is, while the critic *seems* to be making a straightforward objective claim about an artwork when he makes an aesthetic judgment, he really is not, and when he seems to offer a justification from which one could validly infer that aesthetic judgment, he also really is not.

For the Emotivist, the critic, despite appearances to the contrary, does not even express a genuine proposition when he makes an aesthetic judgment; rather, he is simply performatively expressing his aesthetic sentiments. The surface grammar of the aesthetic judgment, on this view, obscures its actual non-propositional form. Insofar, then, as the critic is trying to persuade us to agree with his verdicts about specific artworks, he cannot be trying to do so on the basis that his verdicts are *true*. Rather, he is purely aiming to create taste-solidarity, and, given this, it would seem that any mode of persuasion should

be available to him.

The Intuitionist's treatment is more complicated but with similar results. He does not deny that when critics make aesthetic judgments they are making judgments about artworks. He also does not deny that these judgments are genuine judgments, in that they express genuine propositions. Nor is he a subjectivist with regard to aesthetic properties—the Intuitionist believes that aesthetic properties (the property of being delicate, unified, exquisite, etc.) are objective properties. But he *does* think that they are properties of an odd sort: unlike most properties, they have no fixed supervenience base. That is, there is no fixed set of non-aesthetic properties such that possessing them is sufficient to possess the aesthetic property in question. This, of course, entails an epistemic thesis: there is no fixed set of non-aesthetic *judgments* from which one might validly infer an aesthetic judgment. The justification of aesthetic judgments, on this view, is thus rendered impossible, and it is because of this impossibility of justification that so many Intuitionists go anti-transparent with regard to the locutions of critics. Their argument is transcendental in style: if aesthetic judgments *were* objective and to be read transparently, then they *would* admit of straightforward justification of the type just described. Since, however, straightforward justification is not possible, then it cannot be the case that such judgments are to be read transparently.

The picture of criticism that emerges looks something like this: The critic says that this painting is good, and he says it is good because of some aesthetic property, F. Now, there

is, indeed, some property of this artobject that is, in some sense, responsible for the positive assessment of taste that the critic has offered, BUT: (a) that property cannot be descriptively picked out and (b) “F”—or any other aesthetic predicate—can never entail, and thus, justify, an evaluative assessment. So, the Intuitionist tells us, while the critic *seems* to be describing an object and offering an evaluation that is justified by that description, in the hope, perhaps of persuading you to agree on the grounds that his assessment is true, he is *really* doing something quite different. By his aesthetic judgment—the attribution of “F” to the artobject—he is somehow getting you to *see* the real property, say F*, that is responsible for his evaluative assessment. And by getting you to see that property he is bringing you to agree with his assessment, not because having that property entails that assessment but because seeing that quality will somehow “result in” that assessment.

It is, perhaps, a testament to the ever-increasing irrelevance of philosophy to first-order disciplines that many critics have simply ignored this dominant philosophical conception of the critical enterprise as one in which critics engage in non truth-theoretic methods of persuasion for the sake of gaining a solidarity of taste. Critics, by the scores, have gone ahead making straightforward aesthetic judgments about paintings, sculptures, music, novels, and other works of art, and have offered reasons on the basis of which these judgments are supposed to be confirmable.

But it seems to me that the subjectivism and anti-transparency embraced by contemporary

aesthetic theory *has* seeped into much of criticism and, worse, has invaded the larger popular culture. It is a ubiquitous idea now in our culture that what is artistically great and what is not is merely a matter of one's taste, what one "likes," and that there are no truth-theoretic means by which judgments as to the merits or lack thereof of works of art can be verified, because such judgments are so intractably subjective. And I don't think that it is an accident that coinciding with the rise of such views—on the ascent, now, for almost a half century—there has been, in my opinion as well as that of many cultural critics, a massive deterioration in the quality of both art and its criticism. It is for these reasons, for the sake of the quality of the arts and the integrity of art criticism that I think it so important that philosophers *oppose* the contemporary position with regard to the nature of the aesthetic judgment and the practice of criticism.

This dissertation is just one effort in that direction. It opposes every one of the major tenets of the dominant contemporary view in philosophical aesthetics: (1) It asserts that there is a single ontological criterion for an object's being art, one for which there are clear necessary and sufficient conditions; (2) It proposes a conception of artistic value, in which the worth or lack thereof of an artobject is an objective property of that artobject; (3) It provides an analysis of critical judgments, such that these judgments can be interpreted transparently with respect to their surface grammar; that is as objective, factual judgments, rather than subjective judgments of taste; (4) It advances a straightforward epistemology for critical judgments, one that takes the form of covering-law, nomological-deductive model of justification.

At its core, my theory is teleological in nature. It conceives of artobjects as embodying a multitude of civilizational interests and purposes, and it construes artistic *value* as being a variety of success; specifically, success with regard to the communication and expression of those interests and purposes. In this way, my views are much closer to Aristotle's than to Hume's or Kant's. For Hume and Kant, aesthetic value—or, less anachronistically, *beauty*—is conceived as experiential. It is a perceived property, a property, so to speak, of our *sensibility*. In contrast, on Aristotle's view, as on mine, it is a property pertaining to *success*. For Aristotle, if a tragedy provides catharsis for its audience, it is a successful, and thus, a beautiful tragedy. And we should remember his discussion of beauty in *On the Parts of Animals*; it is not “prettiness” or attractiveness that should be our criterion of beauty for an organ or for a creature, but rather, its excellence with regard to its function.

It is the construal of artobjects as inherently teleological in nature that allows us this “virtue-theoretic” conception of artistic value (and I will dispense with “beauty” in favor of “aesthetic value,” for reasons to be discussed at length). And it is the virtue-theoretic account of artistic value that makes possible the treatment of aesthetic judgments transparently, as objective judgments about works of art, rather than subjective judgments about us and our sensibilities. And finally, and most importantly, it is this ability to treat aesthetic judgments objectively that allows us to treat them as straightforwardly true or false, and thus subject to traditional forms of epistemic justification. As already mentioned, the model of justification that I will offer is nomological-deductive in nature.

While presenting this philosophy of art and criticism, I also hope, along the way, to make some interesting claims regarding the relationship between criticism and art history, to talk about the differences between criticism and science, and to explore some of the different artistic media in detail and with a healthy stock of examples taken from painting, sculpture, music, literature, and film.

—*Daniel A. Kaufman, September 1998*

Table of Contents

Preface	i	
List of plates	xiii	
Chapter One: Emotivism and the Humean Legacy		
1.1	Introductory Remarks	1
1.2	The Humean Legacy: The Exhaustive Categories of Ideas, Secondary Qualities, and the Impotence of Reason Over Action	2
1.3	From Hume to Ayer: Logical Empiricism, “Emotivism,” and the Humean Results	10
1.4	Against the Emotivist Strain	18
Chapter Two: The Intuitionist Tradition		
2.1	Three Stages to Anti-Transparency	28
2.2	G.E. Moore on “Good” and Good-ness	34
2.3	Frank Sibley’s “Aesthetic Concepts”	41
2.4	Arnold Isenberg’s “Critical Communication”	54
2.5	Mary Mothersill’s <i>Beauty Restored</i>	65
2.51	The Nature of the Aesthetic Judgment, Taste, and Beauty	70
2.52	The First Thesis, <i>Ceteris Paribus</i> Laws, and Subjectivity Again	93
2.6	Uniqueness	101
Chapter Three: The Ontology of Artobjects		
3.1	The Philosophical Impact of the Readymades: Danto and the Transfiguration of the Commonplace	109
3.2	Institutions and Status: The Institutional Theory of Art	122
3.3	History, Civilization, and the Functionalist Theory of Art	139
3.4	Differences with Danto: A Word on “Transfiguration”	154

Chapter Four: Artistic Teleology and Artistic Value

4.1	An Aristotelian, Virtue-Theoretic Account of Artistic Value	164
4.11	Essence, <i>Telos</i> , and Excellence	165
4.2	Aesthetic and Non-Aesthetic Teleologies	173
4.21	Non-Aesthetic Teleologies	176
4.22	Aesthetic Teleologies	198
4.3	Aesthetic Purposes as Ends	208
4.4	Artistic Value: Measuring Success	238
4.41	The Virtue-Theoretic Account of Artistic Value	242
4.42	An Intentional Fallacy?	254
4.43	Evaluating Art History: Cross-Teleological Judgment and the Evaluation of Artistic Teleologies	266

Chapter Five: The Justification of Critical Judgments

5.1	Preliminary Remarks	278
5.2	Critical Justification	279
5.3	Artistic Laws	284
5.4	<i>Ceteris Paribus</i> Clauses and Artistic Laws	293
5.5	Artistic Proviso Clauses and the Function of Criticism	298

Plates	318
---------------	-----

Bibliography	355
---------------------	-----

List of Plates

1. *Fountain*, Marcel Duchamp, 1917. Sidney Janis Gallery. (p. 318)
2. *Augustus of the Prima Porta*, 14-29 A.D. Vatican Museum. (p. 319)
3. Portrait Statue of Vincetius Ragonius Celsus, 4th century A.D. Ostia Museum. (p. 320)
4. Reliquary Statue of St. Foy (detail of head), 9th century A.D. Treasury of the Church of St. Foy, Conques. (p. 321)
5. Reliquary Statue of St. Foy (profile), 9th century A.D. Treasury of the Church of St. Foy, Conques. (p. 322)
6. Equestrian Statuette of Charlemagne, 9th century A.D. Musée Carnavalet. (p. 323)
7. Equestrian Statue of Marcus Aurelius, 161-180 A.D. Piazza del Campidoglio, Rome. (p. 324)
8. Aachen Cathedral (Interior, nave), consecrated 805 A.D. (p. 325)
9. St. Vitale, Ravenna (Interior, nave), 525-547 A.D. (p. 326)
10. "Christ Washing the Apostle's Feet" (from the Gospel Book of Otto III), 1000 A.D. Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich. (p. 327)
11. Crucifixion (from the Weingarten Missal), 1216. The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York. (p. 328)
12. Christ Triumphant (front cover of the Lindau Gospels), 870 A.D. The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York. (p. 329)
13. "May" (from *Les Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry*), 1410. Musée Condé, Chantilly. (p. 330)
14. *Napoleon Emperor*, Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, 1806. Musée de l'Armée, Paris. (p. 331)
15. *The Third of May*, 1808, Francisco Goya, 1814. Museo del Prado, Madrid. (p. 332)
16. *Saturn Devouring One of His Sons*, Francisco Goya, 1820-22. Museo del Prado, Madrid. (p. 333)
17. *Monastery Graveyard in the Snow*, Caspar David Friedrich, 1817-19. Nationalgalerie, Berlin; destroyed in 1945. (p. 334)

18. *Winter Landscape with Church*. Caspar David Friedrich, 1811. National Gallery, London. (p. 335)
19. *Woman in Front of the Setting Sun*. Caspar David Friedrich, 1818. Museum Folkwang, Essen. (p. 336)
20. *An elephant and its keeper* (drawing from a manuscript). Matthew Paris, 1255. Parker Library, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. (p. 337)
21. *Dido Building at Carthage*. J.M.W. Turner, 1815. National Gallery, London. (p. 338)
22. *The Slave Ship*. J.M.W. Turner, 1840. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. (p. 339)
23. *Steamer in a Snowstorm*. J.M.W. Turner, 1842. Tate Gallery, London. (p. 340)
24. *Glass Painting with Sun*. Wassily Kandinsky, 1910. Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich. (p. 341)
25. *Composition VI*. Wassily Kandinsky, 1913. Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich. (p. 342)
26. *Pieter van den Broecke*. Frans Hals, 1633. Iveagh Bequest, Kenwood, London. (p. 343)
27. *Portrait of Madame Matisse—The Green Line*. Henri Matisse, 1905. State Museum of Art, Copenhagen. (p. 344)
28. *Woman I*. Willem de Kooning, 1950-52. Museum of Modern Art, New York. (p. 345)
29. *One—Number 31*. Jackson Pollock, 1950. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. (p. 346)
30. *Autumn Rhythm (Number 30)*. Jackson Pollock, 1950. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. (p. 347)
31. *Four Darks in Red*. Mark Rothko, 1958. The Whitney Museum of Art, New York. (p. 348)
32. *Abstract Painting*. Ad Reinhardt, 1960-61. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. (p. 349)
33. *Napoleon Crossing the Great Saint Bernard Pass*. Jacques Louis David, 1800. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. (p. 350)
34. *Coronation of Napoleon and Josephine*. Jacques Louis David, 1805-07. The Louvre, Paris. (p. 351)

35. *The Creation of Adam* (from the Sistine Chapel ceiling), Michelangelo Buonarotti. 1512. Sistine Chapel. Vatican, Rome. (p. 352)
36. *Madonna of Burgomaster Meyer*. Hans Holbein the Younger. 1526. Schlossmuseum, Darmstadt. (p. 353)
37. *The Angel Leaving Tobias and his Family*. Rembrandt van Rjin. 1637. The Louvre, Paris. (p. 354)

Chapter One: Emotivism and the Humean Legacy

1.1 Introductory Remarks

There are essentially two strains of anti-objectivity anti-transparency in the history of the philosophy of evaluative/aesthetic discourse.¹ One derives from the skepticism/Naturalism of David Hume. This is the Logical Empiricist or Emotivist strain, most starkly expressed in A.J. Ayer's *Language Truth and Logic* in the chapter entitled "Critique of Ethics and Theology." This strain is maximally anti-objective—it claims that there are no objective (that is, non-person dependant) evaluative facts in aesthetics—and anti-transparent—it claims that the surface grammar of evaluative judgments in aesthetics (and ethics) misleadingly implies that there *are* objective evaluative facts in aesthetics.

The second strain stems from the Intuitionism of G.E. Moore, as it is represented in theorists like Frank Sibley in his famous paper "Aesthetic Concepts" and by Arnold Isenberg in his "Critical Communication." It can also be found in the "property-nominalism" of Bernard Harrison. This strain is not necessarily anti-objectivist—it does not necessarily claim that there are no real aesthetic properties (evaluative or otherwise)—but it *is* anti-transparent—that is, because it argues that there is no way to verify evaluative and aesthetic judgments, it claims that critics, when they make evaluative and aesthetic judgments, *cannot* be saying what they seem to be saying. Thus, just like the

¹ It is important to include both evaluative/aesthetic discourse because while some evaluative discourse is aesthetic, not all aesthetic discourse is evaluative, or better, purely evaluative.

Logical Empiricists, aesthetic Intuitionists claim that evaluative and aesthetic judgments must be radically reinterpreted, since their true meaning is wildly at odds with their surface grammar.

In this chapter I will deal with the first strain. Discussion of the second will come in chapter two. It is important to mention, at this stage, that the purpose here is not to give an exhaustive characterization of either of these two strains or to completely refute them. Nor is it my interest to give a comprehensive view of the history of modern thought on art. Rather, my reason for these “historical chapters” is to set up the positive position that I will offer in chapters three through five. Why have anti-objectivism and anti-transparency become so much the order of the day in contemporary aesthetics? What might some objections to the Logical Empiricist and Intuitionist approach to aesthetics look like? And, given the nature of these objections—indicating, as they do, what is wrong with Logical Empiricist and Intuitionist views on art—what sort of aesthetics is recommended? *This* question, then, will then bring us to the gates of my own aesthetic theory, about which the rest of this dissertation (chapters three through five) is about.

1.2 The Humean Legacy: The Exhaustive Categories of Ideas, Secondary Qualities, and the Impotence of Reason over Action

In order to understand the first strain of anti-objectivism and anti-transparency, that of twentieth century Logical Empiricism, we have to first understand David Hume’s ideas on moral theory and moral sentiment, for the Logical Empiricist position on the nature of

aesthetic judgments is identical with their treatment of the logic and semantics of moral judgments, and their position on moral judgments is derivative of Hume's results in this area. And while the Logical Empiricist's is essentially a *linguistic* thesis where Hume's is not, I will argue that the linguistic thesis is a not-unreasonable extension of Hume's relocation of moral properties from the action and behavior-types being evaluated to the mind of the evaluator. On Hume's view, for an act/behavior/state of affairs to be morally right is for it to incite positive responses in the observer. For it to be morally wrong is for it to incite disapproval in that observer. This relocation of moral properties from the objective world to the subjective sphere of human experience is the key to the linguistic conclusions at which the Logical Empiricists arrive.²

Hume comes to his conclusions on morals through essentially *three* lines of reasoning. The first is the idea that reason alone can never produce action and, therefore, can never be ultimately responsible for moral behavior (which, of course, includes the act of making a moral judgement). This is an instance of Hume's general thesis about the impotence of reason in action without the aid of the passions—in the absence of a *sentiment* to the effect that such-and-such a circumstance is unacceptable due to some feature, F, the mere

² Much has been made of the Logical Empiricists' approbation of Hume's results, and whether or not their linguistic theses follow from those results. Barry Stroud especially has stressed just how far the Logical Empiricists distorted Hume's viewpoint, especially in their view that it is the job of philosophers primarily to perform conceptual analysis (that is, to dabble in the *analytic a priori* (or, in Hume-speak, "relations of ideas")) in the service of science. See Barry Stroud, *Hume* (New York: Routledge, 1977); pp. 219-222. While Stroud's thoughts are right on target from the point of view of the history of ideas—the Logical Empiricists' actual arguments, connecting themselves to Hume, are for the most part, quite weak—I think we can construct a more sympathetic version of the Logical Empiricists' thesis and a tighter argument connecting that thesis to Hume's thought.

conclusion on the basis of *reason* that this circumstance is F will never cause anyone to act in order to change the circumstance, or make an exclamation of moral disapproval.³

The second line of reasoning stems from Hume's basic categories of propositions: matters of fact and relations of ideas. The point simply is that the ascription of moral properties to act- and behavior-types *neither* analytically follows from those act- and behavior-types (and hence, moral ascriptions are not relations of ideas) *nor* is present, empirically, in those act/behavior-types (and hence, moral ascriptions are not matters of fact). When I watch an old woman being bludgeoned on Eighth Avenue, I cannot *deduce* that this act constitutes a moral violation (for <bludgeoning> is not constitutive of <moral violation> (say that '<>' denotes concepts)) the way that I can deduce that something is a rectangle from the fact that it is a square (since <rectangle> *is* constitutive of <square>, which is defined as <rectangle with sides of equal length>).

On the matters of fact front, as I watch the old woman being bludgeoned, I never observe wrongness *in addition to* the bludgeoning; instead, I observe the bludgeoning itself and it is accompanied by—or better, *produces*—feelings of moral disgust). The rightness or wrongness of the act, then, is only observable when I consider my own responses to it,

³ Since morals, therefore, have an influence on the actions and affections, it follows, that they cannot be derived from reason; and that because reason alone, as we have already prov'd, can never have such an influence. Morals excite passions, and produce or prevent actions. Reason of itself is utterly impotent in this particular. The rules of morality, therefore, are not conclusions of our reason.

David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978) p.457.

and this is because moral properties are in our minds, not out in the world.⁴

Hume's third line of reasoning (and it really follows from the second one) makes the comparison of moral properties with secondary qualities. After pointing out that we can only observe wrongness/rightness when we look in ourselves, Hume goes on to say that

Vice and virtue, therefore, may be compar'd to sounds, colours, heat

⁴ Hume says,

The question only arises among philosophers, whether the guilt or moral deformity of this action be discovered by demonstrative reasoning, or be felt by an internal sense, and by means of some sentiment, which the reflecting on such an action naturally occasions. This question will soon be decided against the former opinion, if we can shew the same relations in other objects, without the notion of any guilt or iniquity attending them. Reason or science is nothing but the comparing of ideas, and the discovery of their relations; and if the same relations have different characters, it must evidently follow, that those characters are not discover'd merely by reason.

But if examin'd will prove with equal certainty, that it consists not in any *matter of fact*, which can be discover'd by the understanding...Take any action allow'd to be vicious: Willful murder, for instance. Examine it in all lights, and see if you can find that matter of fact, or real existence, which you call *vice*...The vice entirely escapes you, as long as you consider the object. You never can find it, till you turn your reflexion into your own breast, and find a sentiment of disapprobation, which arises in you, towards this action. Here is a mater of fact: but 'tis the object of feeling, not reason. It lies in yourself, not in the object.

Ibid., pp.466-468. Hume, of course, runs a virtually identical line on aesthetic value. In his "Of the Standard of Taste," he says,

[A] thousand different sentiments, excited by the same object, are all right: Because no sentiment represents what is really in the object. It only marks a certain conformity or relation between the object and the organs or faculties of the mind; and if that conformity did not really exist, the sentiment could never possibly have being. Beauty is no quality in things themselves: It exists merely in the mind which contemplates them...

David Hume, "Of the Standard of Taste," reprinted in Frank Tillman and Steven Cahn, eds. *Philosophy of Art and Aesthetics: From Plato to Wittgenstein* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), p. 117.

and cold, which, according to modern philosophy, are not qualities in objects, but perceptions in the mind

and, if we think about this for a moment, we will realize that this line is generally consistent with basic Cartesian/Lockean metaphysics. The qualities of “things in the world” are limited to the so-called “primary” qualities, which are, according to Locke: solidity, extension, figure and mobility (what we take to be the quantitative aspects of things).⁵ The so-called “secondary” qualities—what we generally take to be the *qualitative* aspects of things—are the results of the primary qualities acting upon our sense organs. So, analogously, for Hume, just as the property of warmth is not a property of physical objects, but rather a property of our minds, caused by our interaction with the primary qualities of physical objects, so the property of wrongness/rightness is not a property of acts/behaviors/situations but rather a property of our minds, caused by our observation of these acts/behaviors/situations.

Hume’s moral theory should be familiar and predictable to anyone who has already come to understand his conclusions on the subjects of causation, induction and our belief in the continued and distinct existence of bodies. We think we have observed a case of cause and effect and attribute causation as a sort of “power” which is transferred from cause to caused, but really, in the world, there is just constant conjunction; the causal power is simply a matter of projecting into the events the expectation that arises as a result of observing certain constant conjunctions (those in which the things conjoined are

⁵ John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (Clarendon Press: Oxford 1975) pp.134-135.

contiguous in time and space and whose conjunction is repeated). Likewise, when we find an act particularly sadistic and repulsive, we think that we have observed a case of moral wrongdoing and attribute wrongness to the act, but really, in the world, the acts have no moral properties; wrongness is really just a matter of projecting the disapproval that arises in us when we observe the act.

For a different sort of philosophical mind, such a conclusion—that all these things we took to be real and for which we thought we could give a rational analysis, are really just projections of our expectations and tastes—might lead, quickly, to a strong anti-realism and, even, nihilism. But, because Hume is essentially a naturalist and not a skeptic, once he has demonstrated to his satisfaction that a rational reconstruction of the relevant concepts is impossible, he proceeds to *deflate the question* (i.e. rather than asking what *justifies* our moral/causal/inductive judgements, asking instead what *causes* us to make these judgements) and offers a *deflationary answer* (in terms of psychological dispositions and habits). In this case, then, the question becomes, “Why [causal ‘why?’] do we make moral judgements?” and the answer is something like “Because, having sympathy, we just *do* have certain responses to certain actions, including the making of moral judgments, such as ‘good’, ‘bad’, ‘right’, and ‘wrong’.”

One source of disanalogy between the case of morality and the other metaphysical concepts for which Hume, ultimately, offers a deflationary treatment, is that in the case of the latter there is a further explanation as to *why* the psychological projections occur. For

instance, if we ask Hume why the perception of a regular—though perhaps interrupted—series of impressions of, say, a table, causes us to have the idea that there is a single table which exists all along, an explanation is offered which invokes the principles of association of ideas: resemblance, contiguity in time or place, and cause and effect. It is because our impressions of the table come in a series, are *contiguous* in terms of both space and time, with each impression shortly and closely following after the last, and because each impression in the series *resembles* that before it, that our minds move smoothly from one impression to the next, creating the illusion that there is a single table we have been viewing all along. But for moral properties there is no analogous explanation.

Notice that Hume's conceptual deflation and subsequent deflationary moral theory requires the success of the second line of reasoning (the line which proceeds from the exhaustive categories of ideas). It would be fallacious to conclude, merely on the argument that reason is impotent in producing moral action, that moral *concepts* cannot admit of rational reconstruction. All that would follow is that such a reconstruction cannot be the sole basis for moral behaviors (including the making of moral judgements). For my purposes, then, it is the second line of reasoning that is most crucial to the Logical Empiricists' linguistic thesis on evaluative discourse and hence, to my project concerning objectivity and transparency in aesthetic judgement.

It is, by now, a well-rehearsed fact of the history of ideas that great doubt has been placed

on the exhaustiveness of Hume's categories. One form that this doubt has taken is, roughly, the form of a *reductio*, i.e., "Given the Humean categories, out goes arithmetic, geometry, and many of the basic principles of natural science (like cause and effect and induction). This is just absurd. Therefore, the categories must be wrong or non-exhaustive." This is, in a sense, the dialectical strategy behind Kant's introduction of the *synthetic a priori* category, where all of these homeless concepts get housed—remember his introductory worries about assimilating the proposition that seven plus five equals twelve into the Humean categories.⁶ Now, Kant's construal of the *synthetic a priori* has fallen into disrepute and the almost complete resurrection of Hume and his two categories

⁶ The idea is that since arithmetical propositions are neither matters of fact (*synthetic a posteriori*) nor relations of ideas (*analytic a priori*), but nevertheless have content (which they shouldn't if Hume is right about the exhaustiveness of his categories), then there must be another category of propositions to which they belong. Hence, the *synthetic a priori* category.

All mathematical judgments, without exception, are synthetic. This fact...has hitherto escaped the notice of those [like Hume] who are engaged in the analysis of human reason, and is, indeed, directly opposed to all their conjectures. For as it was found that all mathematical inferences proceed in accordance with the principle of contradiction... it was supposed that the fundamental propositions of the science can themselves be known to be true through that principle. This is an erroneous view...

...it has to be noted that mathematical propositions, strictly so called, are always judgments a priori, not empirical; because they carry with them necessity, which cannot be derived from experience...

We might, indeed, at first suppose that the proposition $7+5=12$ is a merely analytic proposition, and follows by the principle of contradiction from the concept of a sum of 7 and 5. But if we look more closely we find that the concept of the sum of 7 and 5 contains nothing save the union of the two numbers into one, and in this no thought is being taken as to what that single number may be which combines both. The concept of 12 is by no means already thought in merely thinking this union of 7 and 5...Arithmetical propositions are therefore always synthetic.

Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965), pp. 52-54 (my brackets).

has been accomplished by the Logical Empiricists and Naturalists of the 20th century. I have problems with this resurrection in general; Deflationism and Naturalism seem unacceptable to me without a prior demonstration that a rational reconstruction of the relevant concepts is impossible, and Kant at least showed that Hume had not adequately made this demonstration.⁷ But, I get ahead of myself. Let's flesh out the Logical Empiricist extension of Hume's results before damning them.

1.3 From Hume to Ayer: Logical Empiricism, "Emotivism," and the Humean Results

Hume has argued that moral properties cannot be located amongst the furniture of the physical world, nor demonstrated to be constitutive of the concepts used to describe that world. Since he is not a nihilist and is compelled to give an explanation of human moral behavior (as he is to explain human belief in causation, induction, and the continuing and distinct existence of bodies), he concludes that moral facts are characteristics of our sentimental lives, not of the world around us. For bludgeoning old women to be wrong is for that act to be the sort that arouses morally disapproving sentiments in us. This is the only possible remaining explanation of our moral attitudes and behaviors, given that they will not be explicable in terms of a rational analysis of moral concepts.

⁷ And, worse, for naturalists and deflationists, twentieth century philosophers have proposed ways other than Kant's of construing *synthetic a priori* knowledge and Rationalism in general, Jerry Katz being perhaps the best and most sophisticated example—see his *Metaphysics of Meaning* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1990) and *Realistic Rationalism* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1998). The degree to which views like Katz's are ignored by naturalists and deflationists indicates the degree to which the belief in Naturalism and Deflationism have become practically religious, rather than philosophical.

Now, there are many agendas behind the Logical Empiricists' resurrection and transformation of the Humean results, and some of them might be seen as less legitimate than others. These might include the Logical Empiricists' desire to destroy metaphysics by employing Hume's results with a linguistic twist, claiming that metaphysical utterances are literally meaningless. But the Logical Empiricists' linguistic interpretation of Hume can be given a sympathetic reading, and I want to run through that reading before criticizing this whole strain of anti-objectivist, anti-transparency thought. In short, the Logical Empiricists claim to be the progeny of Hume, though they falsely attribute a linguistic thesis to him. Many of their reasons for this attribution are suspect. But, there *is* a way to get to that thesis which constitutes a natural and non-suspicious extension of the Humean results. First, however, the suspect reading of Hume.

This line goes as follows: Moral judgements (as well as all other "metaphysical" judgements) read congruously with their surface grammar are *literally meaningless*. This is due to the Verification Theory of Meaning, which states that a sentence is semantically significant if and only if it is empirically verifiable. Analytic propositions, on this view, while meaningful, are semantically vacuous (that is, impart no information). The Verification Theory of Meaning is justified on the basis of the Humean categories of relations of ideas/matters of fact.⁸ Therefore, the best we can do is offer an analysis of

⁸ With Ayer,

The views which are put forward in this treatise derive from the doctrines of Bertrand Russell and Wittgenstein, which are themselves the logical outcome of the empiricism of Berkeley and Hume. Like

moral judgement in terms of its performative force—when people say [x is wrong], they're really just saying something like [x, Boo!].⁹

The weak link here, of course, is the justification of the Verification Theory of Meaning. In addition to an abundance of linguistic difficulties, the theory just doesn't follow from Hume's results; the exhaustiveness of Hume's categories of ideas entails nothing about the *semantic significance* (or lack thereof) of sentences which make reference to ideas falling outside the categories. Thus, although "Bludgeoning old women is wrong" makes supposed reference to a fact that is neither a matter of the relation between the ideas

Hume. I divide all genuine propositions into two classes: those which, in his terminology, concern "relations of ideas," and those which concern "matters of fact"...Propositions concerning empirical matters of fact...I hold to be hypothesis, which can be probable but never certain. And in giving an account of the method of their validation I claim also to have explained the nature of truth.

To test whether a sentence expresses a *genuine empirical hypothesis*, I adopt what may be called a modified verification principle...If a putative proposition fails to satisfy this principle, and is not a tautology, then I hold that it is metaphysical and that, being metaphysical, it is neither true nor false but literally senseless.

A.J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic* (New York: Dover Publications, 1952), p. 31.

⁹ Many readers, including Nickolas Pappas, have complained about my use of Ayer to represent the Logical Empiricist position, on the grounds that his position is overly simplistic, and presents the worst case for the treatment of aesthetic judgments as performatives. In the specific manner of performative that Ayer construes the aesthetic judgment, any possibility of there being a substantive disagreement that can be rationally debated seems ruled out. The complaint, in short, is that in choosing Ayer as my representative of Logical Empiricism, I am presenting a strawman. My reply to this all-too-fair complaint is that it misses the point. The point here is not to discuss Logical Empiricism for its own sake. My purpose in these two introductory chapters is to discuss the sources of anti-transparency in terms of aesthetic judgments. It is anti-transparency, of any type, that I oppose. So, frankly, if a fancier, more subtle version of anti-transparency exists in other Logical Empiricist philosophers, it is, nevertheless, anti-transparency, something I will not tolerate in criticism. Given that Ayer's position is the most straightforward, clearest expression of anti-transparency available in the Logical Empiricist literature, it is a good choice for my purposes.

<bludgeoning> and <wrongness> or a matter of fact about the objective physical world, that does not mean, on Hume's analysis, that the sentence is meaningless. Perhaps such sentences are necessarily false in the Humean universe, although I'm not sure even of that.¹⁰

The Logical Empiricist, however, can get his non-transparency thesis (that $\lceil x \text{ is wrong} \rceil$ really has a non-propositional interpretation, something like $\lceil x, \text{boo!} \rceil$) in a more refined manner. Start with the Humean results. Since the categories are exhaustive, this means that facts that fall outside the categories must either be reduced to one category or other or eliminated. Moral facts *qua* facts about act- and behavior-types reduce to neither category and therefore, must be eliminated. Given that the set of moral facts is empty—and thus, since moral predicates as a kind must, necessarily, fail in reference—any sentence making reference to moral facts must itself fail in reference, and therefore, must either lack a truth-value or always be false.¹¹ In the spirit of Hume, however, we want to make *some* sense of moral utterances, yet we don't want to be forced to assert that when people make such utterances, they are always spouting falsehoods. A plausible re-

¹⁰ This gets very tricky because it depends on how you read the meaning, truth conditions, and logical form of the sentence. For example, if you construe "wrong" in "Bludgeoning old women is wrong" as *meaning* "invokes (or tends to invoke) feelings of disapproval" then the sentence might be true, but its interpretation then deviates substantially from its form. Specifically, rather than "wrong" being a one-placed predicate, yielding a sentence of the form, Fa (a is wrong), it is really a two-placed predicate of the form Fab (a invokes a sentiment of wrongness in b). If you treat the form as its surface grammar suggests, however, the sentence will always be false, since there are no wrong acts, where wrongness is taken to be a property of acts.

¹¹ This, of course, depends on whether one takes a Fregean or Russellian view of the effect of empty reference on the truth values of sentences.

evaluation of moral qualities in light of the Humean results is that their ascription to act- and behavior-types is really an ascription of our *attitudes* towards those act- and behavior-types. Thus, when ascribing a moral predicate to some act or behavior, we are really offering a propositional-style code, one which when unlocked will reveal that we are really talking about our attitudes and sentiments. In this sense, then, we have a classic example of surface grammar obscuring logical form; specifically, the surface grammar of “Bludgeoning old women is wrong” misleadingly suggests a logical form of *Fa*, where it really is a performative utterance of the form [a, boo!].

It is clear from the following excerpt from *Language, Truth and Logic* that Ayer expresses the Logical Empiricist line in the more dubious, crude sense which I discussed first

We begin by admitting that the fundamental ethical concepts are unanalysable... [T]he reason why they are unanalysable is that they are mere pseudo-concepts. The presence of an ethical symbol in a proposition adds nothing to its factual content. Thus, if I say to someone, “You acted wrongly in stealing that money,” I am not stating anything more than if I had simply said, “You stole that money.” In adding that this action is wrong, I am not making any further statement about it. I am simply evincing my moral disapproval of it...

If now I generalise my previous statement and say, “Stealing money is wrong,” I produce a sentence which has no factual meaning—that is, expresses no proposition which can be either true or false. It is as if I had written “Stealing money!!”—where the shape and thickness of the exclamation marks show... that a special sort of moral disapproval is the feeling which is being expressed.¹²

Of the application of this theory to aesthetic judgements, Ayer says, “Aesthetic terms are used in exactly the same way as ethical terms.” He goes on to say,

¹² Ayer, p. 107.

Such aesthetic words as “beautiful” and “hideous” are employed, as ethical words are employed, not to make statements of fact, but simply to express certain feelings and evoke a certain response. It follows, as in ethics, that there is no sense in attributing objective validity to aesthetic judgements and no possibility of arguing about questions of value in aesthetics but only about questions of fact. A scientific treatment of aesthetics would show us what in general were the causes of aesthetic feeling, why various societies produced and admired the works of art they did, why taste varies as it does within a given society, and so forth. And these are ordinary psychological or sociological questions. They have, of course, little or nothing to do with aesthetic criticism as we understand it.¹³

While it would be simplest to merely attack Ayer’s extremist position, I want to discredit the *entire* Logical Empiricist strain as well as the initial Humean deflation of morals (and aesthetics). Therefore, I will act as if the more reasonable construal is the Logical Empiricist position (and ignore the Verification Theory of Meaning), and I will levy some arguments against Humean-style Deflationism too.

Something important to notice, which will be of significance to my objections to the Logical Empiricists’ Emotivist theory of evaluative discourse, is that the *purpose* of our moral conversations is radically transformed. Where there is no statement of fact there can be no genuine disagreement—in the sense of *formal* disagreement—between disputants (that is, disagreements of the form “A is F” and “It is not the case that A is F”). The purpose, then, of evaluative judgements in ethics and criticism, respectively, is not to state objective facts but rather to express our emotions or tastes and incite the same in others, with the hope that this will translate into action or taste-allegiance. Ayer goes on to say about aesthetics, “The critic, by calling attention to certain features of the work

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

under review, and expressing his own feelings about them, endeavours to make us share his attitude towards the work as a whole.”¹⁴

Understand that Ayer is anticipating a powerful objection to the Emotivist theory—“What are people doing when they have evaluative disagreements? And, given what you’ve *said* they’re doing (that is, not really disagreeing over objective facts but rather, performatively expressing preferences), why do they *seem to think* they are involved in genuine, that is, formal, disagreement? What is the *point* of that evaluative argument if there is no objective basis for disagreement?”

The answer, the Emotivist tells us, involves the invocation of the fact/value distinction, a distinction which becomes possible once we have taken the Humean-Logical Empiricist line on what constitutes genuine, disputable facts. Often, we *are* engaged in genuine disagreement, but it is really a disagreement over facts not values. An example from the abortion debate comes to mind. Both sides of the debate would generally agree that to kill an innocent person is wrong. In debates over the morality of abortion, while it may seem that the disputants are arguing about issues of value, the argument *really* comes down to a dispute over facts—whether or not the fetus should be counted as a person.

In the aesthetic case, this goes as follows: Two critics are arguing over whether or not a portrait of a woman is good. Both critics agree that *if* the woman in this portrait were

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 114.

painted delicately, the portrait would receive a positive assessment. What they disagree about is whether or not the woman painted is delicate. Here, again, while it may seem, from the outside, that the debate between our two critics is over the value of the portrait, what the disagreement is really about is a matter of fact, whether the portrayal of the woman is delicate or not.

The Logical Empiricist position to be addressed then, sums up as follows: Hume has purportedly shown us that his categories exhaust the possible kinds of facts. Facts which fall outside the categories must either be reduced to one or the other or be eliminated. Given that this is the case, sentences which refer to facts that resist reduction (such as evaluative sentences) must always be false. Lest we call *all* evaluative judgements false, let's reevaluate our theory of evaluative discourse in light of Hume's results. Hume tells us that since evaluative facts, *qua* facts about act- and behavior-types must be eliminated, those facts must be about something else, specifically, the *attitudes* of the person making the judgement. Given that this is the case, let's, with Ayer, recommend a linguistic thesis, where evaluative sentences themselves are evocative of the those attitudes rather than of properties of the objects of those attitudes. This, of course, will require a reconstruction of the notion of evaluative disagreement, which we will claim is *either* informative—and hence about facts not values—*or* non-informative and then merely, a kind of evaluative head butting. The purpose of such disagreement, on such a theory, rather than being to discover and reveal evaluative truths, is primarily *persuasive*. We seek to assimilate other's evaluative attitudes to our own in the hope of producing actions and sensibilities

congruous with ours.

1.4 Against the Emotivist Strain

I guess it makes the most sense to attack this strain of thought in its most general form first. Doing this will make clear my broad *programmatic* difficulties with Emotivism, as well as set the stage for the more specific arguments that I want to make against aesthetic Emotivism. I want to make it clear that I do not consider these general considerations to be conclusive in terms of the specific case of aesthetic judgement—one might certainly craft a set of rationales for such a thesis distinct from the principles that Hume and Ayer provide. But, from the more general standpoint of the history of ideas, I think that this strain of thought is extremely wrongheaded and has lead, disastrously, to a near evisceration of philosophy (at least, philosophy as it had been traditionally practiced) in the 20th century.

I have already alluded to my disgruntlement with Hume's Deflationism: Hume has not adequately demonstrated that his categories exhaust the possible range of facts or propositions. In the absence of such a demonstration, it is unmotivated to shove all facts/propositions into one of the two categories. It is even *more* unmotivated when we take a deflationary stance towards facts and propositions which do not fall into those two categories.

Now, Hume thought he *had* demonstrated the exhaustiveness of the two categories to satisfaction. Indeed, the *Treatise* is packed full with arguments seeking to make this very demonstration. But Hume, I think, was not nearly as cognizant of the theoretical effects of such a policy, as he was of what was required to set up this policy. Take, for example, cause and effect. The arguments as to why a necessary connection can never be demonstrated over and above constant conjunction are detailed and brilliant. But are we really satisfied with the Humean solution—that causation just *is* constant conjunction plus some psychological dispositions? If being born on Tuesday correlates with aggravated poverty rates, do we really think that being born on Tuesday causes people to be poor, just in case the correlation is *perceived* as suggesting as much? A Goodmanesque entrenchment theory¹⁵ (that certain constant conjunctions, as a matter of historical fact, get entrenched as examples of causation rather than others) will not help, since the question then becomes, “In virtue of what has *this* constant-conjunction relation become entrenched rather than that and does it preserve truth in predictions?” It certainly can’t be due to the *frequency* of correlations, since the correlation of being born on Tuesday and being poor may be perfect up to this point in time.¹⁶ And, of course, even if the bullet is bitten until one’s gums bleed, all the intuitions continue to nag—clearly there is some deep

¹⁵ See “Prospects For a Theory of Projection” in Nelson Goodman, *Fact, Fiction and Forecast*, Fourth Edition (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), pp. 84-124.

¹⁶ Hume, of course, says that it is the *contiguity* of the conjoined events that differentiates cases of cause and effect constant conjunctions from plain constant conjunctions, but this analysis won’t work for causal claims like “The Russian president’s rhetoric caused concern among the national security advisors to the president,” given that the cause—the Russian president’s rhetoric—and the effect—the national security advisors’ concern—are not contiguous (indeed, they take place on different continents and may occur weeks, even, months, apart in time).

difference between billiard balls crashing into each other and being born on a particular day of the week correlating highly with the poverty index. And it is an intuition of difference that will not be satisfied by talk about correlations, habits and entrenchments. Our intuition is that causation is a fundamentally different animal from correlation, and a mere *renaming* of correlations as cases of causation, no matter how fancy, just will not do.

The reason is that a deflationary answer to a question will never satisfy unless one is convinced that a deflationary *question* is actually appropriate. A deflationary answer can never be a satisfactory answer to a *non*-deflationary question. If I am interested in what justifies my belief that my cocker spaniel will bark if I throw him a treat, I will not be satisfied with an answer to the effect, “you’ve just come to expect it, based on nothing but correlations and emotional tugs” lest I am convinced that no real epistemological justification is possible. Such justificatory questions have been asked since, at least, Plato, and they have a long and venerable history. The burden of proof, then, is on the deflationist to demonstrate that those questions are spurious before proceeding to deflate both question and answer. Consider the following remarks from Jerry Katz on the subject of Nelson Goodman’s deflation of induction

Goodman tells us that the old riddle, the task of explaining why we ought to make inductive projections, has been laid to rest, and urges us to occupy ourselves instead with his new riddle, the task of explicating the projections we do make. But Goodman’s dismissal of the old riddle is too quick. No one not already convinced that such metaphysical problems are, to use Goodman’s own word, spurious can be convinced by his rehearsal of the familiar Humean moves. (Deductive justifications don’t work because inductive conclusions do not follow from statements about past experience, and inductive justifications don’t work because they beg the question.) The implication is, presumably, that inductive projection is beyond justification, but this conclusion doesn’t follow unless it is

further supposed that deductive and inductive justification exhaust the modes of justification.¹⁷

Insofar, then, as Hume (and no one else, for that matter) never adequately provided such a demonstration, the breathless rush to deflationary theories, from “redundancy,” “disquotational,” and “pragmatist” theories of truth, to naturalized epistemologies and Emotivist conceptions of morality and aesthetics constitutes not only an unreflective rush to judgement but bad theorizing, since it betrays a fundamental lack of understanding about just how burdens of proof are parsed out.

The most troubling (and least satisfying) aspect of these deflationary and naturalistic approaches to philosophy is the way that they are willing to abandon entire levels of explanation for the various phenomena that they seek to explain. Consider, once again, the issue of cause and effect. When I ask the deflationist (who has just offered an entrenchment theory to explain why some constant conjunctions count as cases of causation while others do not), “*In virtue of what* does one set of correlations gets entrenched as causal while another does not (given that all that causation really is is constant conjunction)?” he can offer me no answer. Or, at best, he can offer an answer which invokes a kind of “historical accident” or “contingency” which is itself not much better than no answer at all from the perspective of explanation.

¹⁷ Jerrold J. Katz, *The Metaphysics of Meaning*, p.304. *The Metaphysics of Meaning* offers one of the most devastating attacks on twentieth century Naturalism and Deflationism ever written. See, especially, Chapters Seven and Eight.

Many philosophers, rather than being embarrassed by such paltry answers to what seem to be perfectly sensible and simple questions, assert their thin explanations with great pride or simply ignore the issue altogether. When Richard Rorty, for example, asserts that "...the pragmatist says that there is nothing to be said about truth save that each of us will commend as true those beliefs which he or she finds good [useful] to believe..."¹⁸ he simply ignores the obvious question, "yes, but why is it that *these* beliefs are so useful while others are not?" Instead, he ridicules the realist for accusing the pragmatist of relativism (a seemingly reasonable accusation) and proudly asserts that the pragmatist "...does not have a theory of truth, much less a relativistic one."¹⁹

From this very general perspective, then, the Emotivist theory of evaluative discourse in ethics and aesthetics will fail if its foundational plank is pulled out from under it. If relations of ideas and matters of fact do not exhaust the possible categories of facts/propositions, the second step in the sensible-Logical Empiricist's argument, "Facts that fall outside the categories must *either* be reduced to one category or other *or* eliminated" is false and hence, the necessity of reference failure in the case of evaluative terms in ethics and aesthetics is blocked. Therefore, not all moral utterances need be false, and this would remove the primary impetus for the Emotivist solution—that the surface

¹⁸ Richard Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism and Truth: Philosophical Papers, Vol. 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1991), p. 24. This is, in part, a late-Wittgensteinian disease—the idea that as philosophers we should be proud of having no theories to offer on subjects as weighty as the nature of truth.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 24 .

grammar of moral sentences obscures what is actually non-propositional in logical form. Of course, this would not eliminate the *possibility* of a theory that comes to the same conclusions on different grounds. But, it would eliminate the theories whose justifications are argued on this basis—as most (if not all) such theories are.

On the face of it, then, there is no reason to believe that evaluative disagreement isn't *real* disagreement or that evaluative propositions with the surface grammar "A is F" aren't of the logical form, "Fa." That is, there is no *prima facie* or antecedent reason to believe this, although we may find later that the best theory of evaluative properties and discourse turns out to have such results. (I will, of course, be arguing that the best theory supports the objective and more transparent interpretation of evaluative sentences.)

There are particular implausibilities when evaluative Emotivism is applied to evaluation in criticism and some of these are described in a superb piece by Peter Kivy entitled "A Failure of Aesthetic Emotivism." The basic thesis of Kivy's piece is that contrary to conventional intuitions—which hold that Emotivism is more plausible when applied to aesthetics than ethics (that the notion that "It's all just a matter of subjective taste" is more intuitive in the case of paintings than murders and rapes)—in fact, Emotivism is far *less* plausible in the case of art than morals. What we have is a case of bad fit between theory and practice.

The bad fit comes in most forcefully when the Emotivist redirects the nature and purpose

of evaluative disagreement and debate. The question was: if evaluative assertions express no facts, if indeed, we are just *grunting* our approval or disapproval with the use of words, then why on earth do we have evaluative disputes and why do we *think* that we are engaging in real disagreement? The answer told us that the purpose of evaluative disagreement is to express your attitudes and inspire the same attitudes in the other, in the hope of producing actions which are to your liking. The reason why we think we are engaged in real disagreement is because we often are, except that the disagreement consists in a lack of consensus on the *facts* of the case rather than its evaluative components.

We've already had a glimpse of how this last idea is supposed to figure into moral and aesthetic disagreements. In the abortion case, it turned out that the two parties were really arguing over whether or not the fetus is a person, *not* over the evaluative issues (they both agreed that killing innocent people would give rise to negative sentiments). When one person expresses his sentiments about abortion to another, his purpose is to raise like sentiments in the other, and hopefully, to cause the other either to stop from having an abortion, or to picket the homes of abortionists and clinics, etc...Likewise, in the case of the portrait of a woman, it turned out that our two critics were really arguing over whether or not the portrayal of the woman is delicate, not over whether it is good.

What Kivy points out is that this treatment of the nature and purpose of evaluative disagreement will not wash in the aesthetic case. What is supposed to be the analogue to

the persuasion to action in the moral case? This was essential, because without an answer to the question “What is the point of moral disagreement given that it is not a real disagreement?” all ethical practice, on the Emotivist view, looks fundamentally irrational. The answer recast moral discussion as the pursuit of *persuasion*—we try to get someone else to do that which pleases our moral sensibilities. But how is this supposed to go in the aesthetic case? You and I disagree over the aesthetic worth of Kazimir Malevich’s *Black Square*. What *interest* am I advancing in trying to persuade you that it’s a truly superior work? What *action* am I trying to instigate, other than your mouthing “It’s great”?

The point here is subtle. There is no doubt that persuasion is part of what the critic does—he is endorsing or failing to endorse a work of art, in part, for purposes of persuading you to agree with his verdict.²⁰ The question is, *why does he want you to agree?* Truth, of course, is a motive to which the Emotivist has no recourse; *we* might want to say that the critic is interested in your having *true* beliefs about the merits or lack thereof of an artobject, but for the Emotivist, since aesthetic judgments have no propositional content, they cannot be true or false. The Emotivist’s explanation as to why you want to persuade someone else to agree with your positive assessment, must involve some action or state that you wish him to perform or attain.

²⁰ Of course, for Kant, this requirement that others should agree with our taste is precisely what distinguishes the aesthetic judgment from the mere judgment of agreeableness, though both are judgments of taste and both are subjective. See Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgment*, tr. James Creed Meredith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952), §7. I will address Kant’s views in more detail in my discussion of Mary Mothersill’s *Beauty Restored* in Chapter Two.

Peter Kivy discusses a possible response on the part of the Emotivist. Perhaps when the critic tries to persuade you to agree with his positive assessment of Malevich's work, he is doing so in order that you might buy more Malevich paintings. Or when he writes an article praising the merits of the Pre-Raphaelites, he is trying to get the local museum to open a center for Pre-Raphaelite studies. The problem is that it is unclear that these motives for action are ultimately aesthetic; it seems instead, that they are moral or prudential. Kivy says,

[M]y response would be that, for the most part, the physical actions envisaged invariably fall under the head of the prudential or the moral, and the fact that they have to do with works of art, and people's aesthetic or artistic attitudes fails to make the latter the objects of special 'artistic' or 'aesthetic' imperatives. It is true that sometimes I may be in a position where manipulating someone's aesthetic or artistic attitude might have indirect practical applications...But such cases are bound to be uncommon and peripheral.²¹

The point here is that while we have an Emotivism—a theory that claims the purpose of a certain kind of non-cognitive discourse is to persuade others to action—it is not an *aesthetic* Emotivism. For the call to action is ultimately motivated by moral or prudential desiderata rather than aesthetic ones. What this indicates is that the analogy with Emotivist ethics breaks down, and this is a devastating result for the aesthetic application of Emotivism. For either it leaves entirely unexplained why people engage in aesthetic disagreement or it reduces the purpose of their persuasive gestures to moral and prudential, rather than aesthetic, motivations.

²¹ Peter Kivy, "A Failure of Aesthetic Emotivism," *Philosophical Studies* 38, 1980, pp. 358-359.

I have many other difficulties with Emotivism. One is a psychological unreality problem—the Emotivist claims that when people say *x* they *really mean y*. What seems to be going on is that the Emotivist is being forced from his semantic theory to a theory about *speaker meaning* (is moving from his *a priori* considerations about semantics to an empirical thesis about the intentions of speakers) which, I would think, is likely to turn out false. I don't believe that people mean what the Emotivist says they do when they make aesthetic judgements. It would be interesting, in a paper devoted entirely to this subject, to explore all the different problems with Emotivism as applied to aesthetics. It would be interesting, for example, to do a comprehensive survey—in the manner of the Ordinary Language school—of critical disputes with an eye to the typical communicative intentions (speaker meaning) of the critics involved, to see if the Emotivist, as an empirical matter, is correct about what critics “are really saying.”

But at this point I want to move on to the strain of anti-transparency which derives from the Intuitionism of G.E. Moore and is reflected, most paradigmatically, in Frank Sibley's “Aesthetic Concepts” and Arnold Isenberg's “Critical Communication.” The reason I want to shift gears so quickly is because the intuitionist strain has had the far greater influence on anti-objectivism and anti-transparency in contemporary aesthetic theory than has Emotivism (which has been stronger in ethics than aesthetics). Also, the discussion of Intuitionism will involve issues that bring us right up to the point at which I want to move to my own theory of the nature of art, critical evaluations of art, and the justification of those evaluations.

Chapter Two: The Intuitionist Tradition

2.1 Three Stages to Anti-Transparency

The second strain of anti-transparency in terms of evaluative/aesthetic discourse stems from the philosophy of G.E. Moore, particularly chapter one of his *Principia Ethica*, and continues through philosophers such as Frank Sibley, Arnold Isenberg, Mary Mothersill,²² and Bernard Harrison. It is, I think, the dominant strain of anti-transparency in aesthetics.

Although this strain is the more dominant one in aesthetics, it is much more difficult to trace back to its source. For while the connection between the first strain and its Humean roots is simple, direct, and somewhat obvious, in the case of this second strain, the relationship of Sibley and company to Moore is complex, indirect, and not obvious. While all the aestheticians just mentioned assert anti-transparency of one form or another, it is not obvious how that anti-transparency connects to the arguments we find in Moore. In short, none of the thinkers discussed in this chapter, wear an “Intuitionist” sign around their necks.

When I say that it is not obvious how this connection is to be made, I mean several things. First, unlike Logical Empiricism’s connection to Hume’s philosophy, the Moorean results

²² Mothersill’s work is also heavily influenced by Immanuel Kant’s philosophy, as represented in *The Critique of Judgement*. It will become more clear in my discussion of Mothersill just which aspects of her philosophy are intuitionistic in nature and which are Kantian.

do not entail—in a strict sense—the anti-transparency theses that aesthetic Intuitionists hold. Second, Sibley and his crowd do not (as far as I can tell) explicitly invoke or tie themselves to Moore as the Logical Empiricists tie themselves to Hume. Third, Sibley and company do not necessarily even *acknowledge* the line of thought which I will explicate in this chapter. That is, rather than acknowledge the chain of reasoning which connects their anti-transparency to classic Intuitionism, they act as if the anti-transparency thesis is somehow true to—or a natural way of representing—critical practice. This gives their anti-transparency the misleading aura of being recommended by the first-order discipline.

I will examine and evaluate the specific arguments of Moore and the others in the next sections of this chapter. At this point, however, I want to roughly draw the dialectical relationship which obtains between the anti-transparency thesis and Moore.

In chapter one of *Principia Ethica*, G.E. Moore argues that “good” must denote a simple, undefinable, unanalyzable, quality, call it “P”. Moore did not explicitly draw linguistic conclusions from this fact (although he drew many metaphysical ones), but we can extend the logic of his results. If P is truly undefinable, or *un-specifiable*, then that means that “good” itself can have no real sense, as a sense is merely a description by which we can determine a term or concept’s reference.²³ After all, if there *was* some determinate

²³ Although I am sympathetic to a generally Fregean semantics, I presuppose no such semantics here. By this claim I *do not* mean to assert that sense determines reference or defines the extension of a term but rather, the relatively uncontroversial point (I hope) that a description or set of descriptions is typically (other than in the case of ostension) *the means by which we determine the reference of a term*. This is fine, since the conclusions and difficulties I want to draw are really epistemological, not semantic.

property denoted by “good” that could be analyzed (say that “good” refers to the property of producing pleasure), then we would be able to offer a sense for “good” in the form of a description, *the F*, where *the F* uniquely specifies that property. To put the matter more colloquially, if P is not specifiable or is unanalyzable, then it cannot be described. And if it cannot be described, then we cannot specify a substantive concept or term which represents it. The best we can do is offer a word/reference relationship cashed out in the barest disquotational sense, e.g. “good” → good.

Notice that there is nothing here that *directly* entails any form of anti-transparency.

Nothing about the fact that “good” denotes the undefinable “P” entails that sentences of the form [x is good] must be interpreted at variance with their surface grammar (because, unlike the Logical Empiricists, the Intuitionist is not claiming that P does not exist—or does not exist in an objective sense—but merely that it is undescribable). Rather, the thesis about the indefinability of P provides the first stepping stone in a line of thought that strongly recommends such an anti-transparency thesis. Let’s call this first stepping stone “stage one”.

To continue, the descriptive content of a term can be seen as a criterion. If the descriptive content of “table” is *<a standing piece of furniture consisting of a flat surface arranged atop a number of legs>*, then the way I know whether or not a particular object falls under the extension of “table” is by checking to see whether or not it fits the criterion. Given stage one, however, it becomes very difficult to see how one would *know* whether or not

an object is a table or, more relevantly, whether some act or situation is “good,” insofar as no criterion for falling within the extension of “good” is forthcoming, since there can be no analysis of the property it denotes and therefore, no corresponding description which picks it out.

Determining whether or not something falls within the extension of a predicate—that is, meets the criterion specified in the sense of the predicate—is how we determine whether the sentence in which it occurs is true or false. So, if I want to determine the truth value of “the piece of furniture in the center of my living room is a table,” I must be able to determine whether or not that piece of furniture falls within the extension of “table”. But, without a criterion to serve as a measure, it is unclear how we could, or better, *on what grounds*, we could give a truth value assignment to the sentence. Correspondingly, given the lack of criteria for being good (in the moral sense), how do we know whether or not the sentence “shooting your grandmother through the head was good” is true or false, or in the aesthetic sense, whether the sentence “Jan van Eyck’s *The Arnolfini Wedding* is good” is true or false?

What we are in is epistemological hot water. Most people who are moral (or aesthetic) realists would like to be in a position to offer a justificatory schema for moral judgements such that when we assert:

a is good

we can give a justification roughly of the form

a is good because it is F and $(\forall x) (x \text{ is F} \rightarrow x \text{ is good})$

Given that we can give no analysis of “good” or *good-ness*,²⁴ we cannot offer such a justificatory schema. We are left, therefore, in the position of offering moral (or aesthetic) judgements without justification. It is no wonder that this view has been called “Intuitionism,” as nothing other than intuition seems to be possible as an epistemological basis for the propositions of ethics or aesthetics. Call this epistemological trouble “stage two”.

It is the combination of stages one and two plus a third line of argument, run solely by *aesthetic* Intuitionists, that results in the strong anti-transparency thesis that we find in so many forms of aesthetic intuitionism. This line of argument asserts the *uniqueness* of artobjects and individual aesthetic properties. So, not only don’t aesthetic predicates admit of conditions for their application, but, more strongly, aesthetic properties do not admit of *any* generalizations whatsoever. Aesthetic properties are to be construed utterly nominalistically.

Suppose, for example, that a critic claims that a painting is good because it is dynamic and unified. Our aesthetic Intuitionist wants to claim not only that the painting is unique, but that its dynamism and unity are also unique. One of the consequences of such a position is

²⁴ It should be pointed out now (although I will go into this in detail in my examination of Moore) that in addition to being unable to give a semantic analysis of “good” —that is, a meaning postulate for “x is good” —this strain of thought also entails that we are unable to give material conditions for goodness (x is good iff x is F).

that it becomes very difficult to see how we can justify the claim that the painting is good *because* it is dynamic and unified. For this would require that we have recourse to an aesthetic “law” which states that, generally speaking, works which are dynamic and unified are good (otherwise, it simply would not follow that the painting is good because it is dynamic and unified). Our aesthetic Intuitionist tells us that such a law is impossible, not simply because dynamism and unity may be a virtue in one work and a vice in another, but because dynamism and unity *cannot admit of universal generalization* (indeed, no aesthetic qualities can), and this is what would be required for us to say that generally, dynamism and unity are positive features of artworks. The reason that aesthetic properties cannot figure in universal generalizations is because they are unique to the work in question—dynamism and unity in painting #1 are utterly dissimilar from dynamism and unity in painting #2. Thus, when one tries to justify the claim that painting #1 is good because it is unified and dynamic, one must invoke a law which states that dynamism and unity are good-making features of paintings. But this cannot be done, because dynamism and unity, as aesthetic properties, are not property types that more than one object can possess. Call this property nominalism “stage three”.

It is still the case that none of these stages or their combination *entails* the anti-transparency thesis. But they strongly recommend it. Think about it for a moment. On the aesthetic Intuitionist’s view aesthetic judgments: (i) will resist truth-value assignments, since there is no way to tell whether or not an artobject falls within the extension of a particular aesthetic predicate; (ii) will be resistant to confirmation, since

justifying the claim that a painting is good because it is F will rely upon our invoking a law that F-ness is a good-making feature of artworks and, given property nominalism, we cannot universally generalize over F-ness. So, if we *were* to make aesthetic judgements and treat them transparently, then only embarrassed silence can follow when we are pressed for reasons and justifications for our judgments—we have, indeed, theoretically cornered ourselves. Better to claim anti-transparency and avoid the problems altogether, saying something like this: “Yes critics make aesthetic judgments and seem to offer justifications for them, but these judgments are to be interpreted as performative expressions of taste and the justifications as ways of inviting taste-agreement.”²⁵

Now, on to the specifics of Chapter One of GE Moore’s *Principia Ethica*.

2.2 G.E. Moore on “Good” and Good-ness

Principia Ethica—and particularly its preface and first chapter—is, I think, a most curious work. Its initial driving force is Moore’s diagnosis of the central problem in moral philosophy, namely, a lack of sufficient distinctions, especially between what *questions* are being asked in ethics and what *answers* are appropriate to those questions. I would

²⁵ As we can see, the aesthetic Intuitionist finds himself forced to a similar position on the purpose of critical discourse as his Emotivist cousin. Indeed, many Intuitionist aestheticians argue that when critics offer justifications for aesthetic judgments, they are doing so for the purpose of “guiding perception”—that is, getting the viewer/listener/reader to see/hear what the critic sees, in the hope that the viewer/listener/reader will then agree with the critic’s sentiment. Frank Sibley, Stuart Hampshire, Arnold Isenberg, and Bernard Harrison all offer variations on this view.

generally concur that making distinctions is essential to successful theorizing—indeed, such distinctions are the primary components of understanding, in *any* enquiry. But Moore, it seems to me, has done his best to call this relatively uncontroversial point into question—the distinctions *he* draws are just too much (as well as being confused). And at the end of the day, these distinctions force Moore into some of the unfortunate theoretical positions outlined in the previous section.

From the outset, Moore says that there are two sorts of questions in ethics to be distinguished from one another:

- a. What things ought to exist for their own sake (what is good in itself)?
- b. What actions ought we to perform?

Questions of type-a are undemonstrable, *immune* to any sort of proof. Questions of type-b, on the other hand, *are* demonstrable; they admit of proof. The evidence base for type-b questions is complex, made up of the following:

- I. Truths of type-a
- II. Outcomes of the action in question²⁶

After making this initial set of distinctions, Moore protests being labeled an Intuitionist; according to Moore, the real Intuitionist thinks that questions of *type-b* are undemonstrable, whereas Moore thinks it is only those of the first class that are so. He also protests that by “intuition” he means only that type-a questions are incapable of

²⁶ GE Moore, *Principia Ethica* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966) pp. viii-ix.

proof, not that there is a special faculty for apprehending them.²⁷

Methinks Moore doth protest too much. If type-b questions are partially composed of type-a ones, then how can they themselves be entirely capable of proof? In other words, if the moral concept-term admits of no analysis, then how can we verify/justify the moral judgment that makes use of that term? If there are no criteria for the application of “good,” then how can we know whether, for any x, the sentence [x is good] is true or false? Moore’s second protestation just seems disingenuous. It is true that nothing in his position *entails* a special faculty of intuition, but if you don’t posit one, then the very reasonable question “How do you know that act X is moral/immoral?” is left entirely unanswered—mysterious.

According to Moore, most people think that the questions of ethics deal primarily with conduct, and, ostensibly, they do, insofar as they ask what right/wrong, good/bad conduct is. But Moore’s enquiry is much more general; it looks into the *nature* of what is good.

For insofar as

good-ness is the operative—or at least a constitutive—property in *all* moral evaluation, it is the place from which we must start.²⁸

But the question “what is good/bad?” is *itself* ambiguous. We must distinguish among the

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. x.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 1-3

various questions which we might be asking. And it is in this second set of distinctions that Moore commits his major conflation. We might be asking:

1. What is the **extension** of “good/bad”? (What is the complete set of good/bad things)
2. What is the **reference** of “good”—the *property* it denotes?
3. What is the **definition** (the meaning) of the word “good”?²⁹

To distinguish these questions from one another is a useful thing to do. But the discussion that follow—in which Moore asserts that it is question 3. with which he is concerned—consistently conflates 3. with 2. Indeed, on the very next page, Moore explicitly states that he is *not* looking for a definition by synonym.

What, then, is good? How is good to be defined? Now, it may be thought that this is a verbal question. A definition does indeed often mean the expressing of one word's meaning in other words. But this is not the sort of definition I am asking for....My business is solely with that object or idea which I hold, rightly or wrongly, that the word is generally used to stand for. What I want to discover is the nature of

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 3-5. In the following quote, Moore can be seen as supporting either 1. or 2., depending on how you take the subject terms, and whether you treat the existential terms as terms of identity or predication:

But there is another meaning which may be given to the question ‘What is good?’ ‘Books are good’ would be an answer to it...And ethical judgments of this kind do indeed belong to Ethics...Such is the judgment ‘Pleasure is good’—a judgment, of which Ethics should discuss the truth, although it is not nearly as important as that other judgment, with which we shall be much occupied presently—‘Pleasure alone is good’.

For 3. he says:

But our question ‘What is good?’ may have still another meaning. We may, in the third place, mean to ask, not what thing or things are good, but how ‘good’ is to be defined. This is a question which belongs only to Ethics, not to Casuistry; and this is the enquiry which will occupy us first.

that object or idea.³⁰

But this is to ask a question of type-2, not type-3; it is to ask for the *reference* of “good”. And the ensuing discussion makes it quite clear that Moore is talking about a type-2 question. On page seven, he assures us that “...propositions about the good are all of them synthetic and never analytic,” and on page nine he reasserts his indefinability thesis by claiming that “‘Good’, then, if we mean by it that quality which we assert to belong to a thing...is incapable of any definition.” So it is clear that by “definition” Moore does not mean an explication which will give us a synonym, or cluster of synonyms, for “good” but rather a reference for “good”.

This would all be fine and well if it weren’t for the fact that *which* question Moore intends to be answering is crucial to the quality of his answer. Were this not the case, the conflation would simply reveal careless work, that Moore had made a distinction (between type-2 and type-3 questions) of which he intended to make no use. Moore’s answer to the question, however—where he lays out his (in)famous “Naturalistic Fallacy” and attributes it to any theorist who tries to give a definition (in his sense of “definition”) of “good”—is revealed as a complete *non sequitur* when 3. is construed as 2. Let’s go through this carefully, for what is to follow can be rather muddled.

Suppose we have two philosophers, arguing over the definition of “good,” one who asserts that the definition of “good” is *<that which is desired>*, the other who says that it

³⁰ Ibid., p. 6.

is *<pleasure>*. Moore claims that to offer any such substantive definitions is either to put oneself in a position where the debate is no longer ethical but psychological (since these are *definitions*, the one who says that “good” is the object of desire will be arguing against the other that the object of desire is not pleasure—a psychological point) or to offer banal trivialities. For if “good” just means *that which is desired*, then to assert that the good is that which is desired is just to assert that that which is desired is desired, hardly the product of fruitful moral theorizing.³¹ This, then, is the Naturalistic Fallacy.

But, if we take Moore at his word—that we are not talking about offering a synonym or cluster of synonyms for “good” but rather offering a reference, then none of this fallacy stuff follows at all. In order to get the pernicious tautologies which Moore is talking about, we would have to be offering precisely what he asserts he and his opponents are *not* offering, a definition by synonym. This is the only way in which “The good is that

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp.11-12 Moore says,

But from his first assertion, that good just means the object of desire, one of two things must follow as regards his proof:

(1) He may be trying to prove that the object of desire is not pleasure. But, if this be all, where is his Ethics? The position he is maintaining is merely a psychological one...

(2) The other alternative will scarcely be more welcome. It is that the discussion is after all a verbal one. When A says ‘Good means pleasant’ and B says ‘Good means desired,’ they may merely wish to assert that most people have used the word for what is pleasant and for what is desired respectively. And this is quite an interesting subject for discussion: only it is not a whit more an ethical discussion than the last was. Nor do I think that any exponent of naturalistic Ethics would be willing to allow that this was all he meant...When they say ‘Pleasure is good,’ we cannot believe that they merely mean ‘Pleasure is pleasure’ and nothing more than that.

which is desired” becomes “That which is desired is desired”—we substitute synonym for synonym to produce the vacuous logical truth. To merely offer a material condition, a *biconditional* of the form $[Fa \leftrightarrow Ga]$, is not to offer anything from which we can produce a logical truth. For

$[x \text{ is good} \leftrightarrow x \text{ is that which is desired}]$

does not express a synonymy relation and therefore, provides us with no substitution base from which to produce the tautology.

This basic mistake undermines this entire portion of Moore’s project.³² For once it is pointed out that those committing the “Naturalistic Fallacy” are merely offering material conditions for “good,” the argument for indefinability (and hence, Intuitionism itself) evaporates, for that argument is based entirely on the supposed incoherence and vacuity of the naturalistic option. What is so puzzling about this is that Moore *himself* emphasizes that he is not talking about a lexical definition—a meaning analysis—so the question then becomes why he is stalking this horse in the first place.

None of what I’ve said means that there may not be other arguments to the indefinability of “good” *qua* ethical predicate. I am certainly not going to spend time *looking* for them, as I do not see that the view has even *prima facie* plausibility. However, since we will encounter the aesthetic counterpart to ethical Intuitionism in the next sections, it is

³² I say “portion,” because most of *Principia Ethica* is devoted to presenting a roughly utilitarian ethics that can be justified on its own grounds and need not be derived from the so-called Naturalistic Fallacy or Moore’s Intuitionism.

important to understand this line of thinking and trace it to its progenitor.

2.3 Frank Sibley's "Aesthetic Concepts"

Much of what we will encounter in Frank Sibley's important article "Aesthetic Concepts" should remind us of the conclusions at which Moore arrived. Specifically, Sibley asserts—for aesthetic predicates and properties—precisely what Moore argued for "good" and *good-ness* in ethics; aesthetic properties and predicates cannot be analyzed in the way that ordinary properties and predicates can. That is, aesthetic predicates do not admit of conditions for application, since aesthetic properties are impenetrable to cognitive analysis (much the way that moral properties are "simple and undefinable"). Thus, the *apprehension* of aesthetic properties and the attribution of aesthetic predicates is purely a function of direct contact with the artwork in question via a faculty of taste (the aesthetic Intuitionist's counterpart to ethical intuition).

Sibley begins by drawing the aesthetic/non-aesthetic distinction, talks at some length about the nature of the aesthetic, and then proceeds to ask whether aesthetic predicates admit of (a) necessary and sufficient conditions—NO (b) sufficient conditions—NO (c) defeasible conditions—NO (d) *any* specifiable, positive conditions—NO—and then, once this evisceration of aesthetic concepts is complete, proceeds to try and salvage what is left of critical practice from the wreckage. Indeed, this theoretical position pushes Sibley into a spot that no practitioner of the first-order discipline (criticism) is—or would want to

be—in, and, as I discussed in chapter one, I think that as is always the case with deflationist/performativist/Emotivist philosophical theories, one of the more devastating forms of criticism to this theory of aesthetic concepts takes the form of a *reductio*. Is *this* (what you're left with) really all that criticism/science/ethics comes down to? Are you ready to live with this construal of the first-order discipline? The answer is invariably, “no,” and a desperate scrambling then ensues to preserve the pre-theoretic intuitions as well as the practical relevance of the first-order discipline.

Sibley begins, as I have said, by drawing the aesthetic/non-aesthetic distinction, specifically in terms of aesthetic terms and concepts, and I will feel free to talk at different times about one or the other. His way of drawing this distinction, unfortunately, is in terms of *taste*: a term is aesthetic just in case the concept which it expresses requires taste to apply (and I also assume, to grasp fully). Sibley says, “[W]hen a word or expression is such that taste or perceptiveness is required in order to apply it, I shall call it an aesthetic term of expression, and I shall, correspondingly, speak of aesthetic concepts or taste concepts.”³³

Now although my full criticism of explicating aesthetic properties/concepts/judgments in terms of taste will come later, as a part of my discussion of Mary Mothersill's *Beauty Restored*, I do want to indicate here several preliminary reasons why I think this construal

³³ Frank Sibley, “Aesthetic Concepts,” reprinted in Tillman and Cahn, eds. *Philosophy of Art and Aesthetics From Plato to Wittgenstein*, p. 573.

is unfortunate. First, to delineate aesthetic concepts and properties this way is viciously circular and, thus, explanatorily *vacuous*. An aesthetic property is just that kind of property which requires taste to discern and the possession of taste is just what is required to discern aesthetic properties—hardly a robust explanation of either concept.

This kind of explication does not become any less vacuous when it is fleshed out with greater specificity. As Peter Kivy points out, we might ask the Sibley supporter to cash out the notion of being in possession of taste, and he may define it as to be in possession of an ability “beyond those capacities of mind and body that form our concept of the ‘normal’ person.” This elaboration, however, fails to help further define the distinction between “aesthetic” and “non-aesthetic,” since many concepts aside from aesthetic ones require abilities beyond those of the normal person to employ (such as the concepts of theoretical physics). But worse, this elaboration entirely fails to give any more substance to the explication of “aesthetic,” since what the Sibley supporter would obviously be getting at is that the person in possession of taste is in custody of an *aesthetic* ability over and above those of the normal person, and to offer such an analysis is to beg the question of what an aesthetic ability is.³⁴ Indeed, I think that any answer along these lines will

³⁴ See Peter Kivy, “What Makes “Aesthetic” terms *Aesthetic*?” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, xxx p.199. Kivy goes on to say

But if the answer we give to the question, “What makes ‘aesthetic’ terms *aesthetic*?” is *merely*, “They require an *aesthetic* ability for their application.” we have not given an informative answer. It is true enough, but not interesting enough. That all and only aesthetic terms require aesthetic ability, then, is a fact which helps us not a jot in determining the force of the word *aesthetic* in the phrase “aesthetic term.”

either be substantive, and yet fail to distinguish the aesthetic from the non-aesthetic, or succeed in making that distinction, but fail to be substantive. Defining the aesthetic in terms of taste, then, is a loser from the get-go.

Finally, for now, to delineate the aesthetic from the non-aesthetic in terms of taste, that is, in terms of an essentially subjective and *non-cognitive* faculty, renders the process of aesthetic investigation and judgement as well as the process of coming to be aesthetically sophisticated fundamentally inexplicable and mysterious. To make an admittedly crude distinction between the faculties of perception and “the understanding,” taste is clearly more like a perceptual faculty than it is a part of the understanding.³⁵ For crucial to the way the understanding “understands” things is through descriptions of those things. But it is part of the idea that there can be no conditions for the application of aesthetic predicates that aesthetic properties cannot be described.³⁶ So the apprehension of an aesthetic property is not so much a matter of understanding something about an artwork as it is a matter of “seeing” something in it. The difference however, is that even the visual properties of a thing can be described and characterized, but, as we will see, while aesthetic properties are something that taste can descry, they are not, unlike other perceptual qualities, things that can be described.

p. 200 [emphasis in the original]

³⁵ Certainly Descartes, Locke, and Hume would all lump taste into the perceptual faculty, since the objects that taste apprehends—*aesthetic properties*—are secondary, not primary qualities.

³⁶ For the ethical analogue to this claim, see the discussion of ethical Intuitionism in section 2.2.

Taste, then, is logically the epistemic faculty of choice for Intuitionists like Sibley, since aesthetic Intuitionism's central claim, like that of ethical Intuitionism, is that aesthetic terms/concepts are not governed by any sort of conditions, and it seems to follow from this that an aesthetic concept is not something that one can "wrap one's understanding around," but something that only a "direct-contact" faculty like taste can apprehend. Another consequence of this position is that it is difficult to see how someone who is aesthetically ignorant (not in possession of taste) might become aesthetically sensitive, such that he is able to pick out aesthetic properties. That aesthetic concepts are not governed by conditions for their application implies that the accumulation of knowledge of descriptive facts about art and, further, a knowledge of art- and critical *history*, could never aid an aesthetically unsophisticated person in coming to recognize aesthetic properties. So whereas learning about the conditions and rules governing, say, geometrical figures would allow a person ignorant of geometry to become capable of making judgements as to whether particular figures have this geometrical property or the other, a parallel process with art education would not bear the same results. Absent the possession of taste, one could never hope to identify aesthetic properties in objects and, thus, the person lacking taste will not be able to make aesthetic judgements. Just what this special faculty of taste is, where it is located (perhaps in the pineal gland!), or how it is cultivated is, of course, never explained, and given that it cannot be cultivated through ordinary modes of education, its acquisition is mysterious.³⁷

³⁷ A further point here. Consider again the idea that aesthetic concepts admit of no conditions for their application. Consider further the claim of property nominalism (section 2.1). What many aesthetic Intuitionists will say is that one result of these peculiar qualities of aesthetic properties and concepts is

But back to the exegesis. Sibley's first steps are epistemological. It is, of course, a basic premise in most traditional epistemological analyses of evaluative and aesthetic concepts and judgements that a *real* grounding of such judgements and concepts must be in terms of non-evaluative/non-aesthetic concepts and judgements. That is, while an aesthetic judgement might supply a justification for another aesthetic judgement, in a *local* sense, the chain of justifications must ultimately finish in a non-aesthetic judgement. Otherwise, the practice itself, as a whole, is never ultimately grounded; we've just woven circles within a set of isolated concepts. But for Sibley, this is precisely where we must abandon our traditionalism. His central claim is that there are no non-aesthetic grounds which can serve as any sort of conditions for the application of aesthetic concepts (and hence, no non-aesthetic grounds for aesthetic judgements). This starts off sounding like the familiar mantra that one cannot derive an "ought" from an "is," but Sibley's subsequent discussion breaks different and more interesting ground. For he is not interested in the grounding of evaluative judgments in aesthetics, but rather in the grounding of descriptive, non-evaluative aesthetic predications. He wants to know what grounds our application of aesthetic concepts such as "unified," "flamboyant," "delicate," etc., when taken in their

that the reasons for making the judgment that some artobject X has an aesthetic property P are *not transmittable*. If I come to the judgment that X is P because it is R, this does not mean that some other person, if presented with a complete description of X—including the description that it is R—would also judge that it is P. Aesthetic judgement *essentially* requires that one be in the physical presence of the artwork in question, so that his taste can be stimulated. For a discussion of this view, see Peter Kivy, "Aesthetic Concepts: Some Fresh Considerations," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. xxx, No. xxx, pp. 424–426. Also see Sibley, *Aesthetic Concepts*, p. 546. The thought then, as applied to the current question, might be that the cultivation of a sense of taste might result from an extensive exposure to artworks. But this doesn't make the acquisition any less mysterious—for it cannot be the *knowledge* (in the sense of cognitive understanding) which results from such exposure that is responsible, as it then becomes unclear why a detailed and informed description of the artobject would not do. So, the emergence of taste that results from such exposure must be due to some kind of "aesthetic osmosis" a dubious notion.

non-evaluative senses.³⁸

Quickly dismissed is the notion that these concepts might admit of necessary and sufficient conditions, such as those to which, say, the concepts of geometry might admit. But Sibley then moves on to the consideration that perhaps aesthetic concepts admit of a set of purely sufficient or even *defeasibly* sufficient conditions; that is, perhaps aesthetic concepts are similar to other loose, open-ended concepts like 'intelligent', 'lazy', 'righteous', etc. These concepts are such that we can "sort of" offer sufficient conditions for them along with, perhaps, a promissory note that given more properties of one sort, we shall have solid sufficient conditions but given more properties of another kind, we shall not. Sibley characterizes defeasible sufficient conditions in the following way,

The most we can say schematically for a defeasible concept is that, for example, A,B, and C together are sufficient for the concept to apply unless some feature is present which overrides or voids them.³⁹

According to Sibley, however, aesthetic concepts do not even have these kinds of conditions. There is, for example, no set of conditions—even open-ended or defeasible—such that were it to obtain in some painting, P, we would have to admit that P is *expressive*, or *unified*. Sibley contrasts such cases with the case of terms like those to which I have just alluded, which do admit of at least, open ended sufficient conditions

³⁸ The distinction between evaluative and non-evaluative aesthetic concepts and also, between evaluative and non-evaluative *uses* of aesthetic concepts is tricky, and many have accused Sibley of taking the distinction for granted. I will certainly not do so—there is an extensive discussion of evaluative and non-evaluative aesthetic concepts in Chapter Four. Here, however, I want to stick with Sibley's arguments, given *his* suppositions.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 548.

We are able to say “If it is true he can do this, and that, and the other, then one just cannot deny that he is intelligent,” ...but we cannot make any general statement of the form “If the vase is pale pink, somewhat curving, lightly mottled, and so forth, it will be delicate, cannot but be delicate”⁴⁰

This point becomes interesting, because Sibley does not deny that aesthetic terms admit of *negative* sufficient conditions. That is, we can specify a set of conditions such that if they obtain we can assert that P is *not* delicate, for example if P consists of bright fluorescent colors and big bold brush strokes. Whether or not this makes sense, the notion that while there can be *negative* sufficient conditions—it is sufficient reason to say, given that it is F, Q, and G, that it is *not* the case that P is delicate—there can be no *positive* sufficient conditions—it can never be sufficient to say, given that P is R, M and N, that it *is* delicate—is to what I now turn.⁴¹

Let’s consider Sibley’s attempt to jointly claim that (a) aesthetic concepts can admit of negative sufficient conditions, e.g.

$$(\forall x) (x \text{ is } F, Q, \text{ and } G \rightarrow \sim (x \text{ is delicate}))$$

and (b) that aesthetic concepts cannot admit of any positive sufficient conditions, e.g.

$$(\forall x) (x \text{ is } R, M \text{ and } N \rightarrow x \text{ is delicate})$$

It seems to me that if the set of negative sufficient conditions for any aesthetic concept, C, is finite—that is, if we can *close* the set—then this joint thesis must be false. For, if we

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 546.

⁴¹ *Prima facie*, it seems to me that either there can be conditions or not. If there are no conditions, there should be neither positive nor negative conditions. And if there are conditions, then we should have available both positive and negative conditions. Moore, certainly, is more unequivocal on this point with regard to moral properties than Sibley is with regard to aesthetic properties.

can specify a finite set of negative sufficient conditions for C, then the negation of that set must itself be a positive sufficient condition. So, say that the conjunction of F, Q and G are *the* sufficient conditions for it not to be the case that p is delicate. We should then be able to negate that conjunction to arrive at

$$(\forall x) (\sim(x \text{ is F, Q, and G}) \rightarrow x \text{ is delicate})$$

But the Sibley defender will of course argue that the set of negative sufficient conditions is not, and never will be, finite. So we cannot take the negation of the complete set of negative sufficient conditions, straightforwardly, as a positive sufficient condition.⁴²

Regardless of whether, as a matter of logic, this turns out to be correct, Sibley's position is clearly far too strong. If there are negative sufficient conditions, such that, for example, if X is P then it is not unified, then clearly there are some conditions for the application of aesthetic concepts; and having *knowledge* of these negative sufficient conditions will clearly help us in being more successful "aesthetic predicators."

Further, it seems to me that even if Sibley is *correct*, that aesthetic concepts admit only of

⁴² In one sense, of course, this is correct. If we consider not only art history but the art *future*, then the set of negative conditions for whether an aesthetic concept applies is infinite insofar as art history is an organic, evolutionary, process in which new conditions will arise. But if we limit our view to the art objects that have already been created—to art *history*—then it seems to me that the set of negative conditions for whether an aesthetic concept applies to a work of art is NOT infinite, or even indefinite. For it is my belief that art and aesthetic properties are essentially historical phenomena, and so the set of artworks, artistic kinds, and aesthetic concepts will be finite. There are, for example, a finite number of delicate artworks and finite number of conditions under which people have historically *considered* artworks delicate. This essential historicity of art and aesthetics is a central component of Arthur Danto's theory of art, and I will adopt much of this theory in my positive account. In Chapter Five, where I discuss the justification of evaluative judgments in criticism, I will argue that the conditions under which an artwork of a certain type is considered good are finite, and thus, we can have artistic laws that claim "If an artwork is F it is good." While I will not approach the Sibley problem in that chapter, I believe that a similar solution to the one I offer can be given for *all* aesthetic properties, not just evaluative ones. That project, however, will have to be left to another paper.

negative conditions, this fact does not give him the dialectical position which he obviously wants, and here I will come back to Sibley's decision to define aesthetic concepts in terms of a special faculty of aesthetic taste. What Sibley wants, in part, is for us to be unable to make aesthetic predications in absentia from the object, for he shares the view of the property nominalist that aesthetic properties are unique to the works in question and that when these properties (as well as non-aesthetic descriptions) are cited as justifications for aesthetic predications, they are cited *specifically*, not as general representatives of a class.

We do, indeed, in talking about a work of art, concern ourselves with its individual and specific features. We say that it is delicate not simply because it is in pale colors but because of *those* pale colors, that it is graceful not because its outline curves slightly but because of *that* particular curve. We use expressions like "because of *its* pale coloring," "because of *the* flecks of bright blue," "because of *the* way the lines converge" where it is clear we are referring not to the presence of general features but to very specific and particular ones...No doubt one way of putting this is to say that the features which make something delicate or graceful, and so on, are combined in a peculiar and unique way; that the aesthetic quality depends upon exactly this individual or unique combination of just these specific colors and shapes so that even a slight change might make all the difference.⁴³

I don't think that much can be determined on the basis of Sibley's quoted examples of critical discourse. The use of definite articles in no way suggests that the critic, in indicating specific features of a painting, P, for his justification of an aesthetic judgement, means *not* to appeal to the general class to which that specific feature belongs. One could easily imagine that when the critic invokes "because of *its* pale coloring" as a justification for calling P 'delicate' he means something like "P is delicate because of *its* pale coloring, and pale coloring is one of the features which generally suggests delicateness in a work."

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 551-52. [Emphasis in the original]

Indeed, it is hard to see how such reasons—that is, the citing of *specific* features of P—could possibly serve as a justification for the judgement that P is delicate without reference to the generalization “paintings which have pale coloring are generally delicate”; again, to the assertion “P is delicate because of this particular pale color” one can reasonably and commonsensically ask, “Oh yes? Why, or, in virtue of what, is that the case?” To make this inference without the corresponding generalization is to make an inference of the form [a is b, therefore, a is c] without any premise connecting b and c, a classically invalid schema.

It is unclear, at least in terms of any explicit declaration from “Aesthetic Concepts,” whether Sibley is offering his specific justifications as sufficient conditions, so this argument might be muted in its force, but only on the surface. For it points us to a deeper issue. Just how does Sibley intend his use of terms like ‘justification’, ‘support’, or ‘reason’? If he wants to construe these terms with even the slightest bit of their traditional, truth-supportive, senses, then he must answer the question how can these specific reasons be supportive, in the *truth-theoretic* sense of ‘supportive’, without the corresponding generalizations?; on this point, Sibley is significantly mute. I think, however, that Sibley recognizes that such precise justifications—better, reasons—which make reference to properties, construed utterly nominalistically, could never possibly serve as justifications for aesthetic judgements.

There are two reasons that I suspect this: First, Sibley says, immediately following the

previous quote that “...it is obvious that even with the help of precise names, or even samples and illustrations, of particular shades of color, contours and lines, any attempt to state conditions would be futile.”⁴⁴ even though it seems like this is precisely what he has just done—after all, what are all those “because of’s” in the previous quotation doing? Second, later in “Aesthetic Concepts”, Sibley offers a sketch of a possible reconstruction of critical practice, seemingly in light of the critic’s inability to offer traditional (covering-law style) justifications for aesthetic judgements. This reconstruction takes the form to which I have already alluded; when the critic offers reasons for his judgements, rather than offering a truth-supporting justification, one which if accurate, allows us to validly infer the judgment, he is instead offering various “guideposts” to the perception of the object in question. By means of his “justifications,” the critic gets the viewer/listener to see/hear what he sees/hears and hence, gets him to agree with the judgement.⁴⁵ This is achieved, not only through the offering of reasons, but also through “non-verbal behavior”; gestures, looks, and the like.⁴⁶

So, the larger structure looks something like this: The critic is unable to offer any reasons, *qua* justifications, for aesthetic judgements. This is due to the utter uniqueness and

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 551.

⁴⁵ There is a fascinating parallel here between the Intuitionist and Emotivist reconstructions of critical practice. Since both have abandoned any truth-theoretic role for criticism, and particularly, aesthetic justification, both have to reconstruct the justificatory language of critics as one, primarily, of persuasion.

⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 557-9.

conceptual impenetrability of aesthetic properties; they are such that there are no generalizable conditions under which they obtain. One consequence of this seems to be that no person can be aided in their apprehension of the aesthetic by the accumulation of art historical and artistic knowledge. For when I learn art history or read criticism, I am learning *facts* about art, its production, and its appreciation. But these facts are useless—except in the dubious “osmosis” sense already alluded to—for the evaluation of new cases, as each new case is aesthetically unique. So the overarching results are as follows:

- A. If we are to grant that viewers/listeners/critics do apprehend aesthetic qualities, we must invoke a special faculty, “taste,” since our ordinary cognitive faculties are of no help at all, insofar as there is nothing on which they can operate—no conditions for applying aesthetic concepts.
- B. If we are to grant that critics usefully make use of locutions such as [x is delicate because it is y], then we must radically reconstrue what is *meant* by such locutions, since they cannot possibly be functioning in the way implied by their surface form, that is, in a *justificatory* way. They cannot be so functioning, because one cannot generalize that some object will have an aesthetic property given a particular—or set of—non-aesthetic property (ies).

And B is just a statement of anti-transparency.

Sibley only alludes—towards the end of “Aesthetic Concepts” —to what criticism will look like after his results are fully digested, and he never explicitly invokes anti-transparency as a semantic analysis of aesthetic judgments. This will come in the theorists of the next sections.

2.4 Arnold Isenberg's "Critical Communication"

Of all the thinkers who are a part of what I am calling the "Intuitionist strain," only Arnold Isenberg can plausibly be said to have the same kind of influence that Sibley has had. His "Critical Communication," originally published in 1949, is perhaps the most concise and honest expression of Intuitionist anti-transparency yet published. While Isenberg has many followers, most notably Mary Mothersill, whose *Beauty Restored* we shall get to in the next section, none of them are as clear—or consistent—as Isenberg in their exposition of the anti-transparency position. Typically, such thinkers want to have it both ways; to do as much damage to aesthetic objectivism and critical transparency as possible, but at the same time innocently claim that all along they have supported the notion that aesthetic judgements can be literally—*transparently*—true. Indeed, Mothersill adopts just such an inherently paradoxical position.

One other quick point before I get to the exegesis and analysis of "Critical Communication." Isenberg is another one of those theorists who makes no explicit reference to G.E. Moore. Now, you may ask again why, then, as no particular homage has been given, do I associate Isenberg with the positions taken in *Principia Ethica*; that is, why do I identify his anti-transparency with the Intuitionist strain instead of, say, the Logical Empiricist one? My answer is that insofar as Isenberg comes to two essential theses—first, that aesthetic properties are not really describable and second, that insofar as they are, in a rough, imprecise way, such descriptions are useless in any kind of robust

aesthetic justification schema—he falls under the Intuitionist ideology; that is, his anti-transparency is best identified as stemming from Intuitionist rather than Logical Empiricist intuitions and sensibilities. Now, on to “Critical Communication.”

Isenberg begins by characterizing a traditional or better, classic, picture of the critical enterprise. There are, of course, value judgements or, as Isenberg calls them, “verdicts,” e.g., “Jan Van Eyck’s *The Arnolfini Wedding* is a great work.” Then there are the justifications or, as Isenberg calls them, “reasons,” e.g., “*The Arnolfini Wedding* is a great work because it is F.” (where “F” denotes some feature of *The Arnolfini Wedding*). Finally, there are the aesthetic generalizations or, as Isenberg calls them, “norms,” e.g., “Any work which has ‘F’ is a great work.”

Now Isenberg construes the verdicts as “...expression[s] of feeling—an utterance manifesting praise or blame,”⁴⁷ and this might make us wonder whether he is offering a version of Logical Empiricist aesthetics, but this locution is probably just an anachronism, insofar as immediately afterwards Isenberg says that “...among utterances of that class it is distinguished by being in some sense conditional upon R [the reason(s)].”⁴⁸ Isenberg also includes in his description (as I already have) the fact that verdicts and reasons may themselves be complex, consisting of both evaluative and descriptive components. That is, the reason given for the verdict may itself have an evaluative component, and hence,

⁴⁷ Arnold Isenberg, “Critical Communication”, reprinted in.....p. 658.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 658.

the entire schema, in a given instance, may be somewhat tautological. But because Isenberg is specifically interested in how reasons, taken with their descriptive force, lend support to evaluative verdicts, he stipulates that in the cases he will discuss the reasons are to be taken solely in their descriptive senses.⁴⁹

Isenberg characterizes the aesthetic generalizations (norms) which figure in these justifications as being *inductively* determined. Now this is the natural stance to take insofar as Isenberg is operating within a tradition (as was Sibley) where the primary aesthetic phenomenon to be analyzed is aesthetic response or the stimulation of *taste*. The norms, then, are the result of inductive generalizations as to what features of artworks tend to please or invoke positive/negative aesthetic responses. I have already discussed briefly why I think that this is a terrible basis on which to proceed with aesthetic investigation, and I will have much more to say about it when discussing Mothersill. Here, however, it is not really a problem, because Isenberg goes on to distinguish between *explaining* and *justifying* a critical response, and makes clear that what he is interested in exploring is the latter. Isenberg says

...it is well to remind ourselves that there is a difference between *explaining* and *justifying* a critical response. A psychologist who should be asked "why X likes the object Y" would take X's enjoyment as a datum, a fact to be explained. And if he offers as explanation the presence in Y of the quality Q, there is, explicit or latent in this causal argument, an appeal to some generalization which he has reason to think is true, such as "X likes any work which has that quality." But when we ask X as a critic "why he likes the object Y" we want him to give us some reason to like it too and are not concerned with the causes of what we may so far regard as his bad taste. This distinction...is commonly ignored in the

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 659.

practice of aesthetic speculation; and the chief reason for this...is the fact that some statements about the object will necessarily figure both in the explanation and the critical defense of any reaction to it. Thus, if I tried to explain my feeling for the line "But musical as is Apollo's lute" I should certainly mention "the pattern of u's and l's which reinforces the meaning with its own musical quality," because this quality of my sensations is doubtless among the conditions of my feeling response. And the same point would be made in any effort to convince another person of the beauty of the line. The remark which gives a reason also, in this case, states a cause. But notice that, though as criticism this comment might be very effective, it is practically worthless as explanation, because we have no phonetic or psychological laws...from which we might derive the prediction that such a patter of u's and l's should be pleasing to me.⁵⁰

Insofar then, as Isenberg is focusing on justification and not on a deflationary psychologistic program, where all that is offered is a physicalistic explanation of our responses, his discussion is of interest to me, regardless of the fact that the thing to be justified is aesthetic pleasure or "response."

Isenberg, of course, aims to criticize, or better, *dismantle*, the classic view of the critical enterprise, and that dismantlement will rest essentially on the impossibility of true aesthetic generalizations [norms]. But Isenberg's is not solely a negative thesis. Like Ayer and the Logical Empiricists, Isenberg wants to reconstrue and reconstruct the nature and purpose of critical discourse, most importantly, in terms of the function that reasons play with regards to verdicts. Such a reconstruction was alluded to and hinted at by Sibley, but not in any substantive or compelling way. Unlike Sibley, Isenberg seems fully aware of the *linguistic* repercussions of his negative thesis, and he is prepared to go all the way to explicit anti-transparency and a correspondingly non-transparent treatment of critical judgements and justifications.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 659-670. [Emphasis in the original]

Isenberg argues that those who have taken a dim view of the classic treatment of criticism have wound up adopting its essential tenets. Some (just whom Isenberg has in mind, I'm not sure) have complained that the classic schema is suspect because there are no known laws of human taste—that is, there are no known laws which reliably connect properties of artworks to positive/negative human responses. But Isenberg rightly points out that such a complaint seems to imply that *were there such laws*, the classic schema would be alright. It is only due to the fact that “...criticism is being held back by the miserable state of aesthetic science” that the classic schema is rendered inoperable.⁵¹ It is not until we question the very structure of the classic schema—the notion that reasons provide justifications for verdicts, through the truth of aesthetic generalizations—that we can adequately criticize the classic approach.

...for as long as we have no alternative interpretation of the import and function of R, we must assume *either* that R is perfectly arbitrary *or* that it presupposes and depends on some general claim.⁵²

With the idea of providing just such a structural critique in mind, Isenberg goes on to examine a specific piece of criticism, isolating the reason that is offered in support of a positive critical verdict. The example comes from Ludwig Goldscheider's criticism of El Greco's *The Burial of Count Orgaz*. Isenberg takes the following descriptive quote from Goldscheider's evaluation to be in support of—a *reason* for—a favorable judgement of the painting:

Like the contour of a violently rising and falling wave is the outline of the four

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 661.

⁵² Ibid., pp. 661-662. [Emphasis in the original]

illuminated figures in the foreground: steeply upwards and downwards about the grey monk on the left, in mutually inclined curves about the yellow of the two saints, and again steeply upwards and downwards about...the priest on the right.⁵³

Isenberg's point is that while this description most certainly makes straightforward reference to a property—specifically, that the figures in the painting have the property of being represented along a contour in the shape of a violently falling wave—such a property, if stated as a reason in support of a positive verdict of *The Burial of Count Orgaz*, could not possibly function as a justification of the truth of that verdict. For this same contour might be reproduced in countless other paintings—indeed, we could sketch such a curve on a blackboard in several seconds—and yet not justify a favorable verdict. Thus, any aesthetic generalization to the effect, “A painting, if it has property P, will be good” will be false.

This is the *negative* component of Isenberg's thesis. But he then immediately (and correctly, given his predilections) goes on to say that given this impossibility, it cannot be *this* property to which the critic intends to refer. It is here, then, that Isenberg firmly embraces the essential tenets of property nominalism and anti-transparency and begins to offer a positive theory of critical practice in order to replace the classic conception. While the critic appears, by virtue of his words, to be straightforwardly denoting the property of being in the shape of a violently falling wave in the justification of his judgement, his *speaker reference* really picks out something quite different, something which cannot be captured through the ordinary attributive use of descriptions.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 662.

It seems reasonable to suppose that the critic is thinking of another quality, no idea of which is transmitted to us by his language, which he *sees* and which by his use of language he *gets us to see*. This quality is, of course, a wavelike contour; but it is not the quality designated by the expression “wavelike contour.” Any object which has this quality will have a wavelike contour; but it is not true that any object which has a wavelike contour will have this quality.⁵⁴

While I think that this is false, I like Isenberg’s consistency and honest exposition. He realizes that to claim simultaneously that no reason could ever function as a justification for a positive or negative verdict while at the same time claiming that critics, nevertheless, are offering their reasons for just such a purpose, is to put forward a plainly contradictory position. Instead, Isenberg radically reconstructs what is actually being said by the critic. He does this by construing the critic’s words *non-transparently*. When it is inquired, “Well, if the critic is not offering a straightforward justification for his verdict by his reason, then why is he offering the reason in the first place?” we get a variation on the Logical Empiricists’ reconstruction of the purpose of criticism. The sole point is to get you, the reader/listener/viewer, to *agree* with the critic, to see that quality which he sees and by virtue of this symmetry of perception, to agree with his verdict. While this quality is not denoted by the predicate “rising and falling wavelike contour,” our perception is “guided” by the use of this description to the point of the *real* object of reference.

Now the critic, besides imparting to us the idea of a wavelike contour, gives us directions for perceiving and does this by means of the idea he imparts to us in the discrimination of details, the organization of parts, the grouping of discrete objects into patterns.⁵⁵

It is an important part of this analysis—and it should be familiar to us, insofar as it brings

⁵⁴ Ibid., pp. 662-663. [Emphasis in the original]

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 663.

us back to property nominalism, and to the peculiar Sibley-like sense in which in order to understand these critical locutions we must be somehow in *direct acquaintance* with the object or at least, a reasonable facsimile—that what the critic tells us with his words is importantly incomplete. It is ultimately of no educational worth unless we actually *look* at the painting, either before, during or after the critical verdict and reason.

...the critic's *meaning* is "filled in," "rounded out," or "completed" by the act of perception, which is performed not to judge the truth of his description, but, in a certain sense, to *understand* it...we can say that it is a function of criticism to bring about communication at the level of the senses, that is, to induce a sameness of vision, of experienced content. If this is accomplished, it may or may not be followed by agreement, or what is called "communion"—a community of feeling which expresses itself in identical value judgements.⁵⁶

On this point that the critical exercise is useless to the neophyte, unless he is also in acquaintance with the object—again, very Sibley-like—Isenberg says

Reading criticism, otherwise than in the presence, or with direct recollection, of the objects discussed, is a blank and senseless employment...There is not in all the world's criticism a single purely descriptive statement concerning which one is prepared to say beforehand, "If it is true, I shall like that work so much the better"⁵⁷

Now, before I go on to offer some specific criticisms of Isenberg, I want to point out those features of his position which clearly identify him as an Intuitionist. The affinity with Sibley (or better, Sibley's affinity with Isenberg, since Isenberg was first) is, of course, instructive. Although Isenberg is discussing the issue of aesthetic concepts with regard to the descriptive support of *evaluative* judgements, his position is very similar to Sibley's insofar as Isenberg thinks that these concepts refer to properties in a purely

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 663. [Emphasis in the original]

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 664. Of course, if we are no longer talking about taste when we say "good" or "bad," this point is not obvious at all.

ostensive, *direct*, manner. Because there are no substantive conditions such that an artwork can satisfy an aesthetic predicate, there is no descriptive content such that the critic can, by means of words, *attributively* refer to aesthetic qualities. These properties are to be construed utterly nominalistically rather than as belonging to a general class, the property of which all the members of that class share and is denoted by the descriptive content of the predicate.

But this of course means that such properties cannot figure into standard justification schemata, since such schemata quantify over—that is, *generalize* over—such qualities in a way that is quite impossible according to the property nominalist. This resistance to description and quantification, and the utter lack of substantive conditions for satisfying aesthetic predicates, which precludes any positive, substantive, epistemological approach, is a clearly Intuitionist way of thinking of aesthetic properties and concepts. The only way to them is through “intuition,” “taste,” or “acquaintance” which may be facilitated in very byzantine and obscure ways by critical description, but which remain ultimately inexplicable and mysterious processes. At best then, the critic can use language in a rough, cartographical way, hoping that by guiding the viewer’s vision, he will come to see what the critic sees. Once again, rather than saying true things about objective features of artworks, and getting you, perhaps, to agree with your verdicts on the basis of the true things you’ve said, the *sole* purpose of criticism is to say what *I* like and to gain your solidarity in taste.

My first specific criticism of Isenberg continues from this line of thought. It resurrects the point which Peter Kivy made against the Emotivist theory of criticism. I don't see the ultimate *aesthetic* point of the solidarity which the Intuitionist critic seeks. I can see the point in the ethical case; I can, for example, see why someone would want me to agree with them that one shouldn't murder people. That is, from the Emotivist standpoint, I can see the deep emotional investment that would motivate a campaign designed to gain behavioral conformity on this principle. But what aesthetic action am I trying to get you to take by getting you to agree that *The Arnolfini Wedding* is a great work?

More generally, when objective truth fails to be the aim of inquiry and is replaced solely by subjective truth—what appeals to my taste—and taste solidarity—attaining your agreement with my taste—I don't see why one should continue to appeal to truth-theoretic means of persuasion in order to get one's point across. In other words, since purely *game-theoretic* virtues are what are being sought, game theoretic tactics should prevail. My criticism here is, in a sense, similar to the one which Isenberg raised against those before him who had attacked the classic model of criticism. Isenberg, unwittingly, has largely remained *within* the classic model, insofar as critics, while using ordinary language for not-ordinary performative purposes, are still offering reasons for judgements, and hoping to persuade others to agree with their "vision" through that use of language. But, given that truth is not the goal of critical enquiry, and thus, cannot be the basis for persuasion, why retain this model at all? Why offer reasons for aesthetic judgments in the

first place?⁵⁸ That is, if the point is winning on *any* grounds, rather than winning because you've said true things and supported them with other true things, then why retain this model which on its surface, appears to conform to a classic justification schema?

It seems to me that the Intuitionist/property nominalist gets into big trouble on this front. According to Isenberg, the purpose of offering critical reasons is not to offer justificatory support for evaluative claims about artworks (since there can be no "laws of taste") but it is, rather, to get people to *see* the features of those works that are cited in the critic's reason for his evaluation. But why should it then be expected that getting them to see those features will produce agreement as to the aesthetic merits of the work? Specifically, suppose that I get the viewer to see the nominalistic property denoted by the predicate "rising and falling wavelike contour." Why, in the absence of any "laws of taste" should I expect that seeing this will cause the viewer to agree with my "good" verdict?

Deep down, the Isenberg position is a radical *non sequitur*. On the one hand, he dismantles the justificatory apparatus of classic criticism; reasons cannot possibly justify judgements insofar as there are no viable norms that ground them. Yet, somehow, getting you to see the "real" quality denoted by the critic's speech-act (the citing of a reason) is

⁵⁸ Indeed, why use ordinary language at all? If the purpose of offering reasons in support of a verdict is to direct perception to the property that is supposed to be denoted by the reason, would it not be more efficient to use the language of cartographers, that is, map-language. Why the *Rube-Goldberg* apparatus: critics use ordinary language to make non-attributive reference to un-ordinary, undecidable, properties? Why not just do criticism as follows: "X is a great work. Why? Look at Longitude 100 degrees, Latitude 50 degrees."

supposed to increase the likelihood that you will agree with his verdict. But why should this be a reasonable expectation? For to expect this would be to believe in the existence of just the kind of inductively supported norm that Isenberg says cannot exist—that the presence of this quality will likely result in a positive/negative evaluation. Construing the quality in the rigorously nominalistic sense that Isenberg and Sibley do and claiming that it defies ordinary attributive reference helps not at all, for the critic still thinks that getting the viewer to see *this* quality will gain him agreement in his judgement. Is such agreement supposed to be obvious or *automatic*? Again, we find that the anti-transparency theorist has destroyed critical practice and then, embarrassed with the results, tries frantically to reconstruct it. But the reconstruction either winds up capitulating on just the points where the theorist has ground his axe, or leaves the whole process an inexplicable mystery.

Now let's move on to the position of Mary Mothersill, specifically as put forward in her *Beauty Restored*. Afterwards, I will talk briefly about other Intuitionists such as Bernard Harrison and offer my criticisms of the Intuitionist strain in general.

2.5 Mary Mothersill's *Beauty Restored*

At its center, Mary Mothersill's *Beauty Restored* is concerned with a classic antinomy which has been lurking behind our discussion up until this point. That antinomy represents two contrasting and seemingly mutually exclusionary intuitions regarding aesthetic judgment:

- (i) There can be no laws or principles of taste
- (ii) There is at least one genuine (objectively true) aesthetic judgment⁵⁹

This antinomy, of course, has lurked in the background throughout our discussion up until this point. The theorists which we have discussed so far have argued for (i).⁶⁰ And the Intuitionists also (except for the more consistent ones like Isenberg) have wanted to claim (ii). Up until now, the discussion has been somewhat undisciplined—that is, none of the authors has explicitly recognized the paradoxical nature of this antinomy—and I have been hammering away at the Intuitionists, claiming that to jointly hold (i) and (ii) is impossible. Anti-transparency has seemed to be the solution of choice for those committed to both—there are no laws or principles of taste, and either there are no true aesthetic judgments or their truth is a complicated affair. The justification of aesthetic judgments, on this view, becomes even more complicated and that’s what gets us all the stuff about “guiding perception,” etc.

Mothersill’s work is to be praised for its bold assertion of the antinomy, and in its

⁵⁹ This, of course, closely mirrors the antinomy found in *The Critique of Judgment*:

1. *Thesis*. The judgement of taste is not based upon concepts; for, if it were, it would be open to dispute (decision by means of proofs).

2. *Antithesis*. The judgement of taste is based on concepts; for otherwise, despite diversity of judgement, there could be no room even for contention in the matter (a claim to the necessary agreement of others with this judgement).

Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, §56, p. 206. [Emphasis and parentheses in the original.]

⁶⁰ Actually, I’m not sure what those of Ayer’s stripe would say about aesthetic laws, at least as they are construed as laws of taste. There is no reason, at least in principle, why a Logical Empiricist couldn’t think that there are laws concerning which types of properties tend to provoke which kinds of responses. We know that Hume believes that there are such principles or “standards” of taste.

acknowledgment that this paradox is at the heart of the debate between those whom she calls the “anti-theorists” (roughly, those like the Logical Empiricists and Intuitionists with whom I’ve been saddling the moniker “anti-transparency”) and the “pro-theorists” (those, roughly, like myself who believe that aesthetic judgment is a relatively straightforward affair; aesthetic judgments make objective claims, can be true or false of the things they are about (artworks), and can be justified in a traditional justification schema). The difference between pro- and anti-theorists can be seen in the way that they focus on opposite ends of the antinomy, and thus come to different conclusions with regards to the possibility of aesthetic theory. Anti-theorists are impressed by (i), and given the assumption that an aesthetic theory just *is* a theory which prescribes principles of taste/aesthetic judgment, concluded that therefore, aesthetics *qua* aesthetic theory is impossible (hence, the label “anti-theorist”). On the matter of (ii), the anti-theorist is in an embarrassing position (indeed, the anti-theorist’s position is more unenviable than that of his opponent), since it is altogether unobvious how it can be squared with (i). For the aesthetic judgment is offered with reasons, given in its support. Those reasons, if they are to provide this support, must take the form of generalizations. As Mothersill observes,

To discern and announce a virtue is to give a reason in support of a favorable verdict. A reason is implicitly general: nothing could be a reason in one and only one case, and the support it provides is, no matter how heavily qualified, deductive.⁶¹

Anti-theorists, as a result, will either accept heavily hedged aesthetic principles/laws (and hence, partially deny (i)) or go for some form of anti-transparency, and hence, partially

⁶¹ Mary Mothersill, *Beauty Restored* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 64. Keep this observation in mind. I will be turning it against Mothersill later in my analysis of *Beauty Restored*.

deny (ii).

The pro-theorist, on the other hand, is impressed by (ii) and claims that the notion that there can be objective aesthetic truths is only possible if (i) is false. He agrees with the anti-theorist that aesthetic theory is all about prescribing principles of taste/judgment, and therefore argues that aesthetic theory is possible. Hence the label, “pro-theorist”. The awkwardness for the pro-theorist is in trying to garner a conception of aesthetic principles or laws that will be robust enough to provide inferential support for aesthetic judgments and yet will also be true. It is this, indeed, that I do in Chapter Five.

Mothersill rightly determines that the greatest issue for aesthetic theory, in all of its manifestations, is the solution of this antinomy. And yet she disagrees with both the anti- and pro-theorists’ solutions. This would seem, *prima facie*, impossible, since the antinomy certainly looks like a *genuine* paradox, and the pro- and anti-theorists seem to represent the two sides of that paradox.⁶² But Mothersill tries to pry (i) and (ii) apart by denying precisely that upon which the pro- and anti- theorists agree—that the business of aesthetic theory is primarily that of establishing principles of taste/aesthete judgement. For Mothersill, (i) is most certainly true, and so is (ii). But aesthetic theory is neither bankrupt nor impossible, because its business is *not* the pursuit of aesthetic laws or principles of taste/judgment. Aesthetic theory does concern itself with the truth of (ii), and its business

⁶² Of course, Kant is the most famous of those who have tried to solve this paradox, while continuing to hold both (i) and (ii). I have very little confidence in his solution—and will discuss it shortly—and Mothersill’s is far less sophisticated than his.

is to show how (ii) can be possible. Yet, in due deference to (i), aesthetic theory cannot support (ii) by appeal to a set of general principles or laws from which aesthetic judgments can be derived. Rather, Mothersill thinks that the business of aesthetics is to provide a “theory of beauty” from which a theory of aesthetic predication (and hence, aesthetic *judgment*) is supposed to emerge.

In other words, Mothersill’s thesis rests upon the argument that the conjunction of (i) and (ii) does not constitute a *genuine* paradox. Of the consistency of (i) (which Mothersill calls the “First Thesis”) with (ii) (the “Second Thesis”), she says

Given that FT and ST are both true and that in conjunction they set the stage for a general aesthetic theory, they must be shown not only to be consistent but to *cohere*. Kant was the first philosopher to recognize this as the focal task of aesthetics.⁶³

The reconciling of (i) and (ii) is an ambitious, indeed, a herculean task. Unfortunately, however, though the exegetical and negative elements of *Beauty Restored* are thorough and sophisticated, the positive aspects of the work—specifically the explication of the concept of beauty and the provision of an aesthetic theory which can support the truth of (ii) without violating that of (i)—goes nowhere. Indeed, what is ultimately so infuriating about *Beauty Restored* is that for all the criticism of anti- and pro-theorists and all the promises of a spectacular solution, none ever materializes. The book ends without even a shadow of a plausible positive theory that would reconcile (i) with (ii) and utterly fails to explain what beauty has to do with such a solution.

⁶³ Mary Mothersill, *Beauty Restored*, p. 169. [Emphasis in the original]

The explanation of Mothersill's failure is marvelously simple and unsurprising. Held jointly, (i) and (ii) *do* constitute a genuine paradox, so rather than herculean, Mothersill's mission is better analogized to that of Sisyphus. *My* solution, along with the pro-theorists, is that (i) is simply false. What is surprising, however, is the degree to which (i) is taken for granted by the anti-theorists, all on the basis of a very thin and unexceptional argument, which we will discuss in due course.

My intention here, then, is to discuss in some detail those sections of *Beauty Restored* which are relevant to the issues in this chapter (and this book), and to identify Mothersill with the Intuitionist strain of anti-transparency (although by embracing ii., she obviously would vehemently deny it). Along the way, I hope to compliment my previous criticisms of the construal of the aesthetic judgment as a judgment of taste and to discuss Mothersill's devotion to beauty and "beautiful" as the primary property/predicate of aesthetics and explain why I think it could not possibly play such a role.

2.51 The Nature of the Aesthetic Judgment, Taste, and Beauty

Let's begin with Mothersill's construal of the *form* of the critical judgment (it should be clarified from the beginning, that Mothersill's work is concerned with the aesthetic judgment *qua* evaluative judgment). The judgment is (a) singular, that is, of the form "a is F," where "a" denotes an individual, not a class; (b) categorical (that is, *not* hypothetical);

and (c) affirmative.⁶⁴ It is, in other words, just the kind of judgment which we have been discussing since the beginning of this dissertation.

We now come to the nature—the *content*—of the aesthetic judgment. For Mothersill, the aesthetic judgment is to be interpreted under two aspects: (i) its avowal or *confessional* aspect; and (ii) its *normative* aspect. She usefully identifies each of these aspects with a distinct philosopher; that aspect of the aesthetic judgment which constitutes its avowal is affiliated with the aesthetic theory of George Santayana,⁶⁵ while the normative aspect of the aesthetic judgment is associated with the thought of Immanuel Kant.

We should notice right away that these two aspects, or interpretations, of the aesthetic judgment, entail two distinct sets of truth-conditions. Under the first aspect, the locution “a is good” is true iff the person uttering it likes the referent of “a”; its truth is conditioned purely on *sincerity*. Under the second aspect, the locution “a is good” is true iff the person uttering it likes the referent of “a” *and* iff it is true that every other competent observer/listener/reader should like it as well; its truth is conditioned on *conformity* of taste.

Insofar as both aspects (and their corresponding truth-conditions) deviate from the surface grammar of the aesthetic judgment (in which the evaluation seems to be about the work,

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 75-76.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

not about the person perceiving the work), the question is immediately raised as to the reason for the deviation. For Santayana, the misleading surface form is a reflection of *timidity* on the part of the speaker. Rather than unabashedly sling a subjective opinion, we feel more comfortable making it look like an objective judgment; on this view, then, the critic is in a kind of *bad faith*. For Kant, the misleading surface form is an indication of the antinomy or paradox that lies beneath critical practice; an utterance of the true aesthetic judgment *requires* conformity of taste, and yet this does not seem a reasonable or realistic requirement, given the truth of the Second Thesis.⁶⁶ Indeed, (i) and (ii) are *both* true, and the resulting confusion requires a transcendental deduction.⁶⁷

In a sense, another peculiar antinomy lurks beneath these two aspects of the aesthetic judgment, when it is construed as essentially a judgment of *taste*. That Mothersill assumes that the aesthetic judgment is inextricably bound to taste is obvious from her claim that even under its normative aspect, the aesthetic judgment implies an avowal, that is, *entails its confessional aspect*. So, while Mothersill rejects the stronger semantic analysis of Santayana, which *translates* the aesthetic judgment into a personal testimonial, she agrees with a weaker material entailment from aesthetic judgment to confession.⁶⁸

But construing the aesthetic judgment as essentially, or at least “two-thirds subjective,”

⁶⁶ Ibid., pp. 82-83.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 81.

⁶⁸ Ibid., pp. 84-85.

puts its two aspects in conflict. As I just mentioned above, it is extremely counterintuitive to simultaneously claim that a judgment at bottom is an avowal or confession of feeling, of taste, and also argue that conformity of such feelings or tastes is to be demanded across persons. That is, it is unobvious how one can assert that one *ought* to make a particular avowal, which at the same time must be *sincere* in order for its truth-condition to be satisfied—you can, indeed, force someone to do something or say something, but you cannot force them to *like* what they're doing or be sincere about what they are saying. You can't legitimately claim that someone else *ought to* like the color blue, or enjoy De Chiricos, or like rum raisin ice cream for that matter, for there are no right or wrong tastes. Likes and tastes are just not the kinds of mental states which can be prescribed. It seems then, that the normative aspect of the aesthetic judgment is unsustainable in concert with its avowal aspect, if the judgment is construed as a judgment of taste.

Hume, of course, believed that one *can* make such prescriptions of tastes across persons, although in his case these prescriptions will be more empirical than normative—less about what people ought to like as an *a priori* matter and more about what they ought to like as properly functioning organisms. As already discussed in Chapter One, it is Hume's belief that aesthetic properties—including the property of having aesthetic value—are like secondary qualities such as the color red or the feeling of warmth. That is, the sentiment of beauty is a psychological state that one is disposed to feel given a sensory interaction with an object of certain primary qualities, just like seeing red is a psychological state that one is disposed to perceive given a sensory experience of a certain quantity and

arrangement of primary qualities.

What this means, however, is that there is a way that a “normal” human organism should respond to certain sensory stimuli. This is why, for example, color blindness or spectrum inversion is considered “abnormal”: if someone sees yellow when faced with a stop sign or fire truck, we can say of that person that he *ought* to have seen red, and we can conclude that there is something defective about him. Likewise, with beauty or aesthetic goodness, it is Hume’s belief that normal humans all should find Virgil’s *Aeneid* or Homer’s *Odyssey* beautiful, because this is how a properly functioning organism should react to these clusters of primary qualities. We can say, then, of a person who doesn’t find either of these epics beautiful, just as we can say of the color blind person, that he is abnormal.

Consider the following from Hume,

It appears then, that, amidst all the variety and caprice of taste, there are certain general principles of approbation or blame, whose influence a careful eye may trace in all operations of the mind. Some particular forms or qualities, from the original structure of the internal fabric, are calculated to please, and others to displease; and if they fail of their effect in any particular instance, it is from some apparent defect or imperfection in the organ. A man in a fever would not insist on his palate as able to decide concerning flavours: nor would one, affected with the jaundice, pretend to give a verdict with regard to colours. In each creature, there is a sound and a defective state; and the former alone can be supposed to afford us a true standard of taste and sentiment. If, in the sound state of the organ, there be an entire or a considerable uniformity of sentiment among men, we may thence derive an idea of the perfect beauty; in like manner as the appearance of objects in day-light, to the eye of a man in health, is denominated their true and real colour, even while colour is allowed to be merely a phantasm of the senses.⁶⁹

I have little hope for the success of any such view, and so the expectation or requirement of conformity of taste seems to me a futile aim for those who wish to attach a normative

⁶⁹ David Hume, “Of the Standard of Taste,” in Tillman and Cahn, eds., pp. 120.

component to the aesthetic judgment, taken as a judgment of taste; subjectivity and relativity of taste, it seems to me, are too intimately connected to be pried apart in the way Hume wants.

First, I do not believe that even in “the sound state of the organs” there is, as a matter of empirical fact, a uniformity of sentiment among human beings, *qua* human beings (as opposed to, say, as members of cultural communities), in either the moral or aesthetic case. It seems to me that Hume—and those who believe that morals and aesthetics can be dealt with as primarily sentiment-based (that is, as subjective) and yet can also be rendered non-relativistic—suffer from a severe cultural myopia, looking at humanity through what are really Western lenses. Dehumanizing, physically mutilating, and killing women invokes sentiments of horror and revulsion in Western countries such as Canada, The United States, and Great Britain, but in much of the rest of the world, such activities are promoted, culturally approved of, and are often even *mandated* practices: in many Islamic countries women’s rights and privileges are severely curtailed, to the point where the woman’s life is literally owned by her father and, later, her husband; in India women must be sold to husbands for what are often huge sums of money and as a result, female offspring are routinely targeted for abortion and infanticide, with abortionists cheerfully advertising sonograms so that one may kill one’s daughter sooner rather than later; and in many African nations, women, as a matter of religious practice, are subjected to genital mutilation, designed precisely to rob them of sexual pleasure and to keep them chaste. Where, then, is the uniformity of sentiment among humankind, with regard to matters

moral?

The same diversity is found, of course, on the aesthetic front. To Western ears, the high pitched, tinny sound of Indian singing and music and the wailing and caterwauling of Arabic song is grating to the extreme, and the unmelodic, somewhat disjointed sound of Japanese music and opera can be remarkably unpleasant. And one can imagine how a Japanese person, whose taste is grounded in a Spartan and streamlined aesthetic, deeply rooted in simplicity, would typically react to, say, the Victorian style of interior decorating with its highly cluttered and extremely eclectic look. The sheer diversity of art around the world—a diversity that often consists of diametrically opposed, indeed clashing aesthetics—makes it very difficult to believe that there is anything like a uniformity of human sentiment with regard to taste; that there is some ideal arrangement of physical, primary qualities that will get the “normal” human to react positively. The position, again, just seems straightforwardly, empirically false.

If we *stipulate* the Humean position, we get difficulties of the *reductio ad absurdum* variety. Stipulate that there is some uniform standard of taste (in both aesthetics and in morals), a standard that results from human physical uniformity and the uniformity of dispositions that humans possess, one which make us react similarly to artobjects with regard to the sense of beauty that results, and to actions with regard to the sense of abhorrence or approval that is caused. What are we then forced to say of those of divergent tastes and moral sentiments? We are forced, it seems, to say that such diversity

of taste and difference of moral response are the result of physical deformity. For if the analogy with secondary qualities is to be believed—and it is one that Hume makes repeatedly—then no less than the person who sees yellow when confronted with a stop sign or fire truck, the person who finds *The Aeneid* boring and tedious is *abnormal* in a physical, pathological sense; the person who thinks that it is morally appropriate—indeed, morally *required*—to put a live woman on the funeral pyre with her dead husband is somehow physically defective. Indeed, to be wicked on the Humean view just *is* to be a person whose human sentiment is malfunctioning, such that he doesn't don't react with horror or pleasure to the right things.

Aside from what seems the patent absurdity of a view that reduces diversity of taste and moral wickedness to natural deformity, in the moral case, at least, real difficult questions regarding responsibility and punishment arise; how do we punish someone who is, so to speak, “malfunctioning”? One has to worry that the pathologizing of immorality will result in an inability to make moral condemnations that carry with them the consequence of just punishment. It is dangerous, in other words, to reduce the evil to the sick; the philistine to the “malformed.”

Kant, of course, takes a very different tack on the matter of squaring the inherent subjectivity of the aesthetic judgment (since it is a judgment of taste)⁷⁰ with the demand of

70

If we wish to discern whether anything is beautiful or not, we do not refer the representation of it to the Object by means of understanding with a view to cognition, but by means of the imagination...we refer

a conformity of taste in others. Indeed, it seems to me that he merely describes the difficulty, with great sophistication and in great detail, rather than offer a solution as Hume does; Kant, I say with some hesitation, seems to be offering more of a *phenomenology* of the aesthetic judgment than an epistemology for it. In this way, his discussion of the judgment of taste is very different from his analysis of our empirical or even moral judgments.⁷¹

As already discussed, for Kant, there is no genuine aesthetic judgment without a demand for conformity from others; this, indeed, is precisely what separates the judgment that something is beautiful from the judgment that it is merely agreeable. With Kant,

As regards the *agreeable* every one concedes that his judgement, which he bases on a private feeling, and in which he declares that an object pleases him, is restricted merely to himself personally. Thus he does not take it amiss if, when he says that Canary-wine is agreeable, another corrects the expression and reminds him that he ought to say: it is agreeable *to me*...With the agreeable, therefore, the axiom holds good: *Every one has his own taste* (that of sense).

the representation to the Subject and its feeling of pleasure or displeasure. The judgment of taste, therefore, is not a cognitive judgment, and so not logical, but is aesthetic—which means that it is one whose determining ground *cannot be other than subjective*. Every reference of representations is capable of being objective, even that of sensations (in which case it signifies the real in an empirical representation). The one exception to this is the feeling of pleasure or displeasure. This denotes nothing in the object, but is a feeling which the Subject has of itself and the manner in which it is affected by the representation.

Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, §1, pp. 41–42.

⁷¹ I should qualify that this is the *result* of Kant's treatment, though it probably was not his intention. Because, as I will argue, Kant's transcendental form of argument fails to negotiate the antimony of taste, a failure that seems to me much more stark than its failure (if it is a failure) in other areas, such as science and morals, the result is that Kant's work stands more as a catalogue of the experience of taste, rather than a justification for the concept and its applications.

The beautiful stands on quite a different footing. It would, on the contrary, be ridiculous if any one who plumed himself on his taste were to think of justifying himself by saying: This object...is beautiful *for me*. For if it merely pleases *him*, he must not call it *beautiful*...[B]ut when he puts a thing on a pedestal and calls it beautiful, he demands the same delight from others. He judges it not merely for himself, but for all men, and then speaks of beauty as it were a property of things.⁷²

At the same time, however, though the very nature of the aesthetic judgement is that it is one that demands conformity of taste from others, that conformity cannot be demanded on the grounds that the beauty of the thing in question is an objective property of that thing. The judgment of taste is not like an empirical judgement, where a thing is represented under a concept, and where, as a result, the prescription that “you ought to believe P, too” has an objective source. Consider the following remarks from *The Critique of Judgement*:

[T]he judgement of taste is an aesthetic and not a cognitive judgement, and so does not deal with any *concept* of the nature or of the internal or external possibility, by this or that cause, of the object, but simply with the relative bearing of the representative powers so far as determined by a representation.⁷³

There can be no objective rule of taste by which what is beautiful may be defined by means of concepts. For every judgement from that source is aesthetic, i.e. its determining ground is the feeling of the Subject, and not any concept of an object.⁷⁴

Of what I call *agreeable* I assert that it *actually* causes pleasure in me. But what we have in mind in the case of the *beautiful* is a *necessary* reference on its part to delight. However, this necessity is of a special kind. It is not a theoretical objective necessity—such as would let us cognize *a priori* that every one *will feel* this delight in the object that is called beautiful by me...In other words it is a necessity of the assent of all to a judgement regarded as exemplifying a universal rule incapable of formulation. Since an aesthetic judgement is not an objective or cognitive judgement, this necessity is not derivable from definite concepts, and so

⁷² Ibid., §7, pp. 51-52.

⁷³ Ibid., §11, p. 62.

⁷⁴ Ibid., §16, p. 75.

is not apodictic.⁷⁵

What, then, is the nature of this expectation we have when we make an aesthetic judgment? I tell you that X is beautiful, and a part of what this means is that I expect you to think it beautiful too; I believe that you ought to find it beautiful. If this is not an objective expectation—i.e. an expectation that is due to the fact that beauty is an objective property of this object, one that the object possess as a result of its being represented under a concept—then what sort of expectation is it? Kant tells us that it is an expectation that between creatures with the cognitive capacities that we have, there is a *common sense*, one such that it is reasonable to make judgments of taste with the expectation of—indeed, the *demand* for—agreement.

Were judgements of taste in possession of a definite objective principle, then one who in his judgement followed such a principle would claim unconditioned necessity for it. Again, were they devoid of any principle, as are those of the mere taste of sense, then no thought of any necessity on their part would enter one's head. Therefore they must have a subjective principle, and one which determines what pleases or displeases, by means of feeling only and not through concepts, but yet with universal validity. Such a principle, however, could only be regarded as a *common sense*.

The judgement of taste, therefore, depends on our presupposing the existence of a common sense...Only under the presupposition, I repeat, of such a common sense, are we able to lay down a judgement of taste.⁷⁶

Why, we might ask, is it reasonable to presume such a common sense? As an empirical matter, is this not as dubious as Hume's assumption of a universal human nature, such that we can reasonably expect "normal" people to react similarly to objects with regard to their beauty or lack thereof? This is where Kant's philosophy is so different from Hume's, for

⁷⁵ Ibid., §18, p. 81. [Emphasis in the original]

⁷⁶ Ibid., §20, pp. 82-83. [Emphasis in the original]

his style of argument is not empirical—that there *is* such a common sense among sentient beings—but rather, like in the rest of his Critical philosophy, transcendental—that there *must be* a common sense among sentient beings if judgements of taste (as Kant has construed them) are possible. Given that such judgments of taste *are* possible—insofar as we actually make them, and the existence of something entails its possibility—then there must be a common sense among sentient beings.

This, of course, is precisely the form of argument that Kant employs for the *synthetic a priori* concepts he explicates in *The Critique of Pure Reason*; they are necessary for the possibility of human experience, and since human experience is possible, these *synthetic a priori* concepts must obtain. The weak link, of course, lies in the actuality of what is claimed to be possible. With regard to human experience, taken generally, it is quite plausible to claim that we do actually experience the world the way that Kant says we do, and thus, the transcendental argument to the necessity of causality, etc., goes through smoothly.

But it seems to me that in the aesthetic case the argument falls apart. Notice in the quotation from §7 that Kant says that it would “be ridiculous if any one who plumed himself on his taste were to think of justifying himself by saying: This object...is beautiful *for me*. For if it merely pleases *him*, he must not call it *beautiful*.” But why should we agree that this is true? From an “ordinary language” standpoint, it is not at all ridiculous—indeed, people say such things constantly; the claim that “beauty is in the eye

of the beholder” is one of the most entrenched expressions in our language. Kant merely asserts, with a lot of foot stamping, that this is, *in fact*, what we imply when we make judgments of taste, as a matter of our *speaker-meaning* when we make such judgments, but *that* is an empirical matter, and it is one for which Kant offers no evidence or argument. And it should be pointed out that even if it is argued that our *expectation* that others should agree with us is indicative that this is our speaker meaning when we make judgments of taste, nothing, strictly speaking, would follow about the necessity of the existence of a common sense, because our expectations could be unreasonable, a purely psychological fact about us. As a matter of psychology, we expect many things which are unreasonable to expect, and thus, mere expectation entails nothing about the necessity of anything else.

Of course, without a more firm basis for asserting that the judgment of taste differs in this way from the mere judgment “of sense,” it is in no way clear that the judgment of taste implies the requirement that others agree. And if the judgment of taste has no such implication—and thus, cannot be separated from the judgment of sense—then the rest of the transcendental argument to the necessity of a common sense simply does not follow. The transcendental architecture, with regard at least to judgments of taste, if not to empirical and moral judgments, is a failure.

With this failure, the best chance of sustaining the idea that the aesthetic judgment is a judgment of taste while also being able to claim that there can be straightforwardly true

aesthetic judgments, that admit of straightforward justification, falls by the wayside. If we want to treat the aesthetic judgment as a judgment of taste, then we must give up the notion that the aesthetic judgment is normative. For where there is nothing that is objectively true, or of which we could, at least, demand subjective conformity, it is virtually impossible to see how, on the basis of the fact that I find X pleasing, I should demand or expect that you find X pleasing too. And with this impossibility, the possibility of real—that is, truth-theoretic—aesthetic dispute and aesthetic justification disappears. Criticism, as a practice, turns into nothing but the slinging of radically subjective tastes.

This is the main reason why I will not construe the aesthetic judgment as a judgment of taste. More specifically, I will want to separate aesthetic judgments, which are normative, from any essential connection to an avowal or confession, concepts which belong purely to the domain of taste. Luckily (and contrary to Mothersill's belief) I don't think it is at all obvious that the aesthetic judgment, at least when made by the professional critic, entails any sort of avowal or confession at all. As a matter of fact, thinking further about the phenomenology of the aesthetic judgment for a moment, it seems to me obvious that the true, educated, *professional* aesthetic judgment must take great pains *not* to implicate an avowal—not to be, in other words, a judgment of taste, for this is a violation of the critic's pedagogical and evaluative mandate. The proper stance of the critic is the *disinterested stance* (and I mean “disinterested” in the ordinary English sense, not the Kantian one). The critic must be able to soberly evaluate artworks, and be prepared to approve, regardless of whether or not they are the sort that he likes.

I have these kinds of arguments with my mother all of the time. She is turned off by anything that is overly visceral, horrifying, or ugly. Hence, she is incapable of looking at a Lucian Freud, or an Otto Dix, or a Francis Bacon or, for that matter, of watching a David Cronenberg or Clive Barker film, and offering any positive appraisal whatsoever, regardless of the formal quality and superiority of their work. Indeed it is virtually impossible for her to consume such art at all. Her likes and dislikes—the outpourings of her *confessional* soul—are trumping her objective evaluation of the object. Now she is nevertheless, a highly sophisticated, high class, art consumer, someone we would describe as in possession of elevated tastes. And when talking about works which she *does* like, she can make persuasive and compelling arguments as to their merits. But I think we would agree that her stance is not that of a critic but of an *enthusiast*, or a fan. There is nothing wrong with such a stance, and it is true that people can be *both* critics and enthusiasts (although not at the same time, I would think), but it is not the stance, I assume, that we ought to be discussing in the philosophy of criticism, which is, as I have already said, what aesthetics should be, primarily, about.

Yet what is one to make of the following, in which Mothersill discusses the possibility of cleaving apart the normative and confessional aspects of the aesthetic judgment? Consider first, the proposal, as expressed by Joseph Margolis in *The Language of Art and Art Criticism* in the following selected quotes from *Beauty Restored* (hereafter, “BR”):

If I judge a particular work of art to be good, I am bound, on demand, to supply the justifying reasons; I have not yet supplied them in issuing the judgment. But if the justifying reasons are admitted to be true, and to be the proper sort of reasons sufficient for the finding, one cannot withhold the finding on presentation

of the reasons.

The finding or judgment (or verdict) is not an expression of taste and is only contingently related to our actual taste...It is altogether conceivable that one likes what one judges to be artistically poor or fails to appreciate what one knows to be excellent.⁷⁷

A reasonable, intuitive and, certainly, *prima facie* plausible claim. Indeed, as should be obvious from the previous paragraph, it represents my own position. But now look at

Mothersill's response

What Margolis says is not exactly false but, so to speak, out of touch. I am *not* obligated to produce a justification, still less a 'proof' for every judgment that I make; how *could* I be? I do, on occasion, try to show what it is about a particular work that leads me to think it a good work of art, but unless I *liked* the work in question, this exercise would be bizarre. Much that is nonstandard is no doubt 'conceivable', but the question opens complicated issues that extend beyond aesthetics, and jauntiness is out of place...

...to speak of confusion, mistake or loss is to presume a norm, and the norm surely is to judge beautiful what one finds beautiful, and to find something beautiful is to find it a source of pleasure. (my brackets)⁷⁸

This response entirely begs the question against Margolis, who, as should be obvious from the spirit of the above quotes, is *denying* that the aesthetic judgment is a judgment of taste, or a judgment concerning the perception of beauty. Mothersill's "argument" is nothing more than rhetorical foot-stamping. But more remarkable is Mothersill's obvious obliviousness to her own prejudices—she is simply unable to see the critic as anything other than an at least tacit, if not explicit, *advocate*.⁷⁹ Otherwise, once such prejudices and

⁷⁷ Joseph Margolis, *The Language of Art and Art Criticism* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press 1965) p. 138.

⁷⁸ Mothersill, *Ibid.*, p. 114.

⁷⁹ And this preoccupation with the notion of critic as advocate, as promoter, should warn or alert us to look for strains of Logical Empiricism or Intuitionism behind Mothersill's position. For it is precisely these theorists who come (are forced) to such a construal of critical practice.

unargued presuppositions are dismissed, there is nothing at all “bizarre” about what Margolis proposes—indeed, it is *Mothersill's* position which strikes us as weird. The critic is *not*, in essence, a fan. Indeed, his being too much of a fan disturbs precisely that which is his duty, to make disinterested judgments about the nature and quality of artworks.

As to this business about the “norm” being the critic who judges beautiful what he takes to be beautiful (and we will substitute “aesthetically valuable” for the first “beautiful”), this seems to me straightforwardly, empirically, *false*. I have nothing but aesthetic praise for the sickly and dimpled flesh of the figures in the work of Lucian Freud, yet find none of it “beautiful” in any ordinary sense of the word. I believe that German Expressionism is the most aesthetically superior movement within modernism, but the work of some of its finest artists, Otto Dix, Max Beckmann, and Egon Schiele, for example, are deliberately hideous, ugly, horrible and terrifying (the conveying of such qualities, is, indeed, much of the point of this art).⁸⁰ And consider the following remarks by Arthur Danto (an art critic as well as a philosopher), whose interest in Pop Art—and especially its philosophical consequences—is at the center of most of his philosophical works on the subject of art and dominates much of his actual criticism.

⁸⁰ Consider, for example, Egon Schiele, *Seated Young Girl* (1910—Graphische Sammlung Albertina), *Self-Portrait Screaming* (1910—Graphische Sammlung Albertina); Otto Dix, *Nun Rape* (xxxx—xxxx), *The Dead near the Position at Tahure* (1924—Otto Dix Foundation); Max Beckmann, *Nacht* (1918/19—Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen). None of these paintings is beautiful, indeed, none of them is supposed to be beautiful. To be beautiful would be to undermine the very point that such images tried to convey—the horrors of World War I, the ugliness, sickness and disease of child prostitution, and the murderous violence of the November Revolution. For discussion of several of these works, see Dietmar Elgar, *Expressionism* (Köln: Benedikt Taschen, 1994).

I think that living in New York in the mid-to-late twentieth century has been to live in a philosopher's wonderland, for the artworld threw up example after example of the most astonishingly conceptual sort. To have been philosophically interested in art in those years would have been almost tragic had one lived anywhere else in the world.

But I am...a lover of fine painting, and I cannot claim that I love the art that has occasioned my philosophy with anything like the intensity or in anything like the same way in which, for example, I adore the Dutch masters. Aesthetically, I suppose, I might be willing to trade it all for Giorgione's *La Tempesta*. But unlike the law, good philosophy is generated by hard cases. And good philosophy of art by red monochrome squares and *Brillo Boxes*. (my brackets)⁸¹

So I flatly reject Mothersill's anachronistic, almost Victorian, conception of the critical and aesthetic enterprise as one of cataloguing and promoting or advocating works which are "beautiful" and "pretty," and I reject the view of criticism in which the positive evaluation of an artwork entails that the critic "likes" it. Where has she been throughout the mountains of criticism done on the work of the German Expressionists, Eisenstein and Murnau, or of Exploitation and Slasher films? Talk about out-of-touch! If anything, the painting of the twentieth century and certainly, the film of the late 1960's through the present, are moving farther and farther away from beauty and towards a visceral ugliness that is at odds with the aesthetics of the High Renaissance or late 19th century impressionism,⁸² and may be more like some of the more brutal examples of early and mid-

⁸¹ Mark Rollins, ed. *Danto and His Critics* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1993), p. 198.

⁸² I'm not even sure if this narrow conception of aesthetic value, *qua* beauty, applies to the Renaissance, if we also consider the Northern Renaissance. My thoughts turn to the apocalyptic triptychs and diptychs of Jan Van Eyck, Petrus Christus, as well as the work of Hieronymous Bosch and Pieter Bruegel the Elder. Are the figures in Bosch's *Christ Carrying the Cross* beautiful? Of course not—the whole *point* is that each horrific face, in contrast to the serenity of Christ, is supposed to represent one of the ugly passions of the soul

Around these four figures surge a howling mob who scowl, leer and roll their eyes at their victims, their twisted and deformed faces glowing with an unearthly light against the dark ground. These are not men but

nineteenth Romanticism, such as Goya's disturbing and bloody *Saturn Devouring his Son*.

On these matters, Mothersill is just not with what's going on.⁸³ Critics do not attribute aesthetic value only to works which they "like," and they do not always like or attribute aesthetic value to works which are in fact, beautiful.

Mothersill, of course, will protest my attribution of this Victorian conception of beauty to her. And given her allegiance to Kant, she will want to distinguish between the "merely

demons...Bosch never rendered human physiognomies with a more intense ugliness....It is likely...that he tuned to the German artists who for generations had endowed the tormentors of Christ with monstrously deformed features.

Walter Bosing, *Hieronymus Bosch: Between Heaven and Hell* (Koln: Benedikt Taschen). p.78.

⁸³ It might be protested that the horror genres in film to which I refer are relatively recent and "trendy" and should not carry too much significance with regards to our treatment of aesthetic value. I would reply that in addition to the fact that we can find horror in painting at least as far back as the Romantics, the tradition in film goes back at least as far as early twentieth century films such as *Nosferatu* and *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*. Indeed, in critical circles, *Nosferatu* is considered a superior interpretation of Bram Stoker than the various *Dracula* films, precisely because it presents the vampire as a hideous, sickening creature that brings sickness and plague with him wherever he goes. And it is arguable that a sub-genre of horror, the so-called "splatter film" goes all the way back to 19th century French *Grand Guignol* theater.

Splatter movies, offshoots of the horror film genre, aim not to scare their audiences, necessarily, nor to drive them to the edges of their seats in suspense, but to mortify them with scenes of explicit gore. In splatter movies, mutilation is the message.

Splatter movies have their source in Grand Guignol, French theater created in the late 1800's for the benefit of those with jaded tastes. As it evolved, it gravitated towards a more unsophisticated audience, the French theater-going masses, who came to marvel at grotesquely realistic eye-gougings, beheading, and throat slittings. Plots were openly derivative or non-existent, but nobody cared: in Grand Guignol, gore, not drama, was the thing. It was like a ghoulish magic show.

John McCarty, *Splatter Movies: Breaking the Last Taboo on the Screen* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984), pp. 1-9.

agreeable” and the “beautiful,” with the beautiful carrying with it a degree of objectivity—or at least, inter-subjectivity—that the agreeable lacks. Indeed, she chides C.I. Lewis for not making this distinction: “Notice that Lewis takes no account of the distinction insisted on by Kant between the beautiful and the ‘merely agreeable’; Canary wine would be right in there with the beefsteak and the Gothic facades. Here, I think, Kant is in the right.” The problem is that given the ultimate failure of the Kantian treatment of the judgment of taste, and given the *theory of beauty* which Mothersill proposes, I don’t see that she has the conceptual resources to make this distinction. What she is referring to above is just a reworked version of the distinction between the aesthetic judgment under its avowal aspect as opposed to its normative aspect. Of the canary wine, then, we can only make an avowal whereas with the Gothic facade, we must *prescribe* that avowal across persons. But, insofar as the two aspects have been shown to be incompatible, and no solution or accommodation is offered, we must conclude that this cannot succeed.

The theory of beauty offered hurts rather than helps Mothersill’s case, as it reinforces the impression that she is talking about beauty *qua* superlative for “pretty” and “nice.” Her analysis closely tracks that of Plato, in which the conception of beauty has the following characteristics:

1. Beauty is a kind of good: “To be beautiful is a blessing in itself and a social asset. From infancy on, the **personally attractive** receive preferential treatment”⁸⁴

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 262. [My boldface]

2. Beauty is ontologically neutral. That is, *any kind of thing* is a candidate for beauty.
3. Beauty is **causally linked with pleasure and inspires love**: "...to believe oneself beautiful is a cause of pleasure; to be beautiful is to give pleasure to others. To find something beautiful is a pleasure, and it is also a pleasure to produce something beautiful."⁸⁵

It is difficult, if not impossible, to see how such a conception of beauty could possibly serve the same function of "aesthetic value," especially given the litany of works we have just discussed. It is hard to see how Otto Dix's *Nun Rape*, "inspires love," or how Herschel Gordon Lewis's *Blood Feast* "gives pleasure to others," despite the fact that both tend to receive positive reviews by critics. While it certainly is the case that a *subset* of the aesthetically valuable will be beautiful, it is not the case that *all* aesthetically valuable objects will be beautiful.

It seems to me that Mothersill is in the position that either by "beautiful" she means what most English speakers take it to mean (and what is suggested by her theory of beauty and the various other remarks she has made concerning it) or that by "beautiful" she just means "aesthetically valuable." In the former case, the concept is simply too narrow to serve as the central evaluative predicate in criticism—too many artworks which are aesthetically good are *not* beautiful—and in the latter case I entirely lose the point of the beauty exercise. And it is difficult, anyway, to square the second reading with Mothersill, given all that she has said, and given that she explicitly refers to beauty as a "standing concept," that is, a concept which is "taken for granted in critical discussion of the arts,

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 271. [My boldface]

and that is indispensable.”⁸⁶ Such a stir would not be made over “beauty” if it just meant “aesthetic value,” and “beauty” *could not be* the central, indispensable, evaluative concept in aesthetics if it did not, at least, exhaust the extension of “aesthetically valuable.”

Why are these issues regarding beauty, taste, and subjective versus objective evaluative concepts so important? In the most immediate sense, they are important because Mothersill’s insistence on subjective evaluative concepts makes the reconciliation of this second paradox—that between the avowal and normative aspects of the aesthetic judgment—impossible. To construe the aesthetic judgments as primarily a judgment of beauty or lack thereof, and to construe beauty in the way that Mothersill does puts all the semantic weight of the aesthetic judgment on the avowal side. Given the counterintuitiveness of prescribing subjective tastes across persons, and given the failure of either a Humean or Kantian explanation of how tastes might be prescribed across persons, this puts accommodation of the normative aspect beyond our reach.

This emphasis on subjective concepts as central to aesthetics also has relevance to the issue of the First and Second theses, that is, the *original* paradox which we have discussed. Insofar as the choice of aesthetic evaluative concepts centers around the subjective, the First Thesis becomes *inevitable*. For if it seemed weird—when considering the avowal vs. normative aspects of the aesthetic judgment—to contemplate prescribing sincere avowals across persons, then it is just as weird to invoke an aesthetic “law” or

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 247.

principle which purports to describe just such a symmetry of taste. That is, since the truth conditions of the aesthetic judgment *qua* judgment of taste are based, essentially, upon sincerity, it is highly counterintuitive that a true aesthetic judgment will entail a symmetry of sincere taste under a law, principle, or “common sense.”

What I guess I am saying is that this insistence on subjective evaluative concepts stacks the deck, loads the dice. The result is a not very paradoxical paradox, since Mothersill’s presuppositions, coupled with the failure of the Humean and Kantian solutions to the subjectivity-relativism problem concerning taste, pretty much entail a subjectivist solution of the problem of the First vs. Second Thesis. The appearance of muddle in *BR* is due to Mothersill’s inexplicable fight against this inevitability. Her aesthetic intuitions stack the deck, but her commitment to philosophy forces her to fight the fight. The whole adventure down the road of “beauty” makes no sense to me whatsoever.

There is also a more general, less “aesthetic” issue that lurks behind the First Thesis. This has to do with issues of generality, explanatory power, and lawlikeness that surround the subject of laws and universal generalizations. These issues, combined with Mothersill’s subjectivist intuitions, make her case for the First Thesis.

The First Thesis, then, is the last—although also the most important—issue raised in *BR* which I will discuss, and I turn to it now.

2.52 The First Thesis, *Ceteris Paribus* Laws, and Subjectivity Again

No one seems to like aesthetic principles and laws. Many of whom Mothersill calls “anti-theorists” claim that there are no such principles or laws, but then proceed to countenance a practice of criticism which presupposes and makes use of precisely such laws and principles. This inconsistency is often glaring and obvious. Most egregiously, Morris Weitz, in “Reasons in Criticism,” first claims that he supports a version of criticism in which critics use reasons to provide justifications for aesthetic judgments, but then goes on to argue that such reasons cannot be based in any kind of universal generalizations:

...the application of criteria is the giving of reasons in direct support of the utterance: e.g. ‘Shakespeare’s dramas are great because they have P.’ where ‘P’ denotes some criterion like, ‘being true to nature’...

The most troublesome feature of evaluative criticism, however, is not in the application of criteria...but in the justification of its criteria. Every evaluative critic of Shakespeare’s dramas commits himself to ‘P is a great-making property of drama.’ His commitment immediately raises the perennial question, ‘But what has P to do with dramatic greatness?’⁸⁷

Weitz calls this process “the request of a reason for a reason.” He asks if there are necessary and sufficient conditions for being dramatically great, and answers the question with a resounding, *no*. Weitz tells us that “the history of dramatic criticism is in great part

⁸⁷ Morris Weitz, “Reasons in Criticism,” in Weitz, ed., pp. 921-922. Weitz, of course, is a Wittgensteinian, so one might ask why I am clobbering him over his failure to commit to the existence of aesthetic laws. The point is this: philosophers like Weitz, Mothersill, and others reject the possibility of there being aesthetic laws. But they then purport to practice the sort of criticism which requires that there be precisely such laws. This is not dissimilar to Isenberg’s critique of those who oppose the traditional model of criticism but then continue to work within it. It is all fine and well to claim that there are no aesthetic laws or to go “open concept” or “family resemblance” on aesthetic concepts. But one cannot then help oneself to the traditional model of criticism, in which one offers a reason for a critical judgment that is supposed to straightforwardly justify it.

a history of unresolved disagreement over the necessary and sufficient properties of dramatic greatness.” How then, does he square his assertion that critics legitimately offer reasons in support of aesthetic judgment with the view that there can be no principles which back up those judgments? Once again, *magic*. Weitz tells us that reasons are good reasons if they are “logically unchallengeable.” But what on earth could this mean? How could “Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* is a great work” be logically unchallengeable unless it were a necessary truth (which it clearly isn’t). Maybe Weitz doesn’t really mean “logically unchallengeable” but something more like “undeniable.” But unless some appeal is made to aesthetic laws or, worse, to intuition, this of course just begs the question, *Why is the verdict and its justification unchallengeable?*

Mothersill does this too. She wants simultaneously to claim that there can be no aesthetic principles or laws—that is, no true, explanatory, justificatory universal generalizations in criticism—while also committing herself to a model of criticism in which critics go around making judgments and offering reasons which support those judgments, and which are supposed to hold some weight on the judgments of others.

In “Critical Reasons” as well as in *BR*, Mothersill lays siege to justificatory universal generalizations in criticism. The attack is on what in *BR* she calls “aesthetic principles.” These are universal generalizations of the form “all x’s which are Q’s are good.” These are what are supposed to provide deductive support for judgments such as [p is good] and reasons offered for such judgments, like [p is good because it is Q.] The first argument is

that these principles cannot possibly function because they are not exceptionless [and notice that here she uses “law” to refer to principles.]

It follows that the critic, who, in support of his verdict (P is a good painting) offers a reason, must refer to a particular feature which the work in question actually has. If he says that P is a good painting because it has quality Q...then, as a minimal condition, P must be seen to have quality Q. But this is not enough, for how can the reason really support the verdict unless it refers elliptically to an appropriate ‘law’, i.e. ‘Q is a good-making quality in paintings’? This seems implausible since paintings are different and are good for different reasons. Quality Q may contribute to the value of painting P but fail to contribute or count as an actual flaw in painting P₁.⁸⁸

I will argue that this is an old chestnut, easily cracked. For a similar difficulty arises for the possibility of their being laws in the special sciences, sciences such as psychology, sociology and even biology. And there is a vast literature on how to deal with the problem of non-exceptionless laws in these sciences. Taking a cue from this literature, I will suggest that we provide our aesthetic law with a *ceteris paribus* clause—or something very much like one—which indexes the universal generalization to artistic types and thereby, preserves its truth across varying contexts.⁸⁹

But here is where we are supposed to get into trouble. Mothersill joins the legions of philosophers who believe that universal generalizations which include *ceteris paribus* clauses are somehow suspect, and anyway, are useless for the purposes of explanation and justification. Indeed, Mothersill acknowledges the possibility of using *ceteris paribus* clauses to solve the problem of aesthetic laws but quickly dismisses them as being of any

⁸⁸ Mary Mothersill, “Critical Reasons,” in *Aesthetics: Contemporary Studies in Aesthetics*, p. 210.

⁸⁹ This will be the lynchpin of my solution to the problem of aesthetic laws, receiving an entire chapter of its own (Chapter Five).

use. Her rejection has three layers. The first is simply her unargued assertion that there are no criterial features in artworks, and that therefore, regardless of how relativized the law, it will nevertheless be false insofar as it relies on criterial features. As this argument assumes as a premise what it is trying to prove (whether or not there are criterial features of artworks) I will not contend with it. The second argument is really more of a complaint. Mothersill wonders why justification in criticism must take the form of a deduction at all,⁹⁰ especially insofar as an open-ended *ceteris paribus* clause would make such a deduction impossible, even were it available—i.e., if I say that p is good by virtue of being q and q works are, *ceteris paribus*, good, unless I can exhaust the range of the *ceteris paribus* clause, that is, make sure that the exceptions it mentions do not obtain in p, I can never complete the deduction.⁹¹

But the real argument comes later in *BR*. It accuses the aesthetic *ceteris paribus* law of being the victim of a dilemma. *Either* it is substantive, explanatory, but false (for example, our aforementioned aesthetic law without its *ceteris paribus* clause) *or* it is true, but is thus somewhat tautological and therefore, neither substantive nor explanatory (as in the law *with* its *ceteris paribus* clause). “...an interesting generalization is easily shown to be false, and the only way of saving it is by transforming it into an uninteresting law, such as

⁹⁰ Mothersill, *Beauty Restored*, p. 89.

⁹¹ This is a standard objection to covering-law models of explanation in the sciences; insofar as virtually all scientific laws will require some sort of CP clause in order to make them true, deductive models of explanation become impossible to implement, since one cannot perform a deduction from an open-ended law. Much more on this in Chapter Five.

‘Gold makes things beautiful if and only if gold is ‘ “appropriate’ .’⁹²

By construing the aesthetic judgment as a judgment of taste, the problems of those committed to this model of judgment and justification become compounded. For the aesthetic law seems to stand as an *a priori* stipulation, governing over matters which are issues of empirical reality. I say that p is a great work [read: it is pleasing] and say that it is so because it is Q, where Q is a good-making feature [read: a feature which pleases]. As the deduction goes, therefore, I start with the observation that p is Q and then, given that Q is a good-making feature, deduce that p must please. But on what basis do we determine that Q is good making, that is, that it pleases? Is this not an empirical matter, whether or not some criterial feature *actually* pleases people?⁹³

This is why Mothersill treats aesthetic laws as “Laws of Taste.” They are supposed to be *inductive* generalizations as to what kinds of features tend to please viewers, listeners and readers, and these generalizations are then the undergirders for the aesthetic principles from which our deductions of particular judgments proceed.⁹⁴ But these laws suffer for reasons similar to, though not identical with, those which damn aesthetic laws not construed as laws of taste. The laws are either lawlike but not predictive or predictive

⁹² Ibid., p. 125.

⁹³ Of course, my question must be read in light of the discussion of Hume and Kant—and my conclusions with regard to them—in the last section.

⁹⁴ As already indicated, such inductive laws of taste are, of course, precisely what Hume talks about in “Of the Standard of Taste.” I have already discussed why I think such laws of taste are hopeless.

and not lawlike. Mothersill makes use of the following example. Suppose she knows from experience that she likes Bach. If she is presented with a concert program, then, which consists of Bach, she can predict on the basis of a generalization rooted in her experience, that she will like the concert. But this generalization is not a “law,” because it does not support the relevant counterfactuals—in a possible world where *Rite of Spring* was written by Bach, the prediction will likely be false. So while the “law” may predict well in this world, it is not a proper law because it will not do so in other possible worlds. On the other side of things, suppose Mothersill identifies those qualities of Bach’s work which she likes, say its regular, highly structured meter, its use of terraced dynamics, and others. The law, then, will say something like “musical works consisting of highly structured meter, terraced dynamics will generally please.” But while this is now lawlike, it will not predict very well. A computer can beep out musical notes, satisfying the constraints in the law, and nevertheless, will likely fail to please.⁹⁵

This discussion of aesthetic laws as laws of taste has largely been for the sake of accuracy in my representation of Mothersill’s views. I believe, however, that I have already exhaustively explored the significant disadvantages of an aesthetic theory that construes the aesthetic judgment as being a judgment of taste, so all the consternation over constructing generalizations which will accurately predict likes and dislikes is irrelevant.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 101-104.

⁹⁶ I should say anyway that any appeal to inductively based laws of taste is inherently positivistic in its attitude about evaluative judgment insofar as it has abandoned any prospect of rational reconstruction, of justification. In replacement of justifying evaluative judgments by appeal to features of the work, we

But on the idea of aesthetic laws taken more generally, Mothersill's objections, when properly distilled, closely mirror the worries about *ceteris paribus* clauses that we find in the philosophy of science. These are serious issues, and they will be taken up in Chapter Five. At the center of the issue are three questions, two of which are corollaries. Does the presence of a *ceteris paribus* clause render a universal generalization insufficiently general so as to be useless for purposes of justification? Does the presence of a *ceteris paribus* clause render a universal generalization tautological or vacuous? Third, of what relevance are issues of lawfulness with regards, specifically, to aesthetic laws? That is, need the universal generalizations of aesthetics have the same qualities as scientific laws in order to do their work?

In closing my analysis of *BR*, it should be pointed out that despite all the huffing and puffing about laws and principles and despite her scolding of the anti-theorists for their insistence on the First Thesis without due respect to the impact that it must have on the Second Thesis, Mothersill commits the very sins of those she castigates. She holds the Second Thesis religiously, all the while disparaging the possibility of aesthetic principles or laws. But she also, in numerous places in *BR*, offers a schematization of criticism, in which—big surprise—we find critics offering reasons, in a justificatory capacity, for their aesthetic judgments. In Chapter Six, Mothersill says, "To claim of a set of judgments...that they are true...is to invite the question of how I know them to be true, or

seek instead to explain, empirically, what features of works tend to make people express approval. This sounds to me, indeed, like a psychologistic, *deflationary* program rather than one which seeks, in the traditional sense, to *justify* aesthetic judgments.

of the grounds I have for believing them.”⁹⁷ She then goes on, for several pages, to describe such a process of the offering of grounds.

...the strength of my conviction about the merits of [Beethoven’s] Op. 59, No. 1, what gives me the confidence to wager that I could convince a skeptical audience...is in part conditioned by beliefs about my own qualifications...I know the quartet pretty well, have listened to it in various performances...I know the tradition in which it figures—well enough.

But whether by a long or shorter route, I get to Op. 59, No. 1: we listen to it, we listen to parts of it; we do a thematic and structural analysis, consider analogues and sources, compare it with quartets by Schubert, and so forth. Suppose that the demonstration proves to be a total flop...I would be disappointed and puzzled: something serious has gone wrong: I have completely misjudged either my own pedagogical skills or the capacities of my audience...Yet in seeking an explanation, there is one hypothesis that I would not consider, namely that Op. 59, No. 1 is, in fact, musically worthless, that, in claiming it to be beautiful, I had simply been mistaken.⁹⁸

I ask Mothersill, as we asked Isenberg: why do you expect these reasons you offer to be of any help in assuring conformity of taste/judgment in the absence of precisely the universal generalizations which you say we cannot have? Without true principles to the effect of “such-and-such characteristics tend to be good-making/inspire approval of taste,” why are you surprised when someone’s tastes deviate from yours? You have not provided any possible basis for predicting/expecting agreement.

Mothersill’s expectations of the critical enterprise are entirely inexplicable, indeed, *fanciful*, given the theoretical apparatus which she permits. Throughout *BR* there is the vague promise that the theory of beauty will bridge the gap between the First and Second

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 157-162.

Theses, but this promise is never even approached, let alone fulfilled. And unlike Isenberg, Mothersill does not see her position for the oxymoronic one that it is and, as a result, opt for anti-transparency; that is, adopt the First Thesis and reject the second. While illuminating and interesting, *BR* is an ultimately frustrating book, offering no answers to the conundrums it constructs.

The simple matter is, one cannot simultaneously hold the First and Second Theses. My transparency about aesthetic judgments—that is, my commitment to the view that aesthetic judgments make straightforwardly objective claims about artobjects—will entail my commitment to the existence of aesthetic laws, that is, to my rejection of the First Thesis.

2.6 Uniqueness

I devote a separate section here to the issue of uniqueness, because it seems a particularly (and peculiarly) Intuitionist fetish. Most anti-transparency theorists and anti-theorists (as Mothersill calls them), of whatever stripe, base their anti-transparency, ultimately, or in part, on their conviction that aesthetic laws or principles are impossible. And most of them agree on the *reasons why* such laws are impossible. They will initially point out that while property P may be the reason why artwork W has aesthetic value, it may also be the reason why artwork A is aesthetically lousy. Therefore, there can be no law or principle of the form,

$(\forall x) (x \text{ is an artwork and } x \text{ is } P \rightarrow x \text{ has esthetic value})$

But, as also discussed, many Intuitionists have another reason why they think aesthetic laws are impossible. This is the reason which I alluded to in section 2.1, under the name of “property nominalism.” This sort of Intuitionist thinks that artobjects are *unique*, but not just unique in the way that, for example, Bach’s *B-Minor Mass* is unique (which, of course, it is). What this type of Intuitionist thinks is that all the aesthetic *properties* of particular artobjects are unique, even those aesthetic properties which it would seem are the kinds that many artobjects can and could potentially share. So, for example, though *being unified* seems to be a property that any number of things might have, when an *artobject* is unified, for some mysterious reason, it and only it can have *that* aesthetic unity. Stated in the abstract, this doctrine seems bizarre, given the way that we normally think of the metaphysics of properties, but consider it as expressed by Bernard Harrison

Bach wished to build in sound an architecture of the spirit...But these sorts of phrases, though they may help us to appreciate Jane Austen and Bach, are useless as bases for judging success or competence, because they are thoroughly particular...Bach may be doing ‘architecture in sound’ but one cannot say that it is good or bad architecture in sound as architecture in sound goes, because that phrase only has meaning in relation to our experience of Bach’s work. Bach’s music is not a ‘good example’ of architecture in sound because it is not an example at all, but the only instance there is.⁹⁹

Treat the architecture in sound in Bach as the property “P”. What Harrison is telling us is that P cannot serve as a justification for our claim that Bach’s work is good, because that justification would have to be grounded in a law or principle which said, at least, that artworks which have P are, *ceteris paribus*, good. We cannot construct such a principle,

⁹⁹ Bernard Harrison, “Some Uses of ‘Good’ in Criticism,” in Francis J. Coleman, ed., *Aesthetics: Contemporary Studies in Aesthetics*, p. 137.

because we cannot generalize over P with the universal quantifier—P (architecture in sound, in this case) is a property which *only* Bach's work has and which cannot be possessed by any other object. Before I really go after this absurd notion, I should point out that once again, Harrison, like Mothersill and Isenberg, wants to have it both ways. P cannot justify my judgment that Bach's work is good, but at the same time, is somehow—"poof!"—supposed to "help me appreciate" Bach's work. But why should I expect P to help make me think that Bach's work is good, if P cannot justify that evaluation or figure in an aesthetic generalization that connects P-ness to good-ness?

This property nominalism explains a lot of the quirky views which the Intuitionists hold. Sibley is obviously appealing to a variation on the theme of property nominalism when he says things like "We say that it [an artwork] is delicate not simply because it is in pale colors but because of *those* pale colors," implying that the delicacy in artworks is not the ordinary kind of delicacy which we find in other things and which *can* be the result of pale color, taken as a property-type, but some other, special kind of delicacy, say, delicacy*.

Isenberg is appealing to property-nominalism when he argues that despite the fact that we use the expression "rising and falling wave" to refer to the property by virtue of which *The Burial of Count Orgaz* is aesthetically good, the *real* property that makes it good is not this normal property-type of being in the shape of a rising and falling wave, but rather, some other kind of rising and falling contour, unique to the *Burial of Count Orgaz*, and so defiant of generalization, that there can't even be an English predicate which refers to it by virtue of that predicate's content.

Intuitions about property-nominalism are also the reason why Intuitionists like Sibley and Isenberg are so obsessed with the notion that aesthetic judgments can only be made and more importantly, *understood*, in the presence of the artwork in question. And this leads to the consequence that I discussed earlier; taking art history courses, learning about aesthetic genres and types, and relating particular works to others which share their aesthetic types, winds up being *useless* in terms of helping us to understand and produce aesthetic judgments. For to merely read about, or discuss a work, in absentia from it, is to communicate or comprehend by means of predication, and predication is of normal properties, not these strange nominalistic ones. And to learn about a work's typological cousins—for example, learning about Renoir's work when studying the delicacy of a particular work by Pissaro—is to no avail, at least not in terms of helping one to understand and make judgments about the Pissaro, for none of the aesthetic properties in the Renoirs are generalizable to the Pissaro and vice versa.

There are never any arguments offered to explain why this property-nominalism makes any sense, and there is never any explanation as to why, if such comparisons and generalizations are so useless, critics make use of them *all the time*. But regardless of the lack of substantial arguments for property nominalism, on the part of its proponents, I want to offer a few arguments for why I think property nominalism is a preposterous concept.

To begin with, property-nominalism is straightforwardly, empirically, *false*. I like

Harrison's description of Bach's building an architecture of spirit in his music; this invokes the wonderful way in which Baroque music, and especially, Baroque religious oratorio, through its intricate and strictly metrical form, combined with sweet, pure, soaring voices, especially in chorus, conveys a deep feeling of spirituality as well as a sense of pristine beauty, a *mélange* of divine sweetness and order. But this "architecture of sound" is a good description of much of Handel's religious work as well as Bach's, and there are moments in Purcell which invite a similar analysis. So, not only is it false that "architecture in sound" is a property unique to Bach's work, but it would seem to me that our ability to ascribe this property to the work of other composers is a key ingredient to our comprehension of Baroque music, and specifically, our understanding of what is so particularly wonderful about it in relation to later periods in music. And, *contra* Harrison, it is precisely for the purpose of justifying aesthetic judgments about Baroque music such as Bach's, that we would bother to offer such a description. Why else, for heaven's sake, would we bother to use the expression?

But property nominalism is also logically incoherent. What, after all, does it really come down to? The argument is that aesthetic properties, because they are not property-types—that is, properties which can be exemplified by more than one individual—cannot figure into universal generalizations which ascribe them, through a variable, to the entire universe of entities. Thus, they cannot figure into aesthetic laws or principles, which take the form of universal generalizations.

Let's stick with "architecture in sound" as our nominalistic property. Consider the following sentences:

1. G.F. Handel's *Messiah*, through its masterful architecture in sound, combined with the purity of its voices, conveys the deep spirituality behind the story of Christ.
2. One way in which later periods of music differ from the Baroque is in the way they begin to move away from strict metrical rhythm. A consequence of this, is that the beauty of these works cannot rest in a pure architecture in sound, which characterizes so much of Baroque music.

The property nominalist owes us an explanation as to just what is wrong with these sentences. It's all very well to bark "property nominalism!" and assert that "architecture in sound" can only be found in Bach's work, in a gush of uniqueness-intuitions, but the obvious semantic propriety of these sentences places the burden of proof on the property nominalist. If the property nominalist is correct, then the occurrences of "architecture in sound" in 1. and 2. either do not refer—and therefore, these sentences must be semantically incomplete, and thus, do not express any coherent proposition—or each refer to a separate, different, unique property, and thus, are not talking about the same property. To this, I (and every competent English speaker) must say, *rubbish!* All the instances of "architecture in sound" refer—both sentences are semantically complete, with truth-conditions—and in both sentences, "architecture in sound" refers to the same property-type; their truth lies in the fact that in both cases, the possession of one and the same property—architecture in sound—is the truth maker of each sentence.

But let's even restrict ourselves to "architecture in sound" as used to describe Bach's

work and Bach's work alone:

3. J.S. Bach's *Magnificat* is beautiful in part because of its great architecture in sound.

To what does the occurrence of "architecture in sound" refer in this sentence? According to the property nominalist, to the property of having a sonic architecture, *nominalistically construed*. O.k., what does "architecture in sound" *mean*—that is, what is its *semantic content*? Without any claims as to the *import* of Carnapian meaning postulates in a theory of meaning, can we at least agree that from 3. we can infer the following,

4. J.S. Bach's *Magnificat* is beautiful in part because of its great structure of sound. because of the following meaning postulate,

5. $(\forall x) (x \text{ has an architecture} \rightarrow x \text{ has structure})$

and thus, because of the truth of

6. $(\forall x) (x \text{ has architecture in sound} \rightarrow x \text{ has structure in sound})?$

But all this should be impossible on the property nominalist's view. I should not be able to sanction the analytic entailment from 3., represented in 4., because "architecture in sound" does not refer to a normal property, and therefore, cannot figure in any universal generalization, meaning postulate or otherwise. The problem is, if we cannot even form a Carnapian meaning-postulate for a term or concept, then I fear that that term or concept must be utterly unstable and incoherent. For when I ask the property nominalist what "architecture in sound" *means*, his answer will entail a set of meaning-postulates which will allow us to make analytic inferences from any sentence including that term. When I am told that this term cannot occur in any universal generalization, what this tells me is

that I can give no answer to the question “what does it mean?” I wonder, then, how the term or concept can exist at all, and specifically, how it can be used meaningfully in any context. Property nominalism is just plain incoherent as a theory about properties, and specifically, as a theory about *predicates*, the lexical units which refer to properties.

As we close this chapter and this section of the dissertation, let it suffice to say that Intuitionism gets just about everything in aesthetics wrong. It wrongly assumes that aesthetic concepts can admit of no conditions, necessary, sufficient, or otherwise, for their application, and thus, appeals to mysterious faculties of intuition for their comprehension and application. It wrongly assumes that aesthetic properties are a weird sort of entity, utterly dissimilar from all the other properties which exist in the universe, and that therefore, reference to these properties cannot occur through the ordinary mechanism of attributive reference, and comparison of one artwork with another is pointless for the purpose of understanding either. The totality of Intuitionism’s wrongheaded assumptions, plus worries about the untoward effects of *ceteris paribus* clauses, leads to the claim that aesthetic principles and laws are impossible and the overarching result is that the possibility of straightforward justification for aesthetic judgments is eviscerated. This fact is what leads honest Intuitionists to anti-transparency about aesthetic judgments, the stalking horse of this dissertation.

I move on now to the positive half of this investigation, where I will lay out my own theory of the nature of art, aesthetic judgment, and the justification of aesthetic judgments.

Chapter Three: The Ontology of Artobjects

3.1 The Philosophical Impact of the Readymades: Danto and the Transfiguration of the Commonplace

Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* (Fig. 1—1917) is a urinal, inscribed with the name “R. Mutt”. Duchamp sent the urinal to the Society of Independent Artists exhibition in New York in 1917, where it caused enough uproar to be screened off from the rest of the display (although not enough to be removed.) Thus was born the “Readymades,” objects purported to be works of art by those who presented them and which, beyond defying paradigms of beauty—already breached as early as Goya and Gericault—and conventions of representation—already violated by the Impressionists and post-Impressionists—thumbed their noses at what was seen to be the barest condition for an object's acquiring art-status; that it should have at least *been made by the artist*. The Readymade, whose initial manufacturing was for distinctly non-art purposes, challenged the very notion of what was art and what was not, and scores of critics were quick to clamor that those like Duchamp had gone to far, and that artistic innovation had resulted in works, which, whatever they were, were not works of art.

That artists should challenge prevailing conventions in their work and thus receive the scorn of the critical establishments of their times is a not uncommon theme in art history.

That critics should, beyond scorn, claim that the work of such radicals is, indeed, not art at

all, is also nothing new; the notion that the accusation of a radical work's not being art is unique to the evaluation of the work of Duchamp and other Dadaists is a mistake. Negative aesthetic criticism—accusations that a work is “bad art”—and demotion from ontological status—accusation that a work is “not art at all”—have often mixed together in the mouths of critics. J.M.W. Turner's remarkable work, for example, which anticipated many of the innovations of Impressionism more than thirty years prior to its emergence, was considered by many of the critics of his time to be no better than “...canvases smeared with coffee grounds...not artworks at all, properly speaking.”¹⁰⁰ The art of the pre-Impressionists, Corot's in particular, was heavily criticized as involving “clumsy execution.” Charles Baudelaire, in his review of the Salon of 1845, describes how critics “...after having conscientiously admired and faithfully praised a picture by Corot...always end by declaring that it comes to grief in its execution; they agree in this, that decidedly M. Corot does not know how to paint.”¹⁰¹ And while Baudelaire himself admired Corot, he had plenty of poison to dish out to an equally important pre-Impressionist, Jean-François Millet, of whose work, Baudelaire said,

[P]art of the ridicule which I directed against M. Ingres's pupils sticks to him [Millet]. For 'style' has been his disaster. His peasants are pedants who have too high an opinion of themselves. They display a kind of dark and fatal boorishness, which makes me want to hate them...Instead of simply distilling the natural poetry of his subject, M. Millet wants to add something to it at any price. In their monotonous ugliness, all these little pariahs have a pretentiousness which is

¹⁰⁰ Marx Wartofsky supplied this gem in his “Art, Artworlds, and Ideology,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, xxx, xxx, p. 242.

¹⁰¹ Charles Baudelaire, *Art in Paris 1845-1862: Reviews of Salons & Other Exhibitions*, tr. Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon Press, Ltd., 1965), p. 24.

philosophic, melancholy and Raphaelesque.¹⁰²

The collision of “bad art” assertions with accusations of “not art” have also worked in reverse, that is from the position of the radical, once he has become entrenched, against what would have been called traditional in a prior time. Clive Bell’s critiques of representational art, and in particular, Pre-Raphaelite art come to mind.¹⁰³ Bell, an admirer of primitive art and of Western abstraction, in the work of painters like Cezanne and Picasso, was convinced that art at essence was nothing but “significant form.” Representation, according to Bell, is not only irrelevant to the aesthetic quality of a work, but is typically a hindrance to it. Any characteristic of a work which distracts from the perception of its significant form or which betrays, on the part of the artist, interests other than the presentation of significant form, play against its quality and indeed, its ontological status as art. For Bell, there is no bad art, only art—which is always good in some respect—and non-art, which may be good (on non-aesthetic grounds) or not good (on any grounds). The following quotations are indicative of Bell’s attitudes on these matters,

The hypothesis that significant form is the essential quality in a work of art has at least one merit...it does help to explain things. We are all familiar with pictures that interest us and excite our admiration, but do not move us as works of art. To this class belongs what I call “Descriptive Painting”—that is, painting in which forms are used not as objects of emotion, but as means of suggesting emotion or conveying information. Portraits of psychological and historical value, topographical works, pictures that tell stories and suggest situations, illustrations

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 195.

¹⁰³ Bell referred to Pre-Raphaelite art as “...a sermon at a tea-party” and went on to say that “What painters have to do is not convey sentiments about morals and religion, but to create forms which have an emotional significance of their own...The Pre-Raphaelites...took little joy in seeing, and less in the problems of plastic expression; they had neither pride of the eye nor a lust of paint.” These remarks from Bell’s *Landmarks in Nineteenth-Century Painting* (London, 1927), are reprinted in Malcolm Warner, *The Victorians: British Painting 1837-1901* (Washington D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1996).

of all sorts, belong to this class...According to my hypothesis, they are not works of art.¹⁰⁴

There must be some one quality without which a work of art cannot exist: possessing which, in the least degree, no work is altogether worthless.¹⁰⁵

Art is above morals, or, rather, all art is moral because, as I hope to show presently, works of art are immediate means to good. Once we have judged a thing a work of art, we have judged it ethically of the first importance and put it beyond the reach of the moralist.¹⁰⁶

What separates the reaction to Dada, however—and to the Readymades in particular—from all these other instances of critics reacting to radical works with the exclamation “Not art!” is the seriousness and *literal* nature of the accusation. Putting Bell aside for the moment—whose assertions about the non-art status of descriptive art do seem to be meant literally and are hard to take seriously—when critics have accused something of “not being art,” the criticism has typically had the force of an evaluation, rather than a literal ontological demotion. Turner, after all, was a painter, and he was doing what other painters of that time—John Constable, in particular—were doing, namely, painting landscapes, seascapes, and townscapes. What was different was the *way* he did it, and it was a way which many critics found repulsive. Their accusation of “Not art!” speaks more to the depth of their dislike for Turner’s work than to a serious conviction that what he was doing was, literally speaking, not art.

With works like Duchamp’s *Fountain* and Rauschenberg’s *Bed*, however, the claim that

¹⁰⁴ Clive Bell, *Art* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1958); p. 22.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

they are not art seems, intuitively, far more serious. Such charges in the case of the Readymades, while certainly containing a good deal of critical scorn, seem to go beyond a merely hyperbolic exclamation of aesthetic disdain. For the makers of the Readymades, unlike Turner, were *not* doing what everyone else was doing. Among the contemporaries of Duchamp were Gustav Klimt, Wassily Kandinsky, Max Beckmann, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, and Pablo Picasso. These giants were still painting—albeit in a way as different from those who preceded them as Turner did—and Picasso, with artists such as Constantin Brancusi, were sculpting as well, though again, in radically different ways than the previous generation’s master, Auguste Rodin.¹⁰⁷ But the Readymade was a far greater departure from the contemporary scene than any other radical artistic innovation. For the artist who presented the Readymade had not even made it himself, but rather, simply acquired it as anyone else might acquire such an object; by going to a store and purchasing it. So, it was not that the critics found the Readymades ugly, of an “unfinished” appearance, or too representational. Rather, they wondered whether something not even made by an artist, something that could just be picked up at a bathroom-fittings or furniture shop, could, with any legitimacy, be called “art,” for a minimal constraint on being art, one would think, is that the object in question at least be made by an artist. This seems a very commonsensical and intuitive ontological position, and not just a coded expression of aesthetic disapproval.

¹⁰⁷ Duchamp himself was a painter, working in various styles including Futurism (see, for example, his *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2*, (1912)), but he is most remembered for his Dadaist work and in particular, his Readymades.

The Readymades, then, forced, in the strongest possible way, something which had never seriously been forced before, the issue of just what art *is*. Yes, philosophers since Plato had been proposing ontological theories for art, but the *extension* of “art” was generally agreed upon. It was just a matter of figuring out by virtue of what characteristics the objects which fell under the concept of art did so. But the Readymades called into question the extension of “art” itself, arguing, implicitly, that the set of artobjects (and of possible artobjects) is far larger than had previously been thought, and that accordingly the characteristics which philosophers of art had been investigating as candidates for determining the membership of an object within this set were way off the mark. For these philosophers had assumed that the extension of art was relatively fixed and thus, the characteristics which they examined were drawn from this set of objects. But once the Readymades are included within the category of art, the notion that any of these characteristics could be essential to an object’s being art becomes impossible.¹⁰⁸

Inspired, as they are, by the Readymades and by similar innovations in Pop-Art, such as

¹⁰⁸ Not every art historian takes the Readymades as having such serious implications. No less an art historian than E.H. Gombrich said of Dada,

It was certainly the wish of these artists to become as little children and to cock a snook at the solemnity and pomposity of Art with a capital A. It is not difficult to understand these sentiments, but it has always seemed to me a little incongruous to record, analyse and teach such gestures of ‘anti-art’ with the very solemnity, not to say pomposity, they had set out to ridicule and abolish.

E.H. Gombrich, *The Story of Art*, 16th Edition (London: Phaidon Press, Ltd., 1995), p. 601. I think that this analysis underestimates the significance of the Readymades, regardless of the fact that it may be correct with regard to the Dadaists stated intentions. It is not unusual for a work to have a far greater impact than an artist anticipates.

Warhol's *Brillo Boxes*, the thought experiments involving twins-cases in Arthur Danto's *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* are the best place to begin any ontological investigation into art. *Fountain*, after all, is a twins case itself, as it invites the question, "what distinguishes Duchamp's urinal, the artwork, from phenomenally identical urinal untouched by Duchamp?" Functioning, as they do, as guides which direct us away from one type of identity-conditions for artworks and towards another, we can conclude, on the basis of these thought experiments, that any theory which attempts to distinguish artworks from other sorts of objects on the basis of inherent or phenomenal properties must fail, for any such theory must fail to account for the possibility of identical twins, one of which is an artwork and the other which is not. This conclusion entails another; that some sort of *relational* treatment of the identity conditions for artworks is where the answers to the ontological questions in aesthetics must lie.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ These are the conclusions which Jerry Fodor draws in his excellent analysis of Danto's work. Fodor says,

By definition, the possibility of a twin case with respect to some property *P* shows that two things that are, to all appearances, things of the same kind may nevertheless differ in respect of *P*: and this difference may be 'hidden:' it may fail to reveal itself even to close scrutiny. How could this be so? The obvious suggestion is that if there can be twins with respect to *P*, then *P* must be a relational property. I will take it for granted that being an artwork is a relational property. The question then arises: which relational property is it?

Jerry Fodor, "Deja vu All Over Again: How Danto's Aesthetics Recapitulates the Philosophy of Mind," in Mark Rollins, ed., *Danto And His Critics* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1993), p. 42.

There is, of course, one other type of solution which has been offered for twins cases such as these, and it is the one to which Hilary Putnam ultimately makes use of in "The Meaning of 'Meaning'"—perhaps, whether or not an object has *P* is a matter of its micro-structure. This is what separates water from twin-water in Putnam's article. Regarding this proposal as a possible solution of twins cases in the domain of art, Fodor says in a footnote (with which I entirely concur),

Another possibility is that whether a thing has *P* is determined by its

Twins cases have a venerable history in philosophy, entirely distinct from their artistic instances—most famously, perhaps, in Wittgenstein’s discussion of the difference between my hand raising and raising my hand—and, as Noël Carroll points out, many of the major questions in the history of philosophy can be recast in terms of cases of indiscernible twins. The problem of the metaphysics of cause and effect can be reformulated in terms of trying to distinguish between two indiscernible cases, one in which we have mere constant conjunction, and the other where we have necessary connection. The epistemological problem of our knowledge of the external world can be characterized in terms of trying to distinguish between coherent and realistic dreams on the one hand and their indiscernible counterpart, our experience—awake—of the external world.¹¹⁰ These twins cases have a similar kind of usefulness in ethics and aesthetics,

A central problem in moral theory concerns demarcating acts of prudence from acts of morality, where the observable actions in question—say, making the correct change—look exactly alike (Kant). And, perhaps, needless to say, for Danto, the philosophy of art begins when we can imagine two objects—say, Duchamp’s *Fountain* and a urinal—which, though to all appearances identical, are nevertheless such that one is an artwork and the other is not.¹¹¹

microstructure. Hence Putnam’s widely discussed example in which one but not the other of two superficially indistinguishable substance is actually water. I assume that the artwork case is not of this kind. What determines that this twin is water and that one merely fools-water is that only this twin is H₂O. But whether a twin is an artwork isn’t, surely, a matter of its chemical analysis.

Ibid., p. 53.

¹¹⁰ Noël Carroll, “Essence, Expression, and History,” in Rollins, ed., *Danto And His Critics*, pp. 80-81. Carroll’s piece, in addition to offering this remarkable reconfiguration of the history of philosophy in terms of twins-cases, provides the finest exegesis of Danto’s ontological views on artworks. Danto, in the “Responses and Replies” section of *Danto And His Critics*, agrees.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 81.

Not everyone, however, takes Danto's cases to have the theoretical force which both Carroll and I have attributed to them. Richard Wollheim, for example, thinks that the indiscernibility Danto talks about is impossible, that once all the facts are in, beyond the surface appearance of the objects in question, the previously indistinguishable twins will become discernibly different. Danto's cases, then, insofar as they provide only a superficial sort of twins-scenario, cannot possibly have the ontological weight which they are supposed to carry. Wollheim says,

My claim is, that even if Danto is not wrong in the result that he thinks that the experiment gives, he is wrong, and profoundly so, in that he supposes that the experiment gives a more conclusive result than, in the nature of things, it ever could...

What seems to me impossible, except in a one-off way, is that there should be pairs of this sort that, ultimately, or when all the information is in, cannot be told apart. That, I claim, would transgress the assumptions of art: in particular, it would transgress the assumption that an object made by an artist out of some set of appropriate materials will bear the imprint of his intention.¹¹²

Clearly, then, a good hard look at Danto's cases (or at least some of them) is in order.

I will focus on Danto's example—introduced at the beginning of *Transfiguration of the Commonplace*—involving an imaginary exhibition of perceptually identical red canvases.

There are many other twins cases throughout the book, each designed to bring out specific distinctions which Danto wishes to make and to show all the different aesthetic features of artworks which individuate on a basis other than perceptibility, but most of the essential ontological and interpretive points can be teased out of the example of the exhibition with

¹¹² Richard Wollheim, "Danto's Gallery of Indiscernibles," in Rollins, ed., *Danto And His Critics*, pp. 31 & 35.

the red squares, so I will mainly discuss this case.

The first painting in the exhibition is an entirely red canvas entitled “The Israelites Crossing the Red Sea,” and the explanation for the unusual presentation of this historical subject is that the picture represents a point in the story *after* the Israelites had already crossed over and the Egyptians had been drowned by God. As it appears that this painting was once mentioned by Søren Kierkegaard, Danto has us imagine a second painting in the exhibition, another red square, identical to the first, but this time, a psychological portrait by a Danish portraitist, with the title, “Kierkegaard’s mood.” Rounding out the exhibition are several more paintings consisting entirely of identically red canvases: (3) a “clever bit of Moscow landscape” called, fittingly enough, “Red Square”; (4) a minimalist work with the same title, “Red Square”; (5) a metaphysical, Hindu-inspired work, called, “Nirvana”; (6) a still-life, painted by an embittered disciple of Matisse and obviously a dig at the famous *Harmony in Red*, entitled “Red Table Cloth”; (7) a red canvas, prepared by Giorgione, in order to paint his never-realized masterpiece, “Conversazione Sacra”; and finally, (8) a canvas which managed to get itself painted an identical red by who-knows-whom and for who-knows-what reason, which is not a work of art, but merely stands at the end of the exhibition.¹¹³

The catalogue for this rather boring exhibition—at least, perceptually speaking—would be finished but for one more entry, this time by an artist named “J.” J., as it turns out, is one

¹¹³ Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*, pp. 1-2.

of those wretched people entranced by a dismal sort of egalitarianism that eschews hierarchical distinctions of every sort, and he is outraged that the last canvas in the exhibition has been demoted out of art-status, merely because of its anonymous background. To express his outrage, J. paints up another identical red canvas, naming it “Untitled,” and demands that it be exhibited. After some reluctance, but in the face of J.’s earnest declaration that this ninth work is indeed a work of art, “Untitled” is admitted.¹¹⁴

The catalogue complete, it is now time to ask what the implications are. Danto does not always draw explicit conclusions in *Transfiguration of the Commonplace*—rather, he lays out the various thought experiments and with a running commentary indicates, often indirectly, what he takes to be their ontological and interpretive consequences. But we know, from his other writings, especially *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art* and *Beyond the Brillo Box*, what Danto takes these cases to show. Since we can have pairs of indiscernible twins, one which is an artwork, the other which is not, we know that what makes something art cannot be something intrinsic to the object in question, but must, instead, reside in its *external* relations, either to its creator, a community of present and past creators, a combination of both, or, broader still, to an “artworld,” which includes not only the creator and a community of past and present creators, but also critics, museum and gallery owners, etc.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 2-3.

¹¹⁵ I’m sure that for many, the temptation to cry “Not art!” in response to these fictional cases is as strong as it is for many critics of real color-field painting. And there is a sense in which, if someone really wants to dig in their heels and reject the ontological significance (or even the art-

This is why many have interpreted Danto's thought experiments, as well as his "artworld" locutions (which, by now, he probably regrets ever having used), as constituting an argument for what is known as the "Institutional Theory of Art." Indeed, none other than George Dickie—the Godfather of the Institutional Theory—took Danto's first efforts in this direction, in an influential 1964 *Journal of Philosophy* piece,¹¹⁶ as an inspiration for his own version of the Institutional Theory, a connection which has subsequently been dropped. Danto denies that he ever was an Institutional theorist, and Dickie claims that he mistakenly interpreted Danto as being one. Dickie also accuses Danto (and everyone else, for that matter, who has commented on the many implausibilities of the Institutional Theory) of misinterpreting his own Institutional Theory, one which, on Dickie's reconstruction, begins to look more and more like Danto's non-Institutional, but nevertheless artworld-laden, account. The whole back-and-forth reads a bit like a

status) of *Fountain*, *Bed*, or *Brillo Boxes*, in addition to color-field painting and other such radical innovations, there is not much that can be said to persuade him of the relevance of Danto's thought experiments. I would point out, however, that for a critic to take such a stance is to significantly oppose the vast majority of critical opinion. The creators of these works certainly acted as if they were art, and critics and art historians have responded as if they were art. In other words, these works seem to occupy a coherent place in the critical/art-historical enterprise.

For a philosopher to take such a position seems particularly strange, since he must realize that issues of identity and ontology always cut according to tough cases, not easy ones. (Unlike good law, good ontology is made on the basis of tough cases.) For example, the relevant cases in the issue of the metaphysics of natural kinds and the semantics of natural-kind terms are *aberrant* members of natural kinds—such as albino tigers, non-yellow lemons, and water which consists of a chemical compound other than H₂O—not normal instances (See Hilary Putnam, "The Meaning of 'Meaning'" and "Is Semantics Possible?" and Saul Kripke, *Naming and Necessity*, Lecture III). Likewise, characterization of the "art kind" must proceed from difficult cases such as *Fountain*, not easy ones like Raphael's *Disputa*.

¹¹⁶ Arthur Danto, "The Artworld," *Journal of Philosophy* Vol. 61, No. 19, 1964.

comedy,¹¹⁷ but nevertheless, the Institutional Theory (IT) presented such an important break with past theories of art, that is essential that we discuss it in some detail.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ First, Dickie's remarks on Danto.

In his paper ['The Artworld Revisited: Comedies of Similarity'], Danto goes to some lengths to deny any responsibility for my institutional theory of art...but I realized some time ago that his theory and my theory are not as closely related as I thought they were in the beginning...It turns out that the things Danto has in mind as the artworld and what I understand the artworld to be are very different sorts of things.

In his paper, Danto gives a summary account of what he takes my institutional theory of art to be and then quite correctly shows that the view he summarizes is badly wrong. It is no wonder that he wants to disclaim any paternal responsibility...Fortunately for me the view that Danto refutes is not my view or even one that I ever entertained as a possibility.

George Dickie, "A Tale of Two Artworlds," in Rollins, ed., *Danto And His Critics*, pp. 73-74.

Now, Danto's remarks on Dickie,

...there is already a tale of two artworlds in my own writing, neither of which, as Dickie argues, answers to *his* artworld, which is a "structure of roles within which artists create art." I think Dickie would concede that even if this is his view, it is not the one widely attributed to him by his admirers and critics, who suppose him to have said that being an artwork is a status conferred on an object...Dickie's reconsidered institutional theory is certainly a lot closer to the institutional factors I have in mind... but it is no closer to a theory of what *makes* art.

Arthur Danto, "Responses and Replies," in Rollins, ed., p. 204.

¹¹⁸ Dickie's version of IT is also, I think, plagued with difficulties that Danto's theory avoids, and so the delineation of Dickie's IT from what I take to be the theory implied by Danto's account of indiscernibles is of key importance, since it is Danto's theory, more than Dickie's, which provides the inspiration for my own ontology of art.

3.2 Institutions and Status: The Institutional Theory of Art

As Noël Carroll's work has been so outstanding in so many other areas of aesthetics, I intend to make liberal use of it here as well, particularly his "Beauty and the Genealogy of Art Theory,"¹¹⁹ where he discusses the history of analytic philosophy of art as it stood prior to the advent of IT, as well as the circumstances which led to IT.

Aesthetic theories in the analytic tradition since, at least, Hume have treated the artobject as having, at its core, *one* purpose; appealing to an art consumer's aesthetic taste, or as it sometimes referred to in the literature, the production of an "aesthetic experience."¹²⁰

This is a distinct thesis from the claim that the aesthetic *judgment* is concerned primarily with taste—discussed exhaustively in Chapter Two—although the two are intimately linked (if the experience of an art object is construed as a phenomenological one, an appeal to taste, then of course the most natural reading of the judgment which results from such an encounter is that it is a judgment of taste). This aesthetic experience was construed primarily—although Clive Bell is a notable exception—as the experience of beauty in the artobject, and it was taken to have two general characteristics that are

¹¹⁹ Noël Carroll, "Beauty and the Genealogy of Art Theory," *The Philosophical Forum*, Vol. 22, No. 4, 1991; pp. 307-334.

¹²⁰ The tradition *prior* to Kant also included thinkers of this stripe—Hume and Hutcheson both saw the primary function of the artobject as a stimulator of taste—but if we go back further we find another dominant strain, originating in Plato, that the purpose of art is fundamentally mimetic. Indeed, Plato saw in the mimetic purpose of art a fundamental danger to civil society and, in particular, to the proper upbringing of its youth. If young people are exposed, for example, to too many fictional tragedies, especially good ones, their ability to understand real tragedy (and indeed whatever other human emotions and conditions are "mimicked") is necessarily blunted. See Plato, *Republic*, book X.

interrelated: (1) That it is a fundamentally disinterested experience, one to which the purpose, usefulness (or lack thereof), history, political implications, or meaning of the object in question is irrelevant¹²¹; (2) it is an experience which stems solely from the perceptible or formal qualities of the object, and in which, again, history, politics, morals—indeed, all varieties of meaning—play no part.

Such a construal of our experience of beauty is fundamentally perceptual and non-cognitive (in the sense of appealing to the understanding rather than the perceptual faculties¹²²); indeed, it treats the essence of our aesthetic experience of an object as being centered around what are actually its most superficial—or better, *surface*—qualities. One might wonder, given contemporary perceptual psychology's treatment of perception as essentially cognitive, why these theories so starkly contrast perception with cognition.¹²³ They are, as we have already discussed, a remnant of Empiricist epistemology. The apprehension of beauty in an object is supposed to be like our experience of color, one of the so-called “secondary” qualities, which does not really reside in the object itself, but is instead a function of our perception of the object's primary qualities.¹²⁴ A person's seeing

¹²¹ Here, of course, we are talking about the Kantian and “Bellian” conception of disinterestedness, not the one that I discussed in Chapter Two.

¹²² See section 2.3 for my (short) discussion of the difference between “the understanding” and the perceptual faculties.

¹²³ Descartes is, indeed, the precursor of this treatment of perception as an active rather than a passive process, construing it as a form of judgment in *Meditations* Two and Four, while Kant was perhaps its most mature philosophical advocate in the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

¹²⁴ Recall this remark from “Of the Standard of Taste,”

red, on such an account, is treated, again, as follows: there exists a physical object, which consists entirely of a certain mass, extended in space and disposed to motion, such that when light reflects off this object and strikes our eyes, it results in a “redish” sensation. Likewise, in the art case, there exists some object, consisting, say, of a particular organization of colors, textures, and lines, such that when the light hits it and reflects into our eyes, we have a sensation of beauty. In Hutcheson’s case, it is objects which possess “uniformity amidst variety” that cause this sensation of beauty.¹²⁵ For Bell, who dispenses with beauty, it is an object’s “significant form” which causes us to have a sensation of aesthetic worthiness, or an “aesthetic experience.” For Hutcheson and other theoreticians of beauty and taste, such as Kant, these conclusions about the relationship of the art consumer to beauty and of beauty to the artobject were not treated as having ontological implications. But for Bell, the theory of significant form and taste collide with ontology. For Bell, an artobject just *is* an object with significant form that appeals to our aesthetic taste,

...no sentiment represents what is really in the object. It only marks a certain conformity of relation between the object and the organs or faculties of the mind; and if that conformity did not really exist, the sentiment could never possibly have being. Beauty is no quality in things themselves: It exists merely in the mind which contemplates them...

Hume, “Of the Standard of Taste,” p. 230.

¹²⁵ Expanding on the empiricist psychology of Locke, he [Hutcheson] regards beauty as a sensation, one for which we have a faculty of reception, viz., the faculty of taste. What kind of a sensation is it? Most importantly, it is an immediate and disinterested sensation of pleasure. What causes this sensation? Objects that possess the compound property of uniformity amidst variety.

Carroll, “Beauty and the Genealogy of Art Theory,” p. 312.

For a discussion of aesthetics, it need be agreed only that forms arranged and combined according to certain unknown and mysterious laws do move us in a particular way, and that it is the business of an artist so to combine and arrange them that they shall move us.

There must be some one quality without which a work of art cannot exist; possessing which, in the least degree, no work is altogether worthless. What is this quality?...Only one answer seems possible—significant form. In each, lines and colours combined in a particular way, certain forms and relations of forms, stir our aesthetic emotions. These relations and combinations of lines and colours, these aesthetically moving forms, I call “Significant Form”; and “Significant Form” is the one quality common to all works of visual art.¹²⁶

One can understand why Bell should have abandoned the notion that it is the experience of beauty that characterizes the aesthetic experience, for art history had proceeded to a point at which one could no longer tenably hold such a thesis without leaving out a whole lot of art. As I have discussed in Chapter Two and earlier in this chapter, to take beauty as the fundamental property in aesthetics is either to leave out our experience of scores of artworks by painters such as Goya, Gericault, Kirchner, Dix, and Bacon (not to mention scores of films) or to expand the definition of “beauty” to the point where it just means “aesthetic value” (and to the point, thus, where we have abandoned beauty as the primary property in aesthetics). But beyond this, even if this use of “beauty” is not controversial in the way that I assert, as we look at art from the Impressionists to the post-Impressionists, German Expressionists, and then the abstract artists—and I’m thinking primarily of those like Braque, Picasso, and Kandinsky and the pure abstraction of some of the Abstract Expressionists—the notion that it is the *beauty* of these works that is of central interest becomes increasingly difficult to support. Bell’s “significant form” and “aesthetic experience” are thus far more conducive to a taste-theorist confronted with modern art,

¹²⁶ Clive Bell, *Art*, pp. 17 & 19.

than “uniformity amidst variety” and “beauty.”

But Bell shares the view with his predecessors that our experience of art is fundamentally non-cognitive (in my specified sense), apolitical, and ahistorical, a view in which a knowledge of art history, intellectual and cultural history, and political and economic history become irrelevant in the experience, interpretation, and criticism of works of art. And while this view is indeed highly questionable—the notion that one can, as a *critic*, properly approach late Gothic art without an understanding of Christian humanism seems preposterous—it can be sustained so long as the art in question *does* possess the formal and phenomenal qualities that the “beauty-and-significant form-theorists” (hereafter “B&SF”) claim produces the aesthetic experience that is supposed to exhaust our encounter with it. So long as history was serving up Jan van Eyck, Titian, Rembrandt, Poussin, and the like, there were, in a sense, enough properties to go around, such that the works which would be deemed great by critics interested in extra-formal features such as historical or religious significance and meaning would also be deemed so by the B&SF theorists.¹²⁷ But when the history of art produces works that do not possess such formal

¹²⁷ Even this is not necessarily so clear. B&SF theorists are so narrow in their conception of what counts in art that the result is often the most absurd—even philistine—sort of criticism. Consider the following critical remarks by Bell.

In Europe we watch art sinking, by slow degrees, from the thrilling design of Ravenna to the tedious portraiture of Holland, while the grand proportion of Romanesque and Norman architecture becomes Gothic juggling in stone and glass. Before the late noon of the Renaissance art was almost extinct. Only nice illusionists and masters of craft abounded...

...The bulk, however, of those who flourished between the High Renaissance and the contemporary movement may be divided into two

and phenomenal qualities, or art which has no intention of producing any sort of aesthetic experience or sense of beauty whatsoever, the BS&F crowd must either choke on it or cry “Not Art!”

A philosophy of art and criticism which cannot handle the works that actually arise in the history of art—and which purports to tell the artists who make that history that what they are doing is not art, because what they are doing violates the dictates of the theory—is a philosophy of the most inferior and least plausible sort. Art comes first. The theory comes second, and it tries to deal with the phenomena which confronts it, to organize them, systematize them, explain them, and generally make sense of them. One does not start with the theory and then attempt to decide what counts as the phenomena. The way in which B&SF theorists like Bell shout “Not Art!” at works which do not conform to what they have antecedently decided characterizes art seems a lot like those 17th century clergymen who purported to tell Galileo that the earth did not orbit the sun because given their theory of the universe, it simply could not.¹²⁸ Generally speaking, non-first-order philosophical disciplines, e.g. philosophies *of* science, art, language, must follow, not

classes, virtuosi and dunces.

Bell, p. 36.

The philistinism of such criticism speaks for itself—to characterize Hals’s or Rembrandt’s portraits as “tedious” and to claim that Chartres or Saint Chapelle consist of a “juggling of stone and glass” seems incredible—but given that what Bell counts as relevant to art is so narrow, he is forced by his theory to such conclusions. I will talk a lot more about criticism and the constraints on it in Chapter Four.

¹²⁸ The point I am making here derives from the well-hashed principle of logic that the existence of something entails its possibility and its non-impossibility.

precede the first-order disciplines that they are philosophies of. It would be of no use, after all, for René Descartes to protest that what physicists study today are not really physical objects, since they do not conform to his conception of matter (neutrinos, after all, lack mass), and it is equally useless—though not, by any means, perceived as such by all philosophers—for W.V. Quine to tell linguists that they aren't *really* translating native utterances the way they think they are, because such translations run afoul of his conception of meaning. Philosophers, of course, can make such claims and offer such dictates, and they do, but they thus become irrelevant to the sciences that they seek to philosophize about and add to the already widespread feeling that what philosophers do is of little interest to anyone else. All the action winds up being on the first-order side of town.

Once history began serving up works like *Fountain*, theories like the B&SF theory were no longer plausible possibilities as theories of art. Just as the “ugly art” of Gericault and Dix shows that it is indeed possible for art not to be beautiful and thus, entails the inadequacy of any theory which purports to define art in terms of beauty, the Readymades show that any theory which attempts to define art on intrinsic, perceptual, or formal characteristics of the object will itself be inadequate. One can screech “Not Art!” at the Readymades, but such behavior will then relegate us to the aesthetic sidelines, making us hecklers who are missing all the action. The Institutional Theory of art is the result of those who were not willing to be so relegated.

What IT does is take seriously the challenge of the Readymades. The task, given the presumption that the Readymades *are* art, is to determine how this art is possible. That is, what theory of art can we construct, such that it will include not only van Eyck, Titian, Rembrandt, and Goya, but also Duchamp? Given the widening of the extension of “art” by the Readymades, what theory can we propose such that it will expand the *intension* of “art” to the extent that it will pick out everything in its extension? This seems to me, unlike the reaction of those like the B&SF theorists, exactly the right way for philosophers to react to new and radical innovations within a first-order practice.

The genius of IT is the shifting of attention from an artobject’s internal properties to its external relations. Rather than the essence of art lying within the artobject itself, in some formal or phenomenal property or cluster of properties, it lies instead in the way that object is *treated* and *situated*, that is, in its external relations. The lesson learned from the Readymades is that in principle, any object, with any sort of phenomenal or formal properties, can be an artobject, so long as it has been treated and situated in a particular way. The task of the theory of art, then, instead of determining which formal/phenomenal properties are essential to all artworks, must turn to addressing the question of how it is that objects must be treated and situated such that they should be considered artworks.

Carroll explains,

It is this very ‘phenomenalist’ or ‘perceptualist’ bias in art theory...that Arthur Danto, in effect, rejects when he argues that art is not something that the eye could descry, and that art theory is to be built on the method of indiscernibles. If art were significant form, it could be ‘eyeballed,’ and art history would be irrelevant to the identity of the work of art. That the method of indiscernibles points to the importance of art history to answering the question, ‘what is art?’, is of a piece

with Danto's rejection of aesthetic phenomenalism. Similarly, Danto's tendency to regard the response to art as cognitive, rather than aesthetic (in the traditional sense)—a matter primarily of thought rather than simply feeling—also distinguishes him from aesthetic theorists of art.¹²⁹

With this shift away from the formal/phenomenal properties of artworks, our ontological attention must shift away from properties like “significant form” and “unity amidst variety” and towards art producers and consumers and art history. To understand what makes something a work of art, we must look to the roles that artists, art consumers, and artworks have played throughout the history of art. *Fountain* forces us to understand that it is these persons and roles which create art, but *Fountain* was so “enfranchised” by the persons and roles of *its* time. For a view of what makes any object a work of art—that is, for a theory of art, taken as a *kind*—we must have a better idea of the roles into which art was incorporated throughout history, with an eye to the similarities among those roles. And once we understand those roles and relate them to their historical and cultural contexts, not only will we have an ontological criterion for art, but we will come to an understanding of the great progression of art throughout history.¹³⁰

¹²⁹ Carroll. “Genealogy of Art Theory.” p. 322.

¹³⁰ Once one dispenses with the notion that an artobject is nothing but a bearer of formal and phenomenal properties that cause an aesthetic experience, and adopts the idea that an artwork is actually an historically entrenched cultural artifact, our treatment of the experience, interpretation and evaluation of the artobject must also change. If Michelangelo's *David* is no longer merely a manifestation of significant form and is, instead, an historically situated cultural artifact, then it is not enough to say that the critical experience of *David* is an experience of its form or that an evaluation of *David* is a judgment as to whether its form is pleasing, for such a treatment pays attention only to one tiny aspect of *David* as an artobject. As critics, we must consider the cultural/historical context of *David*, understanding that it was created as a part of a huge revival of classical models, stemming from the previous century's Christian humanism and the rediscovery of Greek and Roman sculptures. The critical treatment of *David*, then, will need make essential reference to this historical/cultural understanding.

George Dickie's original statement of IT in his *Art and the Aesthetic: An Institutional Analysis* (1974) emphasizes the role of persons—of artists and art consumers—in the ontology of art and the quasi-institutional environment these persons constitute; for an artifact to be an artwork (and all artworks are artifacts, according to Dickie) is just for it to be treated in a certain way by certain people. Specifically, an artobject is an artifact that has been put forward by an artist to be received as a candidate for appreciation by the art consuming public and which is, indeed, so received,

A work of art in the classificatory sense is (1) an artifact (2) a set of the aspects of which has had conferred upon it the status of candidate for appreciation by some person or persons acting on behalf of a certain social institution (the artworld).¹³¹

A lot of Dickie's subsequent work, both in *Art and the Aesthetic* and elsewhere, has been the elucidation of the precise nature of both the artist and the art consuming public—the artworld—and the conditions under which that artworld conveys the status of artwork on artifacts. His analysis is that the artist and art consuming public, taken together, comprise a sort of institution—albeit a looser sort than, say, a legal system or a system of government—and that the enfranchisement of an artifact as an artobject comes down to the bestowal of a particular status on that artifact by this institution, much like the status of being “Prime Minister” is bestowed by the British constitutional system of government on individuals elected to that position.¹³²

¹³¹ George Dickie, *Art and the Aesthetic: An Institutional Analysis*, p. 89 (in.....)

¹³² Dickie continues on p. 89.

The most clear-cut examples of the conferring of status are certain legal actions of the state. A king's conferring of a knighthood... the chairman of the election board certifying that someone is qualified to run for office, or a minister's pronouncing a couple man and wife are

Before I discuss the significant problems with this view and the reason why I find Danto's and Carroll's more art-historical and less institutional accounts superior as an account of the ontology of the art-object, it is worthwhile to point out the significant virtues of Dickie's position. Notice that IT, while it proposes an "essentialist" conception of art, does so on the basis of the artobject's external relations rather than in terms of its internal, formal, or perceptible properties. In other words, while IT avoids the late-Wittgenstein-inspired cop-out position that art is an "open concept" (that is, a concept for which, paradoxically, no conceptual conditions can be given), by providing a real definition of "art," it does so in a way that avoids the exclusionist difficulties of essentialist definitions such as those proposed by the B&SF theorists.¹³³ In short, while IT provides a clear

examples in which a person or persons acting on behalf of a social institution (the state) confer(s) legal status on persons.

¹³³ Late Wittgensteinians will, of course, howl at my characterization of the "open concept" option that it begs the question against Wittgenstein and against the idea of open concepts. But I don't think so. The open concept or "family resemblance" mode of dealing with the individuation of terms and concepts is not something one *hopes* to begin with (not even those who are its proponents). It is, rather, a mode that one is *forced* into, when one has become convinced that the precise conceptual analysis of terms and concepts cannot work. This is, of course, the route by which Wittgenstein himself came to the open concept/ family resemblance way of looking at language. He did not set straight out on the course taken in the *Blue and Brown Books* and *Philosophical Investigations*. Rather, this was a course he was forced into given his conviction that the approach to language taken by those like Frege and Carnap (and his own *Tractatus*) could not work.

A part of what I am trying to say in this dissertation—and what other lone, brilliant people like Jerrold Katz have been saying now for years—is that the move to open concepts, family resemblance, and more generally, towards "ordinary language," naturalistic, and deflationist models of philosophical enquiry, and away from traditional rationalist, realist philosophical positions, on a whole variety of philosophical subjects, is unmotivated; that the traditional options, whether traditional *a priori* metaphysics or good old conceptual analysis, have not been exhausted and have not been shown to be impossible. To take the open concept/family resemblance view of terms and concepts is a "cop-out" in that it is a throwing up of the philosophical hands when such an attitude has not been adequately motivated. Katz does this by showing how the proponents of naturalism/deflationism fail to adequately motivate their positions against rationalism/realism (in his *The Metaphysics of Meaning*) and by proposing a contemporary realist/rationalist philosophy of his own (in *Realistic Rationalism*). In similar spirit—though on a much smaller scale—I try, in this dissertation, to show how various anti-objectivist, anti-transparency, anti-rationalist theories in aesthetics stem from false and unmotivated philosophies (like Logical Empiricism, Intuitionism, and "late-Wittgensteinianism") while also trying to sketch out an

conceptual account of what art is, it does so in a manner that is maximally flexible and will not rule out in advance the results of artistic innovations such as those of the avant-garde as “not art.”

The problems with IT as Dickie states it are twofold, and both lie in the institutional/status-conferring emphasis of the theory. The first is that Dickie’s construal of the artworld is itself problematic—if the artworld is intended to be analogous to other types of status-conferring institutions then it is not a great analogy—and regardless, the conception of artobjects as artifacts upon which a status has been imposed by persons belonging to this artworld is problematic on historical grounds. The second problem is that Dickie’s theory only focuses on one of the two essential types of external relations that artifacts must have if they are to become artobjects. Dada taught us that for something to be an artwork is for it to both be treated and situated in a particular way. Well, Dickie’s theory tells us a lot about how artifacts must be treated in order to be art and about who must offer this treatment, but it says very little about how those artifacts must be situated in order to become art. That is, while IT talks a lot about the institutional treatment that art must receive, it says almost nothing about the art-historical environment that serves as the context for this institutional treatment.

On the first front, many have pointed out that the analogy that Dickie makes between the artworld and other institutions, such as legal or political ones, is strained at best. The

objectivist, pro-transparency, rationalist position of my own.

institutional character of these latter organizations is based on formal rules which concretely define the roles played by the various participants and as well as the means by which various forms of status are conveyed. But the artworld has none of these features, and without them, it is unclear in what way it is an institution at all (at least, in the sense of “institution” as a status-conferring institution). In another excellent discussion of IT, Carroll says,

One notable line of rebuttal zeros in on the notion that the artworld is an institution analogous to a legal system or a religion. Specifically, it is argued that it is implausible to regard the artworld on a par with such social formations. Within any given legal system or established religion, the roles, powers and objects of concern—the players and the pieces, if you will—are strictly regulated...But where are the regulations in Dickie’s artworld? What specified conditions does one have to meet in order to act on behalf of the artworld and are there really any minimal conditions for being a candidate for appreciation? One might [as Dickie does in *Art and the Aesthetic*, pp. 89-90] attempt to say that the rules of the artworld are informal, but in response it can be stressed that it is exactly the formality and explicitness of specific legal systems and religions that makes *institutions* of them.¹³⁴

But suppose that we grant Dickie his conception of the artworld, of an institutional setting in which artists and art consumers, critics, and aestheticians, filling various institutional roles, confer the status of art on artifacts. Now the historical question with regard to the institutional theory emerges; is it plausible to say, historically speaking, that there has been such an institutional setting and that it is by virtue of this setting that artifacts in previous

¹³⁴ Noël Carroll, “Art, Practice, and Narrative.” *The Monist*, Vol. 71, No. 2. April, 1988 : pp. 142-143 [my brackets, Carroll’s italics]. Some may complain that Carroll’s conception of an institution is overly narrow and legalistic. This may be true to an extent. One can conceive of institutions without such formal rules and offices (the family, for example). But it does not really matter to Carroll’s point whether or not there *could* be such sorts of institutions. It is not enough for IT that there be *some* conception of institution that can be availed of; rather, IT requires an artworldly institution that is capable of conferring the status of art upon artifacts. And it is very hard to see how there could be a status-conferring institution that has no formal rules or offices. The issue, then, is not that there can be no institutions other than the sort Carroll describes. Rather, the point is that the kind of institution that IT requires the artworld to be cannot be other than the sort Carroll describes.

periods of art history have come to be art?¹³⁵

I doubt that it is plausible to say such a thing, because the very notion of an institutional setting devoted entirely to art is a relatively recent one, going back not much further, I would say, than the “Salons” of the nineteenth century. Prior to that time there were, undoubtedly, many institutions involved in the commissioning and production of art, but it is at best unclear that these institutions comprised an “artworld” of any sort. Indeed, I would think that the institutions most heavily involved in the commissioning and production of artworks for most of art’s history were decidedly *non-artworld* institutions, e.g., political, religious, and economic ones, like monarchies, churches, or assemblages of wealthy merchants.

For example, suppose that a group of 17th century wealthy Dutch merchants commissioned a group portrait for themselves, perhaps to be painted by Hals, Rembrandt, or one of the other great painters of that time. They would have hired the painter, negotiated the price of the portrait and come to some agreement with regard to the aesthetic—i.e. stylistic—conventions that would be employed (or they might have simply

¹³⁵ One may want to further argue here that it need not be the case that there were such institutions in the past; that all the paintings, sculptures, etc... of art history have become art retroactively, on the decision of more recently existing artworldly institutions. This point is not quite as crazy as it sounds, for at least in certain parts of history—ancient Greece and Rome for example—it is not clear that there really was any such thing as art at all—at least not in the way that we mean “art,” and so it does not rankle the intuitions to claim that such objects became art retroactively. I don’t think, however, that we want to say this about the paintings, sculptures made during the Renaissance or Counter-Reformation—that, for example, Raphael’s *Disputa* or Caravaggio’s *The Lute Player* (1596-97) only became art retroactively. And yet, there were no institutions in these periods remotely resembling those after which Dickie’s artworld is modeled either.

left these decisions to the painter himself). Now these aesthetic conventions would not have been dreamt up out of whole cloth, but, rather, would have been a function of the existing aesthetic conventions of portraiture, or, perhaps, if the merchants were a bit more “racy” with regards to their desiderata, selected as a reaction of some sort against those existing aesthetic conventions (though this would be unlikely for such a commission). Of great influence in this selection of how they should be portrayed, of course, would be the political and economic desiderata of the merchant group.

In Danto’s terms, the canvas with paint on it produced by the painter would become “enfranchised” as an artobject by virtue of its entering the art historical stream in this way: by being painted in line with—or in reaction against—existing modes of portraiture; by having aesthetic and programmatic content that stands in a myriad of relations to past and contemporary art; and by being an object that itself becomes a point of interpretation and aesthetic appreciation and thus, a potential source of “ontological influence” for some future art-candidate. What is unclear from the standpoint of IT, however, is whether this set of circumstances, aesthetic conventions, etc... belongs to anything remotely resembling an artworld of the sort that Dickie describes, an artworld that is clearly rooted in institutions such as the Salons of the 19th century and the museum/gallery/critics complexes that exist today. These latter institutions are clearly *artworld*-institutions in the sense that the circumstances and interests under which objects are enfranchised are inherently artistic and in the way that the works submitted to such institutions receive “stamps of approval” from a group of judges and critics.

But in the case of the merchant portrait, none of this seems true. The circumstances and interests in which the portrait is commissioned are as much social, political, and economic as artistic, and there are no judges or aesthetic gatekeepers whose conferral of status is required for the object to enter the art historical stream. It may be said that political institutions such as our merchant association have an *art-oriented component*, and I think that this is indeed, correct but this grants the point that the relevant institutions in the enfranchisement of artobjects throughout most of art's history were not "artworlds," but rather governments, churches, and economic groups with aesthetic interests, or more often, *non*-aesthetic interests which were sometimes well-served through aesthetic means. One could, I suppose, describe the art-oriented component of these other institutions as a "sub-institution," but I think that this would be misleading, and anyway, it stretches "institution" far beyond what Dickie intends.

For most of art's history, extra-artistic concerns have driven artistic movements and have thus determined what sorts of objects would be artistically "enfranchised" at any given time. The shift in style from Romanesque to Gothic art—in sculpture and architecture, for example—was affected most critically by shifts in Christian theology; specifically in the emergence of Christian Humanism. Changes in what was considered the proper construal of a holy environment resulted in the shift away from the heavy, somewhat dark appearance of Romanesque churches to the soaring, illuminated aesthetics of Gothic architecture. An architect in the 1300's, then, would be commissioned to design a building that reflected this new conception of the proper aesthetics for holy spaces, and if

he had created a heavy dark stone structure instead, this edifice would not have been accepted by those who had commissioned him. It would not have been "enfranchised," that is, considered a proper aesthetic expression of the sentiments of the faith.

The same is true, of course, of the depiction of the human figure. With the decline of the great civilizations of Classical Antiquity and the rise of Christianity, the conception of man, of his significance, stature, and dignity, underwent a radical reappraisal, and one of the results was a determinate shift to non-humanist modes of depicting of the human figure. A growing interest in and emphasis on design, prompted in large part by the syncretizing of late Roman Christian art with the art of "Barbarians" such as the Celts and the Germanic tribes, furthered the move away from Classical humanist art. But with the revival of humanism in the Gothic era, and with an infusion of a newly reaffirmed praise for humanity in the theological sphere—reflected, for example, in the emergence of the Cult of the Virgin and its accompanying focus on the human rather than the divine side of Christ—we find a revived interest in the humanist portrayal of the human figure, most notably in early times in Gothic sculpture. We also see these changes in the increasing representations of Christ Crucified rather than Christ Triumphant in depictions of the crucifixion.

A theory, then, which construes the power of artistic enfranchisement as lying exclusively in the status-conferring powers of an "artworld" must fundamentally misunderstand the cultural environment and the political, economic, and religious institutions which have

governed the creation of artobjects for most of art's history. IT is correct in claiming that it is, in part, in the external relations to persons—and even institutions—to which artobjects owe their ontological status, but it is wrong in construing these relations as *essentially* artworldly, and indeed, in putting the emphasis on the relations to these institutions, and particularly, the status-conferring acts on the part of the agents of those institutions, rather than on the cultural environments in which these institutions operated. For it is this cultural environment which provides the ontological criteria or principles through which such institutions, when they have existed, operated.¹³⁶

3.3 History, Civilization, and the Functionalist Theory of Art

It is that the thrust of Dickie's IT is essentially "sociological rather than historical," as Carroll says, that renders it ultimately inadequate as a theory of art.¹³⁷ For it only emphasizes a part of the story, and indeed, it is the less important part. Dickie's insights were prompted by Dadaist works like *Fountain*, and his focus naturally centered on the

¹³⁶ The point here is that it is not necessarily by virtue of being related to any sort of artworld that artifacts get enfranchised as artworks. Rather, it is by virtue of specific cultural environments, filled with economic, political, religious and other civilizational desiderata and interests, that institutions of various sorts (governments, churches, and, yes, in modern times, artworlds) go about "enfranchising" artifacts. As Carroll puts it so beautifully, "art is a cultural practice," and thus, artobjects are really a sort of "cultural artifact."

¹³⁷ Carroll, "Art, Practice and Narrative," p. 154, fn. 4. It is important to clarify what is meant by "sociological" as opposed to "historical." By saying that IT is overly sociological, what Carroll (and I) mean is that it places too much emphasis on the actions of "enfranchisers"—that is, it focuses on the institutional conferring of status—the status-conferring act, so to speak—rather than on the culture and the cultural conditions within which the institutions do that conferring. This is problematic not only because it leaves IT without an explanation of how there could be art during periods of art history when there was no artworld or art-status conferring institutions, but because it focuses on the wrong part of the enfranchising process, even during periods of art when there were/are such institutions.

artworldly institutions of the time that allowed such an unusual object to be designated as art; and indeed, in a case such as *Fountain*, it really seems like being art is just a matter of the right people declaring it so. But to conclude that this is the proper generalization to be drawn from Dadaist works—that being a work of art is just to have the proper institutional persons declare something so—is a mistake. The true implications of Dada must stand at a bit more of a distance from works like *Fountain* if they are to have universal relevance to the ontology of artworks. What is really significant is not that a group of designated persons dubbed *Fountain* art, but rather that an art historical environment existed in which someone like Duchamp could and would present an object like *Fountain* and in which institutions like the artworld of the time could and would enfranchise it as an artwork. It is this cultural environment that has the real ontological muscle, not the institutions which merely carry out the culture's interests and purposes.

This cultural environment is *essentially* tied to history, such that the environment that provided the backdrop for the enfranchisement of *Fountain* could not have existed in the Italian Renaissance or in Baroque Germany. At these periods in the history of art, no artist could have had the aesthetic intentions of a Dadaist, and no institutions could have existed that would have enfranchised Dadaist objects as art. The cultural and aesthetic environment of the early twentieth-century supported the reign of an artworld that could enfranchise objects such as *Fountain* as legitimate aesthetic expressions of “local” ideas and concepts, but the cultural and aesthetic environment of 17th century Germany or Holland could not, and indeed, did not support any institution comparable to an artworld;

it lay to monarchic, religious, and merchant based institutions to enfranchise artifacts, in light of the local ideas, concepts and purposes of *their* time and place. It is reflections such as these that reveal to us the essentially historical nature of art as a kind and makes us appreciate the wisdom of Heinrich Wölfflin's remark (which points so strongly to the relevance of history to art, and which so influenced Danto) that "Not everything is possible at all times, and certain thoughts can only be thought at certain stages of development."¹³⁸

It is perhaps for this mistaken understanding of the significance of Dada (a misunderstanding which Dickie seems to share) that philosophers such as Marx Wartofsky have accused IT of being an "ad hoc theory."

[T]he problem it addresses is a problem which first appears in nineteenth-century art, and then, more sharply, in the twentieth century. It is just the problem of that art whose purpose it is to challenge all previous standards or criteria of art. It is an art of protest whose means of protest is essentially formal, or aesthetic...It is, for the first time, art about art, and art about art-theory. It is, tacitly or explicitly, theoretical art, (but not, as Danto would have it, art-theory).¹³⁹

On this view, IT is *ad hoc* precisely because its conception of the bestowal of art-status on artifacts is rooted too specifically in the art of its time. As a result, the ontological conclusions to which it arrives—that being an artwork is a matter of having a status conferred upon an object by an artworld—are relevant only to the art of this time, and are

¹³⁸ Heinrich Wölfflin, *Principles of Art History: The Problem of the Development of Style in Later Art* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1950), preface to the Sixth Edition, p. ix.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 244. Notice here that Wartofsky treats Danto's theory as a version of IT. I have already indicated—and will soon explicitly assert—that this is not the case. Insofar, however, as Danto's theory—and specifically, his twins cases—are inspired by the Readymades and Pop-Art, some of the criticisms here can be leveled at him as well.

useless for shedding light on the ontological criteria of art in general. And it is thought that Danto's thought experiments involving indiscernible twins commit the same error of generalization, inspired as they are by such a specific and historically contingent artistic movement as Dada. So the question stands about the ontological significance, for art taken as a *kind*, of the Readymades, Danto's red squares, and his other thought-experiments. Are they too excessively tied to the peculiarities of twentieth-century art to provide an all-encompassing ontology for art-objects? And to add another worry, are we going to require *different ontological criteria for different periods in the history of art*, and thus be saddled with the notion that there is no single phenomenon, spread over the course of history, that is art?

This latter worry is clearly what is behind Wartofsky's remarks about mid- to late-twentieth century art; that this art, for the first time in art's history, is, in some sense, "about art" and raises all the ontological questions which heretofore had not arisen within whatever counted in past generations as filling the role of the artworld. The implication is that the ontological criteria raised by this quirky period in art-history cannot be generalized and the consequence of *this*, given the failure of essentialist ontologies like Bell's to accommodate Dadaist art, is that we are forced into multi-furcated ontologies of art. Richard Wollheim, in a similar vein, claims that even if Danto's thought-experiments turn out positive—that is, that the possibility of indiscernible twins, one which is an artwork, the other which is not is affirmed—"It may be that the results cannot be generalized." Wollheim then goes on to muse on the reasons for the un-generalizable

nature of Danto's cases and on the general unsuitability of the art which inspired Danto's philosophy as a model for art-history as a whole,

His aesthetic could scarcely be more clearly rooted. It derives from a place and a time. Watered by the mainstream of European art as this flowed through Renaissance and sixteenth-century Italy and nineteenth-century France, Danto's philosophy of art grows out of the soil of mid-twentieth-century New York painting and sculpture. And a physical metaphor of this sort is highly appropriate. No one can read Danto's text without recapturing the smells, and the sights, and the tireless, circumambient excitement, of the Village, and the uptown galleries, and the grimy, restless streets of Soho...

I am myself an admirer, but certainly not a devotee, of the art to which Danto gives voice. I do not believe that history will treat New York as the Venice, or the Paris, or the Florence, of the second half of the twentieth century...I suspect that it will not forgive an age whose record cannot be set straight without an excess of footnotes over text. The scene is too overcrowded with figures who tried to get into history without contributing to the art.¹⁴⁰

I would agree with Wollheim's art criticism here—that mid- to late-twentieth-century art will not prove to possess much lasting aesthetic interest—but the point seems irrelevant to the ontological force which this art possesses; that is, whether the Dada-inspired twins cases are important to art *theory*. The question we're asking is whether or not the ontological implications of this art can be cast backwards to cover the art of previous generations, while at the same time cohering with those previous generations' own conscious criteria for the enfranchisement of artworks. I think they can.

What Dada and Pop-Art have provided, if not instances of aesthetic greatness, is a kind of *meta-ontological* insight into the nature of artobjects. This art stretched the ontological boundaries so much that it revealed to us precisely what is found in distilled form in

¹⁴⁰ Wollheim, "Danto's Gallery of Indiscernibles," pp. 33-7.

Danto's thought-experiments. It proved—with itself as the example—that in principle, any artifact can be art, given that it is situated properly in the “narrative” of art history. To be more specific, the reason Duchamp's *Fountain* is art is because it was created and exists within a complex of specific interests, purposes, intentions, and historical facts. The intention of the artist to react against the aesthetic and ontological paradigms of the art of the past in a particular way, the acceptance of *Fountain* as constituting such a rebellion by a significant part of the artworld, and their collective belief that *Fountain* and Dadaist works like it had created a new paradigm of art, displacing the old one, and even the reaction of some of the artworld against this new paradigm, all serve, in combination, to establish the ontological status of Duchamp's urinal. And they occur essentially against the backdrop of where art history stood at the moment; at a time when art had progressed to the point where an artist *could* have such interests and purposes, and where the corresponding artistic institutions could recognize such intentions and purposes as a valid extension of the artistic enterprise.

The reason why this insight is meta-ontological is because it, in a sense, reflects backwards and can encompass previous generations' ontological or “enfranchising” criteria for artobjects. Dada does not, in effect, provide us with yet another ontological criterion for art, the last in a long chain of such criteria, but rather, makes us recognize what all such criteria have had in common.

We can, for example, tell precisely the same kind of story about the enfranchisement of a

sculpture from Classical Antiquity—for example, *Augustus of the Prima Porta* (Fig. 2—14-29 A.D.)—as we have just told about the enfranchisement of *Fountain*.¹⁴¹ A sculptor, we know not whom (although we do know that *Augustus* was restored minimally by the great Roman sculptor Pietro Tenerani¹⁴²) took a hunk of stone, and shaped it for the purpose of creating an object that would not only present the Emperor according to his desires, but would do so in the manner of heroic imperial portraiture, a style which had its source in Greek paradigms of representation—in the representation of the ideal rather than the actual figure—and this, indeed, separated the Imperial portrait from an ordinary realistic portrait (the latter being a form which the Romans actually developed independently of the Greeks). Imperial portraits were done in the Greek style, because the Greek style facilitated the larger-than-life, heroic, presentation of the Emperor, essential to the political purposes which ultimately governed the creation of the sculpture in the first place. Consider the following remarks about *Augustus* by Georg Daltrop, the curator of Classical Antiquities at the Vatican,

Every aspect of the sculpture is developed not for its own sake, but for its allegorical and symbolic value. The *Doryphoros* of Polkleitos—which the Romans thought of as “effigies Achillea” (Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, 34, 18) —was the model for the statue type. Though certain details, such as the raised arm, have

¹⁴¹ I use *Augustus of the Prima Porta* precisely because I want to give an example from a period in art history when there was, literally speaking, no such thing as “art,” or at least, nothing that was consciously thought of by the people of that time as “art.” But there was art—indeed, some of the greatest art ever created by man—in the sense that we have been discussing; artifacts, created for the purpose of conveying civilizational interests through aesthetic means. And, in this sense, *it was art at that time*; that is, it has not become art subsequently or retroactively by virtue of nineteenth or twentieth century status-conferring acts, but was art all along in the sense of “art” that I have offered in this chapter.

¹⁴² For this point as well as other fascinating art-historical facts about *Augustus of the Prima Porta*, see Georg Daltrop’s comments in *The Vatican Collections: The Papacy and Art* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1982), p. 208.

been changed, the image of the *Doryphoros* is still present, as in the stylized treatment of the hair.

This Augustus is not an original work, but, rather, a reworking of classical models—as was typical of Attic workshops about 20 B.C. (when the banner lost by Crassus was peaceably returned to Augustus)...Originally, the statue must have honored Augustus for his diplomatic victory in achieving the return of the standard on peaceful terms. This success, worthy of a triumph, made more of an impression than an actual victory in battle would have been.

Art has become the purveyor of an idea. The grandeur of the Roman imperium is personified by the emperor. Augustus announces the end of an earlier humiliation with a bloodless victory and the recognition of the preeminence of Rome. He demonstrates his successful politics of peace, the *pax augusta*, which Virgil (*Aeneid*, VI, 851-853) formulated as Rome's destiny.¹⁴³

The statue, then, became an artwork by virtue of its myriad connections to prevailing aesthetic and programmatic norms, and in the connections of the people involved with it to those norms (the sculptor who made it and the society that received it); and this is the case whether or not anyone in Ancient Rome had a conception of “art.” Such is a problem merely of nomenclature; they may not have had anything that they called “art,” but they did have artifacts whose purpose was to convey civilizational interests through aesthetic means, artifacts which through such a “function” became connected to art before and after, and that is just what art *is* on our view.

Thus, *Augustus of the Prima Porta* was, metaphysically speaking, art at that time, regardless of whether or not anyone called it such. And this shows us, in a rather specific way, just where other essentialist theories—and even IT—get art wrong. Essentialist conceptions of art like the BS&F theory consider the non-formal, programmatic features

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 208. [Emphasis and parentheses in the original]

of art as irrelevant, so they cannot possibly explain how *Augustus of the Prima Porta* could be art other than having become so retroactively, and IT, which requires art-enfranchising institutions to make “art dubbings,” is also not in a position to say that *Augustus* is and always was art. But on the view that I am developing, we have no problem saying that *Augustus of the Prima Porta* is art now and was art then as well. For what makes *Augustus* art is its art-historical connectedness—just as what makes *Fountain* a work of art is *its* art-historical connectedness—and this is a metaphysical fact about it, one which does not require dubbings or, even, that anyone recognize the object as “an artobject.”

An intuitive plus for looking at *Augustus of the Prima Porta* in this way is to notice that if some “mad” sculptor had created something in 20 B.C. that we might, if it were created in today’s artistic culture, call a “Dadaist” sculpture, we would not want to say that it was art. Suppose that this mad sculptor had taken a chariot wheel, stuck it atop a Corinthian column and called it “Emperor.” Such an object would not be an artwork, since it would be utterly unconnected to its art history. The intentions behind its production and the aesthetic aims that we might, anachronistically, want to claim it promotes are ones that it could not have had in 20 B.C. Indeed, even if we stipulate that the cause of our sculptor’s creation was his intention to protest the Imperial regime (say the sculptor was an enraged republican), “Emperor” would not count as an *artistic* act of rebellion, but as a purely political expression. That is, it could not be considered a political rebellion *conveyed by means of an artobject*. For an artistic act of rebellion, as much as artistic expressions of

conformity, requires art-historical connectedness, and “Emperor” was created at a time when art history had not proceeded to a point where the aesthetic intentions essential to such a rebellion would be possible.¹⁴⁴ Thus, the act of making “Emperor” would either have been an act of madness or a purely political act, and neither is sufficient to make it an artobject on my theory of art.

For an example of something that *would* (and did) constitute an act of artistic rebellion (and thus, qualify as an artwork), the *Portrait Statue of Vincentius Ragonius Celsus* (Fig. 3—4th century A.D.), an example of late-Roman art, stands as an excellent instance. The decline and subsequent transformation of the Roman empire, brought about by a long string of corrupt and mad Emperors, “Barbarian” invasions from Germany and Eastern Europe, and the rise of Christianity, served to demote man from the position of exaltation that he had occupied during the height of the Greek and Roman civilizations. In this cultural context, the less realistic, heavily stylized characteristics of this sculpture, while a significant departure from High Imperial portraiture, constitutes an intelligible rebellion against it, unlike the product of our mad (in either sense) sculptor. For while both may be, in part, the result of rebellious political interests and purposes, only *Vincentius Ragonius* expresses its protest through an art-historically connected aesthetic idiom. It is thus

¹⁴⁴ One reader has asked if I am saying that foresight is logically impossible—the idea being, perhaps, that our mad sculptor merely was expressing remarkable artistic foresight with “Emperor.” My reply is that, of course, no foresight is logically impossible (indeed, *nothing* is logically impossible except, perhaps, round squares and even odd numbers), but much foresight is *historically* impossible. Would it have been historically possible to have foresight of medieval aesthetics? Yes, and perhaps we even see such foresight in late Roman sculpture (see the discussion of the *Portrait Statue of Vincentius Ragonius* above). Would it have been historically possible, however, to have had foresight of Dada in 20 B.C.? Most certainly not. Logically possible, yes. Historically possible, no.

connected (in the right way) to the civilizational interests and aesthetic paradigms of its time, though rather than its connectedness reflecting a conforming with those paradigms—as *Augustus of the Prima Porta* does—it reflects a reaction against it, a reaction inspired by the new, themselves rebellious, ideas about man which were infiltrating the Empire and the new aesthetic mode of presentation of man that was appropriate given those new ideas. Thus, the *Portrait Statue of Vincentius Ragonius Celsus* is art, while “Emperor,” created by our mad sculptor, is not. And this it seems to me, is precisely the conclusion that any theory of art should come to.¹⁴⁵

While the criteria under which something became art in 20 B.C. are utterly dissimilar from those under which something counted as art in the early twentieth-century—while the “local” ontological criteria for art, so to speak, were utterly dissimilar—the processes of

¹⁴⁵ Carroll goes into some detail as to the ways in which such an object must be so connected in order that it be possible to consider it as either a conforming with or rebellion against artistic norms. (1) An object can constitute a “...repetition of the forms, figures and themes of previous art.” (2) It can be an amplification of such forms, figures and themes. “An amplification is a formal modification that expands the presiding means for achieving the prevailing goals of a given genre or artform.” (3) Finally, it can be a “...repudiation of an antecedent style and its associated values.” But this repudiation cannot, as in the case of our mad sculptor, be completely opposed in the sense of disconnected, to those antecedent styles.

For an object to count as a repudiation, it must not only be different from what has preceded it, it must also be interpretable as in some sense opposed to or against an antecedent artistic project... To identify a new object as art in virtue of its being a repudiation, one must show exactly along what dimensions the object rejects the tradition as well as showing that just that sort of rejection was conceivable in the context in which the work appeared (i.e., Duchamp’s readymades, as Danto teaches us, could not have been intelligible as a repudiation in the artworld of Cimabue). History and tradition, in other words, supply information that constrains what at any given time can function as a plausible repudiation and, thereby, a radical expansion of the frontier of art.

Carroll, “Art, Practice and Narrative,” p. 147.

the artistic enfranchisement (an enfranchisement which, on our view, required no act of dubbing and no explicit idea that “this is art”) of *Augustus of the Prima Porta* and *Fountain* are identical in that their enfranchisement was affected by virtue of their material counterparts being connected to art history, as it stood in their respective times, in the right way. This is the meta-ontological insight that the Readymades and Danto’s thought experiments provide, and it points the way to an ontological theory for art which can provide an ontological criterion for art that will adequately pick everything that has been and will be within the extension of “art.” This theory, which is best represented by Danto’s views rather than Dickie’s, I will call the Functionalist Theory of Art (“FT”).

Danto’s theory, unlike Dickie’s, is a *transfiguration* rather than a status thesis; “mere real things” are metaphysically transformed into a new ontological category, the art category, by virtue of possessing an appropriate role within a “discourse of reasons,” Danto’s expression. Let’s ignore the term “transfiguration” for the time being and look more closely at “discourse of reasons.” To the best that I can determine, what Danto means by this term is precisely the matrix of civilizational and aesthetic purposes and interests that I have been discussing; the religious, political, economic, and social interests of a civilization, and the aesthetic means selected by members of that civilization to convey them, that, when all mixed together in a kind of primordial cultural soup, produce works of art and which determine how they are going to be received, interpreted, evaluated, etc.

Danto’s ontology for art is analogous to the functionalist theory of mental states, and this

is why I call his variation on the Institutional Theory of Art, the “Functionalist Theory of Art.” On the functionalist view of the mind, a brain state, B, is a mental state, M, just in case it has the proper functional relations to inputs (sensory stimuli) on the one hand and outputs (behavior) on the other, with relations to other mental states mediating these i/o relations (which, if left bare, would constitute ontological behaviorism). Well, on Danto’s view, an artifact is an art-object, just in case it has the appropriate location—or *functional role*—in the civilizational-aesthetic matrix of art history.

Notice that this is only indirectly and contingently attached to the conferring of status; an object, if properly related to artworks before and after, as well as the proper “discourse of reasons,” is art, regardless of whether the “Salon” or other institutions (such as the courts of princes or the church in the Middle Ages), of whichever time period, dubbed it such. This is because Danto’s functionalist version of IT puts all the ontological weight on the historical context within which an object receives its art status. So while the official (or semi-official) appointment of art status to an object often occurs as a kind of culminating event of the object’s entry into art history—its being displayed in a gallery or museum, or praised or damned by the critics—no such event need occur for the object to be art. It is enough that the object has, *in fact*, become a part of art history, and this can be achieved solely by the artist creating the object with aesthetic and non-aesthetic intentions such that his work becomes connected in the ways that Danto, Carroll and I have identified. The object is thereby enfranchised, though it never received any sort of official status.

Dickie was thus correct in asserting that as far as membership in the artworld is concerned, “...every person who seems himself as a member of the artworld is thereby a member,”¹⁴⁶ but mistaken in just *why* seeing oneself a member of the artworld is sufficient for membership. It is not because by somehow dubbing oneself an artworld member—by bestowing that status on oneself—one becomes such a member. Rather, it is because one has engaged in activity that has become a part of art history, in the manner we have discussed, that one is entitled to dub oneself a member of the artworld. As we have seen throughout this discussion and through all the examples, both real and hypothetical that have been brought forward, the status of “artworld member” or “artwork” comes *after* one has entered art history; it is not the means by which one enters it.

Functionalist ontologies suppose only that the object they seek to define has the causal relations necessary to make it a part of the class in question. As just stated, for a brain state, B, to be a mental state, M, is just for it to have the proper i/s/o relations; well, according to FT, for an object, O, to be an artwork, A, is just for it to have the proper intentional/historical/aesthetic relations. FT thus has numerous advantages over IT above and beyond those which we’ve already discussed. For example, FT more comfortably assimilates the extreme radical into art history than IT. If all the artistic community—the entire array of artists, critics, “Salon keepers,” etc... —refuse to acknowledge a radical work as art, it is hard to see how IT can call it an artwork, with the emphasis it places on the bestowal of status. IT can, of course, claim that as one member of the artworld, the

¹⁴⁶ Dickie, *Art and the Aesthetic*, p. 91.

artist's claim that it is a work of art is enough, but this reply seems to abandon the institutional essence of IT (since an institution, I assume, requires more than one member in order to exist), and anyway it leaves unexplained how the artist attained his own artworld status when none of his work has ever been accepted as art. FT, however, since it does not maintain that the embedding within an institution or the bestowal of status is necessary for an object to become art, but insists only that the object be intentionally, historically, and aesthetically connected in the right way, can very straightforwardly and unproblematically assert that the object is or is not art, depending on whether it actually possesses these connections.

As already mentioned, FT is entirely consistent with previous generations' ontological criteria for art, because it can incorporate them into its "meta-ontology" as part of the functionalist matrix. Because the functionalist theory (FT) is generically construed—that is, does not specify *specific* intention-, historical- or aesthetic-tokens within the functionalist matrix—it can incorporate the civilizational interests and aesthetic purposes of "artworld" members from any period in history, something, it seems to me that IT cannot do. Continuing with the example of a radical object, if the artworld at the time of its creation rejected the object, than IT must claim that at that time, the object was not art. But if a subsequent generation's artworld decides to dub it "art" then what happens? Does it become art, subsequently? Or does it become art retroactively—was it, indeed, art all along? IT cannot claim the second, for this would be to threaten the institutional character of IT; by what, other than non-institutional criteria, could a later institution

decide that a previous institutions' art-dubbings were incorrect? But to claim the former not only rankles the intuitions—surely, Turner's paintings were art at the time he created them, regardless of what the relevant institutions said—but it prevents us from saying that an artist may be ahead of his time, since in order for his art to be ahead of its time, it must, after all, be *art*, a status which we've just stipulated the relevant institutions of the time withheld.

Because FT counts the proclamations and attitudes of institutions as only one part of the intentional/historical/aesthetic matrix that makes an object and artwork, it allows for a sounder, more intuitively satisfying approach to this situation. Indeed, FT, will say, the object was art all along—because the civilizational interests and aesthetic purposes that it embodies connect it to art history—but the artworld of its time was too stupid, conservative, or whatever, to recognize it as such. And *this claim*, if one takes it less technically, is just equivalent to the claim that the work was ahead of its time.

3.4 Differences with Danto: A Word on “Transfiguration”

Having thus differentiated Danto's theory from the Institutional Theory of art, and having demonstrated that Danto's stance on art-objects is best read as a functionalist ontology, and explained why this kind of ontology can serve as an ontology for art for all of art history, I now want to put a little distance between myself and Danto's aesthetics. That is, having declared a general allegiance with Danto's aesthetic theory, I want to indicate

certain areas of disagreement.

I am concerned about Danto's use of 'transfiguration', a term which if taken metaphorically, seems to me to be O.K. as a description about how a functionalist ontology works. One might say, in a not-too-literal discussion of the philosophy of mind, for example, that neural states are transformed or even "transfigured" into mental states by virtue of their having a certain functional role within a matrix of sensory inputs, behavioral outputs and other mental states. The problem with Danto is, he seems to take "transfiguration" quite literally, a position which, as Crispin Sartwell has pointed out—in an excellent paper entitled, "Aesthetic Dualism and the Transfiguration of the Commonplace"—threatens the entire Dantoian program.

Danto implies, and even indicates explicitly, that when "mere real things"—blobs and dabs of paint on canvas, chunks of marble, urinals or beds—become enfranchised as art, they are *literally transfigured* and are no longer identical with the materials out of which they were constructed. What he means here seems to be twofold, and it is revealed, in part, by musing for a moment on the meaning of the term 'transfigured' as opposed to the meaning of 'transformed'.

Webster's defines 'transfigure' as "1. To change in outward form or appearance; transform, change, or alter." 'Transform' is translated as "1. To change in form, appearance, or structure; metamorphose. 2. To change in condition, nature, or

character; convert.” To a certain degree, it seems, that ‘transfigure’ and ‘transform’ are synonyms, although ‘transfigure’ has to do more with outward, perceptual changes, while the changes which ‘transform’ describes may be deeper, having more to do with an object’s nature than its appearance. A human being who dyes his hair and puts on clown makeup has been transfigured, but a human being whose genetic structure has been changed to that of a neanderthal—such as the character, Dr. Jessup, in Ken Russell’s *Altered States*—has been, beyond transfigured, transformed.

Danto, at different places in his work, seems to imply that he means both of these kinds of changes in the case of artobjects. An artifact like a urinal is transfigured by its artistic enfranchisement, in the sense that now, rather than just “seeing it as” a bathroom fitting, we see it as a work of art. It’s this sense of transfiguration that Danto speaks of in “The Artworld,” and this sense of transfiguration seems to me to be unproblematic, for its consequences are primarily epistemological; our knowledge that the object has been enfranchised causes us to see it differently.

The conclusions in *Transfiguration of the Commonplace*, however, are clearly metaphysical. Here, by ‘transfigured’, Danto implies the stronger sense of transformation; the artifact, through its enfranchisement, comes to be the member of a different kind or class than it had been before; it has become a new kind of thing. This is evinced by Danto’s Leibnizian observation that predications can be made of the object *qua* art-object which cannot be made of the object *qua* material artifact. Of *Fountain*, he says,

The question is whether the artwork *Fountain* is indeed identical with that urinal, and hence whether those gleaming surfaces and deep reflections are indeed qualities of the artwork...Certainly the work itself has properties that urinals themselves lack: it is daring, impudent, irreverent, witty, and clever.¹⁴⁷

Likewise, there are predications which can be made of the urinal—the material counterpart, as Danto calls it, of *Fountain*—which cannot be made of *Fountain*. ‘Was designed to be pissed in’ would be such a predication, as would be ‘was bought in a bathroom-fittings shop’. Danto calls the predications we can make of the material counterpart of any object “O-predications” and those which we make of the work of art, “W-predications.”¹⁴⁸

There are, I think, significant confusions here, and I find Danto’s “transfiguration” talk unfortunate in its connotations. To begin with, there are some simple points pertaining to the notions of identity and diversity which seem to be fumbled in Danto’s discussion. The sole basis, metaphysically speaking, for the view that artobjects cannot be identical with the material counterparts—the “mere real things”—which underlie them seems to be Leibniz’s law of identity; for any two things, x and y, x and y are identical if and only if they have all the same properties. And on this view of identity, it is certainly the case that *Fountain* is not identical with the urinal of which it consists, since there are indefinitely many predications which can be made of *Fountain* that cannot be made of the urinal and vice versa.

¹⁴⁷ Danto, *Transfiguration of the Commonplace*, pp. 93-4.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

But this seems a very strange (and far too severe) conception of identity to apply to artworks. We do not, as a matter of philosophical course—or common sense for that matter—apply the same criterion of identity to every category of objects (I am thinking of Chapter XXVII of Locke’s *Essay*, “Of Identity and Diversity” and of the relevant sections of Aristotle’s *On Generation and Corruption*). Our criterion of identity for a thing depends on the *kind* of thing it is. For certain kinds of objects, the criterion of identity will approach that in Leibniz’s law; Locke’s examples of simple and complex matter come to mind—in the case of atom α , any change will cause it to cease being α , and in the case of compound λ , where λ is made up of atoms α , β and γ any addition or subtraction of atoms or change of the configuration of its atoms, renders it no longer the same compound. This is because the essence of being a particular compound just *is* the particular nature and configuration of its atoms. But for more complex matter, such as complex inanimate objects or for organic matter, such as plants, animals, and men, the criterion of identity which is appropriate is very different.

The adequacy of any particular criterion of identity is thus rooted, ultimately, in the pre-philosophical intuitions as to what is essential to the thing in question. A criterion of identity, for example, which mandates that for every new leaf acquired or for every inch of bark lost a tree loses its identity is one that is simply ill-suited for trees as we conceive of them. And, more closely to Danto’s case, a criterion of identity for persons which claims that as new predicates become true of a man which were not true of him before, such as that of “becoming a father” or “being loved by his children,” he ceases to be the same

person and becomes someone else, is one which seems peculiarly out of place, given the way that we understand persons.

The principle of identity must suit the object to which it is applied; we do not enslave our conceptions of objects to a principle of identity, decided upon by fiat or through an excess of loyalty to Leibniz, for this is a very bad way of doing philosophy. We could stubbornly insist upon Leibniz's conception of identity and then try to explain away our pre-theoretic intuitions about things like persons and trees, by claiming that while in "reality" the tree does not retain its identity from one moment to the next, the close "resemblance" between tree₁ and tree₂ leads our minds to mistake diversity for identity. This is indeed, how Hume talks about the identity of persons in the *Treatise on Human Nature*, and it is for precisely the reason just outlined that with regard to at least this issue, Hume's account is so much less philosophically sophisticated (and less satisfying) than Locke's. Our idea of identity in persons or in anything which changes over time is rooted in the simple fact that there exist different criteria of identity; it is not a "fiction" which must be explained, à la Hume, by complex appeals to the principles of association of ideas and the psychological formation of dispositions and habits.

These issues point to another significant confusion in Danto's discussion in that talk of "transfiguration" or "transformation" seems to imply that an object cannot simultaneously be a token of more than one type, but this is obviously not so. When a man becomes a father, he becomes a member of a new class, the class of fathers. But he doesn't cease to

be a member of the class “man” or of the class “human,” by virtue of this new membership, in spite of the fact that his new membership means that new predications can be made of him which could not have been made before. And there doesn’t seem to me to be any reason, in principle, why with a urinal’s enfranchisement as an artobject, it would cease to be a urinal rather than just be a token of more than one type. For belonging to the type “urinal” would not, in any obvious way, clash with belonging to the type “artwork.” Indeed, in Duchamp’s case, this is precisely the point; that *Fountain* is *both* a urinal and an artwork. It is this point that Sartwell picks up on. The Leibnizian conception of identity that Danto, in Hume-like fashion, insists upon, and which requires that an artwork is never identical with its material counterpart, is particularly ill-suited to his conception of artobjects (and particularly, is ill suited given the *ontological force* which Danto thinks Dada and Pop-Art possess).

Remember that Danto’s imaginary twins cases—his “red squares,” “Picasso tie/child’s tie,” “Don Quixotes,” and others—derive their inspiration from Dadaist and Pop-Art. It was the Warhol exhibition at the Stable Gallery on East Seventy-fourth street in 1964, after all, that first got Danto excited about the philosophical implications of indiscernibility.¹⁴⁹ It was then that he realized that art had, in a sense, become ontology, or

¹⁴⁹ Arthur Danto, *Beyond the Brillo Box: The Visual Arts in Post-Historical Perspective* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1992), p. 5. It’s important to note that in truth, Warhol’s *Brillo Box* is not a true instance of indiscernibility, since it is significantly different from actual Brillo boxes by virtue of size and the materials used. But, as Danto points out,

To be sure, the resemblances were hardly so perfect that discriminability was out of the question. *Brillo Box* was made of wood and stenciled; Brillo cartons are made of corrugated cardboard and

at least, in part, about ontology—

[T]he philosophical question of its [art's] status has almost become the very essence of art itself, so that the philosophy of art, instead of standing outside the subject and addressing it from an alien and external perspective, became instead the articulation of the internal energies of the subject.¹⁵⁰

—and while this development might be lamented from the aesthetic point of view, since “...the entirety of the artwork has been condensed to that portion of the artwork which has always been of philosophical interest, so that little if anything is left over for the pleasure of art-lovers,”¹⁵¹ it is of great importance from the standpoint of *aesthetic theory*, for through this kind of art, we finally have learned *what it is for something to be art*.

The Readymades, as has already been discussed at length, supplied the real impetus for this discovery. If a urinal or a bed can be an artwork, then a whole host of what had passed as criteria for being an artwork had to be eliminated. And it was here that the ontological criteria for being art finally came into sharp focus—that whatever it is that makes an object art is not something internal to the artwork, not some perceptible or formal quality, but rather, a relational feature that connects the object to art history through a tangled complex of human and institutional intentions, interests and desiderata.

printed. Still, these cannot be where the differences between works of art and what I have termed 'mere real things' are lodged. A philosopher would sound foolish who said that being made of wood is what marks the work of art...

Beyond the Brillo Box, p. 36.

¹⁵⁰ Danto, *Transfiguration of the Commonplace*, p. 56.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

But if Danto's transfiguration talk is taken as indicating a metaphysical transformation in the manner that I have just discussed, then the ontological force which both the Readymades and Pop-Art possess is eviscerated. For by claiming that *Fountain* is not, in any way, identical with the urinal which is its material counterpart, Danto, unwittingly, emasculates its ontological significance. Sartwell puts it as follows,

For if he [Danto] meant quite literally that the artwork and the urinal were wholly distinct entities, then it becomes hard to see in what sense *Fountain* could be a revolutionary work at all. Surely *Fountain* is astonishing precisely because, in it, a urinal has become a work of art, because here a urinal is a work of art...

Danto's overstatement in fact makes the practice of the readymade, which Danto is concerned to celebrate and explain impossible. If to become a work of art was to be 'transfigured' in Danto's sense, Duchamp could not appropriate artifacts, nor post-modern artists images, because what they 'appropriated' would not be what they exhibited.¹⁵²

It is precisely because *Fountain* is a urinal that it sheds the ontological light which it does.

It is precisely because *Brillo Box* is a Brillo box, or better, *could just as well be* a Brillo box, that it has the ontological force *it* has. The point, after all, of the Pop-Art phenomenon, was that there was indeed no essential, or internal, difference between fine art on the one hand and the ordinary objects of daily life on the other. Danto says of this phenomenon, "What Pop in particular told them was that the commonplace..., mass-produced things of ordinary life were not to be despised in invidious contrast to the forbidding images housed in museums..."¹⁵³ But how could this point ever be made if the art itself did not retain the identity of its material counterpart?

¹⁵² Crispin Sartwell, "Aesthetic Dualism and the Transfiguration of the Commonplace," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 46, Summer 1988, p. 466.

¹⁵³ Arthur Danto, *Beyond the Brillo Box*, p. 3.

The comparison with materialism in the philosophy of mind is instructive here.

Functionalists believe that input/state/output relations “transform” our neural states into mental states, and at the level of mental state types believe that these types admit of no simple material property reduction. Yet, Functionalists are also *token physicalists*; this particular pain token is identical with a particular neural state. So, mental states, *qua* types of states, are identified with a set of functional relations, but each mental state, in fact, is identical with a neural state in humans or some indefinite disjunction of physical states in non-human sentient creatures.

Notice the symmetry here; while “art” is a phenomenon which is characterized in terms of social, historical, and intentional relations, each individual artwork is identical with a material or abstract object that qualifies as art by virtue of standing in the proper relations. “Mental state” is a phenomenon characterized in terms of i/s/o relations, and each individual mental state is identical with a material object, a physical state, which qualifies as a mental state by virtue of standing in the proper relations. “Transfiguration” in terms of actual artworks, then, must be taken as a term of art, and in a non-literal sense. And the identity of actual artworks, with their material counterparts, must be maintained in order that Danto’s twins cases, and the historical precedent of Dada and Pop-Art, should have the ontological force they are intended to have.

Chapter Four: Artistic Teleology and Artistic Value

4.1 An Aristotelian, Virtue-Theoretic Account of Artistic Value¹⁵⁴

We have discussed what artobjects are. They are artifacts created out of the primordial soup of art history; artifacts which convey the cultural and other “civilizational” interests of their creators —and of the societies in which they create—through their aesthetic properties and which, through this conveyance, are connected to the rest of art history. The question now is, what makes artobjects *good*? Having given a metaphysics for artworks, the task is now to provide an axiology for them.

Everyone agrees that works of art can be good or not-good, but in addition to disagreement over whether such goodness or “not-good-ness” is objectively real, there is also little agreement as to what *sort* of value artobjects possess and how it is to be determined whether a work has that value or not. So first, we must assign a *type* of value to artobjects and second, we must offer a *method* of determining whether or not an artwork has that value. This chapter will be devoted to exploring just what aesthetic value is and in what way it is assigned to artworks by critics. Chapter Five will be committed to providing an aesthetic epistemology; that is to explaining how critical assessments—of the value or lack thereof—of artworks are confirmed and disconfirmed.

¹⁵⁴ All Aristotle quotes are taken from Richard McKeon, ed. *The Basic Works of Aristotle* (New York: Random House, 1941). See the Bibliography for translator information with regard to each book cited from the Aristotelian corpus.

I will argue that in the case of artobjects value boils down to the possession of *virtues*, in the Aristotelian sense of “virtue” as “excellence relative to a purpose.” This conviction stems from three points: (i) from the nature of artobjects; (ii) from the actual practice of critics; (iii) from intuitions concerning the different evaluative content and force of aesthetic judgments and moral judgments, respectively. I will discuss (i) and (ii) in this chapter, and (iii) will be addressed—briefly—in Chapter Five. Here I want to focus more generally on the nature of virtue-theoretic axiologies and on the relationship of purpose—*telos*—to virtue.

4.11 Essence, *Telos*, and Excellence

For Aristotle, the value or “good-ness” of a thing is fundamentally a function of its purpose, its *telos*. This view stems, perhaps, most strongly from his analyses of the parts of animals and the roles that they play in the functioning of the organisms to which they belong,¹⁵⁵ but it is a general feature of his physics and metaphysics. Every object has a purpose, or cluster of purposes, the fulfillment of which constitutes being a “good”

¹⁵⁵ See, for example, Aristotle, *On the Parts of Animals* I.5.645b14-20. Also, consider the following remark from J.L. Ackrill,

He [Aristotle] aims at providing a teleological explanation in terms of the *good* which some organ or process brings the animal or plant, and also a non-teleological explanation in terms of the *necessary* materials and movements which bring about those organs or processes.

J.L. Ackrill, *Aristotle the Philosopher* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 51. [Emphasis in the original]

version of that object.¹⁵⁶

Aristotle construes all physical objects as a combination of matter and form; that is, as matter (some material stuff at a particular level of description) upon which form (a structural organization) has been imposed. In the case of man-made objects or “artifacts,” the imposition of form comes from an *external* source; the craftsman with a form in his soul—say, the form of a cabinet—imposes that form on matter—say, wood and metal—to produce a determinate object, in this case, a cabinet. In the case of natural objects, the imposition of form on matter has an *internal* source—“an internal principle of change and rest”—and the shaping of the matter in the “mold” of the form is generally developmental or gradual. So, a fertilized human egg has the form of a child within its matter—cells and tissue—and that form emerges from within, over time, to shape that matter into a human child.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁶ The idea that every object—whether natural or artificial—has a purpose is a foundational Aristotelian belief. It stems from intuitions regarding the order of the natural world as well as Aristotle’s conviction that luck or “chance” cannot be genuine causes, views that can be found in *Physics* II.4-6. Consider.

Spontaneity and chance are causes of effects which, though they might result from intelligence or nature, have in fact been caused by something *incidentally*. Now since nothing which is incidental is *prior* to what is *per se*, it is clear that no incidental cause can be prior to a cause *per se*. Spontaneity and chance, therefore, are posterior to intelligence and nature.

Aristotle, *Physics* II. 6 198a5-10. [Emphasis in the original]

¹⁵⁷ ...substances too, and anything else that can be said ‘to be’ without qualification, come to be from some substratum...For we find in every case something that underlies from which proceeds that which comes to be; for instance, animals and plants from seed...

In both cases, the realization of the form within the matter of an object can be seen as the *actualizing of potentialities* contained in the object's matter. The carpenter's wood and metal is naturally suited to form the material component of an indefinite number of objects; one of its potentialities is to become a cabinet. This potentiality becomes an actuality when the form is actually imposed on the wood and metal by the cabinetmaker, resulting in a cabinet. The case of the child is different, but not essentially so. The form is already contained in its matter to begin with—the "child form" is *in* the fertilized egg—and it emerges over time as the egg begins to turn into a child. While through all these intermediate stages between egg and child there are many different combinations of form and matter, the actualization of the *child-form* occurs when the full blown child emerges from this process of development.¹⁵⁸

Generally, things which come to be, come to be in different ways: (1) by change of shape, as a statue; (2) by addition, as things which grow; (3) by taking away, as the Hermes from the stone; (4) by putting together, as a house; (5) by alteration, as things which 'turn' in respect to their material substance...

Plainly then, if there are conditions and principles which constitute natural objects and from which they primarily are or have come to be...plainly, I say, everything comes to be from both subject and form.

Aristotle. *Physics* 1.7 190b1-20.

¹⁵⁸ For the word 'nature' is applied to what is according to nature and the natural in the same way as 'art' is applied to what is artistic or a work of art. We should not say in the latter case that there is anything artistic about a thing, if it is a bed only potentially, not yet having the form of a bed...The same is true of natural compounds. What is potentially flesh or bone has not yet its own 'nature', and does not exist 'by nature', until it receives the form specified in the definition, which we name in defining what flesh or bone is...

The form indeed is 'nature' rather than the matter; for a thing is more properly said to be what it is when it has attained to fulfilment than when it exists potentially.

“Motion” and “Telos”—the two other “causes” of physical objects—are aspects or functions of form.¹⁵⁹ The “motion” of an object is the source of its form, the “primary source of change or rest.” The craftsman, with the cabinet-form in his soul, is thus the impetus or the “motion” of the form of the cabinet, while the father and mother, by whose energies the “child-form” comes into human tissue, are similarly situated as the craftsman vis à vis their child.¹⁶⁰ The *telos* is the purpose or end of the object, “that for the sake of

Aristotle, *Physics* II.1 193a30-193b10. While every quality of a sensible object is the product of a form having been imposed on matter—and thus, an object will possess many forms—the form of an object constitutes its essence, i.e. that which determines *what the object is*.

¹⁵⁹ This is why Lear says that rather than there being four causes, there are really “four fashions” of cause. There are, actually, only two causes, matter and form. See Jonathan Lear, *Aristotle: The Desire to Understand*, p. 27.

¹⁶⁰ Aristotle’s third cause has often been translated as “efficient cause,” but this is a highly misleading translation, given that it implies the modern conception of cause as a relation between events—specifically, where one event is sufficient to bring about another event. With Lear,

The third way we specify the cause is the primary source of change or rest. The father is the cause of the child, in this sense, as is the craftsman of what he makes—and, generally, that which *brings about* a change is the cause of what is changed. The Greek for ‘primary source of change’ is often translated as ‘efficient cause’. Yet this translation is misleading for two reasons. First, it suggests anachronistically that Aristotle had isolated the modern conception of cause; second, it suggests that this is a different cause from the form rather than a different way of specifying the same cause...

Aristotle’s primary principle of change differs dramatically from the modern conception of efficient cause. The most obvious difference is that on the modern, post-Humean conception, the efficient cause is an *event* which is regularly followed by its effect, whereas Aristotle tends to cite *things*—the father, the builder, the doctor—as paradigms of his primary principle...

One way to characterize the difference between Hume and Aristotle is to say that while for Hume causation must be understood in terms of a relation between two events, for Aristotle there is only one event—a change. Aristotle can pick out the single event of a change: and causation must be understood as a relation of things (or things doing their thing) to that event. A change, for Aristotle, is the actualizing of a potentiality.

which” the object exists, and this is also a function of the object’s form. For the form of an object determines what the object is, and once the nature of the object has been determined, its purpose or function can be “read off” that essence.¹⁶¹

In the case of artifacts, such ends are quite easy to see. The essence of a hammer, for example, is a particular structural organization of matter suited to the purpose of driving nails. This is, after all, why the craftsman imposes this form on his materials rather than some other. The *end* or *good* of this object, thus, is to drive nails. Notice that constitutive of *realizing* the purpose of the object is both its form and its matter; a hammer put together shoddily (i.e. its form poorly realized), or made with insufficiently hard substances (e.g. made out of plastic), would presumably not drive nails well, and thus, would not be a good hammer.

Jonathan Lear, *Aristotle: The Desire to Understand*, pp. 29-31. [Emphasis in the original]

¹⁶¹ Again...the primary source of the change or coming to rest; e.g. the man who gave advice is a cause, the father is a cause of the child, and generally what makes of what is made and what causes change of what is changed.

Again...in the sense of end or ‘that for the sake of which’ a thing is done, e.g. health is the cause of walking about. (‘Why is he walking about?’ We say. ‘To be healthy’, and having said that, we think we have assigned the cause.)

Aristotle, *Physics* 2.3 194b29-35. It is important to remember that Aristotle believes that purpose in artefacts imitates purpose in nature, so just as the cabinet has a purpose—to put things in—so the human child has a distinctive function. It should also be mentioned, however, that things are not as simple as Aristotle would like them to be. It is not the case that the function or purpose of a thing can simply be read off from its form alone, for the same form may be suitable for different purposes. I address this point in some detail in section 4.32.

For natural objects, the picture is exactly the same, though perhaps, in the case of whole organisms, a bit more obscure.¹⁶² The easiest examples to assimilate to our discussion of the ends for artifacts are to be found in Aristotle's discussions of the purposes of the parts of animals, for it is here that his teleological and ends-oriented explanations of natural objects are most forcefully and clearly put. The purpose of an eye, for example, is to allow a creature to see, and this purpose explains the existence and nature of the eye. This purpose is thus tied directly to the object's essence or form; nature imposed this particular form, the "eye" form, on this chunk of animal tissue to allow the creature to see. The eye has a function within the overall functioning of the organism, and this work that the eye contributes to the overall functioning of the organism is the eye's end or good; its larger role in the functioning of the organism is "that for the sake of which" the eye ultimately exists. It exists to see, for the sake of the survival of the organism of which it is an organ.¹⁶³

¹⁶² With Ackrill,

It is easy to say not only what the function and purpose of each part of an axe is, but also what the function and purpose of the ax as a whole is...But can we say what the function and purpose of the elephant as a whole is? A part 'serves a purpose' in helping the animal survive; but what purpose is served by the existence and survival of the animal itself?

Akrill, *Aristotle the Philosopher*, p. 53.

¹⁶³ It is important to point out, again with Ackrill (p. 51), that for Aristotle both *material necessity* and *teleological necessity* operate in the generation of natural objects. For example, Aristotle thinks it is a material necessity that hair grows where there is fluid and heat (and this is one of the reasons why men have hair on their heads). But he also thinks that the nature and existence of hair on the human head has a teleological necessity, to provide warmth to the human brain. Aristotle says.

Man has the hairiest head of all the animals. First, this is necessarily so, because of the fluidity of his brain and the sutures in his skull. For

In modern natural science since the time, roughly, of Descartes, it has been thought not only that a teleological construal of nature is unnecessary—that appealing to material necessity is sufficient to explain the existence, nature, and behavior of physical bodies—but that such explanations stem from a mistaken anthropomorphizing of nature; in particular, the ascription of intentions and purposes to inanimate and non-sentient natural objects. These are important criticisms of teleological explanations of natural objects, and, I think, the Aristotelian has available some good replies to them. But since I intend to apply Aristotle's conception of teleology and the good to artworks—which are not natural objects but artifacts—I needn't really deal with the question of whether or not there is teleology in nature here. For it is an unchallengeable fact that artifacts, being artifacts, are made with intentions and purposes and, thus, possess teleologies.

Therefore, Aristotle's model of the good-ness of artifacts seems, on first glance, tailor-made for works of art. For on my view of the nature of artworks, an artifact becomes a work of art by virtue of embodying civilizational interests and purposes that bring it into

there must necessarily be the largest outgrowth where there is most fluid and heat. Secondly it is for giving protection, so that the hair may give shelter and protection from excesses of cold and heat.

Aristotle, *On the Parts of Animals*, 2.14 658b2.

Lear rightly points out that it is teleological necessity that has the larger role in the generation of organisms and their parts and artefacts. While matter does have "...certain limited necessary properties..." these cannot possibly explain the existence or nature of organisms or artefacts, whose highly organized, *specific* natures beg for more than purely material explanations. The particular form and matter of an object are suited to its purpose; thus, with Lear, "...if a saw is to cut wood, it *must* be made of material capable of cutting wood [e.g. not paper maché], and that material, the iron, must be shaped a certain way." (*Aristotle: The Desire to Understand*, p. 43; Lear's emphasis, my brackets) Likewise, if an eye is to see, it *must* be made of a certain material, or at least, a certain disjunction of materials (e.g. not string) and structured a certain way.

the stream of art history. A consequence of this ontological conception of artobjects is that every artwork possesses a huge number of artistic teleologies, against which it can either succeed or not; we thus have at our disposal a tremendous variety of virtues and vices for which to praise and condemn works of art.

So, given our metaphysics for artworks, steeped as they are in individual and collective purposes—and hence, in teleology—a virtue-theoretic model of value seems a natural one to adopt. Since all artobjects embody civilizational—including aesthetic—teleologies (to do so is a condition of their ontological status) they are in possession of virtues and “vices.” But this could be true regardless of whether we decide that these virtues or vices of artworks are what constitute their value or lack thereof *as artobjects*. That is, from the fact that works of art have virtues and vices—including aesthetic virtues and vices—it does not follow that a virtue theory is the correct model of *aesthetic value*; of the value of artobjects, *qua* artobjects.

It will be enough to simply lay out the virtue-theoretic model of aesthetic value and let it stand on its own merits, especially since I believe that the actual practice of art critics supports this treatment of aesthetic value. What critics primarily do, I will claim, is interpret artworks—which involves the *retrieval* of a work’s civilizational purposes. The subsequent critical judgment of an artwork is made relative to these purposes and the virtues indicated by them. Critical interpretation, then, with the help of art history, provides grounds for expectations regarding the effects of the artobject, expectations

which can either be fulfilled—resulting in a good work of art—or not—resulting in a not-good work of art.

But to look at criticism in this way is to employ just the teleologically based virtue-theoretic scheme that I support. And as just mentioned, the discipline of art history lends support to the virtue-theoretic treatment of aesthetic value, or at least provides a conceptual apparatus that is very friendly to such a treatment. I am thinking in particular of the work of Heinrich Wölfflin, whose analysis in *Principles of Art History* of the history of art as a series of consecutive, opposing and overlapping styles—styles which are construed in terms of aesthetic and representational purposes—works beautifully with a virtue-oriented account of aesthetic value.

4.2 Aesthetic and Non-Aesthetic Teleologies

The aim of all this preliminary discussion is, of course, to import Aristotle's conception of virtue—and specifically, his architecture of essence, *telos* and virtue—to the domain of artobjects. That is, we are trying to come up with a model of artistic value which is derivative of Aristotle's conception of natural and artifactual virtue.

I have switched from the term “aesthetic value” to the term “artistic value” for purposes of precision. All along we have been talking of “aesthetic value,” largely because this is the term of art in the literature, but given my conception of artworks and their value, the term

is imprecise and misleading. Remember that on my view—a view shared by Danto, Carroll, and others—the artobject is a kind of cultural delivery device. It is an artifact constructed for the purpose of conveying civilizational interests through its aesthetic properties. In short form, the value of an artobject is going to depend on the degree to which it *succeeds* in conveying these interests through aesthetic means. Now insofar as a subset of these civilizational interests are themselves aesthetic in nature—in early medieval art, for example, there is a great interest in decorative and design-related aesthetics, and in Abstract Expressionist art there is a great interest in the materials and methods of painting—artobjects will succeed or fail, in part, on purely aesthetic grounds. That is, they will either be good with regards to the purely aesthetic interests that they convey or they will be not-good relative to those interests. Such objects will, thus, either possess *aesthetic* value or not.¹⁶⁴

But, to the extent that the aesthetic civilizational interests or purposes of art have been distinctly subordinated to—or better, been put *in the service of*—non-aesthetic

¹⁶⁴ A further word regarding “aesthetic” vs. “artistic.” By “aesthetic” I mean the counterpart to—or the flipside of—content or program. There is the content or program of an artobject, and then there is the *manner* in which that content or program is affected. On this definition, then, all manner of things belonging to style, materials and presentation in artobjects are “aesthetic” features of that artobject, while all manner of things belonging to program or “about-ness” are “contentful” or “programmatically” features of artobjects. Thus, when I talk of the *artistic value* of an artobject, I intend to speak of its virtues with regard to both aesthetic and programmatic purposes—the *totality* of its civilizational purposes, so to speak—whereas when I talk about the *aesthetic value* of an artobject, I mean solely to discuss its virtues with regard to the manner in which the artobject affects its program. What often has characterized modern art is that aesthetics—or manner—has itself often become the program or content of art. This is why modern art is often described as being “about art.”

civilizational interests for the dominant portion of art history,¹⁶⁵ to speak of aesthetic value as the overall value of an artwork is to grant the aesthetic purposes of artworks too much prominence. It is, so to speak, not treating the whole patient. And insofar as this has been the basis for much of my criticism of B&SF theorists like Clive Bell,¹⁶⁶ who think that it is the aesthetic properties and the aesthetic experience that they produce that are the sole features of interest with regard to artworks, I cannot possibly treat aesthetic value as if it is equivalent to artistic value. I shall thus use the term “artistic value” to refer to the overall good-ness or not-good-ness of an artobject, a notion based on a conception of success/failure that takes into account *all* of the civilizational interests that artobjects serve. “Aesthetic value” will be reserved for the discussion of an artobject’s success or failure relative to its *aesthetic* purposes and interests.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ It has really only been since the time of Impressionist art that aesthetic interests have dominated over the other sorts of civilizational interests which art was traditionally used to convey. For whether we are talking about Ancient Greek sculpture, whose main point is to convey Greek attitudes towards the beauty of the human body and the inherent dignity of man, medieval art in its various stages, which convey different “versions” of Christian theology from the anti-humanism of early Christianity to the Christian humanism of St. Francis, or if we jump forward hundreds of years to the Romantic era and its art, which expresses, simultaneously, the glories of nationalist sentiment and the horrors of the Great Terror and Napoleonic wars, art has, for the bulk of human history, served fundamentally non-aesthetic civilizational interests through various aesthetically governed media. It is important to recognize this, lest we suffer from the sort of art-historical myopia to which Clive Bell and his ilk are prone. See Chapter Three for a more detailed discussion of some of these points.

¹⁶⁶ Again, see Chapter Three for my discussion of Bell and the “Beauty and Significant Form” theorists.

¹⁶⁷ Let it be clear that on my view both aesthetic and non-aesthetic (or programmatic) interests are civilizational interests. Artobjects, thus, always are conveyors of civilizational interests, and, historically, they have more often than not been conveyors of both aesthetic and programmatic interests, with the weight falling on the side of programmatic interests.

4.21 Non-Aesthetic Teleologies

The first thing to be done is to lay down the teleological basis from which the evaluation of artobjects is to proceed. Since my conception of artistic value takes the good-ness of an artwork to lie in its success relative to the civilizational purposes and interests it embodies, we first need a robust notion of these purposes and interests. While each artwork will of course possess a distinctive combination of civilizational purposes and interests, we should be able to identify families and types of both aesthetic and non-aesthetic purposes and interests that we find in art.

As mentioned in the last section, for a good part of art history, artworks were created for a multitude of cultural and civilizational purposes, purposes which were predominantly programmatic or non-aesthetic. A mere glance at medieval art reveals an art-historical period filled with reliquaries, illuminated manuscripts, tapestries, churches and cathedrals and the stained glass windows, sculptures and altarpieces that filled and encrusted them. In all these different types of art, non-aesthetic interests and purposes are being served by means of the artwork and, more specifically, through the aesthetics of the artwork.

Take the Carolingian *Reliquary of St. Foy* (Figs. 4 & 5—9th century). Most straightforwardly, this statuette served a distinctly non-aesthetic purpose. It was created to house the severed head of St. Foy, a young Roman girl who had been martyred for refusing to worship pagan gods. Such objects were an important part of early Christian

religious practice; the body parts of saints were considered to have the power to heal as well as other magical capabilities, and they were placed inside reliquaries, which could be anything from statuettes like the St. Foy reliquary to whole buildings (indeed the church of St. Chapelle in Paris (1243–48) is a reliquary built to house Christ’s Crown of Thorns). Pilgrims would travel great distances to worship at these reliquaries in the hope of receiving some of their mystical powers; indeed, relics played an important role in most medieval masses.¹⁶⁸

So in one obvious way, such artobjects exist—indeed, were created—for distinctly non-aesthetic purposes, but it is important to notice that many of the specific aesthetic features of these works also served what were, at bottom, non-aesthetic purposes. Consider the rendering of the St. Foy reliquary. It is made entirely of gold and encrusted with semi-precious stones. St. Foy sits in a throne in what could be described as a late-Roman imperial posture. She is also rendered in a non-humanistic, highly symbolic, style; this is not a portrait of St. Foy, but rather, an icon. None of these aesthetic features is accidental, and none of them is “for its own sake;” that is, not one of the major aesthetic aspects of this reliquary was created for the sake of that aesthetic aspect or its appreciation (as one might find, for example, in Classical, Renaissance, and, obviously, in Modern and Postmodern art). Each represents a non-aesthetic civilizational interest or purpose. The fashioning of St. Foy on the model of a late Roman imperial statue

¹⁶⁸ Indeed, one of the motivations of the first Crusade was to liberate a large number of relics from Byzantine hands; the Byzantines, who were, of course, in the eyes of the Latin west, unfit to keep them. See R. W. Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953), p. 63.

emanates from the brief revival of late-Roman craftsmanship and aesthetics that occurred during the Carolingian Renaissance. We can see this late-Roman aesthetic in much of the art of this period, for example the equestrian statuette of Charlemagne (Fig. 6—9th century), supposedly based on an equestrian statue of the Emperor Theodoric (also compare with the equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius (Fig. 7—161-80 A.D.)), and, in architecture, the great Aachen Cathedral (Fig. 8—consecrated 805 A.D.) whose architect, Odo of Metz, based his design on St. Vitale in Ravenna (Fig. 9—525-547 A.D.), a church built during the last of the Ostrogothic kings of Rome.¹⁶⁹

Charlemagne was interested in reviving the glories of the Christian Roman empire, and his Holy Roman Empire, which lasted until 1806 when it was dissolved by Napoleon, was, for a while, the locus of a great flurry of late-Roman-revivalist decorative artwork and architecture. So all those aesthetic features of the St. Foy reliquary which we can identify with late Roman aesthetics must be understood as the manifestations of this Carolingian interest in reviving the culture—which included the artistic styles—of the Christian Roman Empire. After all, a reliquary could have been made in *any* available style, but the craftsman specifically selected this particular aesthetic because of this interest in the civilization of Christian Rome. This interest is, in itself, non-aesthetic.

The anti-humanist, iconographic aesthetics of the St. Foy reliquary is itself partially

¹⁶⁹ For more on the Aachen Cathedral and its relationship to St. Vitale at Ravenna, see Gombrich, *The Story of Art*, p. 163 and Frederick Hartt, *Art: A History of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc. 1989) pp. 310-315 & 383-384.

explained by this interest in late Roman civilization, but it also has a more independent and deeper source in pre-Gothic Christian thought and sensibilities. All early- to mid-Medieval art is anti-humanist in its aesthetics, and this is due primarily to pre-Gothic Christian attitudes about man.¹⁷⁰ While Christianity is potentially a supremely humanistic religion—depending on which of its aspects are emphasized—it can be remarkably anti-humanist in its expression. With the decline and fall of the great Classical empires, which held up man as the measure of all things, the Christianity that emerged in the second through the fifth centuries A.D.,¹⁷¹ emphasized man's essentially fallen nature, his original sin, and the inherently mysterious and dangerous nature of the world around him. Thus, the great interest which Classical artists and artisans had in representing the human figure in an anatomically precise and heroic manner had disappeared and been replaced by an interest in representing the essentially spiritual, eschatological, and "Christocentric" nature of all temporal objects and affairs. See, for example, *Christ Washing the Apostles' Feet*, from the *Gospel Book of Otto III* (Fig. 10—1000 A.D.) and consider the following analysis by Gombrich. The illumination...

...represents the incident told in the Gospel of St. John (xiii. 8-9) when Christ, after the Last Supper, washed the disciples' feet:

Peter saith unto him, 'Thou shalt never wash my feet.' Jesus answered him, 'If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.' Simon Peter saith unto him, 'Lord, not my feet only but my hands and my head.'

¹⁷⁰ It is important to note that I am talking about the art of *Latin* Christendom. The relationship of humanism to art follows an importantly different cycle in the Byzantine world.

¹⁷¹ I emphasize this 400 year period, because it was during this time that all the basic practices and doctrines of Christianity were set down, in numerous church councils and in Patristic and Apologetic writings.

This exchange alone is what mattered to the artist. He saw no reason to represent the room in which the scene occurred; it might merely have diverted attention from the inner meaning of the event. He rather placed his principal figures before a flat, luminous golden ground, on which the gestures of the speakers stand out like a solemn inscription: the imploring movement of St. Peter, the calm teaching gesture of Christ...All eyes are rigidly turned towards the centre of the scene and thus give us the feeling that something of infinite significance is happening here. What does it matter if the basin is not evenly rounded, and if the painter has to wrench the leg of St. Peter up, the knee somewhat forward, to get his foot clearly into the water? He was concerned with the message of divine humility, and this he conveyed.¹⁷²

Further, consider the following general remark about the artists of this period, "...these artists were not out to create a convincing likeness of nature or to make beautiful things—they wanted to convey to their brothers in the faith the content and the message of the sacred story."¹⁷³ Thus, essentially the same impulse that drove men to the monastery—to the denial of the physical life, and to the search for the spiritual meaning which, it was assumed, lay behind all earthly things and events—pushed artists to produce a highly iconographic art whose purpose was itself inherently symbolic, pointing to the deeper meaning behind the thing or event represented. We see here, in its starkest form, aesthetic means—in this case, a deliberately non-humanist, symbolic style in illustration—serving what are, ultimately, non-aesthetic interests and purposes.

In fact, it is not until the emergence of humanism in Christian theology that we see a re-emergence of humanistic aesthetics in the art of the Latin west; indeed, the evolution of Christian humanism produced large-scale changes in aesthetic sensibilities throughout western art and architecture, whether in paintings, sculpture, church architectural styles, or

¹⁷² Gombrich, *The Story of Art*, pp. 166-167. [Emphasis in the original]

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 166.

decorative arts. This not only meant changes in *what* artists chose to represent in their work but in *how* they chose to represent man and the rest of the “furniture” of the world. It is during this time, for example, that we increasingly see humanistic representations of the crucifixion—representations, that is, of Christ Crucified as opposed to Christ Triumphant (see Figs. 11—1216A.D. and 12—870 A.D., respectively)—and during which humanistic depictions of the Madonna and Child (which emphasize the human side of Christ) become popular and almost ubiquitous; in these mid- to late-Medieval depictions, rather than the Christ-child’s sitting as if a miniature god enthroned on his mother’s knee, he is depicted as an actual human child, thus giving way to a variety of artistic types, “the laughing Child,” “the Child being fed from its mother’s breast,” etc...¹⁷⁴ It is hard not to attribute these important changes in the aesthetic landscape to deeper transformations within the religious culture of the time. St. Francis and his Franciscan friars, for example, were pushing an increasing appreciation of the human side of Christ and the humanity inherent in the mother-son relationship in writings such as the *Stabat Mater*, which beautifully portrays the *human* suffering of the Virgin at the death of her son, Jesus.

...Oh, how sad and sore distressed
Now was she, that mother blessed
Of the sole-begotten One;
Deep the woe of her affliction
When she saw the Crucifixion
Of her ever-glorious Son.

Who, on Christ’s dear Mother gazing
Pierced by anguish so amazing
Born of woman, would not weep?
Who, on Christ’s dear mother thinking

¹⁷⁴ For an outstanding discussion of the humanistic transformations in art and culture during this period, see Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages*, chs. iv and v.

Such a cup of sorrow drinking,
Would not share her sorrows deep?¹⁷⁵

It is also during this period that we find increasing interest in more naturalistic renderings of scenes set in landscapes in both painting and illumination (see, for example, *May* from “Les Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry”, Fig. 13—1410). We can, once again, attribute such aesthetic changes to cultural and religious innovations, for example the increasing appreciation of the beauty and inherent goodness of God’s “works” (i.e. nature) in contrast to the earlier view that the natural world is a mere staging ground for the battle between God and Satan. And as with so many of the other important religious and cultural shifts that we’ve been discussing, this too can be found in Franciscan writings, specifically the *Canticle to Brother Sun*, a straightforward exultation of the natural works of God.

All praise be yours, my Lord, through all that you have made,
And first my Lord Brother sun,
Who brings the day; and light you give to us through him...
All praise be yours, my Lord, through Sister Moon and Stars;
In the heavens you have made them, bright
And precious and fair.
All praise be yours, my Lord, through Brothers Wind and Air,
And fair and stormy, all the weather’s moods,
By which you cherish all that you have made...
All praise be yours, my Lord, through Brother Fire,
Through whom you brighten up the night.
How beautiful is he, how gay! Full of power and strength.
All praise be yours, my Lord, through Sister Earth, our mother,
Who feeds us in her sovereignty and produces

¹⁷⁵ From the “Stabat Mater,” originally attributed to Jacopone da Todi (1306), the author of the *Donna del paradiso*, now attributed to an unknown 13th century Franciscan writer. Reprinted in Marshall Baldwin, *Christianity Through the Thirteenth Century* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970); pp. 357-8. Translated from the Latin by E. Caswell.

Various fruits with coloured flowers and herbs...¹⁷⁶

It may be argued that the art of the Middle Ages is too amenable to my claim that for most of art-history it is the non-aesthetic purposes of art to which aesthetic purposes and interests are decidedly subordinate. The Middle Ages, after all, was a period almost totally in the shadow of the Church, and the vast majority of artistic production took place under some ecclesiastical aegis or other. It is not surprising, it might then be argued, that the art of this period should be governed so completely, by the religious and theological climate, but, it will also be said, the peculiar features of this period cannot be generalized to others.

This argument will not succeed in demonstrating that my claim about art history is false. For whether it is the church, the aristocracy (or whichever governmental mode), or a merchant or “bourgeois” class that is commissioning artworks—and these were the primary “institutions” from which art was produced for the great bulk of its history—art was, for most of its history, created for what were ultimately non-aesthetic purposes. To further bolster this point, let’s choose another, utterly dissimilar period in the history of art, from the late 18th to the mid 19th century, and consider the period’s three primary artistic types; (a) heroic and nationalist paintings; (b) paintings depicting horror, terror and madness; and (c) the Romantic landscape (in its European rather than American variety). With each of these types, I will argue that the objects created (in these cases, paintings and

¹⁷⁶ From St. Francis, “The Canticle of Brother Sun” (date unknown), reprinted in Baldwin, *Christianity Through the Thirteenth Century*, pp. 356-7. Translated from the Italian by B. Fahy, O.F.M.

poems) and the aesthetics employed in their production, were governed by what are, ultimately, non-aesthetic interests and purposes.

Let's deal first with heroic and nationalistic art. Napoleon Bonaparte—who seized control of France in 1799, declared himself Emperor in 1804 and had conquered most of Europe by 1812—was both the inspiration and the model for the Romantic Hero, a cultural archetype that had an enormous presence in the art of this period, whether in the poetry of Lord Byron, the music of Ludwig van Beethoven, or the paintings of Ingres, Jacques Louis David, and Eugene Delacroix. In many ways, the Romantic Hero was a revival of earlier heroic traditions going back as far as Homer and Virgil, but in other ways it was radically different. The great heroes of the past had typically been men of superhuman ability and achievement who were upheld as champions of whatever authorities—whether temporal or religious—existed at the time; but the Romantic hero, while fulfilling the superhuman aspect of the Classical Hero, stood apart from or even in opposition to, prevailing authority. Napoleon was certainly a hero of this type; he was superhuman in his abilities and achievements, and thus fit the traditional model of the hero—having seized control of almost all of Europe, after all, in a remarkably short time—but he also stood against the prevailing authorities of his time—the aristocracy and the church—and was an aloof, eccentric, man.

The individuality and eccentricity of the Romantic Hero is, in part, a rejection of Enlightenment rationalism and the various conformities of character and manners that it

often seemed to entail. The Romantic hero was a free—and to a certain extent, *wild*—figure, and this persona was of great appeal to a people trying to retain individuality within societies increasingly mechanized and urbanized by industrialization but also caught up in the nationalist fervor of the times.¹⁷⁷ All these influences and interests are to be found in the Romantic Hero as he is portrayed in the literature, music, and art of this period.

Consider, then, in light of this cultural archetype, *Napoleon Emperor* (Fig. 14—1806) by one of the masters of 19th century neo-Classicism, Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres.¹⁷⁸ Painted just two years after Napoleon declared himself emperor, and at the beginning of his sweep across Europe, this painting presents Napoleon as a 19th century Caesar Augustus. Seated in an imperial pose, wielding the scepters of power and swathed in velvety robes decorated with gold designs, Napoleon, at this time only twenty-six years of age, looks much like the “living gods” that once reigned over the greatest empire the world has ever seen.¹⁷⁹ A carved decoration forms a partial halo around Napoleon’s head,

¹⁷⁷ The Byronic Hero is, of course, the purest example of the wild, individualistic aspects of the Romantic Hero. See, in particular, Byron’s *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* and *Don Juan*.

¹⁷⁸ For a painting of Napoleon with similar imperial effect, see the *Coronation of Napoleon and Josephine* (1805-7) by Ingres’ teacher, Jacques-Louis David. For a musical composition devoted to Napoleon and imbued with similar imperial and heroic connotations, consider Ludwig van Beethoven’s “*Eroica*”—*Symphony No. 3, in E-flat Major* (1803-4).

¹⁷⁹ The influences in Ingres’ remarkable portrayal of Napoleon are broader than the sole imperial example of Augustus (notice the kinship between *Napoleon Emperor* and *Augustus of the Prima Porta* (Fig. 2)). There are Ottonian and Frankish elements as well; Kenneth Clark says that *Napoleon Emperor*...

...makes conscious reference to both late Roman ivories and tenth-century miniatures of the Emperor Otto the Third. And those little

and he stares at us with a penetrating, almost inhumanly dispassionate gaze that makes him distant and utterly aloof. At his feet, a great bird, wings outstretched, is etched into the floor.

Now certainly, this painting possesses many aesthetic features that are appreciable for their own sake. The strongest characteristics of *Napoleon Imperator* lie in its composition and in the rendering of the robes and fabrics in which Napoleon is swathed. The emperor is situated exactly at the center of the painting—a vertical line bisecting it would cross the bridge of his nose, cutting his body neatly into two parts; at the bottom, this line would bisect the head of the great bird stretched out beneath his feet, and at the top it would halve the flowery cluster at the center of the ornately carved “halo” that surrounds his head. The scepters he holds emanate out to either side of his body, almost like an extended “V” in his lap, and the painting overall has a wonderful, near formal symmetry of composition, that focuses the eye upon its central vertical axis—the head and body of Napoleon—from which various golden and velvety beauties emanate like rays of light.

But it seems to me that while these features, whether the formal composition of *Napoleon*

gold insects on the velvet robe are there because they had been discovered on the robe of Childeric, first King of the Franks in the fifth century, whose coffin had been recently exhumed.

[N]apoleon believed that he was reviving the great tradition of unity and stability by which the ideals of Greece and Rome were transmitted to the Middle Ages...

Kenneth Clark, *Civilisation* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1969), p. 301.

Imperator or the luxurious way in which the emperor's robes and trappings are rendered, are certainly appreciable for their own sake, to engage the work primarily in this way is to give inadequate attention to its historical context and to deny ourselves the kind of understanding that would treat the entire artobject rather than just those features of it that appeal to our senses. For it is clear that the aesthetics of this painting serve its narrative and propagandistic purposes, not the other way 'round. Ingres' point was not to present somewhat symmetrical, lush aesthetics through whatever subject-matter, but rather, he chose the aesthetics he did precisely because it suited the subject-matter.¹⁸⁰ The French were agush over Napoleon, who was reshaping France from a monarchical kingdom into a republic based upon a written code and was achieving magnificent feats of conquest abroad. The Romantic Hero in art emerged as one of the expressions of nationalist pride over Napoleon, and though it eventually developed into a monster of its own, with all sorts of less- and even *non*-Napoleon-like heroes emerging in art and literature, we can never forget the Napoleonic core of the Romantic Hero, lest we mistreat this artistic archetype.

If heroic and nationalist art depicted the "up-side" of the French revolution and Napoleonic wars, then undoubtedly the depictions of terror, horror, and madness that we find in painters such as Goya and Gericault depict the "down-side" of revolution, war, and

¹⁸⁰ Keep this formulation in mind. One of the things that will characterize modern art is that these roles shift. In much of modern art, the narrative or programmatic purposes of an artwork serve its aesthetic ambitions, rather than the other way around. I will talk about this in detail in the next section on aesthetic teleologies.

nationalist fervor. They also express a deep seated cynicism about the so-called “Enlightenment” and its celebration of human reason that had borne such horrific progeny in its tacit recommendation of revolution against rationally unjustifiable monarchic authority. With regard to this more “poisonous” strain of Romanticism, Kenneth Clark says,

Where did this poison come from? Already in the eighteenth century there had been a taste for horror, and even Jane Austen’s heroines had liked to frighten themselves by reading Gothic novels. But it seemed to be a mere fashion that would pass. Then in the 1790’s the horrors became real, and by about 1810 all the optimistic hopes of the eighteenth century had been proved false: the Rights of Man, the discoveries of science, the benefits of industry, all a delusion. The freedoms won by revolution had been immediately lost either by counter-revolution or by the revolutionary government falling into the hands of military dictators.¹⁸¹

We will see that, as with the depiction of the Romantic Hero, the form, style, and other aesthetic features of these works serve distinctively non-aesthetic purposes, specifically the conveyance of fear, horror, and the rejection of Enlightenment rationality and its rationalistic view of man. Consider, for example, one of the most famous examples of Romantic “terror-painting,” Francisco Goya’s *The Third of May, 1808* (Fig. 15—1814), which depicts the execution of Spanish loyalists by Napoleon’s troops. The firing squad forms a faceless, inhuman line, its rifles pointed at its victims, some of whom lie already dead and bloody on the ground, others about to die, gesturing hysterically in their last moments of life; those in the background, waiting their turn for execution, stand with their heads buried in their hands. The rough brushwork and lack of emphasis on figurative detail facilitate the emotive and chaotic power of *The Third of May*, it has an overall

¹⁸¹ Kenneth Clark, *Civilisation*, pp. 306-7.

rough, blotchy look, like clotted, dusty blood, pierced through with shards of light—the glint of the executioners’ rifles and the white of the shirt of a doomed man. All these elements are at work to produce an experience of supreme terror, an emotive rather than aesthetic experience, one inspired by the horrors of a very real war.

In a similar, though more allegorical vein, consider Goya’s *Saturn Devouring One of His Sons* (Fig. 16—1820-22), painted near the end of his career. One of the most horrific images ever depicted on canvas (it was originally a fresco), it has been taken to be an allegory of Time¹⁸² which devours us all just as the god does his son. But I believe that while *Saturn* is obviously somewhat distanced from any particular political or historical subject, it does represent at its deepest level, all the anarchic, pointless, and ultimately mindless slaughter to which Goya was witness (whether directly or indirectly) throughout the bloodthirsty years of the Revolution, Terror, and Napoleonic Wars. Saturn is depicted not so much as a god or even as some supernatural creature (which is how we would expect a personified Time to be portrayed) but as a mindless, frenzied butcher, a meat-grinder that simply devours flesh. And while Time indeed consumes all those who are lucky enough to live out their natural lives, the kind of death with which Goya had become all too familiar was of a much more violent, human sort, the sort where *man* is the destroyer, not Time; where man has lost all that “human reason” ascribed to him by the Enlightenment and has, instead, become the mindless butcher depicted by *Saturn*. This, I

¹⁸² This is a common interpretation of *Saturn*. See, for example, Hartt, *Art: A History of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture*, pp. 802-3.

believe, is what Goya's most visceral work of horror ultimately reveals to us. And it does so, again—and appropriately to the ideas conveyed—through a blotchy, rough, expressive surface, one which renders Saturn a somewhat hazy savage, all bulging eyes, muscles, and gaping maw, and which depicts what is left of his son as a bloody pulp of mangled meat.

The final “type” belonging to this period that I wish to discuss is the Romantic Landscape, specifically its European variety. One of the most powerful effects of the Enlightenment—and, specifically, of the scientific revolution—was the massive industrialization and urbanization that took place in the 19th century. Factories, of course, meant jobs for laborers, and, as economic opportunity was increasingly to be found in the city rather than on the farm, there were startling demographic shifts throughout Europe; people moving from rural areas to cities, which swelled with the new influx of workers. Within one century, Europe was transformed from an overwhelmingly agricultural society into an industrial one.

Industrialization and urbanization had some negative results, one of the most significant being aesthetic; frankly, early industries were extremely dirty, and the new urban areas which had sprung up to house and provide the infrastructural support for the laborers were exceedingly ugly. The concentration and density of population in these cities also took their toll—not only was life dirty and surrounded by ugliness, but it was also, except for elites, crowded and thus, devoid of privacy.

In the arts, these changes produced a deep yearning for the beauty of nature; for people faced with tenements, smoky, sooty, ugly cities, and mind-numbingly mechanical work, the call of nature, of the world which had existed just a century or two earlier, was strong. The appeal of natural beauty in the face of industrial ugliness was thus joined by the re-emergence of a sensibility that one finds at the end of the Renaissance, in works like Shakespeare's *The Tempest*; namely, a sadness and sense of tragedy at the passing from a more innocent, mystical age to a modern, less innocent and more cynical one. The lamentation, notice, is not solely over a type of beauty that has been lost or a type of life that is no longer possible, but over the loss of a kind of *mindset*, of a spiritual state, the loss of a collective childhood and of a sense of wonderment that has been beaten down by the practical attentions of the modern mind.

There is, even further, a religious dimension, that imbues this call of nature with epic, godly power. For as much as the Enlightenment and the rationalistic thinking it promoted challenged monarchic authority and, thus, begat revolution, as much as it propelled science into the modern era and thus produced industrialization, it also confronted religion and confuted the mystical faith which true religiosity requires, producing either weakened, intellectual forms of Deism or downright atheism. But though one's faith in a particular God, type of God, or religious doctrine can be shattered by such a rationalism, human religious sentiment cannot, and if its traditional object—God, the Church, etc...—is removed, it will attach itself to another. Thus, in the art and literature of this period, nature herself is imbued with religiosity and holiness, with the power not only to salve the

hurts and poisons of modern life and industry, but to promote self-understanding, fulfillment, and even redemption.

All these sentiments and sensibilities are wrapped up in Romantic landscape painting and nature poetry; it is indeed, with regard to the Romantic view of nature that painting and poetry come closer together, perhaps, than in any other period of art history. In William Wordsworth's *Lines Written a Few Miles From Tintern Abbey*, for example, we find nature imbued with the ability to heal injured souls and to immunize us not only from the ugliness of modern life, but from that of modern people:

 Though absent long,
These forms of beauty have not been to me,
As is a landscape to a blind man's eye:
But oft, in lonely rooms, and mid the din
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart,
And passing even into my purer mind
With tranquil restoration...

...And this prayer I make,
Knowing that Nature never did betray
The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege,
Through all the years of this our life, to lead
From joy to joy: for she can so inform
The mind that is within us, so impress
With quietness and beauty, and so feed
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
The dreary intercourse of daily life,
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb
Our cheerful faith that all which we behold

Is full of blessings.¹⁸³

Though the Romantic tradition in landscape paintings is most commonly associated with the works of J.W. Turner and John Constable, the artist whose work most completely ties together all the different Romantic elements that lie behind the landscape painting of this period is undoubtedly the German painter, Caspar David Friedrich.¹⁸⁴ Friedrich's paintings of Gothic ruins hauntingly portray a lost, mystical past, while his landscapes celebrate the epic beauty of nature and show us how through nature, humanity communes with the divine. Consider, first, Friedrich's *Monastery Graveyard in the Snow* (Fig. 17—1817-19), a copy only of which remains (the original was destroyed in a fire in 1945). A procession of monks make their way through a grove of gnarled trees and into a ruined cemetery and gothic church in the dead of winter. While interpretations of this picture abound,¹⁸⁵ there is here an unmistakable lamentation of a long-past age. The Church, long abandoned and barely standing as a ruined arch and a fragment of the apse, is clearly not a place where services occur any longer, and so the monks' procession through the cemetery and into

¹⁸³ William Wordsworth, *Lines Written a Few Miles from Tintern Abbey* (1798). Reprinted in Stephen Gill and Duncan Wu, *William Wordsworth: Selected Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); pp. 57-60.

¹⁸⁴ I make this disclaimer, because when talking of Wordsworth and Coleridge it is common to invoke Turner and Constable, and when discussing Friedrich it is typical to invoke Goethe. For most purposes, such groupings are certainly correct, but for my purposes, to find exemplars or archetypes of the Romantic sensibility with regard to nature, Wordsworth and Friedrich seem the most *complete* representatives, in that their work contains all the cultural interests and purposes that I am seeking to give examples of.

¹⁸⁵ We can never underestimate the role that Christianity plays in Friedrich's work; most of his art, at a certain level, can be construed as Christian allegory, and the objects depicted in his paintings and works on paper are usually directly symbolic. See Helmut Borsch-Supan, *Caspar David Friedrich*, tr. Sarah Twohig (Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1990). All the Friedrich plates that I am presenting are scanned from Borsch-Supan's excellent study of Friedrich.

this structure is more a funeral march *for* the church itself—and the lost age it represents—than one that is taking place *within* it. The setting of this scene in winter and the way in which Friedrich conveys a feeling that what we are seeing is a somewhat timeless scene, facilitates our sense of a time that has perished slowly, over the centuries, under the snows of many winters. The monks come across as an almost ghostly procession, lining up each day to ring the funeral bells in their spiritual home, itself a ghost from the past.

For a painting that combines this yearning for an earlier, more mystical time with the attribution to nature of a spiritual, religious dimension, consider Friedrich's *Winter Landscape with Church* (Fig. 18—1811). On a snowy foreground, we have a traveler or pilgrim resting against a rock and holding his hands in prayer towards a crucifix that stands amidst a small grove of fir trees. In the background, enshrouded in a mist or snowy fog, there is the silhouette of a great Gothic church, rising up towards the sky. Our sense of mystery and wonderment is enhanced by the shadowy depiction of the church in the distance, a structure from the past and an enticing and compelling destination. The pilgrim, in seeking to reach this structure, aims to go back in time to an earlier, more religious age, rendered mystical by the ghostly silhouette that the church forms in the haze.

The endowment of nature with a religious dimension is effected by the crucifix standing in the foreground at which our pilgrim has stopped to worship. And the symmetry between the shape of the fir trees in the foreground and that of the shadowy church that rises up

behind them is a direct comparison of natural and religious forms that further invites us to see nature as a place that, as much as the house of worship behind it, is filled with the spirit of God.

Finally, for a work that communicates the notion that it is through nature that man communes with God, consider *Woman in Front of the Setting Sun* (Fig. 19—1818). A woman, her back to us, faces a spectacular landscape of open plains and looming mountains, her hands outstretched as if in welcome of the beauty that lies before her. It is sunset, and the sky is colored a rich and deep orange. From the central rise of the most distant mountain, at the center of the painting, five shafts of red light fan out into the sky, like crimson searchlights probing the sky.

We have here man facing nature alone, much in the way that we ultimately face God; nature herself possesses a godly force—the shafts of light fanning out from the mountain, and received by the outstretched arms of the young woman, are reminiscent of the Bible, and of its depictions of God communicating, through natural and quasi-natural phenomena, with His subjects. The drama and yearning of the piece is enhanced by bringing the viewer into the picture, by having us look over the woman's shoulder, *with* her, if you will, *at* the landscape, rather than us looking *at* her as set *in* the landscape. This technique, of bringing the viewer into the painting by depicting the figures in the painting from behind, so that we can look with them and see what they are seeing, is one which Friedrich uses often—and to great effect—in his work.

In each of these paintings we find Friedrich employing stylistic effects—a hazy silhouette, a cold, wintery setting, or a deep, warm glow—to communicate many of the interests, purposes, and, most of all, sensibilities, of the Romantic age that we have discussed. In order to understand Friedrich’s works in their “wholeness”—that is, not only in their aesthetic dimension but in their role as cultural artifacts—we must, ultimately, understand the sensibility and the interests of this era. Indeed, the purpose of this rather lengthy and in-depth discussion of specific artobjects and periods of art has been to show that in each case, the aesthetic features of these works are employed towards—and, ultimately, must be explained by—the non-aesthetic, programmatic interests which governed their creation. Yes, we perceive the anti-humanist, symbolic aesthetic of the *St. Foy Reliquary*, and we may even have an “aesthetic experience” as a result of this perception, but in order to understand *why* this aesthetic and not some other is being employed—in order to *explain* the aesthetics of this reliquary—we must make appeal to the non-aesthetic context of its creation, a context filled with interest in the Christian Rome of Constantine and Theodoric and with purposes connected to early Christian views of man. Certainly we appreciate the “painterly”¹⁸⁶ style of Goya, and the powerful, textural brushstrokes employed in *The*

¹⁸⁶ Heinrich Wölfflin defines the painterly style in contrast to the linear style: the linear style facilitates the “...perception of the object by its tangible character—in outlines and surfaces...” The painterly style, in contrast, effects

...a perception which is by way of surrendering itself to the mere visual appearance and can abandon ‘tangible’ design. In the former case the stress is laid on the limits of things; in the other the work tends to look limitless. Seeing by volumes and outlines isolates objects: for the painterly eye, they merge. In the one case interest lies more in the perception of individual material objects as solid, tangible bodies; in the other, in the apprehension of the world as a shifting semblance.

Heinrich Wölfflin, *Principles of Art History*, p. 14.

Third of May and *Saturn Devouring One of His Sons*, but how limited our experience of these remarkable paintings would be if we did not, again, ask *why* Goya chose such an aesthetic, and if we did not come to understand the political and social upheavals—and the vast bloodshed that accompanied them—that motivated not only *what* he decided to paint, but *how* he chose to paint it.

Thus, insofar as these fundamentally non-aesthetic cultural interests, purposes, and sensibilities are of supreme importance to the interpretation and comprehension of the vast bulk of art that has been created throughout history, we should expect when we discuss artistic value that much of the evaluation of artobjects will involve considering whether or not the work in question succeeds, through the aesthetic means its creator has employed, in conveying those non-aesthetic interests, purposes, and sensibilities. For an artobject, above all, is a cultural artifact, and the evaluation of the quality of an artifact must take into account the purposes for which that artifact exists. To say that a hammer is a good hammer because it is pretty or smells good would be bizarre, since hammers do not exist for the purpose of being attractive. To say that it is a good hammer only because it does a good job of pulling out nails would also be insufficient, insofar as pulling out nails is only *one* of the hammer's purposes; it also exists for the sake of driving nails. Similarly, to praise or condemn an artwork solely on the basis of its aesthetic properties would be insufficient, since artobjects do not exist solely to appeal aesthetically. Indeed, much of the point of this discussion has been to point out just how many of the aesthetic properties of artobjects, for most of art history, have been subordinated to non-aesthetic interests and

purposes. The purely aesthetic approach to the interpretation and evaluation of art, then, must either leave out the vast majority of artworks, or deal with them in an anachronistic and incomplete manner.

4.22 Aesthetic Teleologies

It has been my assertion that most of the aesthetic features of a good number of the artworks produced throughout much of art history have had, ultimately, broader, non-aesthetic civilizational purposes. The aesthetic features of an artwork are, generally, the language through which artobjects communicate cultural and civilizational interests that are themselves not aesthetic—that lie *outside* of the artobject. We thus will want to discuss in more detail in just what ways the aesthetic teleologies of artworks serve these non-aesthetic teleologies. We will also want to look a little more closely at *how* the aesthetic features of artworks purport to go about these instrumental tasks.

But, of course, there are also purely aesthetic purposes and interests to be found in artobjects. In one sense, all artobjects possess aesthetic properties that are “there for their own sake,” and are, thus, of interest, no matter how ahistorical that interest may be; that is, there are, undoubtedly, aesthetic features of artworks, even of the sort that we have been discussing in the previous section, whose value is not exhausted by their instrumental purpose. They may, for example, belong to aspects of a “personal style,” that are omnipresent in an artists oeuvre, while having no explicit purpose. Our interest in such

features would be ahistorical in that these features may have had no interest to those for whom and the purposes for which the object was created; they are, merely, a by-product of the personal style of the artist. But in the current “aesthetic age,” such features may gain in prominence because of *our* interests.¹⁸⁷

There are, additionally, artobjects for which the aesthetic features have an explicitly central value; that is, the artobject is *primarily* a bearer of distinctly aesthetic interests and purposes. Indeed, there are whole periods and genres within art history in which this is the case, two disparate examples being the Classical period of music in the 18th century and the mid-twentieth century Abstract Expressionist movement in painting. This type of art, where the cultural interests and purposes behind the artobject are themselves primarily aesthetic, is to be found in highly concentrated periods of art history. The Classical era of music (roughly 1750-1825), as already mentioned, is one such period, while the period spanning from, roughly, Impressionism to Minimalist art is another. Some literary modernism also falls into this type of art, although the greatest examples of modernist literature do not.

¹⁸⁷ I'm not sure, actually, if “aesthetic age” is a correct description of the artistic scene any more. Certainly for a good part of the modern era and then the postmodern era that followed it, we were in a distinctly aesthetic age when it came to artistic interests and purposes. Insofar, however, as art has become increasingly political in the last several decades, its purpose, increasingly, to represent the “interests” of various “disenfranchised peoples” —e.g. gays and lesbians, women, “people of color.” etc...—we have probably returned to an instrumental, non-aesthetic age in the arts.

In each case, the ultimate value of a work¹⁸⁸ will depend on the degree to which its end (its aesthetic, non-aesthetic, or combined aesthetic/non-aesthetic) “effect” is a successful realization of its aesthetic and non-aesthetic purposes as realized through its aesthetic means. (A lot more on this to come later.) The first order of business for *this* section is to discuss in a little more detail how precisely, aesthetic means are employed to communicate the non-aesthetic teleologies that we discussed in the previous section. These aesthetic means may have their own “local” aesthetic teleologies, and the second task will be to look more closely at the idea of an “aesthetic teleology” with an eye to those aesthetic teleologies which exist for their own sake, resulting in artobjects whose primary purpose is to realize those aesthetic teleologies. The bulk of that section will be spent, as the last section was, in discussing specific artworks which are motivated by predominantly aesthetic teleologies and which are to be consumed primarily for the purpose of their aesthetic effects.

With the aim of getting a better grasp of the notion of an aesthetic teleology, let’s examine a little more closely just how the aesthetic features of artworks fulfill non-aesthetic purposes and interests in the manner that we discussed in the previous section. I spoke there, for example, of how the rough, textured style of Goya facilitated the conveyance of

¹⁸⁸ “Ultimate value” is an important qualification, because we are here talking about the evaluation of the “whole” artobject. Of course, such a notion of evaluation is of interest primarily to aestheticians. In most *critical* contexts, what is going on is a partial evaluation of an artobject or an evaluation of some feature or features of that artobject. Thus, even for an object whose primary “purpose” is non-aesthetic, there may be numerous critical contexts in which it is the aesthetic features of the object that are under scrutiny. The degree, however, to which this type of analysis of the object becomes obsessive or overpowering is the degree to which such criticism becomes dangerously ahistorical and in jeopardy of failing to properly treat the object in its entirety.

a sense of terror and horror and how such an expression reflected nineteenth century interests regarding the “down side” of the Revolution and Napoleonic wars. To take another example, I explained how the anti-humanist, symbolic style of pre-Gothic medieval art exhibits the deep cultural/religious conviction that the events of this world are themselves merely symbolic of events that are taking place within the supernatural sphere. Indeed, in all of the examples I gave in the previous section, I spoke of the aesthetic features of artworks as facilitators or communicators of a cultural vision. Can we be a bit more precise about how these aesthetic features of artworks achieve this kind of cultural communication and focus on the aesthetic purposes or teleologies that are involved in this communication, with an eye to talking about them in their purer forms in Modern art?

Let’s begin with the example of pre-Gothic medieval art. In what way do the aesthetic features of this art—and let’s stick with our example from the *Gospel Book of Otto III* (fig. 10)—facilitate or communicate the cultural interests that I have asserted they do?

Let’s first describe the illumination in a little more detail. The thing that stands out the most is the cartoon-like rendering of the figures. Indeed, all the figures have virtually the same facial expression and features; variation amongst them is affected purely through the different colors of their robes and the varying color of their hair; some are further differentiated by the fact that they wear beards. The second stylistic feature of the illumination that strikes us is its flatness and the lack of a realistic setting; this event, if it occurred, certainly did not happen *here* (the architecture of the structure in the background is distinctly non-ancient and not in the style of Near Eastern buildings). There

is little to no use of perspective or scaling in the picture—the figures in the background are only minimally smaller than those in the foreground and the size of the structure is utterly disproportionate to the rest of the picture. Finally, there is obvious exaggeration and distortion of the figures, beyond their cartoon-like appearance; The arm with which Christ gestures is much longer than his other arm, and both of St. Peter's arms, as they stretch towards Christ, seem to elongate at the forearms and hands.

Now, assuming that these stylistic features of the illumination were intentionally rendered in this manner,¹⁸⁹ we may ask in what way they facilitate or communicate the

¹⁸⁹ This is, actually, a quite important point. It is popularly said that the reason medieval art is lacking in scale or proportion is because artists had "lost" the ability to draw objects to scale. On this view, this ability was "regained" in the Renaissance in the same manner that perspective was, as a part of the rediscovery of the works of Classical antiquity and through the evolution of geometric expertise and its application to visual representation.

This explanation for the unrealistic, not-to-scale, quality of medieval art proceeds from a visual inspection of popularly displayed medieval artworks, but it does not take into account other less popularly displayed works, and it fails to understand the nature of artistic practice during this time. A fascinating drawing of a man standing beneath an elephant, taken from a medieval manuscript (Matthew Paris, 1255 A.D.—Fig. 20), supports the point, made by Gombrich, that the medievals were perfectly cognizant of proportion and were capable of representing the objects that they saw to scale, but that they were simply not interested in doing so. Indeed, the very notion that in making art one paints, sculpts, etc... something *from nature* is itself alien to the medieval manner of creating art. Artists did not paint things from life; rather, they painted "types," e.g. "standard saint #1" or "standard apostle #2," on which they had been trained as apprentices. These types were inserted into traditional arrangements or compositions which themselves had precedent in preceding artworks. Gombrich says,

...the whole idea of sitting down in front of a person or object and copying it was alien to them [the medievals]. It is all the more remarkable that, on certain occasions, artists in the thirteenth century did in fact draw something from life. They did it when they had no conventional pattern on which they could rely...

He goes on to say of the drawing of the elephant,

This elephant had been sent by St. Louis, King of France, to Henry III in 1255. It was the first that had been seen in England...[W]hat is interesting is that in this case the artist was very anxious to get the right proportions. Between the legs of the elephant there is a Latin

cultural/religious interests that I have continually asserted they do. Well, to us, looking at them hundreds of years later, they do so by inference. Given our knowledge of the religious and cultural attitudes of the early Middle Ages and given our knowledge of the history of artistic styles, we can “deduce” the non-aesthetic cultural purposes of these features of the illumination. The medieval mind saw the world as a stage upon which the “play of life” was conducted, a play which was merely an analogue for a far more important drama that was occurring and in which the forces of Heaven battle the forces of Hell. What was of supreme importance to the medieval mind, then, was not the specific nature of temporally bound events and things but rather, the transcendent, heavenly events and things that they were taken to symbolize. Given this understanding of the medieval mind and given our knowledge of the history of artistic styles as they progressed from classical antiquity up to this point, we can make the following inference: the reason why there is so little attention to details of representation and proportion is because such details were of no significance to the medieval mind. If one is creating an image for consumption by a medieval audience, and if the audience believes that all temporal events and objects have purely symbolic significance, then what would be the *point* of spending a lot of time

inscription saying: “By the size of the man portrayed here you may imagine the size of the beast represented here. To us this elephant may look a little odd, but it does show, I think, that medieval artists...were very well aware of such things as proportions, and that, if they ignored them so often, they did so not out of ignorance but simply because they did not think they mattered.

Gombrich, *The Story of Art*, pp. 196-7.

and attention on detailed, realistic portrayals of temporal events and objects?¹⁹⁰ What is important is *that which is symbolized*, not the symbolic representation itself. And so the artist would create an image whose aesthetic features are designed to get the viewer to contemplate that which is symbolized. The deliberate distortions in this picture—the elongation of Christ’s active arm and of the arms of St. Peter as he reaches out to Christ—facilitate the concentration of the viewer on Christ’s act and it is this act that is at the center of the symbolic importance of the illumination.

For the medieval audience, of course, the communication would be much more direct. They would have had, for the most part, no knowledge of the art of classical antiquity—to them, this simply *was* the style in which art was produced. Their eyes would have been drawn to the central figure of Christ, as ours are, and the perception of the elongated arms of St. Peter and Christ would have fixed their attention, as it does ours, on the act depicted—the washing of the feet and the blessing of the Apostles. A realistic rendering of either the features of the figures or the scale and proportion of the figures relative to each other and to the structure in the background would not only have baffled the medieval audience, but would have distracted the eye—and thus, the mind—from Christ’s

¹⁹⁰ This interpretation is bolstered by consideration of other periods in the history of art. We know for example, that the humanism of Ancient Greek sculpture stems not only from their belief in the inherent dignity and worth of man, but also from their broader interest in nature, in the spatio/temporally bounded portion of existence (although they also had a robust theology and mythology). It thus makes sense that they would give a great attention to the realistic, proportioned depiction of the human body, since they were interested in natural objects *qua* natural objects. But for the medievals, who had little interest in the spatio/temporally bound world—indeed, who thought that this world was largely a corrupt, dangerous place and whose relationship to the transcendent universe is at best symbolic—it would make little sense to give such attention to realism and proportion.

act.

While the illumination's aesthetic features communicate its non-aesthetic purpose to us through a combination of inference and direct perceptual "communication," it would have done so for the medievals purely through perceptual communication; for them, the symbol would have required no mediation.

Obviously, what I am suggesting is some sort of causal connection between the way something is rendered, its aesthetics—in this case, the lack of realism and the deliberate distortion of the arms of St. Peter and Christ—and the perception and thus, the "understanding" of the object in question. This might bring me dangerously close to some kind of inductive aesthetic "law" to the effect that "artobjects with aesthetic features p, d, and q typically produce x perceptual result and, in context, u-type understanding," something which if articulated too rigorously would subject me to the usual blitzkrieg of counterexamples and thought-experiments concerning possible worlds. But clearly, something like this *is* in operation here—there is a very strong sense that too much realism in the rendering of the figures (or in their scaling relative to one another and the structure) would concentrate the focus of the viewer too much on the representation, rather than on that which the representation symbolizes. It would be, in short, a distraction from the real purpose of the illumination if we, faced with a realistic rendering of Christ, Peter and the others in the manner, say, of Classical Antiquity, were to spend a lot of time contemplating the sublime curvature of Peter's back or the fine musculature of Christ's chest and

abdomen. And to describe this relationship between early-medieval, anti-humanist aesthetics and our manner of understanding the works of art that employ them as accidental would be to stretch credulity (or perhaps, incredulity) too far; it just seems very clear that getting the viewer to look beyond the image—to not dwell too much on the details or rendering of the image in question—to the symbolic meaning behind it, is both an explicit and implicit purpose of early medieval aesthetics. Medieval artists painted and sculpted things this way precisely for the sake of this perceptual and cognitive consequence.

We thus have a complex aesthetic purpose—“I will render Christ, Peter and the Apostles in this manner.” (“this manner” unpacking of course, into a multitude of pictorial properties) This aesthetic purpose is itself imbedded within a larger, *non*-aesthetic purpose— “I will convey the spiritual import of Christ blessing and washing the feet of his followers,” for which the aesthetic features of the illumination serve as facilitator. “If I render Christ, Peter and the Apostles in this manner, it will facilitate my communication of the symbolic importance of this act of Christ.” Of course, this is to put the matter (deliberately, for the sake of clarity) in the crudest, starkest terms, and I want to emphasize the extent to which such intentions and purposes are typically implicit or tacit on the part of the individual artist. Having been apprenticed to a master craftsman and a workshop, the artist would have been trained in this manner of representation. In fact, despite the variations in style that different schools contemporaneous to that of our artist may have represented, a non-realistic, anti-humanist aesthetic would have been ubiquitous

in pre-Gothic medieval workshops, and so the intentions that I have referred to with regards to these aesthetic features and the non-aesthetic purposes they serve would have been collective; spread out, that is, throughout the practitioners of the style, and not necessarily conscious on the part of any particular practitioner.

So, once again to anticipate the theory of value that will be employed later, we can see that this illumination can succeed or fail on, at least, several fronts. If we focus our attention purely on the stylistic features of the picture, we can discern some of the aesthetic intentions behind it—the anti-humanist, non-realistic rendering of the figures, for example—and determine whether these intentions have been successfully realized. We can also focus our attention less “locally,” discern the primary non-aesthetic intention behind the illumination—to convey the spiritual import of Christ’s act—and determine whether, overall, the picture succeeds in this purpose. If we were to take the object most completely, however, we would want to understand *both* the medium-specific intentions behind the illumination *and* the way in which these aesthetic intentions are in the service of the non-aesthetic intentions of the work. Our criterion of success would then be not only whether the picture succeeds in conveying its non-aesthetic intentions or whether it achieves the type of rendering that they seek, but whether *through this type of rendering*—through these aesthetics—*the picture succeeds in conveying its non-aesthetic intention.*¹⁹¹

¹⁹¹ I say that this is the most “complete” way to analyze the illumination because to merely consider it under its aesthetic aspect is to neglect the extent to which the object is a cultural artifact. Contrawise, to merely consider the illumination as a cultural artifact—to see whether it succeeds in conveying its cultural

4.3 Aesthetic Purposes as Ends

Now that we have had sufficient exposure to the concept of an aesthetic teleology or purpose and enough time to work with the concept and to see how aesthetic purposes have served non-aesthetic purposes, it is time now to consider artobjects whose ultimate purposes are steeped in aesthetic interests. In the previous section on non-aesthetic teleologies we spoke at length about how artobjects with ultimately non-aesthetic ends are served by their subordinate aesthetic purposes; it is now time to talk about artobjects whose ends are themselves largely aesthetic. The periods and media in which we find the greatest number of artobjects of this type are the Classical period of music (spanning roughly from 1750-1825) as well as parts of the modern period and the period in the history of painting and sculpture spanning from Impressionism through early post-modern art. (We also find this type of art in many periods of the history of dance, but this is an area of art that I am not in a position to say much about.)

The point of this survey, of course, is to facilitate what will be a highly complex constellation of evaluative positions. By distinguishing different types of purposes, some aesthetic, some non-aesthetic, and discussing the various combinations in which they can occur, we provide a varied enough teleological base to allow us maximally fine-grained and subtle evaluations of artobjects, at many different levels of description. Given that

information—is to not treat it as an artobject; artobjects, unlike other forms of communication, convey their information through aesthetic properties.

critics almost never merely ascribe “good” and “bad” to artworks, but rather evaluate them at many different levels of interest, we want an axiology—and a metaphysical foundation for that axiology—that will make such varied evaluative discriminations possible. Hence this detailed discussion of aesthetic and non-aesthetic teleologies.

It is an oversimplification to say that as the history of painting progressed from Roman wall painting through the modern era art became more self-conscious or self-reflexive, but for our purposes this is not a bad characterization of how the ends of art can gradually change from being dominated by non-aesthetic interests of the sort discussed in the previous section to being dominated by aesthetic ones. It is hard to say when this shift really began in painting—undoubtedly, one can find such art dotted all over the art-historical landscape—but there are some clear early indicators of this “aesthetic turn,” the greatest, perhaps, being J.M.W. Turner.¹⁹² Turner’s early work represents an almost orthodox version of the Romantic sensibility in landscape art, described at some length in the previous section. Particularly strong in this early work is a loyalty to tradition, one in which the romantic view of nature was combined with a nostalgia for the architecture of classical antiquity. Turner’s *Dido Building at Carthage* (Fig. 21—1815) thus calls into mind Claude Lorrain’s *Landscape with Sacrifice to Apollo* (1662)¹⁹³ and Thomas Cole’s

¹⁹² Some might claim that the kind of art I am talking about starts with El Greco, and I would not necessarily disagree with such an assessment, but I think the case of Turner is more solid.

¹⁹³ Indeed, Turner explicitly made the connection between his early work and Lorrain’s, demanding that *Dido Building at Carthage* be displayed alongside *Landscape with Sacrifice to Apollo*. See Gombrich, *The Story of Art*, p. 492.

remarkable *Course of Empire* series.

Turner's late work, however, shows an increasing shift in interest from the presentation of the Romantic sensibility through specific stylistic means to an interest in those means themselves, with the landscape subject-matter and Romantic emotional content at least partly subservient to them. Look, for example, at his *The Slave Ship* (Fig. 22—1840) and *Steamer in a Snowstorm* (Fig. 23—1842). In each of these paintings, we are witness to purely aesthetic interests that rival, in their significance and power, Turner's Romanticism. Yes, the swirling browns, whites, and greys that conspire, under heavily textured piles of paint, to render the steamer at the center of *Steamer in a Snowstorm* nothing but a black blot, convey some of the emotion and awe of nature that are so much a part of the Romantic sensibility. But there is also clearly a purer interest here in motion itself—and in the *aesthetics of motion*—as well as in paint itself. Indeed, though Turner is often credited with having anticipated both Impressionism and Expressionism, it seems to me that the really startling anticipation in works like *Steamer in a Snowstorm* is of Abstract Expressionism, anticipation of artists like de Kooning, and his heavily textured, gestural, even violent brushstrokes. The same is true for *The Slave Ship*. On one level, it can be treated as a classic Romantic seascape, conveying through its dramatic colors and subject-matter the epic scale of nature and of man's confrontation with nature. But this content is rendered at a level of abstraction that begs us to pay attention to what are clearly more purely aesthetic interests and purposes regarding, again, motion, paint, and, more so than in *Steamer in a Snowstorm*, color.

In Turner's work, there is a balance between aesthetic and non-aesthetic interests. If we take his corpus as a whole and witness the progression of his painting, we might say that this balance began with the weight of interests resting more on the non-aesthetic side and evolved to a point where it sat more firmly on the aesthetic side. But the Romantic sensibility was never abandoned and continued to play a significant, if slightly secondary, role in Turner's later art. As we shift our focus to the modern era, however, we will find the balance between aesthetic and non-aesthetic interests becoming less balanced, so to speak, with the weight of interest and purpose falling more and more heavily on the aesthetic side until, when we reach the purer abstraction of some of the Abstract Expressionists and Minimalists, aesthetic interests dominate the cultural and civilizational purposes that are the grounds for all art.

As already mentioned, this process can be described as the emergence of an ever more developed self-consciousness on the part of artists and the artobjects they created. Artobjects, as we have discussed, are at bottom artifacts that convey cultural and civilizational interests through aesthetic means—through the various artistic media. What happened in the modern period was that *the interests conveyed increasingly became identical with the means of their conveyance*. To put it more plainly, artists became more and more interested in the very process of art and art-making itself.

For centuries, artists had employed the most imaginative, remarkable stylistic means in conveying the non-aesthetic civilizational interests of their times—whether the humanist

aesthetics of Classical antiquity, the anti-humanist, iconographic aesthetics of the Middle Ages or the expressive, dramatic aesthetics of the Romantic era—but in the modern period, beginning, roughly, with Turner—but getting underway in real earnest with the art of the Barbizon school and Impressionism—artists became increasingly aware of and interested in those aesthetic means themselves. It's as if artists realized, “Hey, for all this time we have been employing a vast array of artistic techniques and methods to convey all sorts of ideas, stories, histories, feelings, and moods. But these techniques and methods, indeed, the very processes of art-making itself, are quite interesting in their own right. Let's make an art whose real purpose is the display of these techniques, methods, and processes.”

It is important to understand the cultural forces that were an integral part of producing this “aesthetic turn.” Indeed, the massive changes that occurred in painting between Turner's time and the turn of the century were due to the collision of several societal, cultural, and technological developments.

On the social and economic front, industrialization did much more than produce the ugly urban landscape that drove artists to the romantic depiction of nature in the first half of the nineteenth century, as discussed in 4.21. Industrialization and the social and economic forces it unleashed transformed the nature of the art consuming public—a transformation that fundamentally altered the relationship between artists and their public—and it also transformed attitudes concerning the proper subject-matter of painting, in ways that had a

profound effect on the art of the *second* half of the nineteenth century.

In previous centuries, the art consuming public consisted of a very narrow band of wealthy and educated patrons, whether princes or kings, bishops or popes, landed aristocracy or merchant capitalists. In these centuries, the taste and desiderata of patron and artist—of art consumer and art producer—were relatively in sync. But in the decades following the industrial revolution, due both to changes in economic demographics—the emergence of a significant middle class—and in the increasing mass-production of decorative and even “fine” arts, the tastes and predilections of artist and art-consumer became increasingly at variance, with much of the art-consuming public becoming less “sophisticated” in their taste, and more and more of the artists become more revolutionary in their subject matter and methods. With Gombrich,

The patron’s taste was fixed in one way: the artist did not feel it in him to satisfy that demand. If he was forced to do so for want of money, he felt he was making ‘concessions’, and lost his self-respect and the esteem of others. If he decided to follow only his inner voice, and to reject any commission which he could not reconcile with his idea of art, he was in danger of starvation. Thus a deep cleavage developed in the nineteenth century between those artists whose temperament or convictions allowed them to follow conventions and to satisfy the public’s demand, and those who gloried in their self-chosen isolation. What made matters worse was that the Industrial Revolution and the decline of craftsmanship, the rise of a new middle class which often lacked tradition, and the production of cheap and shoddy goods which masqueraded as ‘Art’, had brought about a deterioration of public taste.

The distrust between artists and the public was generally mutual. To the successful businessman, an artist was little better than an impostor who demanded ridiculous prices for something that could hardly be called honest work. Among the artists, on the other hand, it became an acknowledged pastime to ‘shock the bourgeois’ out of his complacency...Artists began to see themselves as a race

apart...¹⁹⁴

This increasing gulf between the desires of the art consuming public and the artistic interests of artists is one cause of the change in both style and subject matter of late nineteenth century art. The public wanted traditional “academic” subject matter—paintings with morals, so to speak, in them—angelic cherubs and cupids, voluptuous pillowy nudes, or depictions of great historic battles, champions and heroes, etc...—presented in traditional styles. Artists, on the other hand, increasingly tired of what they perceived as such overblown and artificial subjects, rendered in an idealized fashion, favoring non-traditional subjects taken directly from real life, and painted, as often as not, in the outdoors, in a sketchier, more “impressionistic” fashion. Thus, we see, from Barbizon painters such as Gustav Courbet through the High Impressionism of Claude Monet and Auguste Renoir, depictions of ordinary people doing ordinary things—a barmaid standing behind her bar, journeyman talking on a country road, or a group of friends gathered at a restaurant by the canal, eating, drinking, and laughing. And these scenes were presented, not in the carefully measured hyper-realistic style of academic art, but rather in the manner of ordinary perception. How does a group of people, laughing, talking and gesturing *really* look when seen at a glance? How do fields of flowers, tall grasses, and trees really appear under the almost blinding light of the midday sun? Treating painting in this way, as a proxy for the eye rather than a conveyer of meaning and history resulted in a new kind of “realism,” a realism of perception rather than a realism of anatomy, proportion, and perspective.

¹⁹⁴ Gombrich, *The Story of Art*, pp. 501-2.

Industrialization also elevated the status of the working man. Where in previous centuries peasants and serfs were not considered worthy subjects for painting—except, of course, in some of the painters of the Northern Renaissance such as Hieronymous Bosch and Pieter Breugel the Elder—with industrialization and the “working class philosophies” of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, the laborer began to be seen, at least by artists, in a different light. This cultural shift also had a profound effect on the subject-matter of art, which can be seen at its purest in the work of Francois Millet, whose depictions of field hands, stone-breakers and other physical laborers of every sort, brought a poise and quiet dignity, even a measure of romanticism, to his subjects.

But the thing that perhaps most profoundly influenced the aesthetic turn in art was the emergence of photography. This, more than any other factor, affected the *way* in which painting was done, the manner in which subjects were presented. A photograph could, after all, depict an object in an anatomically and perspectiveally correct manner far more effectively than a painting could. Painting was left, therefore, to discover ways of depicting subject that were not possible in photographs. This, more than anything else, was the direct cause of the development of the Impressionist “blotch and dab” technique of painting.

Understand also that the emergence photography also had an effect on the subject-matter of painting. For centuries, in addition to serving an artistic purpose, painting was the medium through which people and events were recorded; whether a coronation, battle, or

ordinary portrait, people and human events were recorded via the brush and canvas. With the development of photography, painting was no longer required for this function.

So, the aesthetic turn taken by painting was the result of fundamental civilizational transformations—economic, technological, and societal—which changed not only what artists painted but *how* they choose to paint. The new “aesthetic” art originally had a very limited scope—it was an art for artists—rejected by mainstream critics and by the public at large as “ugly,” “unfinished looking,” and “superficial” in its subject matter. But, gradually, the aesthetic turn caught on, and interest in the means and manner of painting became of more and more ubiquitous interest.¹⁹⁵

The triumph of modernism is the result of the utter pervasiveness of the aesthetic turn throughout the artistic and critical community, as well as its embrace by the broader art consuming public. Thus, from the Barbizon school on through Impressionism, the march towards a purer and purer aesthetic art proceeded apace; this included color-theory motivated artistic movements such as Pointillism and Fauvism, gesture-and-paint-stroke movements like Abstract Expressionism, and shape-and-plane movements like Cubism, Supermatism, and certain instances of Minimalism. Such movements, each in their own way, emphasized and displayed a different part of the materials, processes, and aesthetics of art-making. Consider the following remark by one of the central figures of Abstract

¹⁹⁵ To the point, now, where Impressionism is by far the most popular type of art from the point of view of the mass art-consuming public.

Expressionism, Ad Reinhardt, on this subject of the turn that art took in the modern era,

The one object of fifty years of abstract art is to present art-as-art and as nothing else, to make it into the one thing it is only, separating and defining it more and more, making it purer and emptier, more absolute and more exclusive—non-objective, non-representational, non-figurative, non-imagist, non-expressionist, non-subjective. The only and one way to say what abstract art or art-as-art is, is to say what it is not.

The one subject of a hundred years of modern art is that awareness of art of itself, of art preoccupied with its own process and means, with its own identity and distinction, art concerned with its own unique statement, art conscious of its own evolution and history and destiny...¹⁹⁶

The evolution to an art whose primary interest is itself art-oriented or aesthetic, however, is, as we've seen, a gradual one. We find, even in many of the abstract artists, a combination of aesthetic interests with interest in things that ultimately lie outside of the artobject. Consider, for example, Wassily Kandinsky's, *Glass Painting with Sun* (Fig. 24—1910) and *Composition VI* (Fig. 25—1913). The landscape in *Glass Painting with Sun* is merely the basis—an excuse, really—for an exercise in color and motion. Barely discernible figures such as the leaping horsemen on the left and hardly recognizable structures and masses, such as the castles and mountains in the center, serve merely as a launching pad for aesthetic exploration. Kandinsky, at this point in his career, was beginning the process of abandoning figurative and representational painting altogether. What we have in *Glass Painting with Sun* is a leaping dance of color and form; it is closer, indeed, to a modern musical composition than to a traditional landscape painting. As

¹⁹⁶ From *Art International*, Vol. 8, No. 2, 1964, reprinted in Clifford Ross, ed., *Abstract Expressionism: Creators and Critics* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1990), p. 154. This fine collection includes statements from each of the major Abstract Expressionists, joint group statements, and an excellent selection of critical writings from contemporaneous newspapers, magazines and journals. I will make heavy use of this anthology in my discussion of Abstract Expressionism.

notes jump out from a modernist musical composition, in various chaotic tones, so Kandinsky's horsemen bound from the hills, and his castles spring from the mountains.

This is also the case in the truly non-representational *Composition VI*. Here, all pretense at a landscape or other type of representational scenario has been abandoned in favor of a purer abstraction.¹⁹⁷ We are presented with a remarkable tumult of colors, shades and lines, and masses built up out of them, and yet the effect is not, ultimately, a hard or cold one, due largely to the extraordinary way in which Kandinsky makes oil paint take on the soft, bleeding quality of watercolor or airbrush. The lines, which stab into the masses of color from the left, bottom and top, lend a sense of perpetual motion to the picture, and once again, invite a comparison with modernist music, with its leaping, jumping jabbing tones.

This treatment of Kandinsky's work as a kind of visual music is not only invited by our examination of his pictures. We know that Kandinsky's explorations into abstraction were, in large part, influenced by his growing relationship with the great modernist composer Arnold Schoenberg, and Kandinsky's move against figurative painting has often been compared to Schoenberg's abandonment of the tonal system of music. Indeed, Franz Marc, a member of Kandinsky's art-group, *Der Blau Reiter*, wrote to fellow member

¹⁹⁷ Some purport to find figures in *Composition VI*. The masses of color and lines at the center-right of the picture might be seen as a horse rearing on its hind legs and some of the shapes to the back and left of the canvas might be viewed as mountains. I am not persuaded by this way of seeing *Composition VI*, but even if we are to grant it, the level of abstraction makes it clear where Kandinsky's real interests lie.

Auguste Macke,

Can you conceive of music in which tonality is completely abolished? It kept reminding me of the great creation by Kandinsky which leaves not the slightest trace of tonality...., and of the leaping splashes in some of his works when I heard such music in which each intonation given is a kind of white linen screen stretched between the splashes of colours.¹⁹⁸

The connection with music also reveals the ways in which Kandinsky's art represent interests in things that lie outside the artobject, namely, human emotions. As he discusses in his *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, Kandinsky believed that there was a direct link between music, color, and emotion (Gombrich, indeed, refers to Kandinsky's work as "colour music"¹⁹⁹ as do many other art-historians and critics). Kandinsky was, at bottom, a mystic, in search of a powerful new idiom with which to present human emotion and feeling. The high level of abstraction in his work, and the degree to which the aesthetics are "pure" rather than representational, indicates the degree to which the subject-matter—human emotions—is itself abstract and devoid of representational content. Kandinsky, famously, talked about how the color red affects our emotions like the sound of a trumpet, and, relative to what we are discussing now, what this shows is that the abstract idiom is best-suited to the presentation of emotions in their pure form.

¹⁹⁸ This quote is reprinted in Annete and Luc Vezin, *Kandinsky and Der Blaue Reiter* (Paris: Pierre Terrail, 1992), p. 110. The Vezins go on to say,

But beyond being a gesture of solidarity or of simple curiosity towards another innovator.... a closer bond united the two artists. Kandinsky placed the relationship between music and painting at the centre of his thoughts; for his part, Schoenberg had recently started to paint. Both of them published their theories in books appearing within a few months of one another, Schoenberg's *Treatise on Harmony* and Kandinsky's *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*.

¹⁹⁹ *The Story of Art*, p. 570.

Once again, then, we have here an artist who presents us with *both* non-aesthetic and aesthetic interests. On the one hand, Kandinsky's interests are clearly non-aesthetic, insofar as he is searching for an aesthetic means through which to present pure human emotions. Thus, if the Romantic style was well-suited to the expression of a particular type of emotion, say, that of nationalistic fervor, or of the human longing for natural beauty, Kandinsky discovered that the abstract style is best suited to treat of emotions when stripped of any particular object. The deliberate disarray of color, line and shape, and the tumultuous motion of Kandinsky's paintings are appropriate to the chaotic, jumping, constantly moving stream of un-objectified human feelings, much the way that the deliberate convolution of sentences and phrases that we find in the writings of Joyce and Faulkner are appropriate to capturing the inherently convoluted and associationist nature of human streams of consciousness.

On the other hand, we also see in Kandinsky the type of artistically self-conscious interests that I discussed earlier with my references to Pointillism, Fauvism, and Abstract Expressionism, and we see them in a much stronger and more dominant realization than we did in the work of an artist like Turner. Kandinsky was not only interested in how best to represent human emotions. He was also interested in the *inherent emotional qualities of colors* and of the interplay of forms and lines. And while this is a very different sort of interest from an interest in *representing* emotions, its result—the type of art that is made from it—may be almost identical; this is why such competing types of interests find such harmony in Kandinsky's art. The interest in finding a way to express human emotion and

feeling, taken as distinct from any specific *object* of emotion or feeling results in abstract art (because human emotions and feelings, stripped of their object, have no specific representational content), and the interest in exploring the inherently emotional properties of one of the key parts of the painter's medium—color—also results in abstract art. Of the first, ultimately non-aesthetic interest, with its quintessentially aesthetic results and with a view to the more purely aesthetic interests we have discussed, Gombrich says,

If the doctrine was right that what mattered in art was not the imitation of nature but the expression of feelings through the choice of colours and lines, it was legitimate to ask whether art could not be made more pure by doing away with all subject-matter and relying exclusively on the effects of tones and shapes. The example of music which gets on so well without the crutch of words had often suggested to artists and critics the dream of a pure visual music.²⁰⁰

So while a painter like Kandinsky presents us with an art that was, to an almost unprecedented degree, interested in the very medium of painting itself—interested, that is, in the inherent properties of colors, shapes and lines—he still has one foot in the previous millennium of art; in an art whose interest is in things that lie outside the artobject. What will happen with the advent of the even purer abstraction of the Abstract Expressionists and post-modernists—the Minimalists and color-field painters, for example—is that the form, style, and “manner” of art, will become virtually identical with its content. The civilizational/cultural interest that is presented through this art is the phenomenon of art itself; this is, indeed, the culmination of the forces which began after industrialization.

What this means for a medium such as painting is that this “purely aesthetic” art is an art

²⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 569.

that is interested predominantly in the materials and processes of painting; in the texture of paint, the process of its application, the two-dimensionality of the picture plane, and other such concerns, which have to do with the features of painting and paintings and do not refer to anything outside the painting.²⁰¹

Before we get to art of this sort, however, let's consider a few more examples where the interests involved are more mixed, so that we may, through the contrast, more satisfactorily fill out this conception of aesthetic interests and purposes and the manner in which they become of interest for their own sake. To this end, let's look at two portraits. The first is *Pieter van den Broecke* by the great Dutch master, Frans Hals. (Fig. 26—1633) The second is *Portrait of Madame Matisse—The Green Line* (Fig. 27—1905), by Henri Matisse.

So many of Hals's greatest portraits and group pictures possess what I like to call a *journalistic flavor*. They have an air of spontaneity and authenticity that has to do primarily with the un-posed appearance of the sitter and with Hals's uncanny ability to paint figures who seem to breathe life. The portrait of *Pieter van den Broecke* is an exemplary example of what I am talking about; the aesthetics of this painting, the manner

²⁰¹ It should be remarked that such a "purely aesthetic" interest that I am discussing is really a vanishing point. Even the most purely aesthetic examples of Abstract Expressionism, for example, involve interests in extra-artistic things, the psychology of the painter, for example. Nevertheless, I believe that we can make type or kind-distinctions between art like Abstract Expressionism and that of the Renaissance, for example, on these grounds. More on this later in my discussions of Abstract Expressionist art.

in which the paint is applied, and the way the features of the sitter are rendered, all work together to convey this sense of spontaneity, authenticity, and life. First, notice van den Broecke's posture. He leans back against his chair, one arm crooked at the waist, the other resting on his cane, with his head just slightly tilted back—we have caught this man mid-conversation or in the process of relating an amusing anecdote. The highly painterly, even somewhat sketchy, rendering of the figure, and the rough, at some places patchy, application of the paint adds to this sense of authentic “now-ness;” that this picture is a snapshot of this man from life rather than a posed study done in a studio. The rendering also gives the picture a sense of motion; not enough to affect our perception of this picture as being one of a sitter, but rather, one that gives van den Broecke a sense of life; we can see him having just gestured vehemently with his left arm or imagine him tossing back his head in laughter. This sense of life and vivacity is further realized through the slightly tousled, unruly state of his hair and in the healthy, red coloring of his cheeks.

The point is that the aesthetic qualities of this painting—whether the way the figure is rendered, the posture in which it is posed, the manner in which the paint is applied, the coloring of the face—all conspire together to convey a realistic portrait of a real man. None of these stylistic features are there primarily “for their own sake.” Certainly we might admire the masterful way in which Hals renders van den Broecke's lace collar or appreciate any of the other aesthetic features I have discussed, in abstraction from the picture itself, but this is clearly not these features' *point*. We are supposed to see the man *through* these stylistic features; the man is not there to provide an excuse to appreciate

them.

Exactly the opposite is the case with the painting by Matisse. In this case, the face of Madame Matisse becomes an excuse for an aesthetic exercise, rather than the aesthetic features of the painting being a means to our perception of *it*. As the grandmaster of the Fauvist style of painting, Matisse's interests lay squarely in the area of color. It is unlikely that Mme. Matisse looked much like her portrait, and there is no sense at all that the array of colors, lines, shades, and texture of paint is here for the purpose of creating much of a portrait of any kind, whether posed, journalistic, or psychological; indeed, Matisse himself said of *Madame Matisse*, "Above all, I did not create a woman, I made a painting."²⁰²

We are lucky to have a very good sense of the theoretical and aesthetic sources of Fauvism. The foundation, of course, is the Impressionist movement—and, specifically, the style of Monet and Pissaro—with its abandonment of the traditional linear and painterly modes of painting in favor of the blotch-and-dab approach,²⁰³ where objects, light, and shadow are all constructed out of tiny dots of color, and in which the attempt to create the illusion of depth is gradually discarded in favor of a flatter, more two-dimensional aesthetic. The more proximate and obvious sources of Fauvism, however, are the

²⁰² This remark by Matisse about *Portrait of Madame Matisse—The Green Line* is quoted in Michael Wood, Bruce Cole, and Adelheid Gealt, *Art of the Western World: From Ancient Greece to Post-Modernism* (New York: Summit Books, 1989), p. 265. Wood, Cole, and Gealt go on to say, "...Here the woman's face becomes an excuse to present a strong array of hues...For Matisse, color and shape had their own life in art."

²⁰³ I specify Monet and Pissaro, because not all those called "Impressionists" employed the blotch-and-dab technique. Renoir and Degas, for example, did not.

Pointillist movement as represented in Seurat and Signac and the expressionism of Van Gogh. Seurat took the Impressionists' blotch-and-dab technique and applied to it a formal theory of color, one in which mathematically precise dots of pure colors were arranged in such a manner that, when looked at, they combine in the eye to produce subtler, more natural shades and hues. For Seurat, the aesthetics of color and color-theory are of primary interest in painting; that which is painted is of clearly secondary interest. The Fauves had a similar single-mindedness about color and a similar lack of interest in the subject-matter that colors are ultimately used to represent. Matisse, indeed, at one point in his career wrote, "When I use a green it doesn't mean grass; when I use a blue, it doesn't mean the sky."²⁰⁴ In other words, for the Fauves, the subject-matter of a painting was merely a pretext for working with colors.

But, while Fauvism perhaps owes its underlying theoretical and intellectual basis to Pointillism, anyone who has even casually examined a series of Fauvist works will be struck by how utterly unlike Pointillist works they are. It is true that there are varieties of Pointillism, some more severe than others—the Pointillism of Signac, for example, is far less mathematical and, thus, more expressive, than Seurat's—but the difference between Fauvist art and Pointillist art is much more than merely a difference in types of Pointillism. For as much as Fauvist art is steeped in color and color theory, it is also filled with expressive force. If the Fauves inherited their theories of color from Seurat, they inherited

²⁰⁴ This quote is reprinted in Jean-Louis Ferrier, *The Fauves: The Reign of Color* (Paris: Pierre Terrail, 1992), p. 23. Ferrier goes on to explain, "...in a Fauve painting, grass is not necessarily green, nor is the sky blue, but even 'if they really are,' the green and the blue must be seen first."

their expressiveness—and the heavily textured style that facilitates it—from Van Gogh. Fauvist artworks are not only filled with explosions of color, but with vigorous and heavy brushstrokes.²⁰⁵ Unlike Seurat's work, which has a highly polished, almost sheer quality, Fauvist paintings are rough, with the application of paint left both obvious and prominent in the thickness with which it is applied. Indeed, the strongest feature of *Mme. Matisse*, aside from its startling combination of reds, greens and purples, is the heavy texture of the paint. This is especially so of the right side (her left) of the face, the pink side, where the paint is laid on so thick that it almost looks like a mask or theatrical make-up.

This obsession with color and with the texture of paint is just another example of the kind of artistic self-consciousness that I have been using to characterize art whose primary interests are aesthetic or artistically oriented. We once again have a shift away from extra-artistic interests and towards an interest in the very materials and processes of art-making itself. Yes, as always, there are extra-artistic concerns, in this case having to do with the nature of colors as they exist separate from art, but there is undoubtedly a strong interest in paint itself, in the color and texture of paint, and in the manner in which it is laid down on a canvas. Once again, this art represents a point in the larger scheme of civilizational interests in which art was no longer primarily a medium or "language" through which extra-artistic interests were expressed, but rather, became an object of civilizational interest itself.

²⁰⁵ Of course, while the Fauves took a lesson in expression, and in the way to achieve it through texture and gesture, from Van Gogh, they stripped it of the pathos and madness that is so ubiquitous in Van Gogh's work.

We have, thus, with Fauvism, an art whose ends are largely aesthetic, or, to put it more precisely, whose ultimate interests lie largely in the materials, process, and aesthetics of paint and of painting, and we are now in a position to examine a few instances of artworks that are among the farthest along on this side of the spectrum. My examples here are culled entirely from the loosely defined style known as Abstract Expressionism. "Abstract Expressionism" is very difficult to define, for it contains within its extension artists as various as Willem de Kooning, Ad Reinhardt, Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, and Barnett Newman. De Kooning has become most famous for his tortured, almost manic, representations of women, rendered abstract beneath (and through) torrents of violently applied and thickly textured swathes of paint, while Newman, Rothko, and Reinhardt are identified most strongly with their extremely flat, smooth bands and planes of colors and shades.

One common definition unites all these disparate artists and their work under the idea that they are all, to varying degrees, abstract, while they are also, to varying degrees expressive; specifically, expressive of the psychology of the artist. Indeed, despite their utter aesthetic dissimilarities, some think of Abstract Expressionism (hereafter "A.E.") as being an extension of surrealism, with its emphasis on the sub- and un-conscious of the artist. For example, Ross says,

The importance of Surrealism cannot be underestimated. The key to it was a deep philosophical belief in the importance of the individual subconscious, particularly as it might relate to a larger collective one. In a sense, Surrealism gave powerful license to the Abstract Expressionists to explore their own personalities and stylistic impulses to the fullest as they developed a central, collective aesthetic. It allowed them unbridled individuality, yet—despite strong denials from some of the

artists—gave their work a shared focus.²⁰⁶

As we will see in my discussion of some examples of A.E. painting, while such a description might help us make sense of some of the works that fall within the A.E. extension—de Kooning’s for example—I think it is far less helpful in other cases—like that of Newman’s color canvases, or Reinhardt’s grey and blacks on blacks. Indeed, I find the very name, “Abstract Expressionism” somewhat unfortunate in its connotations, for it does make it sound as if the *object* of this painting is the representation of emotions, and that this representation occurs through an abstract idiom. Oddly enough, I think this might be a better name for Kandinsky’s work than Pollock’s or de Kooning’s, for which the name “Expressive Abstractionism” might be more appropriate. For, I believe that this art is, at bottom and most centrally, self-reflexive in the manner I have been discussing. It is a style that puts the processes and materials that have traditionally been used by artists to display their—and their civilizations’—interests, themselves on display. Thus, insofar as all painting, when stripped of its programmatic content, consists in the production of shapes, colors, and lines, A.E. is thoroughly abstract. And, insofar as the process of painting, regardless of its specific programmatic *intentions*, is a form of expression, as, for example, speech is, A.E. is expressive.

Let us, then, conduct our discussion of A.E. from this viewpoint; through an isolation of the different components and processes of painting and with an examination of the different A.E. painters that have concerned themselves with these different components

²⁰⁶ Ross, ed., *Abstract Expressionism: Creators and Critics*, p.17.

and processes. I have isolated these into two large groupings: (1) Paint and the application of paint—under this category I will include “gesture and texture” painters, specifically Willem de Kooning and Jackson Pollock; (2) color, shape, and the flatness of the picture plane—under this group I will subsume those painters interested in the inherent two-dimensionality of paintings as well as those whose primary interest is in color, form, and shade (and often, the two go together). Included will be works by Mark Rothko and Ad Reinhardt.

(1) **Paint and the application of paint:** Painting, reduced to its most basic physical process, consists of the applying of pigments to a surface through gestures of the arm, gestures whose proximate cause is some inspiration or other. To focus on the content of the inspiration is to relegate the gestural act to the position of an instrument; this, indeed, is what characterizes, in its most primitive form, the sort of painting that we discussed in the last section. To focus on the gestural act, irrespective of the specific content of the inspiration, is to regard content or program as a kind of catalyst for the painting-act. This is, in turn, how I have characterized the art that we are discussing in this section. It is thus, not surprising that it has come, in some circles, to be called “Action Painting”; indeed, Harold Rosenberg, the coiner of the expression, said the following of this art,

At a certain moment the canvas began to appear to one American painter after another as an arena in which to act—rather than as a space in which to reproduce, redesign, analyze or “express” an object, actual or imagined. What was to go on the canvas was not a picture but an event.

The painter no longer approached his easel with an image in his mind; he went up to it with material in his hand to do something to that other piece of material in front of him. The image would be the result of this encounter.

It is pointless to argue that Rembrandt or Michelangelo worked in the same way. You don't get Lucrece with a dagger out of staining a piece of cloth or spontaneously putting forms into motion upon it. She had to exist some place else before she got on the canvas, and the paint was Rembrandt's means for bringing her here. Now, everything must have been in the tubes, in the painter's muscles and in the cream-colored sea into which she dives. If Lucrece should come out she will be among us for the first time—a surprise. To the painter, she *must* be a surprise. In this mood there is no point in an act if you already know what it contains.²⁰⁷

Paint is also, however, a substance, one that has a certain viscosity, and so when it is applied to a canvas, it will inevitably produce a textured surface, unless a deliberate attempt is made to dilute the paint before it is applied, or smooth it down afterwards. The combination of these ideas get us the "gesture and texture" side of the A. E. movement (the so-called "Action Paintings"), represented most prominently by Willem de Kooning and Jackson Pollock. Look, for example, at de Kooning's *Woman I* (Fig. 28—1950-52) and Pollock's *One—Number 31* (Fig. 29—1950). We can see, in both of these works, the interest in gesture, in the most basic *process* of painting—the application of pigment to a canvas through gestures of the arm—and in texture, the most basic *property* of paint other than its color. With *Woman I*, these interests may be partially obscured by the presence of a clear enough figurative content, but the woman stands out much less than the very brushstrokes used to render her; she lies, so to speak, behind and beneath those brushstrokes. More than an impression of a woman, I would argue, what comes across in *Woman I* is the process and materials of painting itself. In the blurred and mashed areas, we see where de Kooning stabbed his brush at the canvas, and in the rough and cris-

²⁰⁷ Harold Rosenberg, "The American Action Painters," *ARTnews*, vol. 51, no. 8. Excerpted in Ross, *Abstract Expressionism: Creators and Critics*, pp. 233-4. [Italics in the original]

crossing streaks of color, we see where he dragged it across. Throughout the canvas, the paint is piled on so that we can't help but notice its substance, and at places it has been applied in sufficient excess that it runs down the canvas in conspicuous drips (see, for example, the lower right-hand corner). What could possibly explain the obviously deliberate obscuring of the figure painted beneath the paint itself, if not a primary interest in paint and its application?²⁰⁸

With Pollock's *One—Number 31*, there is no figurative content to obscure the purely painterly purposes and interests. The core of the process of painting—the gestural application of paint—stands forth as the work's overriding interest. Whether or not we are aware of Pollock's manner of painting—in which he stood over his canvases, laid out on the floor, and flung paint at them—the gestural aspect of all painting is transparently clear to the eye; we can follow the various trails and ropes of paint and reconstruct the gestural arc that produced them, and the spots and splatters indicate the many places at which the paint struck the canvas with the most force. We can also see—and this is mostly lost in the reproduction—the inherently textural quality of paint, as it piles up in the layers upon layers of ropy strands that Pollock has laid on the canvas. The at-bottom inspirational nature of the art-making process can also be perceived here, especially when

²⁰⁸ One interpretation of de Kooning's paintings of women that has emerged of late—one which counters this more aesthetic analysis—is that de Kooning was a woman-hater, and this is what explains his violently presented images; he is, so to speak, "beating women with his brush" as he paints them. It is difficult to know what to say in the face of such a patently stupid interpretation of a body of work. Suffice it to say here that it is a typically paranoid example of "gendered" interpretations of art (and of most everything else) and is, thankfully, not the dominant account of de Kooning's *Woman* series.

we look at Pollock's "drip, blot, and streak" paintings in a series; despite the repetition of technique, each is utterly different from the other as a result of the different inspirations that lie behind each individual act of flinging paint.

Interestingly, while the motion of the *act* of painting was clearly of central interest to Pollock—and one of the reasons for his unique manner of painting—this is often not as well communicated in Pollock's work as it is in de Kooning's. Especially in the paintings where Pollock's layers of drips and strands are particularly thick and dense—as they are in *One—Number 31*—the final sense is of something remarkably static. Yes, if we follow any of the ropes or strands with our eye, we can *infer* the gesture that produced it, but the motion of that gesture is not communicated perceptually as powerfully as it is in *Woman I*. This may be, in part, a consequence of the fact that Pollock's hands and brushes do not touch the canvas—and thus, we don't see, as strongly as we do in de Kooning, the paint striking the surface—and it may also have something to do with the lack of space between the strands of paint. Less dense, less crowded paintings such as *Autumn Rhythm—Number 30* (Fig. 30—1950) are more successful in the communication of a sense of motion, than are the more dense, crowded ones.

(2) Color, Shape and the Flatness of the Picture Plane: This represents the other side of the Abstract Expressionist movement whose interests lie primarily in the nature of and relationships between colors and in the inherent flatness of the picture plane. As already indicated, the painters I will use to represent this side of A.E. are Mark Rothko and Ad

Reinhardt. Just as the “gesture and texture” painters focused their art on the inherent materials and processes of paint—specifically, the texture of the prime material (paint) and the process of its application (gesture)—the “color, shape and flatness” group concentrate their attentions on specific qualities of their medium; in their case, on the second primary property of paint other than texture, namely, color and on the predominant feature of the painting arena, namely, the inherently flat, two-dimensional nature of the picture-plane.

Rothko’s paintings of bands or fields of color against a colored background display two consistent features: (i) a significant scale (his paintings are generally large); (ii) a near absolute flatness—that is, not only two-dimensionality of content but an almost complete lack of texture in the paint, resulting in a two-dimensionality of *surface*. Consider, for example, his *Four Darks in Red* (Fig. 31—1958). One clear interest here, as in most of Rothko’s work,²⁰⁹ is in what one might, for lack of a better expression, call the “temperature” of colors (in this sense, Rothko’s work involves a species of interest not utterly dissimilar from Kandinsky’s interest in the *emotional* qualities of colors). Rothko’s roughly applied, darkish bands, with differing degrees of space between them, set against a background that spans from the red to the orange, convey a sense of the warmth of the colors on the red side of the color spectrum. More than this, the bands, within their glowing halo, seem almost to breathe and expand as one stares at them, and this further

²⁰⁹ Rothko is a bit of a tricky character to deal with, because his public pronouncements about his own art are so at odds with what seem to be the obvious interpretations of it. For example, Rothko insisted, throughout his career, that his art was not abstract, a patently absurd suggestion given even the most superficial inspection of his work.

facilitates our perception of heat, much as the expansion of a hot air balloon or the illusory rippling of concrete on a hot day does.

Rothko's work also displays a clear interest in the inherent flatness of the picture plane.

Now how does flatness come into our idea that A.E. is interested, at bottom, in the materials, processes and aesthetics of painting? Though for the bulk of the history of painting, artists have attempted to present three-dimensional images, whether landscapes, portraits or still-lives, such three-dimensionality is, essentially, an illusion. For the *surface* on which all these images have been presented—whether paper, canvas, panel of wood, ceramic, or glass—is itself, two-dimensional. The illusion of depth and of figure is achieved through the clever, geometrical use of lines (i.e. perspective) *and* through the contrast of colors. Clement Greenberg says about the latter,

Value contrast, the opposition of the lightness and darkness of colors, has been Western pictorial art's chief means, far more important than perspective, to that convincing illusion of three-dimensionality which distinguishes it most from other traditions of pictorial art. The eye takes its first bearing from quantitative differences of illumination.²¹⁰

Thus, if one is to draw attention to, to dwell upon, the *arena* of painting—the picture-plane— one must remind the viewer of its inherent two-dimensionality rather than obscure it under the illusion of depth and figure. There are several ways of achieving this, and Rothko utilizes every one of them. The first is to abandon linear perspective, which Rothko, whose paintings consist simply of fuzzy bands of color, has certainly done. The

²¹⁰ Clement Greenberg, "'American Type' Painting," from *Partisan Review*, 1955. Reprinted in Ross, pp. 235-251 (244).

second is to eliminate the textural qualities of the paint, either by thinning it prior to application, or by sanding it down once applied. Thus, one has not only abandoned the illusion of three-dimensionality by abandoning depth and figure, but one has also cast off whatever *actual* three-dimensionality that may be present by virtue of the paint piling up on the surface. In this interest of retaining the two-dimensional integrity of painting, the Abstract Expressionist painter must reject the inherently textural quality of paint. Rothko achieves this by thinning his paint to the point that it almost completely soaks into his canvases, thus producing, in combination with his abandonment of figurative content and perspective, a flatness upon flatness. Greenberg says, “[Rothko] seems to soak his paint into the canvas to get a dyer’s effect and avoid the connotations of a discrete layer of paint on top of the surface.”²¹¹

The final means of conveying the flatness of the picture plane is to eschew, as Greenberg calls it in the quote on the previous page, “value contrasts.” The closer in shade and tone the colors in the painting are, the flatter it will appear. Again, Rothko makes use of this flattening technique too. His colors in *Four Darks in Red*, while different, are all dark, and their setting amidst the background of red and orange somehow emphasizes their similarity rather than their difference. With this third flattening method, Rothko has achieved something that is triply flat; it is flat by virtue of being devoid of figurative content or perspective; it is made even more flat by the elimination of the texture of the paint on the surface; and it is even flatter still by virtue of the relative lack of color or

²¹¹ Ibid., p. 248.

“value” contrast (for a painting that is similarly “triply flat” see Ad Reinhardt’s *Abstract Painting* (Fig. 32—1960-61); it too is devoid of figurative content or perspective, utterly lacking in texture and lacking in any significant value contrast (to a greater degree, even, than *Four Darks in Red*). Thus, Greenberg, at the end of his remarks on Rothko, says, “A new kind of flatness, one that breathes and pulsates, is the product of the darkened, value-muffling warmth of color in the paintings of Newman, Rothko, and Still.”²¹²

I hope that we can see how the criterion for success in each of these examples of Abstract Expressionist art will be concerned primarily with aesthetic interests, as I’ve defined them, rather than extra-artistic ones. Unlike Hals’s *Pieter van den Broecke*, the issue in *Woman I* is not whether a convincing portrait of a woman has been achieved through the aesthetic means at de Kooning’s disposal or whether he has captured the psychology or personality of a sitter, but rather, whether de Kooning has succeeded in bringing alive to us the process of painting itself; whether we, in looking at *Woman I*, can, in a sense, see de Kooning making it. Likewise, the criterion of success for a painting like *One—Number 31*, is not, as it is, in part, with *Steamer in a Snowstorm*, whether or not through Pollock’s technique a powerful rendering of a ship trapped in a storm at sea has been achieved, but rather, whether Pollock has succeeded in conveying to us the motions, gestures and undulations involved in the painting-act. In each and every one of these cases, I would assert, since the primary interests and purposes behind such works are themselves aesthetically oriented, the criterion of success or failure for such works must also be

²¹² *Ibid.*, p. 49. And we would add, “...and Ad Reinhardt.”

aesthetically oriented.

In closing this rather lengthy section, I hope that we have succeeded in painting a complex picture of the types of civilizational interests and purposes that we find in the history of art, of the aesthetic, non-aesthetic, and combined varieties. The purpose for this survey is quite simple. Given that I will present a virtue-theoretic account of artistic value in the next section, one that takes from Aristotle the notion that a *good x* is one which fulfills its purpose fully, it was essential for me to give a complete picture of the kinds of purposes that art-objects embody. The length and detail of this account seems to me important, not only in presenting an accurate picture of art-history, one which adequately captures the many different ways that aesthetic and non-aesthetic interests have intertwined in art throughout its history, but in offering a plausible account of evaluation, one which rather than standing as an artifact in a philosopher's pantheon of values, will accord well with actual critical practice. As mentioned earlier, critics rarely if ever merely proclaim "Good" or "Bad" when faced with a work of art. And if we are to present a theory of evaluation which treats artistic value as a species of virtue, we must have enough teleological resources to account for all the different types of criticism that critics make, at many different levels of description, of the artwork in question. Thus, all the detailed art history and criticism of this section will be of great help to us in the next. For I will refer to these artworks and make use of the many different types, levels, and interactions of purposes that I have argued these works represent when I present the theory of artistic value.

4.4 Artistic Value: Measuring Success

Our final task in this chapter is to discuss the evaluation of artobjects. Evaluation, of course, primarily takes the form of predication; when critics evaluate artworks, they often say things like [x is good], [x is a failure], [x is sublime], [x is sentimental], [x is powerful], [x is profound], [x is beautiful], etc... Typically, when an evaluation is both pure and ascribed to the whole artobject ([x is good] or [x is not good]) it is meant either in a somewhat casual way, or is meant to indicate that the artobject is an overall success—that is, it might succeed and fail on many different counts, and on the balance, it succeeds more than it fails.

In a serious critical context, evaluative predications are typically relativized to a certain level of description of the artobject; [x has a beautiful interplay of colors], [x has a profound message], [the primary melody in the second movement of x is contrasted beautifully against a series of harmonies], [the arrangement of figures in x possesses a marvelous symmetry], etc... Such relativized evaluations are often part of a larger overall assessment; that is, the critic seeks to praise one aspect of the work while negatively criticizing another; [while x has a beautiful interplay of colors, it seems to be a work somewhat superficial in its meaning], [while x has a profound message, it is somewhat inelegantly and ineptly realized], [though the primary melody in the second movement in x is contrasted beautifully against a series of harmonies, x is far too long and filled with far too many uninspiring musical passages], [though x is moving in places, at others it crosses

into sentimentality], etc...

Looking at evaluation at another level, or “cut,” evaluations are sometimes purely evaluative, whether of the whole object or of the object at a level of description; [x is good], [x is a failure], [x is good relative to y], [x is a failure relative to y]. At other times, evaluations are mixed—meaning they consist of a combination of evaluative and descriptive connotations—and these too can be applied to the whole object or relative to a level of description; [x is powerful], [the message of x is profound], [x is delicate], [the rendering of y in x is exquisite], etc.

Sometimes evaluation is not made explicitly at all but rather is a function of the performative force and/or speaker-meaning of a purely descriptive utterance or inscription. One might say that x has symmetry, but say it with the force of an approval and the conversational implication that x is unified. Or one might say that the colors in x are fluorescent with the force of a negative assessment and the conversational implication that it is garish. We could assert that x has many layers of meaning, with the force being one of approval and the conversational implication that x is deep. Or we might claim that x is emotional, with the force being one of disapproval and the conversational implication that it is sentimental.

To begin with, then—and acknowledging the incompleteness of this list—there seem to be at least three different categories and six different types of evaluative stances that we can

take towards artobjects:

- A Overall evaluations (evaluations of the whole artobject)
 - (1) Pure overall evaluations (x is good/x is not good)
 - (2) Mixed overall evaluations (x is moving/x is sentimental)

- B. Partial evaluations (evaluations of a part of the artobject)
 - (1) Pure partial evaluations (the color scheme of x is good/not good)
 - (2) Mixed partial evaluations (the style in which x is rendered is striking/the meaning of x is not profound)

- C. Performative/conversationally implicated evaluations (evaluations where the predicate ascribed has no evaluative content, literally speaking, but in which evaluative force is achieved *via* a speech act or writing context)
 - (1) Overall performative/conversationally implicated evaluation (x has symmetry—where “has symmetry” is taken as meaning “x is unified” and as an expression of approval)

 - (2) Partial performative/conversationally implicated evaluation (x has a fluorescent color scheme—where “fluorescent” is taken as meaning “garish” and as an expression of disapproval)

The question for any theory of artistic evaluation is whether it has the conceptual resources and formal apparatus to capture all these different sorts of evaluations. That is, a philosophical theory of artistic value must be able to actually deal with all the different kinds of criticism that critics make. We can see several ways in which a theory might fail on this front. A theory which only issues in “good” and “not good” evaluations would be one that lacks both the conceptual resources and the formal apparatus needed to capture mixed predications and performatively evaluative descriptions. Similarly, a theory that can only consider artobjects in their entirety lacks the formal and conceptual apparatus to make partial evaluations at different level of description of the artobject and will not be

able to evaluate the object as *both* good and bad relative to those levels of description.

In addition to possessing the formal and conceptual apparatus necessary to account for these many different sorts of evaluations, a theory of evaluation must have behind it the right conception of what art *is*; ontology is surely relevant to a correct axiology. That is, a certain conception of the nature of art is required to fully account for the many ways that artworks can be, or fail to be good. We can see, for example, on the Beauty and Significant Form Theory (“B&SF” theory), how we have a theory of the nature of art that is inadequate to the task of explicating both the varieties of aesthetic quality and the richness of critical discourse (this, indeed, was one of our grounds for rejecting it in chapter three). The B&SF theory claims not only that the sole qualities relevant to an object’s being an artwork are its formal qualities, but also (and consequently) that the only qualities relevant to the *evaluation* of an artwork are its formal qualities. The B&SF theorist then, will be unable to offer an account of any content-related or programmatically oriented evaluations of artworks, whether as overall evaluations, [x is profound] or partial evaluations, [while x has a beautiful interplay of colors, it is somewhat superficial in its meaning]. As already discussed at length, the B&SF theorist is forced to say that while critics may make such assessments on a regular basis, they are systematically confused as to what are the relevant features of x’s being an artwork and of x’s being a good or not good artwork and are, thus, evaluating these artworks on irrelevant bases. Also already discussed at length is why I take this to be an unacceptable stance, both from the standpoint of art and art criticism as well as from the standpoint of

sound philosophical practice; an impoverished conception of what art is on the part of B&SF theorists produces an impoverished conception of the ways in which art can be good or not good.

What I want to do now is show how the virtue-theoretic account of artistic value that I am promoting is well-suited to capturing all these different sorts of evaluations of artobjects. Once that has been accomplished, I will talk briefly about the so-called “intentional fallacy,” a species of objection that might be levied against a theory such as mine, and then move on to considering how my theory will handle the comparative evaluation of artworks, those which share their basic teleologies and those which do not. Finally, I want to talk a little more broadly about our evaluation of these teleologies themselves, of the evaluation of artistic kinds as opposed to the evaluation of artworks relative to an artistic kind.

4.41 The Virtue-Theoretic Account of Artistic Value

On my account of artistic value, to ascribe a positive or negative value to an artwork (“good,” “not good” or some mixture of the two) is to ascribe a virtue to it or the lack thereof. By “virtue,” of course, I do not mean a virtue in the sense of a moral virtue—that is, a virtue of character—but rather, an *artistic* virtue. In both cases, the virtue, or “excellence” of the object—whether human and artwork, respectively—is a function of its purpose or *telos*, which is a part of its essence; what it *is*. On Aristotle’s view, what it *is*

to be a human is to be a rational creature, and so an excellent (virtuous) person is one who lives his life in a rational manner. This analysis of the virtue of man is taken from his analysis of the virtue of artifacts; what it is to be a hammer is to be something that drives nails, and so an excellent (virtuous) hammer is one that drives nails well.²¹³

Similarly, what it *is* to be an artobject is to be an artifact that is created for the purpose of conveying civilizational and cultural interests through an artistic medium (whether painting, music, etc...), and so an excellent artobject is one that succeeds in conveying these civilizational and cultural interest through its particular medium. Since artobjects are loci of extremely dense numbers of such purposes and interests, they can, of course, *partially* succeed (and, thus, partially fail), and so rather than make an overall evaluative assessment, we typically relativize our ascription of artistic virtue to a particular *telos* of the artobject or some set of ends represented therein, thus resulting in a partial evaluation of the whole artobject.

Let's now, using the artworks that we have discussed in this chapter as well as some new ones, give some examples of the different sorts of artistic evaluations I have described and see how they might be construed as virtues and "vices."²¹⁴ We'll start with the last

²¹³ Of course, as we've already discussed, Aristotle believes that the purpose we find in artifacts—the purpose bestowed upon an object by virtue of the forms imposed on it by a craftsman—imitates the purpose we find in nature. A teleological description of natural objects, on Aristotle's view, is not an anthropomorphizing of nature; rather, the process of artifactual creation imitates the process of natural creation.

²¹⁴ I scare-quote "vices" because in this context, the word is really awkward and misleading. Vice is the opposite of virtue in the moral context, but there is no equally concise word to express the failing with

category of evaluation first, namely an example of performative/conversationally implicated evaluation. Some of the first critical remarks that come to mind when looking, for example, at Goya's *Saturn Devouring One of his Sons* is that the image is horrific, terrifying and disturbing. Now "...is horrific," "...is terrifying," and "...is disturbing" are predicates with no literal evaluative content, but in this case, they are clearly implied as praise of *Saturn*, and this analysis is most satisfactorily accomplished if we treat the praise as the ascription of a virtue.

The primary civilizational interest behind *Saturn* is, as already discussed, the representation of the mindless and savage butchery of the post-revolution period in France and the Napoleonic wars, especially as Goya witnessed them in Spain; *Saturn* is, so to speak, an allegorical variation on *The Third of May*. The aim of *Saturn* (as with *The Third of May*) is to horrify, to terrorize the viewer, for the purpose of conveying the nightmare that was the war that Napoleon waged against the Spanish people. I have

respect to a *telos* in the artistic realm. This is an interesting point to consider, insofar as the differences implied between ethics and aesthetics. "Vice," in the moral context, implies an action that one ought not do or a way of being that one ought not be. But it is not so clear in the aesthetic case that one can make the same point; if an artobject fails to possess a virtue—that is, exhibits an artistic "vice"—can we say that the artobject ought not be that way, without sounding weird?

I suspect that the lack of a counterpart to vice in the artistic case speaks not against the virtue-theoretic account of artistic value that I am proposing, but rather to the differences between criticism and morals. In Chapter Five I will argue, albeit in a different context (the comparison of criticism to science) that the purpose of criticism is primarily to *interpret* works of art; that once a complete interpretation has been achieved and disagreement over that interpretation eliminated, the subsequent evaluation of the artobject becomes a somewhat trivial affair. On point here, the primary purpose of morals is clearly to make moral judgments—evaluations of "right" and "wrong"—whereas I do not think the primary purpose of criticism is to make evaluations. Critics spend much more time and space interpreting artobjects than issuing in pronouncements "good" and "bad." This is, I think, a fascinating comparison to explore—the differences between ethics and aesthetics/morals and criticism, but it is one I will have to leave to another time.

already argued that it is precisely the intention to convey a civilizational interest like this one that makes a painting like *Saturn* an artwork in the first place. Well, if this is a purpose or *telos* of *Saturn*, then relative to that *telos*, *Saturn* succeeds artistically to the degree that the execution of the image within it succeeds in conveying it.

Thus, to say that *Saturn* is horrific is to make an utterance with the performative force of an approval—*Saturn* has succeeded in conveying the abominations of the post-revolution Terror and Napoleonic wars by horrifying us through its imagery. If *Saturn* had been rendered in such a way that it was *not* horrific, terrifying, or disturbing, it would have failed relative to this purpose. And the degree to which this purpose is the central or dominant purpose of *Saturn* would be the degree to which it, as a *whole* artwork, had thus failed.²¹⁵

Notice, by the way, how B&SF aestheticians of various stripes cannot offer any useful analysis of such critical remarks. Those of the Clive Bell variety would have to say that the critic's remarks are irrelevant, because their praises are based on an artistically irrelevant feature of *Saturn*, namely its programmatic content. Those like Mothersill would have to reject "...is terrifying," "...is horrific," and "...is disturbing" as expressions of praise, because there is simply no plausible way that such properties can be construed

²¹⁵ I have never seen *Saturn* in person, but a friend of mine who was at the Prado several years ago said that it is much smaller than one would expect and that this diminishes its terrifying impact (It is, indeed, only approximately 5'x3' in size). The degree to which the size of *Saturn* diminishes its horrifying and terrifying effect would be the degree to which it *failed* to convey its primary civilizational interests and purposes.

as constitutive of beauty as Mothersill conceives it; the mangled pulp of what's left of Saturn's son by no means "inspires love," and the bulging-eyed Saturn chewing on the bloody stump of his son's arm in no way "gives pleasure" (indeed, it produces—and is *supposed* to produce—revulsion and disgust). And since beauty is the relevant aesthetic property from the standpoint of artistic value on Mothersill's view, she would be forced to say that such judgments—"...is terrifying," "...is horrific," etc.—imply that *Saturn* is an artistically *bad* work; exactly the wrong critical result given its purpose.

Let's give some examples now of partial mixed evaluations, and let's switch the medium to music to show how my conception of critical evaluation can be applied to media other than painting. Take the following judgments: "The Introit and Kyrie of Maurice Durufle's *Requiem* are stirring" and "The Kyrie in Haydn's *Nelson Mass* is majestic".²¹⁶

The Requiem mass, being a mass for the dead, can appropriately aim at several emotional responses. It can, for example, seek to convey a sense of something ominous and towering, the anticipation of a grand metaphysical end (as the Introitus and Kyrie of Mozart's *Requiem* do); it might try to affect a sense of tragedy and waste (as Britten's *War Requiem* so brilliantly does); or, it can, as Requiem masses like Fauré's and Rutter's do, convey a more subtle sense of sadness, one that is to a certain extent lamenting and yet is also supremely sweet (in anticipation, perhaps, of the eternal beauty and peace of the

²¹⁶ The versions I am using are: (i) *Requiem* (Voices of Ascension Chorus and Orchestra, Dennis Keene: Delos, 1995); *Nelson Mass* (London Symphony Orchestra—Choir of King's College, Cambridge, Sir David Willcocks: London Records, 1988).

afterlife). Duruflé's *Requiem* is of this last sort, and one of its major emotive aims is to convey precisely this sense of sweet, beautiful sadness. That sense is difficult to describe in words, but part of it, certainly, is a profound moving of the soul—the sort that brings tears to the eyes and raises up the hairs on the back of one's neck and arms.

Requiem achieves this in large part by virtue of the great conglomeration of influences within which Duruflé worked and the perfection with which he combined them in a single musical package. It is most strongly present, I think, in the Introit and Kyrie, where the lushness of musical texture, creeping crescendos, and seamlessness of musical structure found in Wagnerian Romanticism are applied to the primordial melodies of Gregorian chant and interlaced with the pristine choral sound of Renaissance polyphony, in the manner of Tallis and Byrd. The seamlessness and lushness of the music, like undulating waves, carrying atop it the drifting voices of the choir with slow buildups and releases of volume, all serve to make both the Introit and the Kyrie stirring of the soul; the crystalline beauty of the voices and the luxurious quality of the music make—to speak as we have—the hair on our bodies stand on end and the inherent melancholy of the medieval Requiem melodies, delivered with such sweetness, brings the tears to our eyes. To judge critically that the Introit and Kyrie are stirring is, thus, to say that it has succeeded in its ambitious and profound aim to move our souls in just this way. "...is stirring" is, of course, a predicate whose content itself implies praise, but it is a specific kind of praise—that is, praise of a particular aspect, e.g. the fact that the music in question is moving in a way that has physical as well as spiritual effect. And since to move us in such

a way is a clear *telos* of this work—given the kind of Requiem mass it aims to be, and given that this is an appropriate aim for a Requiem mass²¹⁷—it is most natural to treat the praise “...is stirring” as the attribution of a virtue in the manner we have been discussing.

Haydn’s *Nelson Mass* is a very different piece of music. Written after Haydn had returned to Vienna from a long and productive period in London, it was being finished just as Nelson decimated Napoleon’s fleet off the coast of Alexandria and thus, was named, by Haydn, the “Nelson Missa”. Though merely coincidental with Nelson’s victory—Haydn, actually, was commissioned by the Austrian Prince to write one mass *every year*—the *Nelson Mass* might have just as well been written to celebrate the occasion, given its nature. It is stately, grand and, dare I say in today’s political climate, a wonderfully *imperial* piece of music. From the opening bars of the Kyrie, where trumpets blast out the primary melody in counterpoint with the strings, we immediately realize that here is music written for royalty. After one round of trumpets and strings, the chorus comes in on top in a massive *Kyrie eleison!* and the primary melody is punctuated by thundering tympani. Indeed, one is urged, listening to this incredible opening, to leap up, puff out one’s chest, and march military style. The Gloria continues this musical effect and even increases it, as it ups the tempo.

To describe critically the *Nelson Mass* as majestic is thus both to describe its grandeur and

²¹⁷ I take it that the set of appropriate artistic aims for a Requiem mass is a limited one; clearly, a mocking or “opera-buffo” tone would not do.

stateliness and to praise its virtue—that is, its success in achieving its aim. A mass written once a year on the order of a prince, should be a big regal affair, and this was clearly Haydn’s intention with the *Nelson Mass*. To be majestic, then—to achieve, through music, a grandiose and imperial effect which makes one think of princes and kings and which makes us want to jump up and march—is to succeed in this purpose. So, again, given that Haydn’s aim is appropriate for such a mass in the culture for which Haydn was composing, to describe the Kyrie (and the Gloria) as majestic is to ascribe a virtue to them, the virtue of succeeding to produce a stately and grandiose piece of music, which is an appropriate sort of music, given the historical and cultural context.

Let’s consider, now, two partial performative evaluations—one positive and one negative—of the same work, Pollock’s *One—Number 31*; let’s also consider Kandinsky’s *Composition VI*. The idea here is not only to give an example of criticism which attributes a “vice” to a painting, but also to show how *aesthetic* judgments, in addition to judgments concerning programmatic qualities like those we’ve been discussing, can also be conceived of in terms of success and failure relative to a purpose (that is, virtue-theoretically).

We might say of *One—Number 31* something like this: “While Pollock has produced a work in which the thickness and texture of the paint is prominent, and where the impact of paint on the canvas can be seen in the splatters clustered around the heaviest dollops of pigment, the overall result is something that is curiously static.” Now, though none of the

key critical points here— “...the thickness and texture of the paint is prominent,” “...the impact of the paint on the canvas can be seen...,” “...the overall result is something that is curiously static”—have any *literal* evaluative content, our understanding of Abstract Expressionism and of Pollock’s work, together with the utterance context would inform us that this critic is offering both praise and negative criticism for *One—Number 31*.

The mission of what I’ve been calling the “gesture-and-texture movement” within A.E. is precisely to bring to the forefront one of the key materials of painting—namely, paint—as well as one of the key processes involved in painting—namely, the act of applying paint. Paint, as a liquid of varying degrees of viscosity, has an inherent texture that becomes manifest when it has been applied and has dried, so one of the ways of bringing paint to the “forefront” is to produce a work where texture is prominent. Pollock’s work most certainly succeeds with regard to this purpose; paint in *One—Number 31*, unimpeded as it is by any figurative content, is omnipresent. One part of our critic’s remark states, “the thickness and texture of the paint is prominent,” and given this aesthetic purpose of *One—Number 31*—to bring paint and its inherent qualities to the forefront of our attention—such a critical remark is to be taken as having the performative force of praise.

But another interest behind *One—Number 31* (and, indeed, an interest that lies behind most of Pollock’s work) is an interest in the *act* of painting. To apply paint to a canvas is intrinsically to perform an act, and thus, just as the gesture-and-texture painters were interested in putting the materials of art on display in their work, they were also interested

in putting the essential processes of art-making on display. Insofar as the central process of painting involves the application of paint to a surface, then, what the gesture-and-texture painter like Pollock tries to do is present the act of painting through the communication of motion, and specifically, the motion of the gesture of the arm when it is engaged in a painting-act.

The problem with *One—Number 31*, as is the case with most of Pollock's more densely painted canvases, is that the final effect—what is actually communicated when looking at the canvas—is rather static (I have speculated that this may be due to the density of the “Pollock strands” of paint; the lack of space between the strands makes us lose the sense of motion that went into creating them). So, to the extent that Pollock's work tries to convey the very act of painting, the motion, so to speak, of the painting-act, it fails in this purpose if the final result is static, that is, communicates a sense of stillness rather than motion. Thus, to say that *One—Number 31* “is curiously static” is to performatively disapprove of it and to conversationally suggest a defect of it; it was *supposed* to convey motion, but instead wound up conveying stillness.²¹⁸

²¹⁸ William James Earle has wondered whether perhaps this shows that this was not the purpose of *One—Number 31*. Indeed, with several of my negative evaluations of works of art (for example, my speculation that the artistic value of *Saturn* might be diminished, given its purpose, by its small size), Professor Earle has wondered whether I've simply gotten the artistic purposes wrong.

It is certainly possible that my art criticism is faulty or to be contested; but what I don't like about this sort of critique is that it seems to indicate that artworks can never be not-good; that is, artobjects can never fail. This is an unfortunate consequence of the B&SF aesthetic theory; for an artifact to be an artobject, it must possess significant form. But the possession of significant form is also the criterion under which an artobject is determined to have aesthetic value. The result is that if x satisfies the ontological criterion for being art, then it must be good, *automatically*. I would take any such consequence—that artobjects must be good and can never be bad—a *reductio* of the aesthetic theory of which it is a consequence, for of course, there is plenty of bad art.

Now, consider Kandinsky's *Composition VI*. The first critical judgment, I think, that leaps to mind is that the painting is dynamic. Now, I am torn as to just what kind of predicate "is dynamic" represents; is it a purely descriptive predicate that takes on a positive or negative content when uttered in a critical context, or does it contain as a part of its sense, a positive connotation? (I cannot think of a critical context where "dynamic" would be used as a negative attribution, so I suspect that it is the latter) But, no matter, in the context of *Composition VI*, the judgment that it is dynamic is an overall judgment (either mixed or performative) that is intended to communicate praise. To say that *Composition VI* is dynamic is to say that it is vigorous or active; that is, it is characterized by energy and motion. Given our interpretation of *Composition VI* and our understanding of Kandinsky's larger project of trying to create with paint what modernist composers had achieved with sound, we know that one of the central interests behind Kandinsky's work, *Composition VI* included, is conveying through paint a sense of motion akin to the motion of notes in a modernist musical composition. Modernist compositions, whether Schoenberg's, Prokofiev's, or Stravinsky's, are characterized in particular by an energetic—often frenetic—movement of tones. To call *Composition VI* dynamic then—to say that it is energetic, vigorous and active—is to say that it has succeeded at one of its central purposes: namely, to convey through paint the same sense of motion that modernist composers communicate through music. It is, in short, to attribute a virtue to *Composition VI*, with regard to one of its primary teleologies.

Finally, let's give an example of a pure overall evaluation and see how this might plausibly

be taken as the attribution of virtue/vice. Suppose we say—as I hope anyone would—that Hals’s *Pieter van den Broecke* is a great portrait. Now, of course, such an utterance could mean a lot of things; such a locution need not be a critical one. One might mean by this simply that he loves *Pieter van de Broecke*, perhaps because it reminds him of a beloved uncle or, simply, because he finds the image “sympatico”—that inexplicable sense in which we just “like” something or someone. I’ve discussed at length why I would want to reject the idea that any judgments such as these should be construed as *critical*, in the professional or technical sense of the word. They are too bound up with taste and personal factors to allow for the disinterestedness that I claim separates the critical world from fandom.

In the critical context, the blanket judgment—the pure, overall evaluation—of *Pieter van den Broecke* as “great” will most likely unpack into a series of partial evaluations if we were to press the critic who had made the judgment. “Great” in this sense is an umbrella term, an economy, in lieu of making a string of complex evaluations of the painting; this is why I said at the beginning of this section that typically such general talk, when taken in a critical context, is either meant casually or is meant as a proxy for a much more complex evaluation.

Thus, the critic might mean to indicate a whole group of virtues that *Pieter van den Broecke* possesses: its remarkable lifelikeness; its journalistic flavor—the sense that Hals has captured an actual moment in real time rather than rendered an image from a posed

model; the fabulous technical mastery exhibited, especially with regard to the lacework found in Broecke's collar and cuffs; the generally superior workmanship in the painterly style. Each of these qualities can very comfortably be taken as a virtue, I think; that is, we can see how the purposes behind this work—not only Hals's personal purposes, but the teleologies of the *type* to which this portrait belongs—are all fulfilled by its possessing these qualities, and, thus, are best spoken of as artistic and aesthetic virtues.

4.42 An Intentional Fallacy?

At this point, with all our talk about intentions and purposes and the central—indeed, dominating—role that they play in my theory of the evaluation of artobjects, we must respond to an objection that might be raised against critical theories such as mine, made famous by W.K. Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley: the so-called “intentional fallacy.” While I do not think that this objection amounts to much—indeed, *it* commits the fallacy of thinking that one can understand a speech act or “art act” without understanding the purposes (and thus, the individual and collective intentions) behind it—it would be irresponsible not at least to *consider* this argument, which has made such an impact in contemporary analytic philosophy of art. One does not take a course in aesthetics in the United States (or Great Britain, I would suspect) without reading this article, and as the objection contained therein seems to at least be applicable to a theory like mine, I would like to discuss it, if only briefly.

Wimsatt and Beardsley make a very simple claim in “The Intentional Fallacy.”²¹⁹ To determine whether a work of art is good or bad on the basis of the artist’s (in their case, the poet’s) intentions is to commit a fallacy.²²⁰ More importantly, the very investigation into the psychology, background, personal history, and even the reading habits and artistic tastes of the poet—all the variables that might enlighten us to the artist’s intentions—are alleged by Wimsatt and Beardsley (hereafter “W&B”) to be not only irrelevant to the critical evaluation of a poem, but dangerous in that they may lead us to make false attributions and interpretations of the poem. W&B set out several “axioms” regarding intentionalism and what they see as problematic about it. The rest of the article is taken up with discussing the origins of intentionalism—we learn that it is a crime that originated with Romantics like Goethe and Croce—and some examples of such intentionalism in critical practice with an eye to pointing out how the intentional stance, when taken by the critic, results in irrelevant or even mistaken criticism.

Although W&B don’t openly acknowledge this, I think that they tacitly recognize that just what the proper critical methodology is when approaching a work of art has a lot to do with the ontological status of art; that is, with what makes an object—whether a collection of sentences on a page, notes in the air or colors and shades on a canvas—an artobject.

²¹⁹ W.K. Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley, “The Intentional Fallacy,” reprinted in Tillman and Cahn, eds., *Philosophy of Art and Aesthetics from Plato to Wittgenstein*, pp. 657-669.

²²⁰ Wimsatt and Beardsley discuss the intentional fallacy solely with regard to the critical study of poetry, but it seems to me from their discussion that they would want to extend it to the critical study of all the arts. I will, thus, continue to talk of the “artist’s” intentions rather than the just the poet’s.

For example, if those such as Tolstoy, Goethe, and Croce are correct, that art is just an expression of the emotions that spring from the soul of the artist, then to claim that understanding the artist's intentions, history, and influences is irrelevant to the critical enterprise would be, frankly, preposterous. It is because they realize this that W&B make it clear that they view such a concept of the nature of art as seriously flawed.

W&B do not deny that the emotions and broader sensibility of the artist may be what *cause* the production of a work of art (in the efficient sense of "cause"), but they insist that once the work of art is finished, it attains a life of its own; so much so, indeed, that it becomes permanently severed from its creator—a kind of cutting of the umbilical cord. In discussing a certain Professor Stoll, someone who has committed the crime of intentionalism in his criticism, W&B say,

"Is not a critic," asks Professor Stoll, "a judge, who does not explore his own consciousness, but determines the author's meaning or intention, as if the poem were a will, a contract, or the constitution? The poem is not the critic's own." He [Stoll] has accurately diagnosed two forms of irresponsibility, one of which he prefers. Our view is yet different. The poem is not the critic's own and not the author's (it is detached from the author at birth and goes about the world beyond his power to intend about it or control it.) The poem belongs to the public. It is embodied in language, the peculiar possession of the public, and it is about the human being, an object of public knowledge. What is said about the poem is subject to the same scrutiny as any statement in linguistics or in the general science of psychology.²²¹

Unfortunately, it seems to me that the case of linguistics works precisely *against* the view that W&B are pushing, one in which the object in question—whether an artobject or an utterance token—becomes utterly detached from the artist's or speaker's intentions, so

²²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 659.

much so that those intentions are *irrelevant* to the interpretation of the artobject or utterance token. As both Grice and Searle have taught us, an utterance token—unlike a sentence type—can only be interpreted through the reconstruction of the intentions of the speaker and an understanding of the speech-act context (which includes the background assumptions of the speaking community) in which the utterance is made. How do W&B propose to interpret the utterance “Muhammad Ali made mincemeat out of George Foreman” made by someone who had just witnessed Ali defeat Foreman or the utterance “John is up the creek without a paddle” made upon learning that John has gone bankrupt, without appeal to the intentions of the speaker and an understanding of the linguistic conventions of the speaking community in which the utterance was made?²²² Consider the following two passages by Grice,

Our talk exchanges do not normally consist of a succession of disconnected remarks, and would not be rational if they did. They are characteristically, to some degree at least, cooperative efforts; and each participant recognizes in them, to some extent, a common purpose or set of purposes, or at least a mutually

²²² Professor Earle has objected that interpreting such utterances has nothing to do with retrieving intentions, but is merely a matter of having knowledge of a few publicly recognized idioms. I would think that this is a far too simple analysis of the process. Suppose I had just used the expression “made mincemeat” in the context of talking about cooking and then, several moments later, used it again in a conversation about sports. In order to interpret the two utterances—one literal, the other idiomatic—properly, one would need to appreciate my *intention to speak idiomatically*, something that could only be known on the basis of an inference supported by the nature of the utterance, the utterance context, and a background understanding (itself grounded inductively) that the intention to speak idiomatically is typically responsible for such utterances in such a context. The point, more generally put, is that we know from speech-act theory and the theory of performative force that the meaning of an utterance token—unlike the meaning of a sentence type—cannot simply be read off of the surface grammar and literal content of the utterance. To understand a sentence type, one must only know the compositional meaning theory (and the compositional syntax) of a natural language. Such knowledge, however, is insufficient to interpret an utterance token, whose intended meaning may not be literal, or which may be nuanced. This is sufficient to defeat the W&B argument that linguistics provides an instance where we have an object whose meaning is to be gleaned entirely from inspection of that object, without reference to the intentions of the person creating or uttering it or any other facts about the background of its creation.

accepted direction.²²³

I have suggested a provisional account of a kind of nonconventional implicature, namely a conversational implicature; what is implicated is what is required that one assume a speaker to think in order to preserve the assumption that he is observing the Cooperative Principle (and perhaps some conversational maxims as well)...²²⁴

And, finally consider Grice's account of what it is for someone to mean something by an utterance:

"U meant something by uttering x" is true iff, for some audience A, U uttered x intending:

- (1) A to produce a particular response r
- (2) **A to think (recognize) that U intends (1)**
- (3) A to fulfill (1) on the basis of his fulfillment of (2)²²⁵

So, the idea that the case of linguistics provides an instance in which we have something—an utterance or other linguistic token—whose interpretive status stands *entirely* separate from the conditions of its production—the intentions of the speaker/writer and the cooperative understandings of the speaking community—and can thus provide a useful analogue for art, is simply false.²²⁶ Indeed, the case of linguistics makes exactly the opposite point; that just as it is absurd to think that the correct

²²³ Paul Grice, "Logic and Conversation" (1967) in *Studies in the Way of Words* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 26.

²²⁴ Grice, "Utterer's Meaning and Intentions" (1967) in *Studies in the Way of Words*, p. 86.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 92. [My boldface]

²²⁶ The "entirely" is important here. What I am accusing W&B of is holding an extremist position. It is obviously the case that an utterance token, in certain respects, becomes a public object upon its utterance, with publicly accessible rules for its interpretation. This is also obviously the case with artobjects, given my theory of ontological commitment to them presented in Chapter Three. The linguistic point I am trying to make here, with Grice, is only that the speaker's intentions are *relevant* to the correct interpretation of his utterances; that W&B's assertion that they are irrelevant is both false and extreme. My intention, as will soon become clear, is to make precisely the same point with artobjects.

interpretation of a speaker's utterance is utterly *irrespective* of a reconstruction of his intentions within the speaking context in which the utterance is made, it is likewise a mistake to think a reconstruction of the intentions behind an artobject's creation or the historical context in which that creation took place is always irrelevant to *its* interpretation.

On my view, the ontological status of the artobject—those conditions under which an artifact has become an artobject, namely the artist's and community's collective interests and purposes (which will consist of clusters of intentions)—is precisely what provides the conditions for interpreting it. The evaluation of the artobject is a function of its interpretation. More specifically, if *X* is an artifact, then *X* becomes an artobject, *A*, just in case the individual interests and purposes behind *X*'s creation, when taken in the cultural-civilizational context of its creation (which itself consists of a complex matrix of intentions and purposes), propel *X* into the "narrative" of art history. The interpretation of *A* involves the retrieval of the individual and collective intentions and purposes that are the cause of its art-status, and the evaluation of *A* consists in the measuring of whether *A* has succeeded in conveying those purposes and intentions.

W&B tell us that judging an artobject (a poem) is "just like judging a pudding or machine. One demands that it work. It is only because an artifact works that we infer the intention of the artificer."²²⁷ But how are we to judge whether or not something "works" without

²²⁷ "The Intentional Fallacy," p. 658.

knowing what that something is *for*—that is, what its purpose is? W&B should have known that a sort of naive Aristotelianism about teleology cannot work; we cannot simply “read off” the *telos* of an object from an inspection of its form alone, for one form may serve several different purposes. We must know the intentions of the creator of the object and the context of its creation in order to know what it is “for” and thus, to be able to evaluate whether or not it “works.” In English cuisine (if there is such a thing), a “pudding” is something that is a part of a meal; one might, for example, order a stew with Yorkshire pudding, where the pudding is intended to be eaten with the stew. The criterion, then, as to whether the pudding “works” is, I guess, whether or not the pudding is edible or tastes good. But I could easily imagine another community where that same pudding is not intended for eating, but rather is a handy way for soaking up the unwanted grease of the meal it accompanies. The criterion, in this case, for whether the pudding “works” is whether or not it is good for soaking up grease. But no mere inspection of the properties of the pudding “from the outside,” so to speak, can tell us which purpose it serves and thus, whether or not it is working. We need to know more about the context of the pudding’s creation in order to know this, and a part of that context includes the intentions of the pudding-maker and the understandings of the larger society in which the pudding was made.

Indeed, the intentionalism that W&B attack seems a rather thin sort of intentionalism, a strawman. What they envisage is a kind of primitive research into an author’s background and an even more primitive inference as to how that influence affected his poetic intentions

and hence, his poem. For example, in a discussion of John Livingston Lowes' *Road to Xanadu* (1927), a work on Coleridge, W&B attack Lowes' appeal to biographical information on Coleridge in his remarks on *Kubla Khan*. First, they quote a tiny section of Lowes' analysis and then purport to show the "intentional fallacy" contained therein:

"Kubla Khan," says Professor Lowes, "is the fabric of a vision, but every image that rose up in its weaving had passed that way before. And it would seem that there is nothing haphazard or fortuitous in their return." This is not quite clear—not even when Professor Lowes explains that there were clusters of associations, like hooked up atoms, which were drawn into complex relation which coalesced and issued forth as poems. If there was nothing "haphazard or fortuitous" in the way the images returned to the surface, that may mean (1) that Coleridge could not produce what he did not have, that he was limited in his creation by what he had read or otherwise experienced (2) that having received certain clusters of associations, he was bound to return to them in just the way he did, and that the value of the poem may be described in terms of the experiences on which he had to draw...

Bartram's *Travels*²²⁸ contains a good deal of the history of certain words and of certain romantic Floridian conceptions that appear in "Kubla Khan..." Perhaps a person who has read Bartram appreciates the poem more than one who has not...But it would seem to pertain little to the poem to know that *Coleridge* had read Bartram.²²⁹

It should be obvious, reading this passage—which is, by the way, characteristic of the way W&B attack Intentionalism—just what a strawman their Intentionalism is. Their interpretation of the fragment of Lowes' criticism²³⁰ is a typically over-analytical, positivistic one. Lowes would never have agreed with a characterization that has him

²²⁸ William Bartram (1739-1823), American botanist, explorer and writer. His *Travels Through North and South Carolina* (1791) was used by both Coleridge and Wordsworth for its catalogue of tropical plants and animals.

²²⁹ "The Intentional Fallacy," pp. 663-4. emphasis in the original.

²³⁰ Lowes, by the way, was a very distinguished Harvard professor of literature of the late-nineteenth/early twentieth-centuries, with numerous and important books on Romanticism, Chaucer and other English literature.

asserting a crude sort of deterministic relationship between Coleridge's reading and his poetic output. W&B read literary criticism as if they were reading a book on chemistry—overly literally. Lowes is merely trying to point out the interconnectedness of literary history through a discussion of Coleridge's influences and predecessors and perhaps make the point that in an important sense, no literary work is truly "original" or "unique" if what is meant by these terms that it has no sources, precedents or analogues. It is, indeed, not in the nature of art or how it is produced, that any work could be original or unique in such a manner. This is an important and basic truth about art and its creation, and the fact that W&B reject it merely points to the degree to which they do not understand art or art history.

W&B assert that to know that Coleridge read Bartram is irrelevant to a proper understanding of "Kubla Khan." And to the extent that the influence of Bartram on writers like Coleridge and Wordsworth was, predominantly, lexicographical, perhaps this is correct. But is it equally irrelevant to know that Coleridge read—and more importantly, had a close relationship with—Wordsworth? Is it irrelevant to know that Wordsworth referred to Coleridge as "The rapt One, of the godlike forehead" "to whom my intellect is most indebted," and that Coleridge said that Wordsworth "was a very great man—the only man to whom at all times and in all modes of excellence I feel myself inferior?" Apparently so, despite the fact that it is generally accepted in critical circles that Coleridge's *The Eolian Harp* (1795) and *Frost at Midnight* (1798) were the two most important sources for Wordsworth's *Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey*

(1798), and that, more generally speaking, the two men had a huge effect on each other's work. Indeed, Coleridge himself even penned a poem that openly acknowledges his indebtedness to Wordsworth,

O great Bard!
Ere yet that last strain dying awed the air,
With stedfast eye I viewed thee in the choir
Of ever enduring men. The truly great
Have all one age, and from one visible space
Shed influence! They, both in power and act,
Are permanent, and Time is not with them,
Save as it worketh for them, they in it...

Nor do thou,
Sage Bard! impair the memory of that hour
Of thy communion with my nobler mind
By pity or grief, already felt too long!
Nor let my words import more blame than needs.
The tumult rose and ceased: for Peace is nigh
Where Wisdom's voice has found a listening heart.
Amid the howl of more than wintry storms,
The Halcyon hears the voice of vernal hours
Already on the wing...

And when—O Friend! my comforter and guide!
Strong in thyself, and powerful to give strength! —
Thy long sustained Song finally closed,
And thy deep voice had ceased — yet thou thyself
Wert still before my eyes, and round us both
That happy vision of beloved faces —
Scarce conscious, and yet conscious of its close
I sate, my being blended in one thought
(Thought was it? or aspirations? or resolve?)
Absorbed, yet hanging still upon the sound —
And when I rose, I found myself in prayer.²³¹

Harold Bloom's *The Visionary Company: A Reading of English Romantic Poetry*,

²³¹ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *To William Wordsworth: Composed On the Night After His Recitation of a Poem on the Growth of an Individual Mind* (January 1807), reprinted in Kathleen Raine, ed., *Samuel Taylor Coleridge: Selected Poetry and Prose* (London: Penguin Books, 1957); pp. 102-105.

considered one of the finest books on Romanticism, is filled with repeat offences of the “fallacy” Wimsatt and Beardsley are so keen on stamping out. Take, for example, the following from Bloom’s introductory remarks on Coleridge,

Coleridge’s “conversation poems” are the origin of the Wordsworthian mode, of *Tintern Abbey* and its attendant works in which we hear “a man talking to men.” And through Wordsworth, they are therefore the ancestors of Shelley’s *Mont Blanc* and Keats’s *Sleep and Poetry*...The conversational idiom of Coleridge and Wordsworth is descended from Cowper’s softening of Milton’s style in his domestic epic, *The Task*. Coleridge mixes Cowper with the Shakespeare of *The Winter’s Tale* and *The Tempest* in forming this style, which moves from a low pitch of informal affection to climactic apostrophes and invocations to nature.²³²

What I am trying to get the reader to see is how important it is to consider the *consequences* of an aesthetic theory on the critical practice it is supposed to be a metatheory for; in this case, the consequences of W&B’s position, of their belief that there is an absolute division between the criticism of art on the one hand and all the things that fall under “author biography” or “author psychology” on the other. It means not only that criticism of the above sort is irrelevant and, even, harmful to the proper interpretation of a poem, but that a biographical and contextual understanding of *any* artist—even if it involves direct proclamations of indebtedness by the artist himself (like Coleridge’s poem to Wordsworth)—is *always* irrelevant and harmful to correct criticism.²³³

²³² Harold Bloom, *The Visionary Company: A Reading of English Romantic Poetry* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971), p. 200.

²³³ An essential point needs to be made here in order to avoid misunderstanding. My argument is *not* that we *always* need to know the artist’s intention in order to properly interpret his work, or that such a knowledge is essential to critical interpretation. This clearly is not the case, and could not be the case on a theory of art such as mine, where works of art can come to belong to new artistic kinds, even long after the artist is dead—clearly, on my view, artworks can be “adopted” into new kinds of which the artist never conceived.

Rather, I am rejecting a position that I view as extreme and at odds with the actual nature of critical practice. While it is true that it is *not* essential that we make reference to an artist’s intentions or history when interpreting his work, the fact of the matter is that, as critics, we often *do* make such

Did you think, for example, that knowing that Kafka spent most of his life in a dreary and bureaucratic profession and was a generally frustrated man (as revealed in his letters) is useful in understanding his work? Wrong—this is to conflate author’s biography with the criticism of his work. Did you hope that by studying and coming to understand the history and culture of the American South in the early parts of this century that you might gain better insight into Faulkner’s fictional, yet startlingly realistic Yoknapatawpha County and, thus, into his work, so much in which said County is featured? Think again. This is to mistakenly believe that knowing the genesis of a work of art is useful to interpreting it—mistaken because the work is “detached from the author at birth.” Perhaps you believed that it was useful to know that Raphael was a student in Perugino’s workshop in Umbria or that Beethoven studied under Haydn, because in seeing the similarities and differences between the work of master and student, one might gain insight into the work of both. You would obviously be mistaken, since everyone knows with Wimsatt & Beardsley that an artwork is a public object utterly detached from its creator and the context of its creation.

Once again, then, we find in Wimsatt and Beardsley theoreticians purporting to tell the practitioners of a first-order discipline how to practice their trade, deigning it their position to determine for critics what information is relevant and irrelevant to their interpretations

reference. That is, an understanding of the artist’s mentality, his sensibility, his personal history, and all other matters relevant to an understanding of his intentions, are often very useful to critics in interpreting that artist’s works. This is part of the reason why, for example, we are interested in the letters of authors like Joyce and Kafka and why we care to read books like Kandinsky’s *Concerning the Spiritual Art*, where the artist tries to explain what he aims to do. To say that such information is essential would most certainly be incorrect, but it is equally wrong to say that it is irrelevant, as W&B do.

and evaluations of artworks. The result, of course, of following the theoreticians' instructions would be the weakest, most superficial sort of criticism. If we were to actually take W&B's negative remarks on Intentionalism seriously and try to do criticism within the confines of what they say "counts" we would be reduced to the mere inspection of an artwork from the outside and a pronouncement on its meaning and worth based on that inspection alone. Art history and artistic biography would become separated from and irrelevant to the critical exercise, and as a result, all three would be left impoverished and infinitely less interesting, and, worst of all, our understanding of art, literature, music, and poetry would be damaged immeasurably.

4.43 Evaluating Art History—Cross-Teleological Judgment and the Evaluation of Artistic Teleologies

A much more serious difficulty looms on an entirely different front. The theory of evaluation that I am proposing has one major implication: *critically evaluative judgments must always be made relative to a teleological framework*. Because I am construing artistic value as a type of virtue, attributions of value must always at least tacitly refer to a *telos* (or *telois*) of the work in question. It would be meaningless to say that a work succeeds at X without at least the tacit understanding that it was for the sake of X (to use somewhat stilted teleological language). For example, it would be seriously deficient for Aristotle to say that courage is a virtue without somewhere explaining that courageous behavior is moderate, and hence, rational behavior, and that humans are *supposed* to live

rational lives. Likewise, it would be importantly incomplete to say that Goya's *Saturn* is horrific (with the conversational implication that it is a success) without going on to say, at some point, that part of the purpose of *Saturn* is precisely to horrify, since its larger aim is to convey the horrors of the French Revolution and Terror. "Virtue" just means excellence, and it is empty to say that something is excellent without explaining *relative to what purpose* it is excellent.

An initial question arises that, though, readily answerable, leads to a much more difficult question, one that I am not sure I can account for in a satisfactory manner. The first goes something like this: you have said that all legitimately critical evaluations must be made relative to a framework of ends. This claim, of course, is one that pertains to the evaluation of individual works of art. But what about the comparison of artworks, something that is often done in critical contexts? More importantly still, what about the comparison of artworks with *diverse* ends? If success or failure is always success or failure relative to a *telos*, then how can we say one artwork is more or less successful than another, if the two works do not share common teleologies?

This is an important question. Critics often—indeed, regularly—compare works of art, in both interpretive and evaluative contexts, and while this is most commonly done with works that obviously share teleologies—the works of Monet and Pissaro, or the music of Debussy and Ravel for example—it is also done with works in which a common teleological framework is not at all obvious—comparing some of the works of Dali with

those of Bosch or of Titian with certain modern painters.

It is these latter cases that are supposed to cause the problem. Comparing works of art that have many teleologies in common, either in interpretive or evaluative mode is, of course, easy to account for on my theory. When interpreting Ingres' *Napoleon Imperator*, we might very commonly invoke Jacques Louis David's, *Napoleon Crossing the Great Saint Bernard Pass* (Fig. 33—1800) or his *Coronation of Napoleon and Josephine* (Fig. 34—1805-7). When discussing Goya, one might very likely talk about Gericault and Delacroix. Such comparisons are useful in the interpretive mode, because these painters were working within the same aesthetic paradigms and the civilizational interests that are responsible for their creation overlap significantly. Understanding David's work, thus, will help us to understand Ingres's; understanding Goya's work may give us insight into Gericault's. And to the extent that we want to compare the works of these artists in the evaluative mode, we can make such comparisons relative to these shared teleologies—e.g. who is the better painter in the neo-classical idiom or who more perfectly conveys the imperial sensibility of Napoleon, David or Ingres? Whose work is the best representative of the “terror, horror, and madness” idiom, Goya's or Gericault's? The answer to such questions will be based upon which artist or which work more successfully realizes purposes that they share in common.

But what of works that don't, in any obvious way, spring from similar teleologies? The work of 15th and 16th century painters like Hieronymous Bosch and Pieter Bruegel the

Elder is often invoked in critical and art-historical discussions of Salvador Dali's paintings—Hartt even goes farther, comparing Dali's work to that of Jan van Eyck and Rogier van der Weyden, claiming that Dali's execution of his work results in "an exactitude of statement that at times recalls less his idols Vermeer and Velazquez than the technique of the Netherlandish masters of the fifteenth century."²³⁴—and Greenberg, when discussing de Kooning's *Women* series, summons up Michelangelo, Ingres, and Rubens—"De Kooning's figurative paintings are haunted...by the disembodied contours of Michelangelo's, Ingres's and even Rubens's nudes."²³⁵ Wölfflin, even, at several points in *Principles of Art History*, compares Bernini with Terboch and Holbein with Michelangelo.²³⁶ What is to be said about the comparison—and comparative evaluation—of works with such apparently dissimilar aesthetic and non-aesthetic teleologies, given that artistic interpretation and evaluation must always be made relative to an artwork's teleology?

The short answer is that the critic making such a point suffers from a lack of imagination; these works of art *do* share teleologies, and this will become clear if one explores in a sufficiently comprehensive way, the conditions, interests, and purposes that lie behind them. And when we make evaluative comparisons between say, Dali and Bosch, de

²³⁴ Hartt, *A History of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture*, pp. 921-2.

²³⁵ Clement Greenberg, "'American Type' Painting," reprinted in Ross, *Abstract Expressionism: Creators and Critics*, p. 239.

²³⁶ Heinrich Wölfflin, *Principles of Art History*, pp. 11-12.

Kooning and Rubens, or Holbein and Michelangelo, those comparisons are always—when we are in critical mode—made within the context of shared teleologies.

Take, for example, the comparison of Michelangelo and Holbein, say the *Creation of Adam* (Fig. 35—1512) panel from the Sistine Chapel ceiling and Holbein's *Madonna of Burgomaster Meyer* (Fig. 36—1526). Other than the fact that the two works are from roughly the same time period, they couldn't appear to be more different. Michelangelo's work represents the height of the Italian Renaissance with its complete revival of Classical humanism, characterized by highly idealized, heroic forms, while Holbein's represents the Northern Renaissance with its frank, un-idealized realism, whose sources trace back to late Gothic art much more than to the art of Classical Antiquity. The subject-matter of the two works are also quite different—the former is an Old-Testament scene that is a part of a much larger series of Bible-inspired frescoes, while the latter is a commissioned Madonna and Child, with the donor and his family flanking the Virgin and baby Jesus. On what grounds, then, given these seemingly distinct purposes and interests, would one compare the two works?

If one thinks a little, the answer comes readily to hand. Beyond their obvious historical, national, aesthetic, and programmatic dissimilarities, the Michelangelo and the Holbein share quite a lot, teleologically speaking. With Wölfflin, both painters were masters of the linear or “draughtsmanly” style; thus, their works are closely related on the basic ground of painting style (also belonging to this grouping are artists as different as Raphael and

Dürer). On many aesthetic levels, then, the Michelangelo has much more in common with the Holbein than it does with Rembrandt's *The Angel Leaving Tobias and his Family* (Fig. 37—1637), which is far closer to *Creation of Adam* in terms of content, but which is done in the painterly style (of which Rembrandt was, perhaps, the greatest master). On this subject of aesthetic similarity in the face of great programmatic and national difference, Wölfflin says,

Vision itself has its history...There are hardly two artists who, although contemporaries, are more widely divergent by temperament than the baroque master Bernini and the Dutch painter Terboch...And yet, if we were to lay drawings by the two masters side by side and compare the general features of the technique, we would have to admit that there is here a perfect kinship. In both, there is that manner of seeing in patches instead of lines, something which we can call painterly, which is the distinguishing feature of the seventeenth century in comparison with the sixteenth. We encounter here a kind of vision in which the most heterogeneous artists can participate...

[Two] artists, who, as personalities, have little in common, Michelangelo and Hans Holbein the Younger, resemble each other in that they both represent the type of quite strictly linear design. In other words, there can be discovered in the history of style a substratum of concepts referring to representation as such, and one could envisage a history of the development of occidental seeing, for which the variations in individual and national characteristics would cease to have any importance.²³⁷

This last point of Wölfflin's is instructive for the point I am trying to make. Looking at art history as the history of artistic teleologies, we can construct very different art-historical progressions depending upon which interests and purposes are held constant. With a focus on painting-style, one gets an art-history where Jan van Eyck, Michelangelo, Raphael, Dürer, and Holbein are grouped together. On the other hand, with a focus on the two types of humanism—Classical and Classical-Revival and Christian Gothic—one

²³⁷ Wölfflin, *Principles of Art History*, pp. 11-12.

gets a very different sorting, where ancient Greek and Roman sculptures get grouped with Michelangelo and Raphael, while, on the other side, the sculptures of Chartres get grouped with the Limbourg Brothers, van Eyck, Petrus Christus, and Holbein. Dürer, on this count, winds up straddling both strands, with one foot in post-Gothic, Northern humanism and the other in the Italian Classical revival variety. Thus, when we further consider the intricate interconnectedness of all art history, there are very few artworks which cannot be compared on some ground-or other—and often, on quite interesting grounds—and, thus, which cannot admit of evaluative comparison, relative to one purpose or set of purposes or another.

But this issue of the inter-teleological comparison of artworks—which has turned out to really be only a matter of *intra*-teleological comparison, and, thus, not a problem for a philosophy of criticism such as mine—leads us to a more difficult and potentially troublesome question. Can we—as critics and not fans—make legitimate evaluations of artistic teleologies themselves? That is, taking artistic kinds as the names of clusters of artistic teleologies, can we make evaluations of them that can be construed as properly critical? For example, “Northern Renaissance art is great,” “Renaissance art is superior to Medieval art,” or “Surrealism is inferior to German Expressionism.” What kinds of judgments are these? Can my philosophy of criticism offer an analysis of such utterances that will satisfy our pre-theoretic intuitions and also sit well with critical practice? It is perhaps on this front that I feel myself on the least solid footing.

What this question boils down to is whether or not there are better and worse artistic purposes and interests. The question we have been asking up until this point is on what grounds we have good or bad artworks, relative to artistic purposes. But the question is obviously begged; are some artistic purposes better, or more worthy than others? More fundamentally, are artistic purposes subject to critical evaluation (that is, not merely on the grounds of taste) as artobjects are?

It is my strong belief that they are not. Or at least, artistic purposes are not subject to the *same sort* of critical evaluation—that is, a virtue-theoretic evaluation—that artobjects are. On this front I cannot waver; for a virtue-theoretic axiology by definition must relativize evaluations to purposes. For X to possess a virtue is for it to succeed relative to a purpose. It would thus be meaningless to say that a purpose is virtuous, for this would just be to say that a purpose succeeds relative to a purpose, a nonsensical notion. The only way that such an idea might be rendered meaningful is if it is possible to discern some overarching teleology, some purpose, for art, taken as a whole—that is, as an entire practice. One could then say that individual artistic teleologies can be virtuous relative to whether or not they facilitate or detract from the ultimate purpose of art. This is a possible line that one could run; I don't find it preposterous to imagine that someone might explore the ultimate purpose of art, taken as a distinctively human activity. But I am simply not up to such a task and will not be, I suspect, until I have accumulated a significantly greater amount of wisdom about art and about humanity.

I also wonder whether someone with an artistic ontology such as the one that I have presented would *want* to say such a thing; for doesn't the notion that there is a single purpose or a tight cluster of purposes that art, as a practice, possesses bring us dangerously close to the kind of essentialist theories of art that I have sought to reject? Will I not lose precisely the pluralism and flexibility that makes my ontology capable of absorbing every new innovation thrown at it from the artworld, both now and in the future? I suspect that one who holds a Dantoian ontology for artworks does not have available to him the notion that there is a single unifying purpose for all art, save the highly indexical one that we have already attributed to it—to convey this, that, or the other civilizational interests and purposes through aesthetic means. Thus, I am quite certain that on a theory of art such as mine, we will not be able to say that artistic interests and purposes—and thus, artistic kinds—admit of the same sort of critical evaluation that works of art do; we will *not* be able to run a virtue-theoretic axiology for artistic purposes and kinds.

I leave it to the reader to determine whether or not this inability to evaluate artistic purposes and kinds in the same way that we evaluate artworks themselves is a weakness of the virtue-theoretic model of artistic value. It seems to me that more important than whether we can offer the *same* sort of evaluative model for artistic purposes and kinds as we offer for artobjects, is that we be able to offer *some* evaluative model for artistic purposes and kinds, so long as it is one that does not relegate such evaluations solely to the domain of taste. While it is undoubtedly the case that many (if not most of) such

judgments *are* judgments of taste, just as are many of the judgments we make about artobjects, I do not think we should be forced to say that judgments about artistic interests, purposes, and kinds are *solely* judgments of taste.

While I would want to explore this issue in more detail in a paper devoted solely to the topic, I want to offer two way of looking at the evaluation of artistic purposes, interests, and kinds that doesn't merely reduce such evaluations to taste preferences.

First, suppose that we say the following: One artistic kind is superior to another just in case the civilizational interests and purposes it represents have greater longevity, "staying power," so to speak, than the other. Taking the evaluation to the level of purposes and interests, we would say the following: an artistic interest or purpose is greater than another just in case it persists in time—remains an interest or purpose—longer than the other.

The idea here is not unrelated to the idea of a "classic," although this concept, of course, applies to artobjects, not to artistic interests, purposes; or kinds. But the point is very similar; it seems more than a matter of mere taste to claim that artistic kinds, purposes, and interests which *last* are of greater value than those which do not. Think of the terms that we use to describe artistic genres and kinds that do not last—"trendy," "flash-in-the-pan," "faddish"; they all have derogatory connotations, whereas the words that we use to describe classics—"archetypal," "prototypical," "time-honored"—all have connotations

of praise. And while all this is to merely describe the differences in how these concepts are used, I would argue that it is more than a matter of taste to claim that something which lasts is superior to something that does not. How, exactly, the argument for this claim would go, however, I am not currently in a position to offer.

While this criterion of evaluation for artistic purposes, interests, and kinds is concerned with how *long* the interests and purposes remain of interest, another relevant criterion, it seems to me, is how *broad* the appeal of the interests and purposes are. This brings me to my second idea for a non-taste based criterion for the value of artistic teleologies and kinds: Does this type of art—do these interests and purposes—appeal only to a narrow group, or to a specific nation or people, or does its appeal spread further, to the peoples of an entire continent, or even, to the entirety of humanity? Again, this is an idea stolen from the concept of a classic; part of the reason why Shakespeare's plays are classics but Brett Easton Ellis's novels²³⁸ are not—aside from the fact that Shakespeare is a vastly superior writer compared to Brett Easton Ellis—is because Shakespeare's plays represent interests and purposes that speak to virtually the whole of humanity, whereas Ellis's novels do not. I would doubt that Ellis's novels, though they are excellent, would have much to say, for example, to the Chinese or the Japanese, since they are so rooted in specifically American—indeed, 1980's and post 1980's American—themes. Shakespeare's plays, on

²³⁸ Brett Easton Ellis is a contemporary American novelist whose works include such excellent novels as *Less Than Zero* (1985), *The Rules of Attraction* (1987), and *American Psycho* (1991). Ellis's work presents a desolate wasteland of rich, jaded, drug addicted youth, and I would argue that Ellis is one of the finest "portraitists" of the culture of the 1980's in American literature.

the other hand, *do* have such a far-reaching appeal. Indeed, some of the finest adaptations of Shakespeare's plays and the themes contained therein have been done by the Japanese filmmaker, Akira Kurosawa.²³⁹

The claim, then, that Renaissance art is great, a claim, not just about individual pieces of Renaissance art, but about Renaissance art as a kind—as a distinctive set of artistic interests and purposes—might, when taken as a critical judgment, be taken, in part, as saying something like, “The artistic interests and purposes represented in Renaissance art are of far-reaching and long-living interest.” And comparisons between artistic kinds—“Renaissance art is greater than medieval art” or “Expressionism is superior to Surrealism”—may indicate that one the artistic interests and purposes represented in one movement may have had more staying power and a greater breadth of interest than the other.

Again, these are only wavings of the hands in the direction of possible ways of construing the critical evaluation of artistic interests, purposes, and kinds, a way that avoids devolving all such talk to the domain of taste, but which also sits with my larger aesthetic theory. Hopefully, in some future forum, I will be able to address the subject more fully and satisfactorily.

²³⁹ Akira Kurosawa's *Ran*, a Japanese adaptation of Shakespeare's *King Lear* is an excellent case in point.

Chapter Five: The Justification of Critical Judgments

5.1 Preliminary Remarks

As we near the end of this dissertation, there is only one significant area left to discuss, namely, an epistemology for criticism. We have already talked about (a) what art-objects are; (b) what sort of value art-objects possess; (c) the nature of critical judgments. What is left now is to explain how critical judgments—of all the different sorts discussed in Chapter Four—are to be *justified*. With this last piece of the puzzle in place, I will have offered the philosophical core of a complete philosophy of art and criticism.

This chapter will address two central issues. The first is the form that critical justifications take; that is, I will offer a justification schema for critical judgments of the sort we have been discussing. This justification schema will take a nomological-deductive form; critical judgments are deductively inferred from (i) artistic laws that map artistic properties onto artistic virtues; (ii) premises stating that the artobject in question has this, that, or the other property. The second will center around the issue of *ceteris paribus* clauses, since it will at least *seem* that the nomological-deductive model of justification that I am offering will need to make essential reference to such “CP” clauses in the artistic laws that are at its center. It is precisely because aestheticians have argued that artistic laws are impossible—because they are false without CP clauses and allegedly vacuous with them—that they have concluded that rigorous critical justification is impossible, and it is

this more than any other factor, as I have consistently claimed throughout this dissertation, that has led to all the various subjectivist and anti-transparency aesthetic theories that I find so unpalatable. I will argue, however, that (at least on my theory), what look like artistic CP laws are really not CP laws at all—that while artistic laws do contain proviso clauses, these clauses do not render them genuine CP laws—and thus, artistic laws avoid all of the problems that CP laws in the sciences encounter. Thus, the discussion of CP laws, and the successful refutation of the argument that presumes artistic laws to *be* CP laws is of key importance to the success of this entire project.

5.2 Critical Justification

A justification schema for critical judgments will consist of a form or model of justification that can be employed in the defense of any particular critical judgment, whether of a painting, musical composition, novel, or any other sort of art-object.

It seems obvious from the most superficial observation of critical practice that critics, when pressed for explanations of their critical evaluations, cite features or properties of the artwork in question when attempting to justify their critical claims about it. When, for example, the critic tells us that *Pieter van den Broecke* is a great portrait and is asked for a reason for this judgment, he may tell us that it is great because of its journalistic realism, its having captured the likeness of a real person in a real moment. In this case, the property of being journalistically realistic is supposed to justify the claim that *Pieter van*

den Broecke is great. Of course, the search for reasons does not end here—the critic, when asked why he believes that *Pieter van den Broecke* is journalistically realistic, will justify *that* claim by pointing out further—though subsequently “lower-level”—properties of *Pieter van den Broecke*; it is journalistically realistic because of a combination of factors—its painterly style, sense of motion, lack of idealization, etc... When pursued to this level, we enter Sibley-territory, and questions as to whether, ultimately, non-aesthetic predications can justify aesthetic ones. I spoke about Sibley at some length in Chapter Two, and I am really more interested here in the justification of evaluative claims of artworks in terms of both aesthetic and non-aesthetic properties, then in the Sibley question. Still, as we will see, many of the problems of justification at both “levels”—i.e. at the higher evaluative level, and the middle- and lower-levels—are the same, and thus, to the extent that a Dantoian ontology and virtue-theoretic account of artistic value helps us in our justifications of artistic evaluations it might help us, I think, with the Sibley problem as well (although showing this will have to be left to another occasion).

So, continuing to work with the examples that have been introduced up to this point, our critic tells us that the Introit and Kyrie of Duruflé’s *Requiem* are stirring, and part of what is conversationally implied is that it is good. Again, the critic has pointed out a feature of an artwork—in this case, a piece of music’s being stirring—and has offered this as a reason for claiming that the work in question is good. Likewise, when the critic asserts that Pollock’s *One—Number 31* is static—this time with the conversational implication that it is not good—he is telling us that it has this negative value *because of* the property

of being static.

If it is generally uncontroversial²⁴⁰ that this is the manner in which critics justify their judgments about artworks, the question now becomes what precisely are the mechanics of this type of justification. That is, how does this type of justification actually *work*?

When we make the critical judgment that Goya's *Saturn* is horrifying or disgusting—with the speaker-meaning of “is horrifying” and “is disgusting” also implying that it is good—or when we merely make the judgment that it is good, we are making two claims with essentially the same justificatory schematization:

1. *Saturn* is good.
2. It is good because it is horrifying.

- 1.' *Saturn* is good.
- 2.' It is good because it is disgusting.

I can imagine a critic and a student standing in the Prado in front of *Saturn*, and the critic saying to the student, “Look how good this painting is, it's so extremely horrifying,” or, responding to the student's palpable nausea at the bloody picture in front of him, saying “Yes, this painting is really disgusting, isn't it good?” Clearly, in such cases, the assertions that the painting is horrifying and disgusting are supposed to justify the claim that it is

²⁴⁰ In one sense it is obviously *not* uncontroversial insofar as people like Isenberg claim that the justification doesn't really operate as a justification but rather “guides perception.” In another sense, however, no one denies that, at least *on the surface*, critical judgments and justifications take precisely this form. What drives Isenberg and those like him to the conclusion that such justifications are not really justifications is the conviction that they *could not possibly function as justifications*. Since I think this is false—I believe that they can function as justifications—the surface appearance of critical practice is vindicated as real “all the way down,” and thus, rendered uncontroversial.

good.

Of course, the question now becomes: Why are the predicates “is horrifying” and “is disgusting” supposed to provide epistemic warrant for the claim that *Saturn* is good?

After all, when formalized, our two pairs of claims look like this:

- 1a. S is G
- 2a. S is G because it is H

- 1a.’ S is G
- 2a.’ S is G because it is D

The problem, here, of course, is that neither 1a.-2a. nor 1a.’-2a.’ is a valid schema. From the fact that X is H, it does not follow that X is G, and from the fact that X is D it also does not follow that X is G. Thus, we have not yet explained why the fact that it is horrifying or disgusting provides grounds for thinking that *Saturn* is a good painting.

What is needed is a universal generalization that connects H and D to G. Thus, if we have a third statement which reads:

- 3a. $(\forall x) (x \text{ is H} \rightarrow x \text{ is G})$

or

- 3a.’ $(\forall x) (x \text{ is D} \rightarrow x \text{ is G})$

Such a generalization, if available, would render our schemas valid. For now (and rearranging the order of our premises, taking “*Saturn* is good” as the conclusion) we have:

- I. $(\forall x) (x \text{ is H} \rightarrow x \text{ is G})$
- II. S is H
- III. \therefore S is G

and

- I.' $(\forall x) x \text{ is } D \rightarrow x \text{ is } G$
- II.' S is D
- III.' $\therefore S \text{ is } G$

As we know from the literature that we have already discussed, from Isenberg to Mothersill, the opinion in the aesthetic literature is that we cannot have laws like I. and I.' Many of their reasons for rejecting such aesthetic laws are derivative of the problems raised for lawlike generalizations in the special sciences that we find predominantly in the literature on folk psychology, but also in the philosophy of biology. These are important problems which must be faced, but I will ultimately conclude that the comparison of aesthetic laws (I will call them "artistic laws") with laws in the special and "hard" sciences rests on a fundamentally mistaken analogy between art and science and that, therefore, the problems raised against laws in the special sciences have no bite against artistic laws, at least not when one also adopts my Dantoian ontology for art-objects and my virtue-theoretic account of artistic value. Adopting my theory of art, in short, gives us a way of construing artistic laws such that they can serve as the centerpiece of critical epistemology, supporting a nomological-deductive model of justification for critical judgments, while avoiding the problems that have been traditionally raised against lawlike generalizations in the sciences.

5.3 Artistic Laws

With the just-sketched schema of justification in mind, let's provide ourselves with a few more examples of artistic laws to help us with our discussion, and let's continue to make use of the artistic examples already discussed. Our imaginary critic has said that the Introit and Kyrie of Duruflé's *Requiem* are good because they are stirring. In order for this to be a valid justification, we must have an artistic law that states that an art-object is good just in case it is stirring, thus:

$$4. \quad (\forall x) (x \text{ is ST} \rightarrow x \text{ is G})$$

Likewise, our hypothetical critic has told us that Haydn's *Nelson Mass* is good because it is majestic. Again, in order for it to be valid to infer from the fact that the *Nelson Mass* is majestic that it is, therefore, good, we must have access to an artistic law that states that artworks which are majestic are good, thus:

$$5. \quad (\forall x) (x \text{ is M} \rightarrow x \text{ is G})$$

Finally, our critic has argued that Pollock's *One—Number 31* is not good because it is static. For this judgment to be valid on these grounds, it would have to be the case that there is an artistic law to the effect that artworks which are static are not good, thus:

$$6. \quad (\forall x) (x \text{ is STA} \rightarrow \text{not } (x \text{ is G}))$$

So, here, in summary, are the artistic laws that we will deal with:

(Where the scope of the quantifier is restricted to the universe of artworks)

$$AL_1: \quad (\forall x) (x \text{ is H} \rightarrow x \text{ is G})$$

“Artworks which are horrifying are good.”

AL ₂ : $(\forall x) (x \text{ is ST} \rightarrow x \text{ is G})$	“Artworks which are stirring are good.”
AL ₃ : $(\forall x) (x \text{ is M} \rightarrow x \text{ is G})$	“Artworks which are majestic are good.”
AL ₄ : $(\forall x) (x \text{ is STA} \rightarrow \text{not-}(x \text{ is G}))$	“Artworks which are static are not good.”

Now, what is supposed to be wrong with artistic laws like these, according to philosophers like Isenberg and Mothersill? Let’s refresh our memories by recalling again the relevant sections of “Critical Communication,” “Critical Reasons,” and *Beauty Restored*, which we discussed at some length in Chapter Two.

At a key point in “Critical Communication,” Isenberg is talking about a critic’s treatment of El Greco’s *Burial of Count Orgaz*, and specifically, the critical judgment that it should receive a favorable rating as an artwork because of a formal feature, namely, the curve on which the figures in the foreground are represented, a curve which is in the shape of a rising and falling wave. Isenberg agrees with the critic that *Burial of Count Orgaz* is artistically valuable and he agrees that it is such, in part, because of the curve on which the figures in the foreground are arranged. But he also thinks that, despite this fact, one cannot validly infer from the fact that its figures are arranged on a rising and falling wave that it is, therefore, good. For Isenberg can imagine an indefinite number and variety of reproductions of an identical such curve which would not receive a positive critical evaluation. Indeed, he tells us, “But the same quality [a “steeply rising and falling curve,” and so on] would be found in any of a hundred lines one could draw on the board in three

minutes.”²⁴¹ Given that the critic is making a judgment and *seems* to back it up with a justification that refers to a property of *Burial of Count Orgaz*, given that the possession of this property cannot validly entail that *Burial of Count Orgaz* has the property of goodness; and given that the critic is neither mistaken nor a fool, we must conclude that while he *seems* to be referring to this property, he is really referring to some other property—a funny nominalistic property, to be sure—a property which *does* suffice to “get us to agree with” the judgment that *Burial of Count Orgaz* is good, but which cannot be denoted through ordinary attributive reference (hence all the stuff about the justification “guiding perception,” rather than justifying a judgment, etc.).

Boiled down to its essence, this problem comes down to this: the properties cited by the critic as justifications for the goodness or lack thereof of the artwork in question cannot be incorporated into a larger law that says that such-and-such properties suffice for goodness in artworks (because there are many artworks (and non-artworks) and possible artworks in which the property would not be a good-making feature), and thus, cannot function in a justificatory capacity for the critical judgment in the first place.

Let’s call this problem the “universalizability problem.” “H” is taken as a good-making feature in *Saturn*, but in order for the inference to go through—that *Saturn* is good because it is horrifying—one must have recourse to a generalization that states that being horrifying is a good-making feature in artworks. The problem is that this generalization,

²⁴¹ Isenberg, “Critical Communication,” p. 663. [My brackets]

when taken universally, is simply false. Quoting Mothersill again from “Critical Reasons”:

It follows that the critic, who, in support of his verdict (*P* is a good painting) offers a reason, must refer to a particular feature which the work in question actually has. If he says that *P* is a good painting because it has quality *Q*...then, as a minimal condition, *P* must be seen to have quality *Q*. But this is not enough, for how can the reason really support the verdict unless it refers elliptically to an appropriate ‘law’, i.e. ‘*Q* is a good-making quality in paintings’? This seems implausible since paintings are different and are good for different reasons. Quality *Q* may contribute to the value of painting *P* but fail to contribute or count as an actual flaw in painting *P*₁.²⁴²

And Mothersill is, of course, correct; our artistic laws—*AL*₁-*AL*₄—as they stand, are clearly false. It is not the case that being horrifying is always a good-making feature in artworks, nor is it the case that being disgusting is always a good-making feature or being static a “bad-making” one.

We should notice, since I will make this comparison throughout our discussion, a similar problem in the philosophy of psychology. When we say that John ate because he was hungry, we must, at some point in our psychological explanation of his behavior, invoke a folk-psychological law which says something like “A person, when hungry, will eat if food is available.” Of course, we know that this law, at least as stated, is false, since John may be on a hunger-strike and thus, will not eat, despite the fact that he is famished after three days without food.

In folk psychology, the typical response to this problem is to invoke what is known as a *ceteris paribus* clause; “all other things being equal” a person will eat if hungry and

²⁴² “Critical Reasons,” in *Aesthetics: Contemporary Studies in Aesthetics*, p. 210.

provided food. The law, with the *ceteris paribus* clause (hereafter “CP clause”)

unpacked, goes something like this:

CPL₁: A person, when hungry, will eat if provided food, unless there is some countervailing belief or desire that overrides his hunger (such as the belief that he should not eat on political principle).

Such talk is ubiquitous in the folk-psychological literature; with Jerry Fodor,

If there are psychological laws, then they must be *nonstrict*; they must be “*ceteris paribus*” or “all else equal” laws. There couldn’t, for example, be a mental state whose instantiation in a creature literally *guarantees* a subsequent behavior, if only because the world might come to an end before the creature has a chance to behave.²⁴³

CP laws in psychology, however, are far from uncontroversial; with Steve Schiffer,

A strict law of nature might tell us that F events always cause G events... A *ceteris paribus* law, if there are any, might tell us that F events cause G events *ceteris paribus*, or, to confine expression to a single language, that F events cause G events *all other things being equal*.

Some philosophers believe that there are *ceteris paribus* laws and that without them there would be no special-science explanations, and hence no special sciences. These philosophers think that science is in the business of providing scientific explanations, that such explanations require laws, and that there are no, or only very few, strict special science laws; whence their appeal to *ceteris paribus* laws...

My trouble with psychological *ceteris paribus* laws is that I doubt there are any. There are *ceteris paribus* sentences, to be sure, but the question is whether they express *propositions* and whether, if they do express propositions, those propositions are, or suitably determine, laws.²⁴⁴

Can CP clauses, or something like them, help us with our artistic laws? As we saw in Chapter Two, the dominant position in aesthetics—represented by those like

²⁴³ Jerry Fodor, “You Can Fool Some of the People All of the Time, Everything Else being Equal; Hedged Laws and Psychological Explanations,” *Mind*, Vol. 100, p. 21. [Emphasis in the original]

²⁴⁴ Stephen Schiffer, “*Ceteris Paribus* Laws,” *Mind*, Vol. 100, pp. 1-2. [Emphasis in the original]

Mothersill—is that they cannot. I will ultimately argue that my artistic laws aren't really CP laws at all, and that as a result they do not succumb to the problems traditionally raised against CP laws. But since the critics of artistic laws (like Mothersill) have treated them as CP laws and have levied complaints at them *as if they were* CP laws, and because I think that the explanation as to why artistic laws are *not* CP laws sheds interesting light on the difference between science and criticism (as well as on the nature of criticism), I first want to consider that they *might* be CP laws and look at the traditional complaints that have been levied against them from the CP law literature.

There are many critics of CP laws in the special sciences—Schiffer, who is perhaps one of the most prominent examples—and many of their criticisms have been imported to aesthetics by those who oppose artistic laws. To summarize these criticisms against CP laws in the sciences:

(A) CP laws are open-ended laws. That is, the CP clause, when unpacked, will be infinite (or at least, indefinite) in length. This is a problem for anyone who hopes to use CP laws in nomological-deductive models of scientific explanation, as the deductions cannot go through if the law is infinite or indefinite in length.

(B) CP laws are vacuous and thus, unexplanatory. When someone says “a person, if hungry, will eat when provided food, *ceteris paribus*,” this is not unlike saying “a person, if hungry, will eat when provided food, unless he won't,” a hardly illuminating proposition from the standpoint of understanding a person's behavior.²⁴⁵

²⁴⁵ This second problem is the big beef that most aestheticians hostile to artistic laws have with CP clauses. Remember with Mothersill,

...an interesting generalization is easily shown to be false, and the only way of saving it is by transforming it into an uninteresting law, such

(C) CP laws are not sufficiently general to be properly lawful. CP laws, when unpacked, read “If X then Y, unless P, D, Q, X, Y, Z, etc...”. To what degree are we concocting “laws of one,” or laws of a few? In what sense are such narrow generalizations laws at all?

These are all problems that have been hurled against CP laws as they are employed in the special sciences. Defenders of CP laws in the special sciences have taken some comfort in the observation, canonized by Carl Hempel (father of the nomological-deductive model of scientific explanation) in his paper “Provisoes: A Problem Concerning the Inferential Function of Scientific Theories,” that it is not only the special sciences that require their laws to be *ceteris paribus*; the claim is that the laws of *all* the sciences—indeed, even physics—must contain CP clauses lest they be rendered false. If practitioners of the so-called “hard sciences” are going to throw CP clauses against the practitioners of the special sciences, they may discover that the theoretical, nomological-deductive “winds” may throw them back in their own faces.

Following this thought that every science must make recourse to CP laws, consider the following: It is a law that water, if raised to 212 degrees Fahrenheit will boil...but only under standard earth pressure. It is a law that a physical object, if dropped, will fall...but only within a certain range of gravitational force.²⁴⁶ With Hempel, it may be a law that two

as ‘Gold makes things beautiful if and only if gold is ‘appropriate’.

Beauty Restored, p. 125.

²⁴⁶ John Greenwood has commented on an earlier draft of this dissertation that I “overstate” the problems about CP laws in the hard sciences. To begin with, hard scientific laws are typically descriptive of idealized conditions. Greenwood says: “...many laws about the causal powers of acids, superconductivity, falling bodies, etc., are confirmed under artificial conditions of experimental closure.” But this, of course merely invites us to ask of the philosopher of “hard” science, “So, are your laws true of

magnets, if broken into two bars and "...suspended by long thin threads close to each other at the same distance from the ground...will orient themselves so as to fall into a straight line," but...

The theory clearly allows for the possibility that two bar magnets, suspended by fine threads close to each other at the same level, will not arrange themselves into a straight line; for example, if a strong magnetic field of suitable direction should be present in addition, then the bars would orient themselves so as to be parallel to each other; similarly, a strong air current would foil the prediction and so forth.

The theory of magnetism does not guarantee the absence of such disturbing factors. Hence, the inference...presupposes the additional assumption that the suspended pieces are subject to no disturbing influences or, to put it positively,

water or just "experimental water," gases or only "ideal gasses," etc.? If the answer is that they are true only of substances taken under ideal or experimental conditions, a question then arises as to their applicability to real-world scenarios: "Oh, but I *thought* we were interested in laws about water, not laboratory water, since we want to build dams, submarines, boats, etc., that will be used with actual water, not laboratory water." On the other hand, if we are told that such "hard science" laws are supposed to be applicable to real-world scenarios, then, of course, those laws must be *ceteris paribus*.

Later in his comments, Professor Greenwood acknowledges that physical laws must be—if they are to apply to real world situations—CP laws even though he also states that most extraneous environmental conditions are not "...mechanisms of interference." (Earlier Greenwood said that "acids remain corrosive even in the presence of dogs, loud music and erotic dancers [!]") As for the indefinite number of environmental factors which *do* constitute mechanisms of interference, these are not, according to John, a problem for the usefulness of CP laws, since "it is an empirical matter whether the conditions specified in the antecedent of the law are sufficient to produce the effect specified in the consequent in the absence of interference, and it is a contingent matter whether any particular other factor is a mechanism of interference." Professor Greenwood then goes on to make his most significant point, "The objection that some CP laws only apply in rare cases—bodies only really fall with equal acceleration in a vacuum, and never continue at rest or in a straight line motion—is beside the point if science is out to understand and quantify forces of generation and interference."

I think that this may all be correct, but none of it really speaks to the problems cited in (A) - (C). Problem (A), remember, is a problem for CP laws taken under *nomological-deductive* models of explanation and prediction. None of Greenwood's points seem to go to this at all: if your model of explanation/prediction in the sciences is a covering-law deductive model, then you cannot have an open-ended covering law, and CP laws, by definition, are open-ended, since their "all else equal" portion must unpack into a list of potential defeating conditions, and this list will be of indefinite length. (It just happens, however, that I think such a model *is* available to us in aesthetics, where the situation is different enough from science that a deductivist justificatory model for critical judgments may be possible.) Problem (C), recall, is a problem about generality, and none of Greenwood's points go to the accusation that a CP law of the sort discussed winds up being a law of one or a few. The fact that science is as interested in "understanding and quantifying forces of generation and interference" does not change the fact that the law will have to be CP lest it be rendered false by the presence of those very factors. (Again, I will argue that this is not a problem that plagues laws in criticism, since it is not the aim of criticism to be as general as it is for the sciences.)

that their rotational motions are subject only to the magnetic forces they exert upon each other.²⁴⁷

And so the debate in the philosophy of science goes on, without clear resolution.²⁴⁸

Luckily, our situation is, I think, far easier. Given my conception of art, art history, the nature of artistic value, and the practice of criticism, I believe that we can help ourselves to artistic laws with proviso clauses (clauses that make them look a lot like CP laws), which are, nevertheless, not CP laws. We can thus avoid each of the problems mentioned above; artistic laws under my aesthetic theory will not be open-ended, their apparent triviality will not be a problem, and they will not need to possess the generality that

²⁴⁷ Carl Hempel, "Provisoes: A Problem Concerning the Inferential Function of Scientific Theories," *Erkenntnis* 28 (1988), pp. 148-150.

²⁴⁸ Bill Earle has also objected to this exporting of CP laws from the special sciences to the so-called "hard sciences," arguing that in the background of these supposedly CP-clause ridden physical laws are non-CP clause physical laws. Indeed, Professor Earle thinks that these laws about water or falling physical bodies are not *bone fide* scientific laws (at one point, in an earlier draft of this dissertation, he claimed that water is not really an object of scientific investigation), and that, thus, these examples I have given offer no compelling reason to think that the laws of the physical sciences are plagued in the way that the laws of the special sciences are. His objection, then, differs from Greenwood's. Greenwood's line seems to be, "Yeah, physical laws may be CP laws, but it's not a problem," while Earle's argument is, "No, true physical laws are not really CP laws."

Professor Earle's idea is that the law about how water will behave when heated reduces to laws about the agitation of molecules and that these laws will not be CP laws. I am not sure why, though, we should think that this is the case. If the remarks from Fodor and Hempel are compelling at all, I would think that there would be as much variability in molecular behavior given environmental conditions—and hence, as many potential defeating conditions for molecular laws—as there is in the behavior of medium sized physical objects. If changes in pressure or the presence of strong gravitational or electromagnetic fields pose defeating conditions for laws that apply to water or magnets, then I don't see why they would not pose defeating conditions for laws concerning molecules or atoms, objects which, despite their smaller size, are as subject to the forces of pressure, gravity, and electromagnetism as objects taken at a larger level of description.

On the second point, I guess it all comes down to what counts as science. Professor Earle doesn't think that objects like water are "real" objects of scientific investigation, but I have the feeling that engineers would probably disagree. It would seem to me that knowing the properties of water—and many other liquids—taken at a macro level of description are of great relevance to engineering tasks of many kind; whether the building of bridges or dams, the designing of cooling systems for cars, airplanes or space-suits, and many other applications too numerous to mention. Now, if we want to claim that such "applied" sciences are not "real" sciences that is all fine and well, but it seems a rather trivial point of nomenclature rather than a debate over what the relevant objects of scientific investigation are.

scientific laws require. We will thus have cleared the way for a robust, nomological-deductive model of justification for critical judgments, of the sort that I am advocating. On then, to the discussion of CP laws and to my own account of artistic laws.

5.4 *Ceteris Paribus* Clauses and Artistic Laws

As already mentioned, CP laws—and the discussion of them—are most commonly encountered in the literature on folk psychology. Using our example of John, who we say eats because he is hungry, we would invoke a folk-psychological law such as the following in the explanation of his behavior:

(Where the scope of the quantifier is limited to the universe of persons)

FPL: $(\forall x) (x \text{ is hungry} \rightarrow x \text{ will eat if food is offered, } ceteris\ paribus)$

The *ceteris paribus* clause unpacks as follows:

CPFL: $(\forall x) (x \text{ is hungry} \rightarrow x \text{ will eat if food is offered, } providing\ that\ there\ is\ no\ competing\ belief,\ desire,\ or\ sensation\ that\ overrides\ his\ hunger)$

Now let's examine what the proviso clauses in artistic laws will look like. The idea here is to see in which ways artistic laws are different from CP laws in the sciences. The degree to which they are different will be the degree to which artistic laws do not succumb to the myriad difficulties that face scientific CP laws, specifically, the difficulties listed in (A) - (C) in the previous section. I also believe that the character of artistic laws—and the difference between artistic laws and traditional CP laws—indicates a lot about the nature of art and, ultimately, the purpose of art criticism.

Recall what was supposed to be wrong with our artistic laws, AL₁-AL₄, namely, the universalizability problem; we couldn't truthfully say that all artworks which are horrifying are good, because being horrifying is not necessarily a good-making feature in an artwork. For a *Madonna and Child* by Raphael, for example, being horrifying is not a good-making feature, and there are many other instances and types of artworks for which being horrifying would not be a good-making feature under any circumstances.

Likewise for an artwork's being static counting against its artistic value. We couldn't truthfully say that it is a law that an artwork, if static, is not good, because there are many instances and types of artworks for which being static may be a *good*-making feature of an artwork. Think of a painting whose aim is to convey a still subject—say a still-life—or even a landscape which is supposed to freeze a moment in time so that it becomes timeless (some of Corot's landscapes come to mind here). In such cases, being static would work in *favor* of the positive evaluation of the work in question.

So, what will solve these problems; that is, what will render our artistic laws true? It seems that we need to index our law to a teleology or class of artistic teleologies. Why is it that being static was responsible for a negative assessment in the case of *One—Number 31* but would not be (indeed, it would support a positive assessment) for a still-life, or certain landscapes by Corot? Because, the artistic purposes behind *One—Number 31* are specifically oriented towards the communication of *motion*. Now, to intend to convey motion and to produce something which is static is clearly to produce something that is a

failure relative to one's purpose. And since on my account artistic value is a matter of the success or failure of a work relative to the purposes and interests that make it an artwork, such failure means that the artwork is not good...at least relative to this purpose.

The same is the case for the property of being horrifying. Why was it a good-making feature for *Saturn*, but not for, say, a *Madonna and Child* by Raphael? Because *Saturn* is a painting which is *supposed* to allegorically convey the horror and terror of the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars. That is, central to the purposes and interests that are responsible for the creation of this work of art is the aim of horrifying the viewer, of getting him to viscerally experience in art what Europe—and specifically, Spain—was experiencing under Napoleon's invading troops. Thus, for *Saturn* to be horrifying is for it to succeed at its primary purposes and intentions, and this is exactly what I have argued it means to say that it is good...again, relative to this purpose. A High Renaissance *Madonna and Child*, on the other hand, is intended to produce an experience diametrically opposed to anything resembling terror, and thus, being horrifying is exactly the kind of effect it should not achieve.

Given these observations, then, it seems clear that our artistic laws must be indexed to teleologies, in a proviso that at least *looks* a lot like a CP clause. These provisos will make direct reference to artistic types (which will reduce to sets of teleologies—artistic interests and purposes) when unpacked. Thus (with the scope of the quantifier restricted to the universe of artworks),

AL₁: (∀x) (x is horrifying—> x is good)

becomes

CPAL₁: (∀x) (x is horrifying—> x is good, *providing it is of a type that is supposed to be horrifying*)

and

AL₄: (∀x) (x is static —> x is not good)

becomes

CPAL₄: (∀x) (x is static —> x is not good, *providing that it is of a type that is not supposed to be static*)

As just mentioned, these italicized proviso clauses will unpack further into a list of art-historical types; in the first case, those art-historical types whose tokens aim at producing horror and in the second, those whose tokens aim at creating a sense of motion. The way we delineate the class of artworks that are not supposed to be static is in terms of their artistic teleologies (and these, of course, are a function of the civilizational interests and purposes that are ultimately responsible for the artwork's ontological status); many Turner's would fall under this class, as would certain sculptures by Bernini, ceilings by Tiepolo, and paintings by Kandinsky—to mention but a few members of this class. So, for example, CPAL₁ will become:

CPAL_{1a}: (∀x) (x is horrifying—> x is good, providing it belongs to either type(s):

- A [which includes Bosch, Breugel, etc.]
- B [which includes Goya, Gericault, etc.]
- C [which includes Dix, Schiele, etc.]
- D [which includes Freud, Bacon, etc.]²⁴⁹

²⁴⁹ These bracketed examples would not be part of the law, but are included here to give an indication what types these capital letters represent.

Indeed, if we recall our discussion in the last chapter of comparing artworks which do not share obvious teleologies, we can, with Wölfflin, view art history as the history of these artistic classes or types—that is, as the history of artistic teleologies, interests, and purposes. Looking at art history this way gives us a multiplicity of groupings of artworks by artistic and aesthetic type. These groupings then provide us with the art-historical information needed to make a list of artistic laws—i.e. laws stating $(\forall x) (x \text{ is } F \rightarrow x \text{ is good/bad})$ —whose proviso clauses are indexed to a description of x , a description which classifies x under an artistic or aesthetic type. That is, if x is an artwork of *this* type, then F is a good-making feature; if x is an artwork of *that* type, then F is a “bad-making” feature.

Now that we know what artistic laws will look like in my aesthetic theory, the tough questions emerge. Given that my artistic laws contain proviso clauses, does this render them CP laws in the mold of special science (and maybe even “hard science”) laws? If not, why not? That is, what argument can I offer that artistic laws, despite appearances, are not really CP laws? And what of objections (A)-(C) in the previous section? Are they only problems for genuine CP laws, or do they pose a problem for artistic laws too? If not, again, why not? These are all questions that need to be answered.

My final aim in this project, then, is to explain why artistic laws, despite appearances, are not really CP laws and also to explain why the traditional problems with CP laws as raised in the philosophy of science literature either do not apply to artistic laws or are

inconsequential to their usefulness in criticism. Much of what this will involve is a clearer explanation of what I take the fundamental purpose of criticism to be, and I think it is fitting that a dissertation that has so clearly presented philosophical aesthetics as providing a metatheory for criticism should end with a discussion of what, ultimately, is the *purpose* of criticism in the arts.

5.5 Artistic Proviso Clauses and the Function of Criticism

I will first identify the differences between artistic laws and CP laws in the sciences, such as those we find in folk psychology, biology, and even, perhaps, physics. This differentiation will proceed from the observation that unlike scientific CP laws, artistic laws, even with provisos, are not open-ended, and *this* will then point us towards the reasons why the remaining problems traditionally taken to plague CP laws in the special sciences, are not problems for artistic laws.

In scientific laws, the CP clause functions to specify *defeating conditions*—that is, the conditions under which the state of affairs described by the law will not obtain. Thus, when a folk-psychological law tells us that a person, if hungry, will eat when provided food, *ceteris paribus*, the CP clause unpacks to inform us of those conditions which might obtain under which the person will not eat, despite his hunger and the presence of food. So, the CP clause may make reference to beliefs and desires which may conspire to *defeat* the behavior predicted by the law on the basis of the presence of the mental state in

question—hunger—and the relevant environmental conditions—the presence of food.

Without such a clause, the law will often entail a false prediction; knowing that John has not eaten for three days and is hungry and knowing he has been offered food, we will predict, on the basis of this law, that he will eat it. This prediction will be false, however, if John believes that he should not eat because he is on a politically inspired hunger strike. The CP clause, thus, in specifying defeating conditions, guarantees the reliability of our psychological/behavioral predictions, made on the basis of the law in question.

This is how CP clauses are supposed to function in *all* of the sciences (if, that is, all the sciences require CP laws). When we have a law that tells us that water will boil when brought to 212 degrees Fahrenheit, *ceteris paribus*, we are being told that water will boil at this temperature, *unless other conditions obtain*—such as certain atmospheric pressures—that will defeat this outcome. What this does is guarantee the reliability of our predictions about boiling water; without the CP clause, we will often falsely predict that water will boil given that it has been heated to a certain temperature.

It may appear superficially that the provisos we have made use of in artistic laws serve the same function. When we say that a work of art, if majestic, will be good, *providing it is of an artistic type that is supposed to be majestic*, it may appear that what we are doing is providing a CP clause that specifies a defeating condition; that is, if the work in question is not of artistic type-T, it will not be good if majestic. And, to a degree, this reading is correct; being majestic is a good-making feature only for artworks of type-T, so being an

artwork of say, type-Q, would be a defeating condition for the law which claims that artworks if majestic are good.

I would argue however, that this assimilation of the artistic law with the scientific CP law is misleading and obscures the radical difference between the two types of laws. To illustrate this difference, let's imagine two conversations, one about water boiling because it has been heated to 212 degrees Fahrenheit and one about the fact that Kandinsky's *Composition VI* is good because it is dynamic:

Conversation One

A: This water is boiling because it has been heated to 212 degrees Fahrenheit.

B: Oh, yes? How do you know that?

A: Because it is a law that water, when heated to 212 degrees Fahrenheit, will boil.

B: Oh, really? But if I took your water to the top of Mount Everest, it would not boil at 212 degrees Fahrenheit.

A: Yes, of course, you're right, that law clearly needs to be re-stated. It is a law that water, when heated to 212 degrees Fahrenheit will boil *unless the atmospheric pressure is less than x or greater than y.*

Conversation Two

A: Kandinsky's *Composition VI* is good because it is dynamic.

B: Oh, yes? How do you know that?

A: Because it is a law that artworks which are dynamic are good.

B: Oh, really? But there are other works which would not be good if dynamic. Take William Harnett's *Still Life with Bust of Dante*, for example. It would not be good if dynamic.

A: Yes, of course, you're right, that law clearly needs to be re-stated. It is a law that artworks which are dynamic are good, *providing that they are of certain art-historical types*.

In the first conversation, possible counterfactual situations are imagined in which the *water*, if heated to 212 degrees, would not boil. Since the conditions under which water will boil are variable, speaker-A is forced to amend his law with a CP clause that specifies the conditions under which the water will not boil when heated to 212 degrees.

In the second conversation we have a very different state of affairs. The situation imagined is not a counterfactual one, under which the painting in question—Kandinsky's *Composition VI*—would not be good because it is dynamic. Rather, speaker-B is pointing out that *another* painting—and more importantly, a painting of a different *type*—William Harnett's *Still Life with Bust of Dante*, if dynamic, would not be good. Here, the point is not that the conditions under which a painting is good or bad vary, but rather that the properties by virtue of which an artobject is good or bad are sensitive to the artistic type to which the artobject belongs.

Unlike in the case of water, where the conditions under which it will boil vary, the conditions under which a specific artwork—taken under a specific art-historical type description—is good are *not* variable. Once an artobject has been identified as belonging to a particular artistic type, the properties by virtue of which it is good or bad are fixed; for according to my theory of art being a good or bad artwork is a function of the artistic teleologies of the artobject, and these artistic teleologies are what determine to what art-historical type the artwork belongs. Thus, the good-making and bad-making features of artworks are *artistic-type relative*, and, as a result, in conversation two, speaker-A is forced to amend his law with a proviso that indexes attributions of artistic quality or lack thereof to particular—and sets of—art-historical types.

The real point of difference here, then, is that the conditions under which water is heated can vary in indefinitely many ways, and thus, a law which purports to describe the relationship between the temperature of water and its boiling must take into account these varying conditions. But this is not the situation in the case of art at all. Artifacts become artworks by virtue of their art-historical context—the civilizational interests and purposes that provoked the creation of that artwork. These art-historical contexts are, well, *historical*, and thus, cannot change indefinitely or even at all.

Thus, the problem with our artistic law without the proviso is not that it may get future attributions of good-ness and bad-ness wrong, because the art-historical conditions under which the artistic judgment is made may change. Rather, the problem is that the law

ignores the fact that there are different art-historical types, thus different artistic purposes and interests and *thus*, different criteria for artistic success and failure. All the proviso clause in the artistic law does is *specify* those art-historical types (and hence, those art-historical interests and purposes), and indicate that the relationship between a particular work of art and a particular assignment of “good” or “bad” must be made relative to that art-historical type (and hence, to those art-historical interests and purposes).

We can see now why problem (A)—the problem of open-endedness—does not arise for artistic laws. All CP laws, by *definition*, are open-ended. The question with scientific CP laws is whether or not this open-endedness is a problem. From the standpoint of nomological-deductive models of explanation/prediction, CP laws—like the one that purports to describe the relationship between the temperature of water and its boiling—are a problem, because the open-endedness of the law “water will boil when heated to 212 degrees Fahrenheit unless conditions x,y,z.....n obtain” will block a deduction whereby one could determine what this water will do when heated to 212 degrees Fahrenheit, because the deduction cannot go through unless all the premises are finitely formulable.

The proviso clause in our artistic law, however, will not be open-ended, for the set of art-historical types is not, and never could be, of infinite or even indefinite length. The history of art—just like all of human history—is and always will be a finite history. So while the proviso clause in our law—artworks which are dynamic are good, providing that they are

of art-historical type(s) *X*—may be quite complex (indeed, it is precisely in the complex and overlapping nature of art-historical types that makes criticism such an interesting and varied practice) it will not be infinite or even indefinite, since the number of art-historical types that exist are of a finite, countable number.²⁵⁰

Indeed, all that the proviso clauses in our artistic laws do is bundle up the information,

²⁵⁰ It is important here to observe the inherently *conventional* nature of artistic types. Given a type-description of an artobject, its potential virtues are fixed, but just which type description an artobject falls under is a matter of convention: artistic types, after all, are not natural kinds.

One might argue that the inherently conventional nature of artistic types makes trouble for artistic laws of a similar kind as the open-endedness problem in scientific CP laws. Since artistic types are conventional, they are potentially infinite in nature. That is, not only may there be an indefinite number of potential future artistic types, but since art historians may reconfigure past artistic type descriptions, there may be an indefinite number of potential past artistic types. So, are we not saddled with precisely the same problem vis a vis nomological-deductive model of justification for critical judgments that scientists are?

The potential for indefinitely many future artistic types is indisputable, but it is not a problem for critics, since the nomological-deductive model I am offering is one that is to be applied solely to critical justification: it is not intended for purposes of prediction. (I will have more to say about criticism and prediction shortly.) As for the past, the situation is not as our imaginary opponent sees it. While it is true that in principle—that is, as a matter of logical possibility—since artistic types are conventional by nature, our past artistic type descriptions of art objects are subject to potentially indefinitely many reconfigurations and revisions, as a matter of empirical fact—as a matter of the actual practice of art history—none of the instability indicated by this possibility obtains. For the most part, our art historical type descriptions have become fixed in the sense that they have become entrenched. For example, the art historical types “Italian Renaissance painting” and “Northern Renaissance painting” are, for the most part, fixed with regard not only to what qualities an art object must possess in order to fall under either of these type descriptions, but also with regard to what qualities are taken to be good-making of those that do fall under them. There may be a bit of play along the edges—where a particular artist’s work falls, for example—but for the most part, these types are solid.

The relative fixedness of a particular artistic type is generally a function of time; the more time that has passed, the more solid the artistic type in question. The more recent the artistic type, the less solid it is. And this is as we should expect. The criticism of recent and, especially, contemporary works of art is more uncertain, more indeterminate, than the criticism of old classics. This fact is easily explained on a view such as mine: for until a significant amount of time has passed, the correct artistic type descriptions of an artobject are uncertain—we may not know, for some time, just what kind of an impact an artobject may have, and hence, to which artistic types it will, ultimately, be shown to belong. But so long as this is uncertain or indeterminate, our evaluations of such artobjects are importantly incomplete, waiting, so to speak, for art history to play out. For as we come to discover that artwork *X* belongs to artistic type *F*, *D*, and *Q*, new good-making features will come to light, and our evaluations of the object may have to be supplemented or changed. None of this, however, threatens the essentially nomological-deductive nature of those evaluations and their justifications.

which, if made explicit, would just become part of the antecedent of an ordinary conditional. Let's look at CPAL_{1a} again, but without the bracketed information:

CPAL_{1a}: $(\forall x) (x \text{ is horrifying} \rightarrow x \text{ is good, providing it belongs to types A-D})$

Now, I am certain that there are not only four artistic types for whose tokens being horrifying is a good-making feature. But I am equally certain that there are not infinitely or indefinitely many such types, if only because there are only a finite number of artistic types altogether. As a result, if we were not interested in elegance or brevity and wanted to be more explicit in our artistic law, we could specify it as an ordinary conditional without a proviso clause:

CPAL_{1b}: $(\forall x) (x \text{ is horrifying and } x \text{ belongs to artistic types A—N}) \rightarrow x \text{ is good}$

It is in this realization that artistic laws—at least when taken within the context of an aesthetic theory like mine—are not open-ended that produces the further realization that artistic laws are not CP laws, for it is in the very nature of CP laws that they are open-ended. Thus, a nomological-deductive model of justification for critical judgments is open to us, since one of the major blocking point for nomological-deductive explanations in the sciences—that CP laws are open-ended and that scientific laws *must* be CP laws—simply does not apply to artistic laws, since they are not CP laws.

It is interesting at this point to notice a major *disanalogy* between science on the one hand

and criticism and art history on the other. Where science is as much forward looking—interested in prediction—as it is backward looking—interested in explanation—art history and criticism are entirely backward looking. It is not the job of a critic to predict what features of art will be good making in the future or to predict, if presented with an hypothetical artwork, whether or not it will be deemed good or not.²⁵¹ Such speculation is not only uninteresting, but it is virtually impossible to be assured of accuracy in undertaking it. For until an art-historical context is established—until an artifact gets entrenched in art history by virtue of being produced under specific civilizational purposes and interests in a manner that connects it to other artworks, before and after—there is, on my view, literally no fact of the matter as to whether it would be a good art object or not. Since it is the same conditions under which an artifact becomes an artobject that determine what it is for it to be a *good* artobject, in the absence of such an art-historical reality, speculation as to the value of hypothetical or future artworks is simply not possible. This is why, at the end of the day, speculations like that made by Isenberg in “Critical Communication”—as to whether the curve he could draw on his blackboard would be good because of its “rising and falling contour”—and by Mothersill in *Beauty Restored*—as to whether a Bach fugue, bleeped out by a computer, would please us—are so uninteresting and, ultimately, useless for the purpose of determining

²⁵¹ This, of course, does not mean that critics do not engage in predictions. For example, Greenberg famously—and correctly—predicted the success of Abstract Expressionism. But I would argue that this is most certainly not the critics job, but rather, a vicarious habit that certain critics engage in. (Much the same is true about journalists, of course; their job is not to predict but merely to tell the news—to explain what has happened, rather than determine what will happen—but I’m sure that we are all aware how many reporters engage in predictive speculation, nonetheless, with varying degrees of accuracy.)

whether there are artistic laws and thus, whether there can be deductive justifications for critical judgments. For on my view there is *no fact* as to whether the curve drawn on Isenberg's blackboard would be good or not due to its rising and falling contour or whether Mothersill's faux Bach fugue would be good because of its melody, because as of yet, no art-historical context has been established such that this curve or that simulated fugue could even be counted as an artobject and thus, as things for which artistic value or lack thereof is available. No civilizational purposes and interests have been indicated as responsible for the creation of the curve or the faux fugue, and thus, speculation as to their artistic value is not possible, and can, at best, be a complete crap shoot—if a civilizational interest arises such that this curve or that faux fugue might become an artobject, etc..., then it will be good if in the shape of a rising and falling wave or if it has melody, M.

Now what about the rest of the problems that are supposed to plague CP laws, namely problem (B)—that CP laws are vacuous and, thus, unexplanatory—and (C)—that CP laws are not sufficiently general to count as laws; they wind up being laws of a few or of one? Despite the fact that artistic laws are not CP laws, can these complaints be thrown at us? Let's deal with problem (C) first and finish this chapter—and this dissertation—with a discussion of problem (B).

Problem (C), it seems to me, really is a problem for the sciences, because the sciences—at least when taken with something like the unity-of-the-sciences thesis in mind—are supposed to give us an account of *everything*, or at least, everything that is

thoroughgoingly physical.²⁵² Of what use to such an enterprise, then, is a law which states, for example, that water will boil at 212 degrees Fahrenheit, unless its at the top of Mt. Everest, on Mars, on Europa, deep underground, etc? Why would we be interested in a law that says that a person will drink if thirsty and provided water, unless he's on a hunger strike, unless he's allergic to water, unless he believes that water must be rationed, etc?

What we have here are laws that describes how water that is on earth, at not too high or low an elevation, without artificially imposed pressure, heated by normal means and how a person who's not allergic, not on a hunger strike, and doesn't believe that water needs to be conserved will behave. But are these things interesting or useful to know? Shouldn't a science explain more than just how water taken under such narrow, specific conditions will behave? Shouldn't a psychological theory explain how *people* behave, not just how people with beliefs X,Y, Z and without beliefs P,D, and Q will behave? And unfortunately, as the case of water, and John's drinking behavior are supposed to show, *all* scientific laws may turn out to be this kind of CP form, or else they may all turn out to be false. So, where does science stand from the standpoint of its explanatory aims if these are the only kind of laws with which they can provide us?

To put the point another way, scientific laws are supposed to be laws about *natural kinds*. The problems with scientific laws is that it seems like in order for them to be true they

²⁵² Which, for naturalists and deflationists, just means *everything!*

must be narrowed or winnowed down to the point at which they no longer are about natural kinds; “human” is a natural kind; “human-who-believes p-desires q-and-doesn’t-believe x-or-desire z” is *not* a natural kind. “Water” is a natural kind; “water-at-elevation x-pressure y-and not-at-elevation a—n-or-pressure a—y” is *not* a natural kind. And yet we must make precisely these kinds of qualifications in our scientific laws—so the criticism goes—in order for them to be true (indeed, this is just what adding a CP clause to our law essentially does). For it will be false that a human—any human—will eat if hungry and it will be false that water—any water—will boil at 212 degrees Fahrenheit. The problem then is this: scientific laws as applied to natural kinds turn out to be false; and, in order for them to be true, they must have proviso clauses attached to them, such that they are no longer laws about natural kinds. This, then, is problem (C), the “generality problem.”

The same difficulty thrown at criticism seems to have no bite whatsoever. It is not the job of criticism to explain everything, or even most things, but instead, to explain a very small domain of objects, namely the set of artobjects, and, equally important, the set of *artistic* types or kinds.²⁵³ Within this domain, it is the critic’s job to interpret and make judgments of specific works of art, on the basis of his personal inspection of its properties and the information about its background—specifically, the civilizational purposes and interests under which it was created—provided by the art historian; in this way, the critic’s and art-historian’s jobs are inseparably intertwined. The art historian, by virtue of laying out the

²⁵³ My uses of “type” and “kind” here are identical, and I will treat them as synonyms hereafter.

information by which the critic can, on the basis of research and visual (or other sort of) inspection, identify the civilizational purposes and interests embodied by the artwork—the artistic kind to which it belongs—tells the critic, in effect, what he *ought to expect* of the work of art in terms of formal and programmatic effects. The critic, on the basis of this information, as well as his crucial inspections, does his interpretations and evaluations. The artistic laws he makes use of in these judgments, are contained in the information provided by the art historian and by the work of previous critics. The way I know of the law pertaining to when “majesty” or “horror” are good making features of artworks is by my understanding of art history and through my familiarity with the history of criticism.

For example, as a critic (and not as a fan), I do not just walk up to a medieval triptych and, on the basis of how it appeals to me, interpret it or judge it good or bad. Rather, in the critical mode, I must know something about medieval triptychs other than this one, the context of their creation, the purposes they are supposed to serve, and the measure by which criticism—both good and bad—of such objects has typically been made. In short, I must know something about the artistic type “medieval triptych” and about the history of criticism of medieval triptychs, in order to make valid critical judgments about any particular medieval triptych.

To return to an example used much earlier in this dissertation, the reason that I know that the property of not being rendered realistically is *not* a bad-making feature in a Romanesque sculpture is because I know the civilizational interests that Romanesque

sculptures are supposed to convey; I know about Romanesque sculpture, *qua* artistic kind. And I know from art history and the history of criticism that it is an artistic law that being realistic is a good-making feature of artistic kinds P-Q, and not being realistic is a good-making feature in artistic kinds R-Z, and that a Romanesque sculpture belongs to the latter set and not to the former.

That laws pertaining to the good- and bad-making features of artworks are narrow is thus not only unsurprising, but to be expected and desired. Since the good- and bad-making features are contained within artistic taxonomy—that is, since artistic types “carry” their good and bad-making features with them—we should expect and hope that artistic laws will be artistic-type specific. In the case of water, since the relevant unit of analysis in the scientific study of water is *all* water—water, that is, taken as a natural kind—not just water that is on earth, at a certain level of elevation, etc..., it is troubling from the standpoint of the scientific study of water that we cannot construct a true law pertaining to water, as a natural kind, but only to water at this non-relevant level of description. Well, in the case of art, the relevant unit in the critical study of art is the artistic kind. Thus, the fact that the only true artistic laws that we can come up with are laws indexed to artistic kinds is exactly as we would expect and desire from the standpoint of the practice of criticism.

So, what of problem (B), that CP laws are vacuous and thus, unexplanatory? Given the claim, just stated above, that artistic types carry their good- and bad-making feature along

with them, aren't my artistic CP laws going to be exceedingly vacuous and unexplanatory? That is, won't it be virtually a logical truth, once we identify a work of art under an artistic types and specify the feature we are interested in, whether it is a good- or bad-making feature of that artwork? The answer is, "Yes, it will be, but it doesn't matter." Now to understand why.

Let's again have CPAL_{1b} again:

CPAL_{1b}: $(\forall x) (x \text{ is horrifying and of artistic type A-N} \rightarrow x \text{ is good})$

If one were to make this law more explicit, one would have to specify artistic types A-N.

Now we know from our extensive discussion in Chapter Four that artistic types are individuated according to the artistic teleologies they represent. Remember that, with Wölfflin, holding various artistic teleologies constant allows us to include Michelangelo and Holbein under one grouping, while under another teleological constant they would belong to different groupings (this was, if you will recall, how we can evaluatively compare artworks whose artistic purposes are not obvious on first glance).

But if artistic types individuate teleologically, and if an artobject's artistic value is a function of its teleology, then CPAL_{1b} will be something akin to a logical truth. For a specification of artistic types A-N will make reference to the artistic purposes of artworks that fall under each type. Thus, for each type A-N mentioned above, part of the content of

the specification of these artistic purposes will say something like, "...is supposed to be horrifying," resulting in a law that says, in effect, "artworks which are horrifying and are supposed to be horrifying are good." And this, while not, strictly speaking, tautological, has about it the air of a trivial logical truth.

I do not deny this fact about artistic laws as I have construed them. I also do not deny a further—and seemingly more destructive—consequence of my treatment of the critical judgment: that critical judgments themselves will be somewhat trivial, at least with regard to their semantic content, once an artwork is identified under an artistic-type description. That is, once the critic has identified *Saturn* as belonging to an artistic type of which one of the purposes is to be horrifying, and once he has observed that *Saturn* is horrifying, the critical evaluation that *Saturn* is good, at least relative to this purpose, follows deductively; but more than this, virtually *analytically*.²⁵⁴

Such consequences might be seen by critics of my position as devastating, implying as they do that my theory of art and artistic value reduces criticism to an empty exercise and renders critical judgments and artistic laws empty of any substantial content. I might agree with this criticism if I believed that the making of evaluations was the primary—or even a central—function of the critic. However, I believe that making evaluations is actually the least important, least interesting, and, indeed, the smallest role that the critic plays in his

²⁵⁴ It would be analytic in the Fregean, though not in the Kantian sense of "analytic."

encounter with the world of artworks.²⁵⁵

While it may be the case that the primary function of a movie critic for a newspaper or television program may be to tell you whether or not the latest “Lethal Weapon” movie is good, and while it may even be the case that a central part of the job of an art critic for a newspaper or magazine may be to tell you whether it is worth going to the latest exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, evaluation—saying that artwork X is good/bad—is not what serious art critics primarily do. Indeed, they rarely do it at all, at least not directly. Yes, it is true that Bloom’s *Visionary Company* is filled with critical discussions that imply and even explicitly state how terrific Bloom thinks the various poets he discusses are, but most of what he—and all critics—do is *describe* and *interpret* works of art. Bloom spends a lot more time describing and interpreting Coleridge’s poetry than praising it, and once the describing is done with, the praise that follows is rather anticlimactic. “Of course,” we would say, “given the description of *Kubla Khan* that Bloom has just given, he obviously thinks it is good.” Once a critical description and interpretation has been completed, I would argue, no one really expects the critical evaluation to tell us much that is new or substantive. The meat is in the description and interpretation; the evaluation simply follows this description and interpretation (in both the temporal and logical senses of “follows”).

²⁵⁵ A further point should be made here. Even if it is the case that such critical evaluations are “trivial” in the logical sense, that does not mean that they are *obvious* in the epistemic sense. Many mathematical and logical truths are “analytic” in this way, but are not at all obvious and require significant expertise to both deduce and understand. Thus, even if critical evaluations are somewhat trivial or analytic, this does not mean the criticism is reduced to an empty exercise.

The relative unimportance of evaluation relative to description and interpretation is further indicated by the nature of most critical disputes. One rarely finds critics disputing the merits of an artwork once the description and interpretation have been agreed upon. What is typically disputed are the descriptions and interpretations themselves. That is, two critics, once agreeing what *Saturn*'s purpose is and agreeing that *Saturn* is horrific, would not then disagree as to whether it is good or not. What they would argue about instead is *what its purpose is* or *whether or not it is horrifying*.²⁵⁶ Once they agreed on these things, they would agree on the evaluation. Likewise, if two critics agreed as to the purpose of *One—Number 31* and also agreed that it was static, they wouldn't then have a big fight as to whether or not it is good. No, if they were to disagree about anything, it would be about the purpose of *One—Number 31* and if they were to argue about anything, it would be whether or not *One—Number 31* is static. If there was no contention over these kinds of things, it is hard to see what the disagreement of the artistic value of *One—Number 31* would come down to.²⁵⁷

In both cases, our imaginary critics are arguing over interpretations and descriptions of a

²⁵⁶ The justification of these descriptive and interpretive judgments—that *Saturn* is horrifying and that it is supposed to be horrifying—bring us, once again, to Sibley territory. Again, in Chapter Two I offered some preliminary observations as to ways we might counter Sibley's thesis that there can ultimately be no conditions (read: justifications) for non-evaluative aesthetic attributions, and I hope that in the discussion here of the justification of our attributions of artistic value, to the degree that the issues are similar, sheds some light on how we might further deal with Sibley-like difficulties. Still, the matter needs to be addressed more fully in a work devoted solely to it.

²⁵⁷ Lest anyone think I have missed the irony here, let me acknowledge outright the similarity between this point and that made by the Logical Empiricists—that disagreements over values are really disagreements over facts—has been noted with due respect (and some chagrin, given my attitude toward positivistic views of aesthetics)!

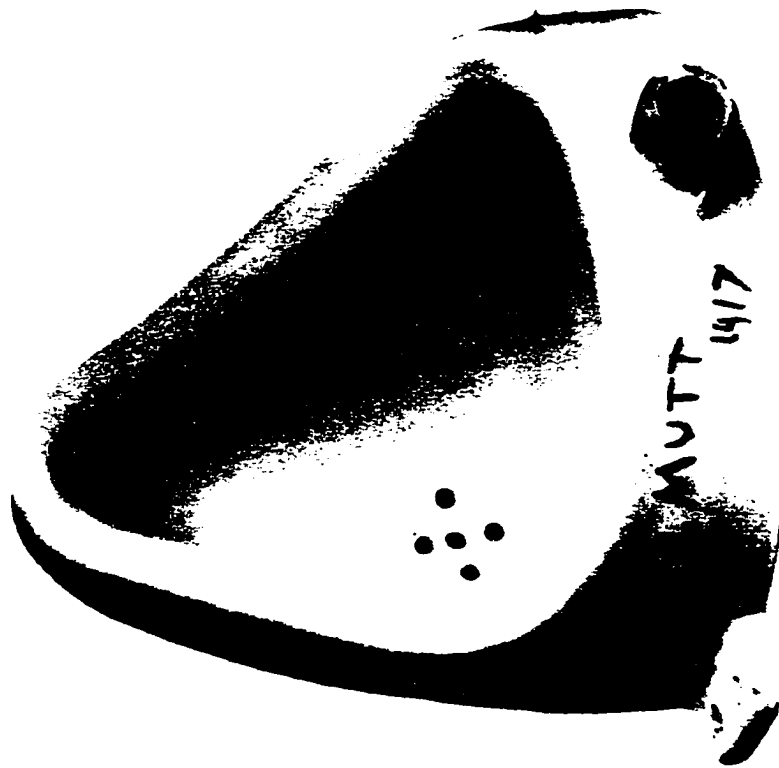
work, not over its evaluation.²⁵⁸ This, I would argue, indicates that what is of real significance and interest is an artobject's description and interpretation, not its evaluation. Indeed, the evaluation, once the description and interpretation have been established, is a rather trivial—logically speaking—affair. Thus, we should not be surprised or dismayed by the fact that artistic laws—which simply map evaluative assignments onto artobjects, under an artistic-type description—are akin to logical truths or that critical evaluations involve inferences that seem analytic. This is to be expected given the relationship between artistic evaluation and the description and interpretation of artworks; the artistic law and the evaluation simply follow from the much more interesting art-historical, descriptive, and interpretive work.

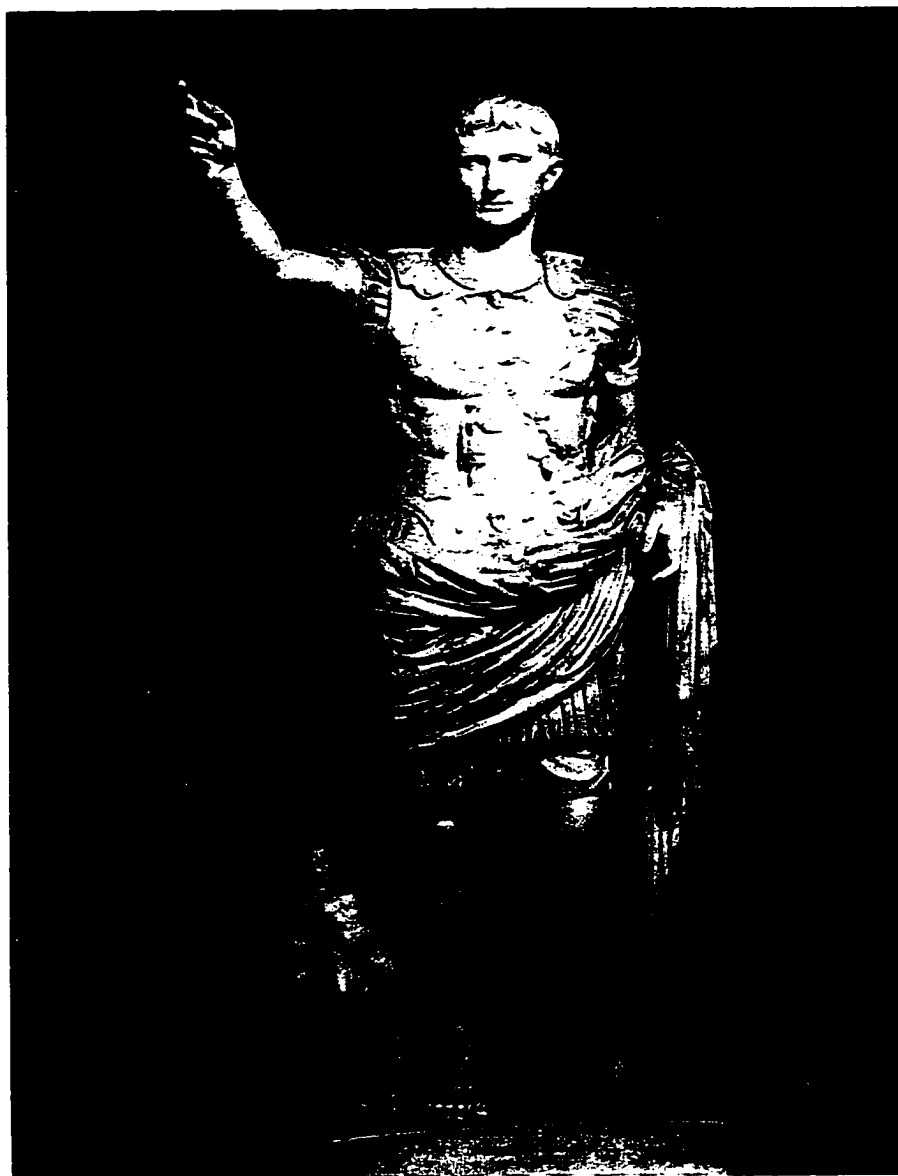
Indeed, given the way that I have been describing their respective roles throughout this dissertation, the primary work of the art historian is the individuation and cataloguing of artistic types such that a set of artistic laws can be established. The critic, then, armed with this art historical knowledge, goes forth into the galleries, museums, and churches, concert halls, and libraries and describes and interprets the work of art in question, such that it can then be measured under our artistic laws; once this is done, the evaluation just falls out, like a soda from a machine into which the proper change has been deposited. Thus, the really interesting work that the critic does is in the description and interpretation—the evaluation is something of an afterthought.

²⁵⁸ And even critical disputes that seem to be over the evaluation of a work, I would argue, if analyzed closely, would turn out to be disagreements due to deeper disagreements over its interpretation or description.

With this we have explained both how artistic laws avoid each of the criticisms that have been traditionally raised against CP laws in the sciences and how they can fruitfully function in nomological-deductive justification of evaluative judgments in criticism. Since with artistic laws available to us, real, rigorous, deductive justifications of critical judgments become possible, all the aesthetic theories which read critical discourse in the subjectivist, non-cognitive, and anti-transparent ways described in Chapters One and Two, become utterly unmotivated. And with such theories of aesthetics and aesthetic judgment rendered unmotivated, the way is cleared for the objective, more transparent, pre-theoretically intuitive reading that moved me to throw my hat—this dissertation—into the aesthetic arena in the first place. I hope that I have managed both to persuade and to interest the reader.

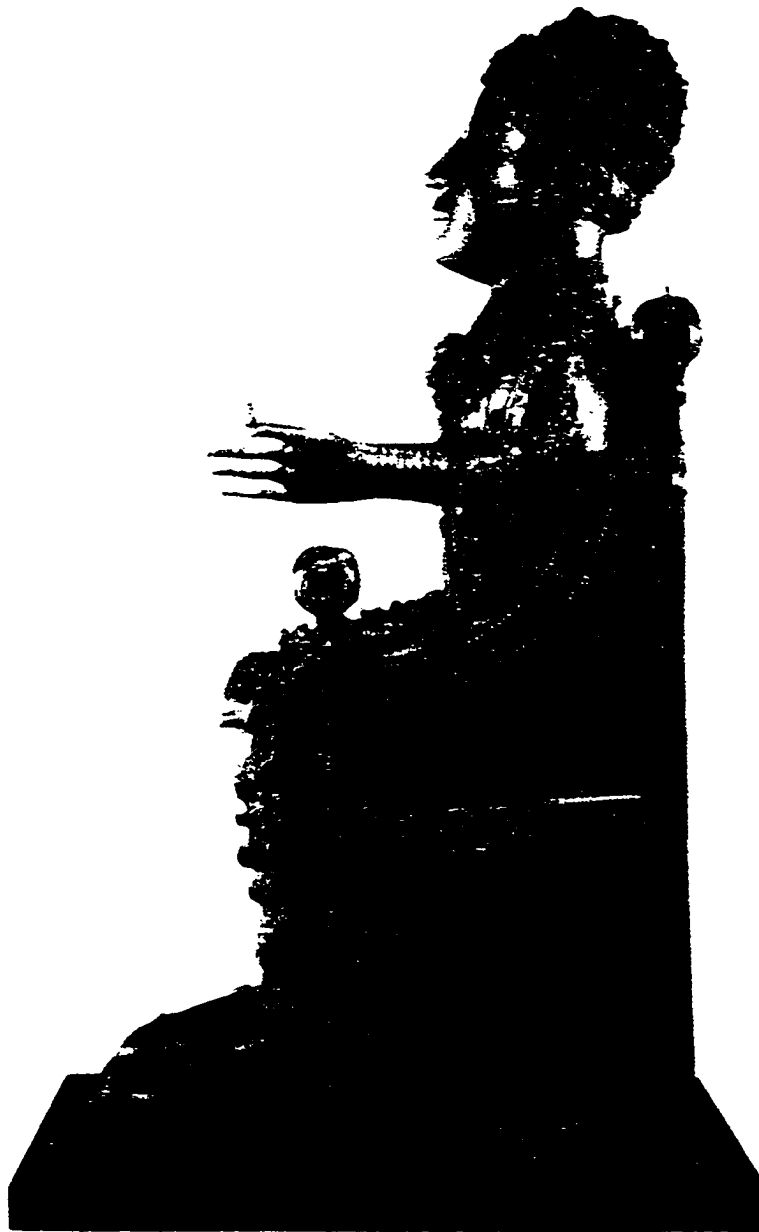
—*Daniel A. Kaufman*

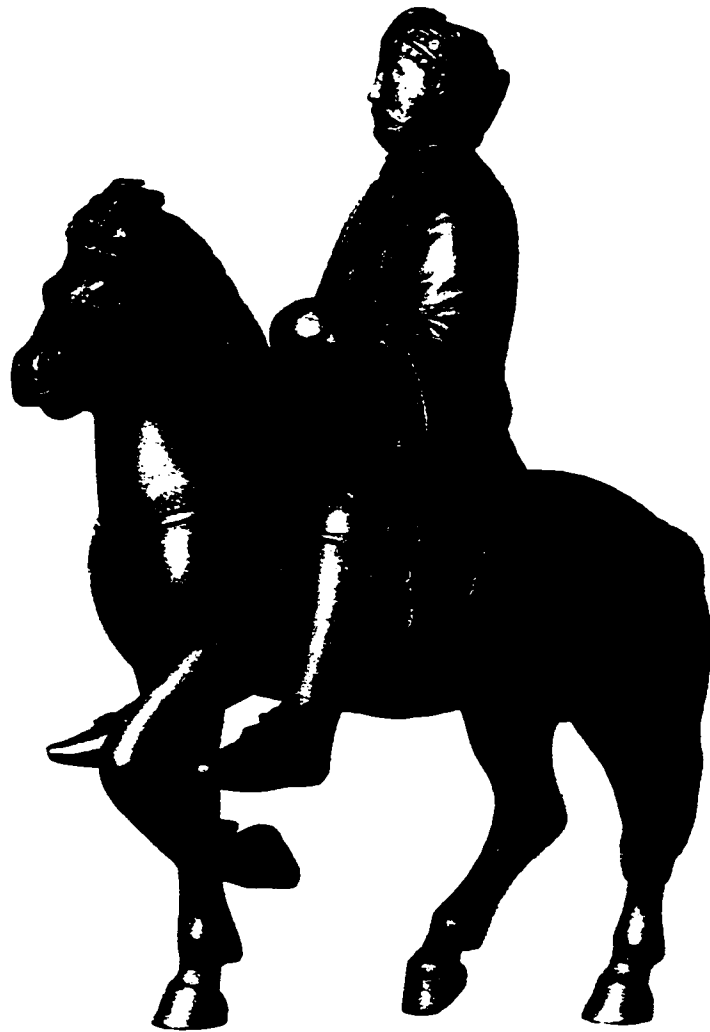


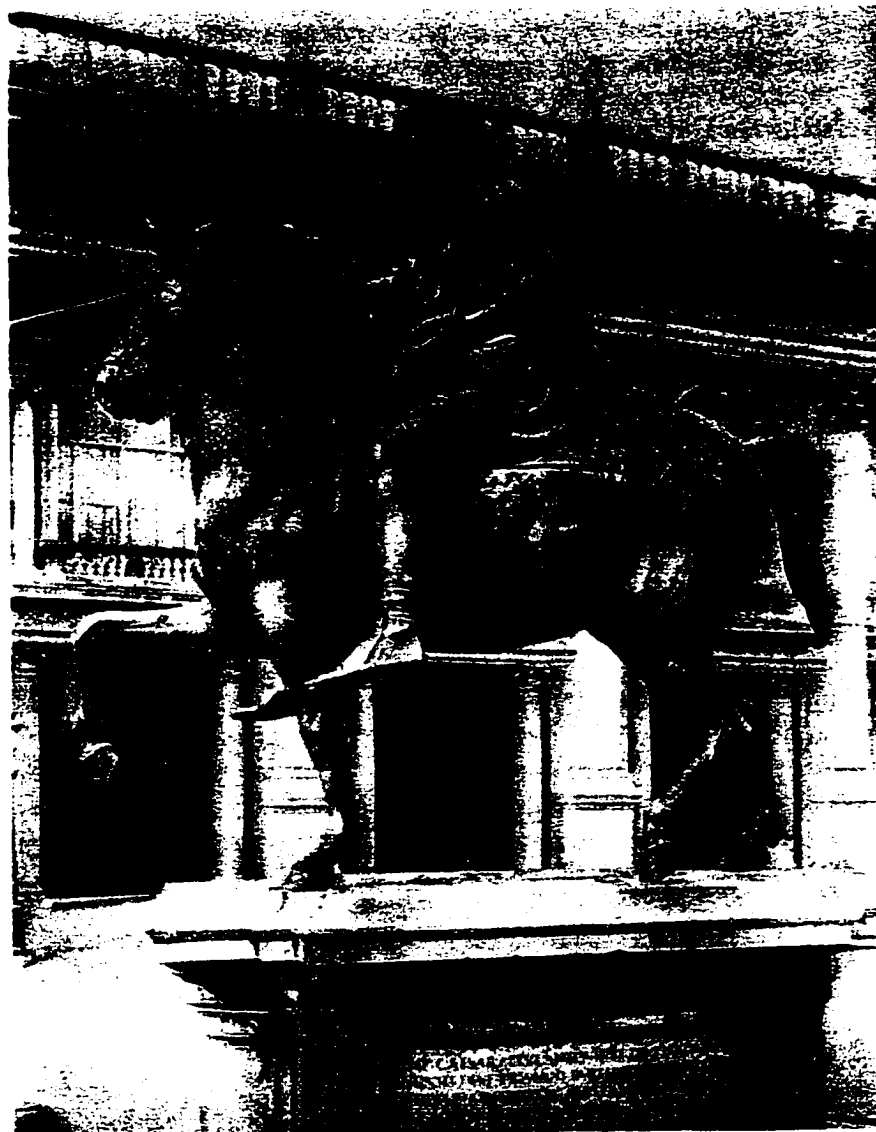


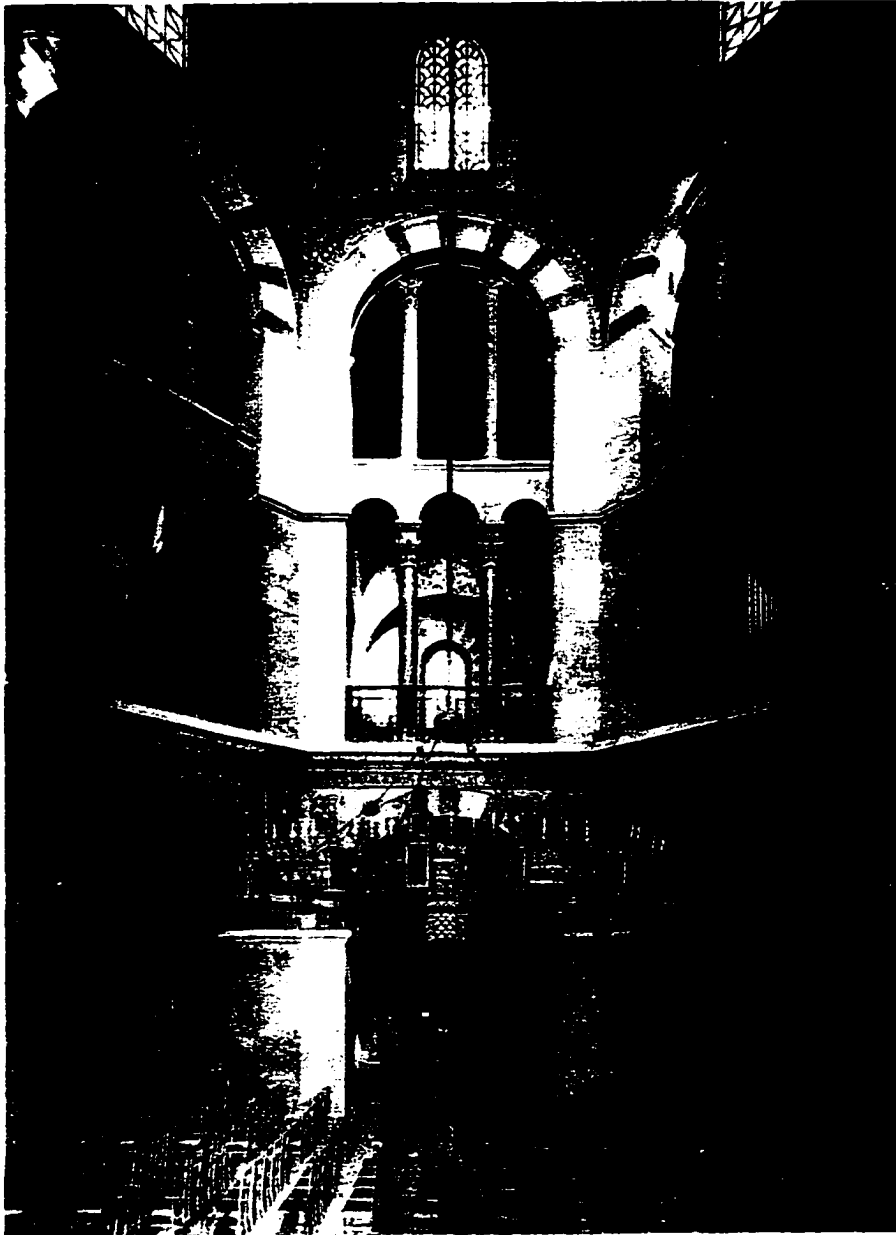




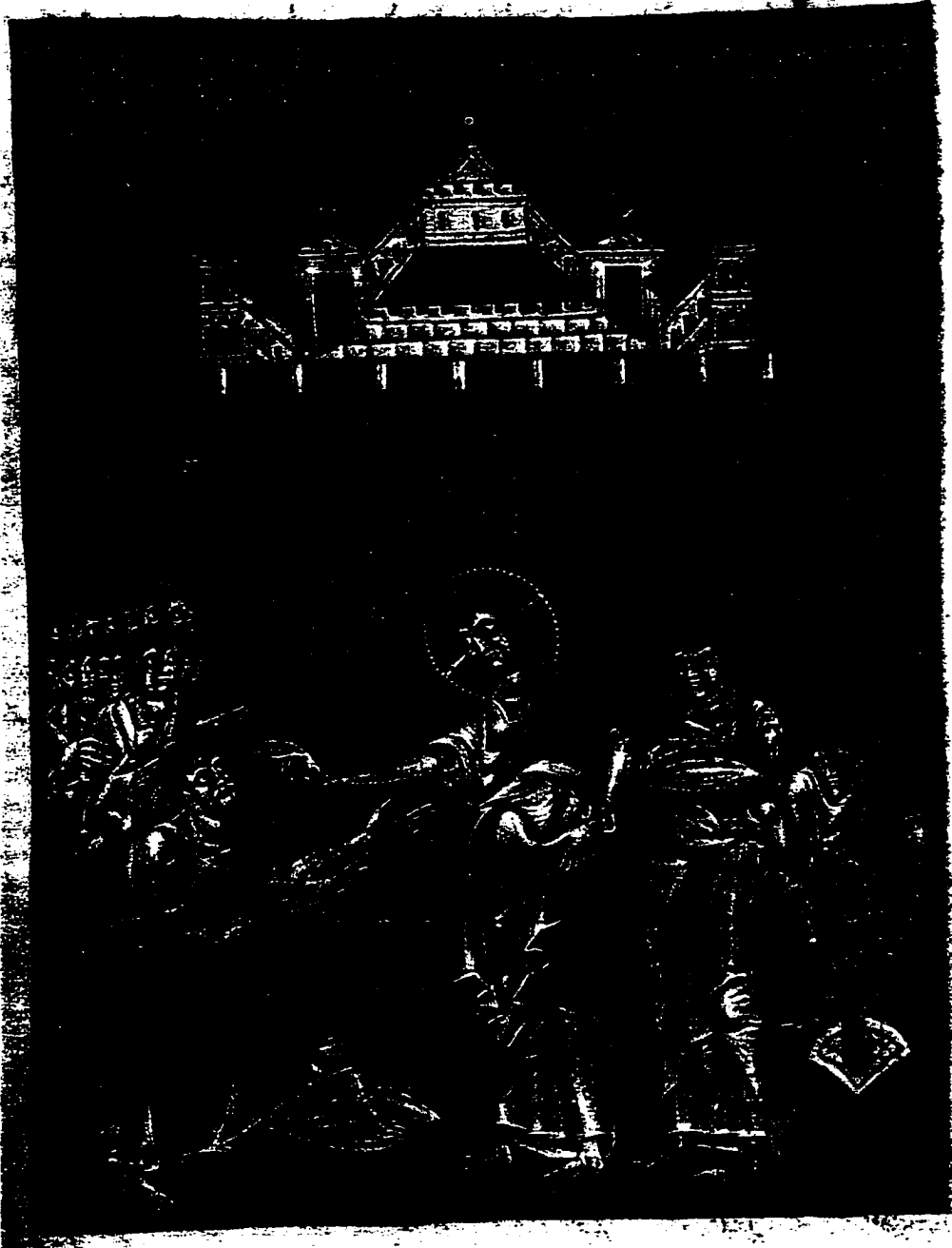


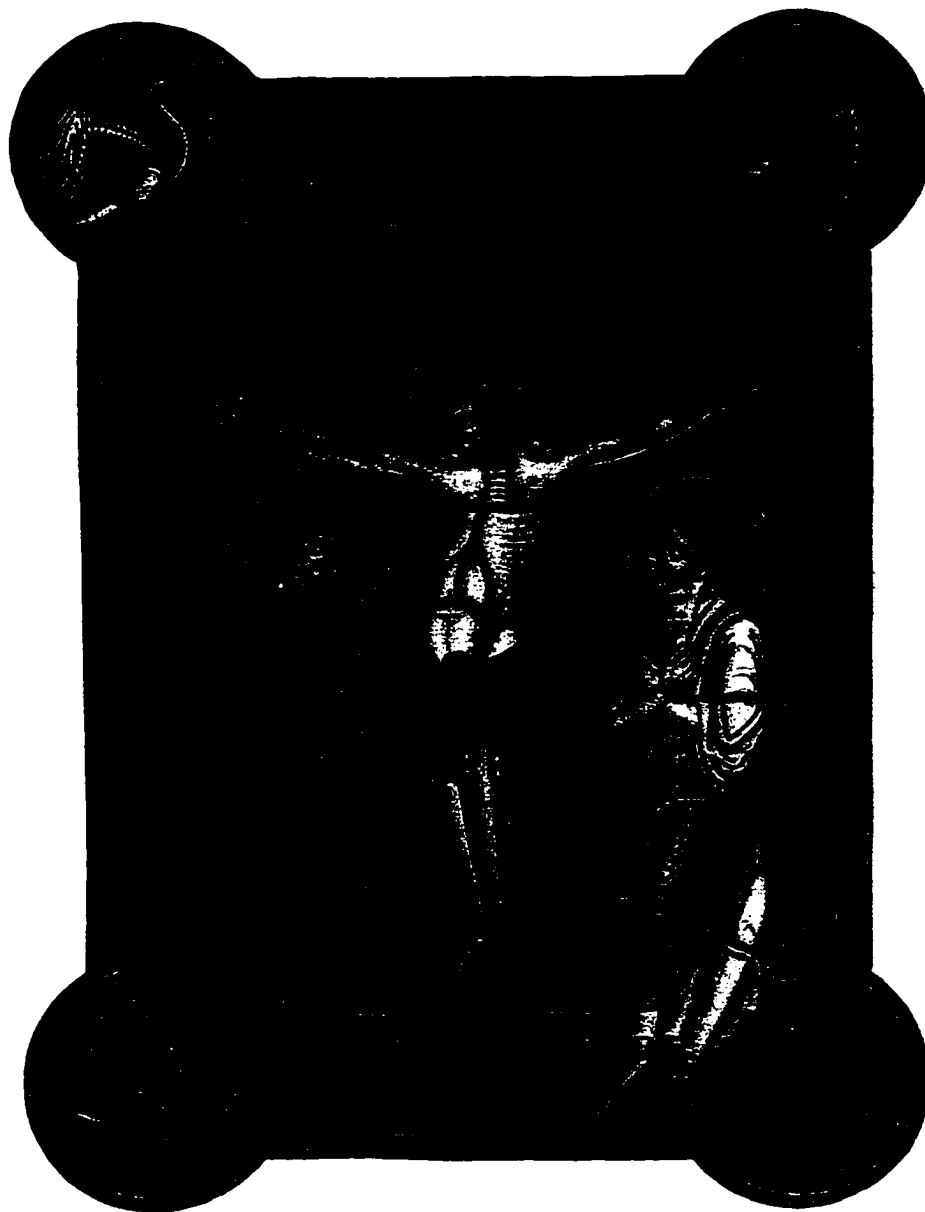


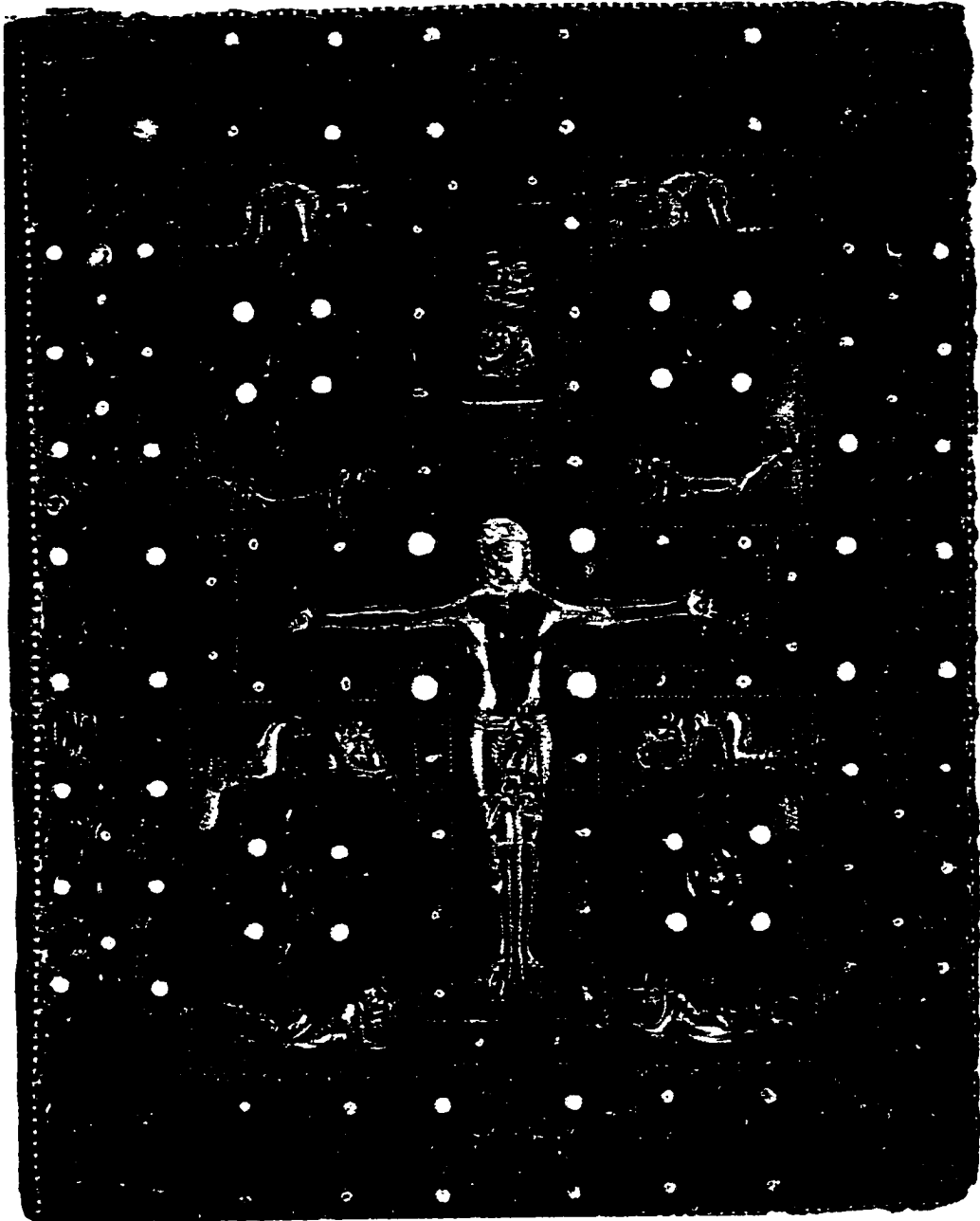


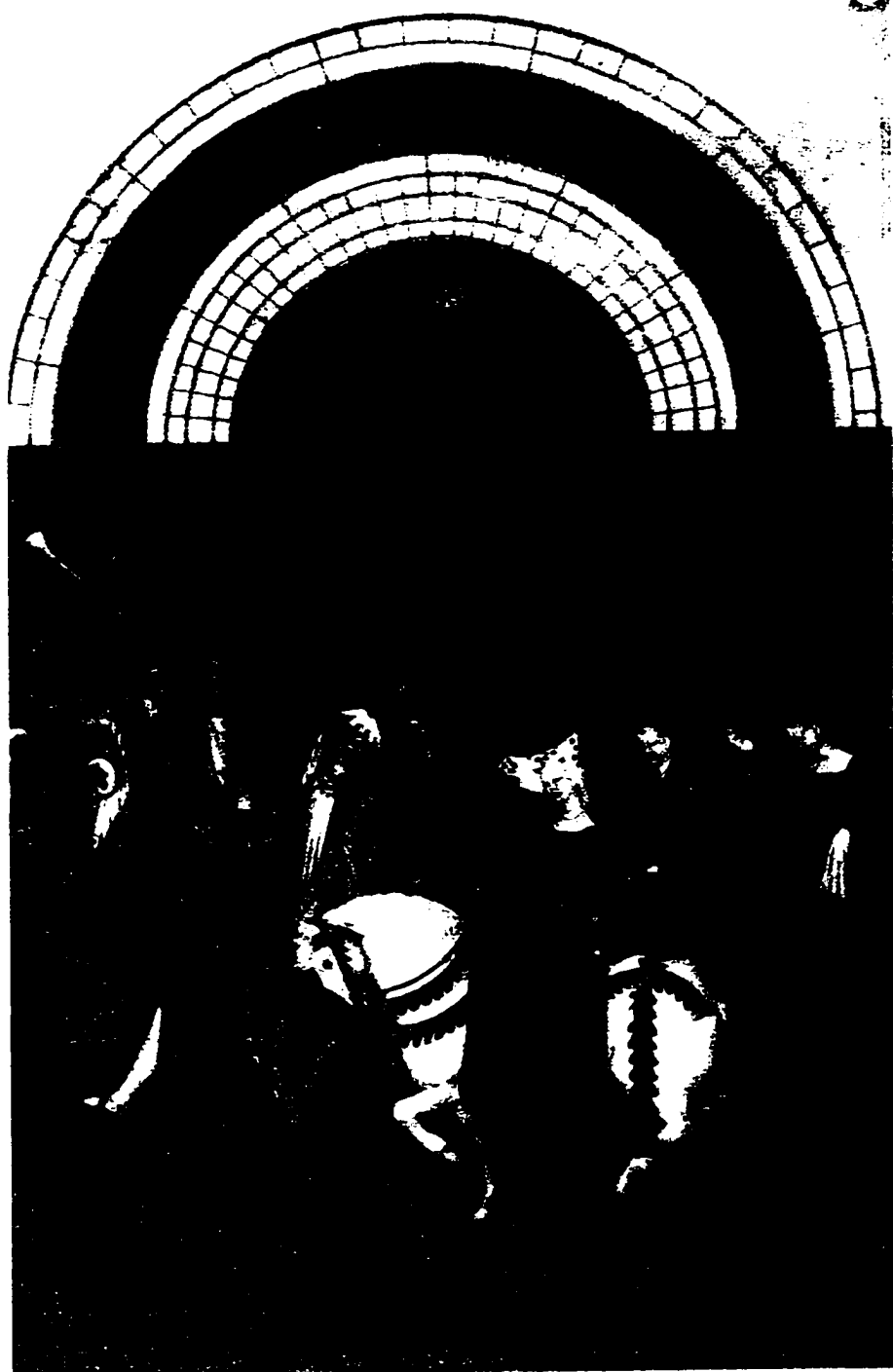


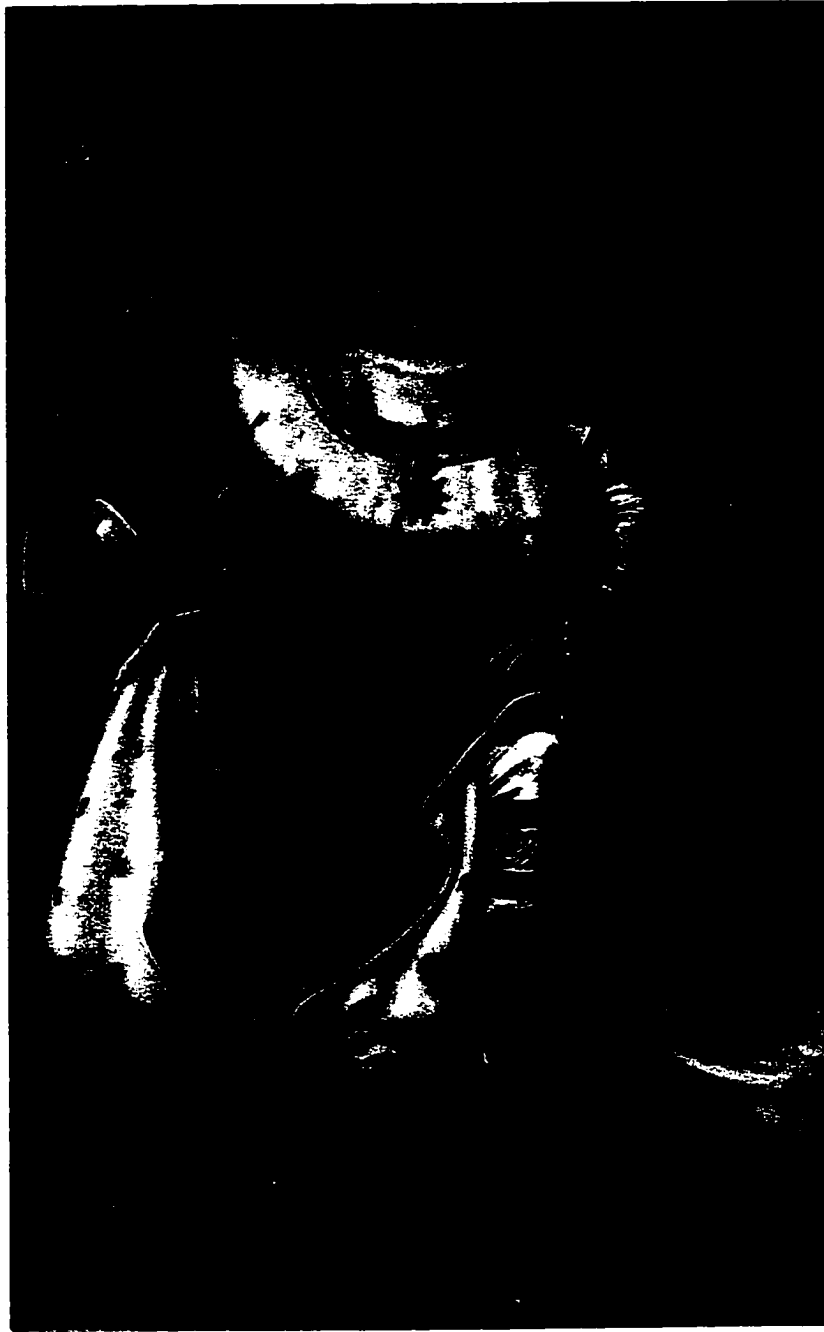










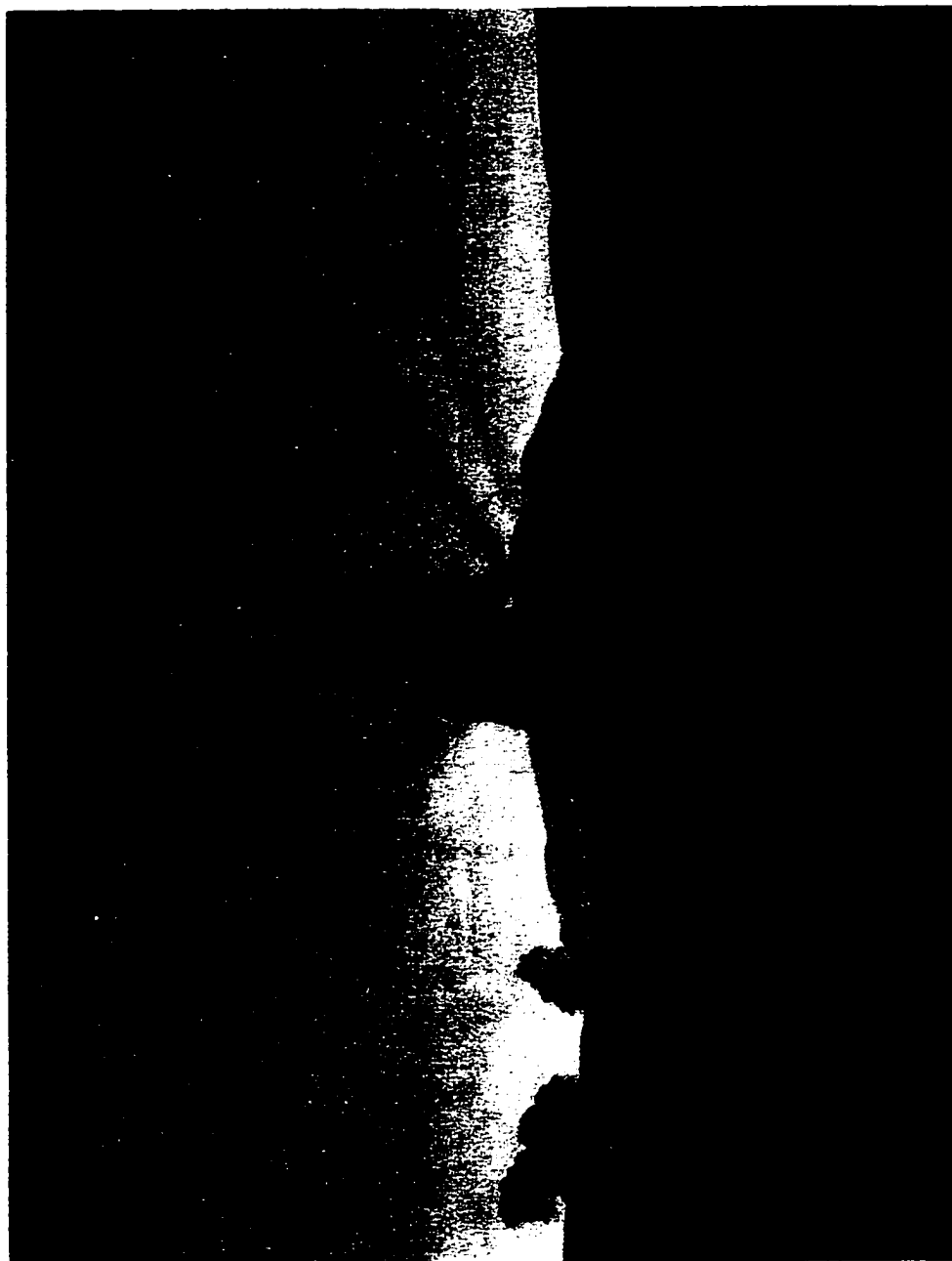












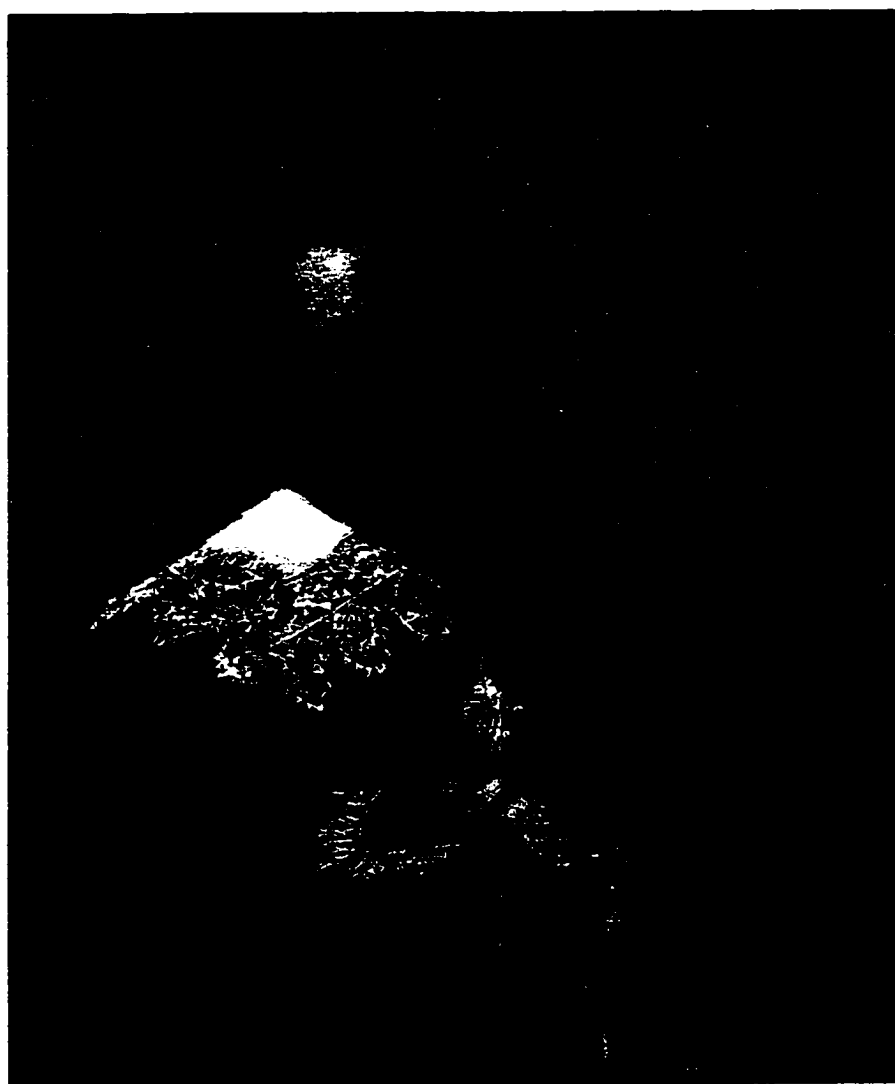


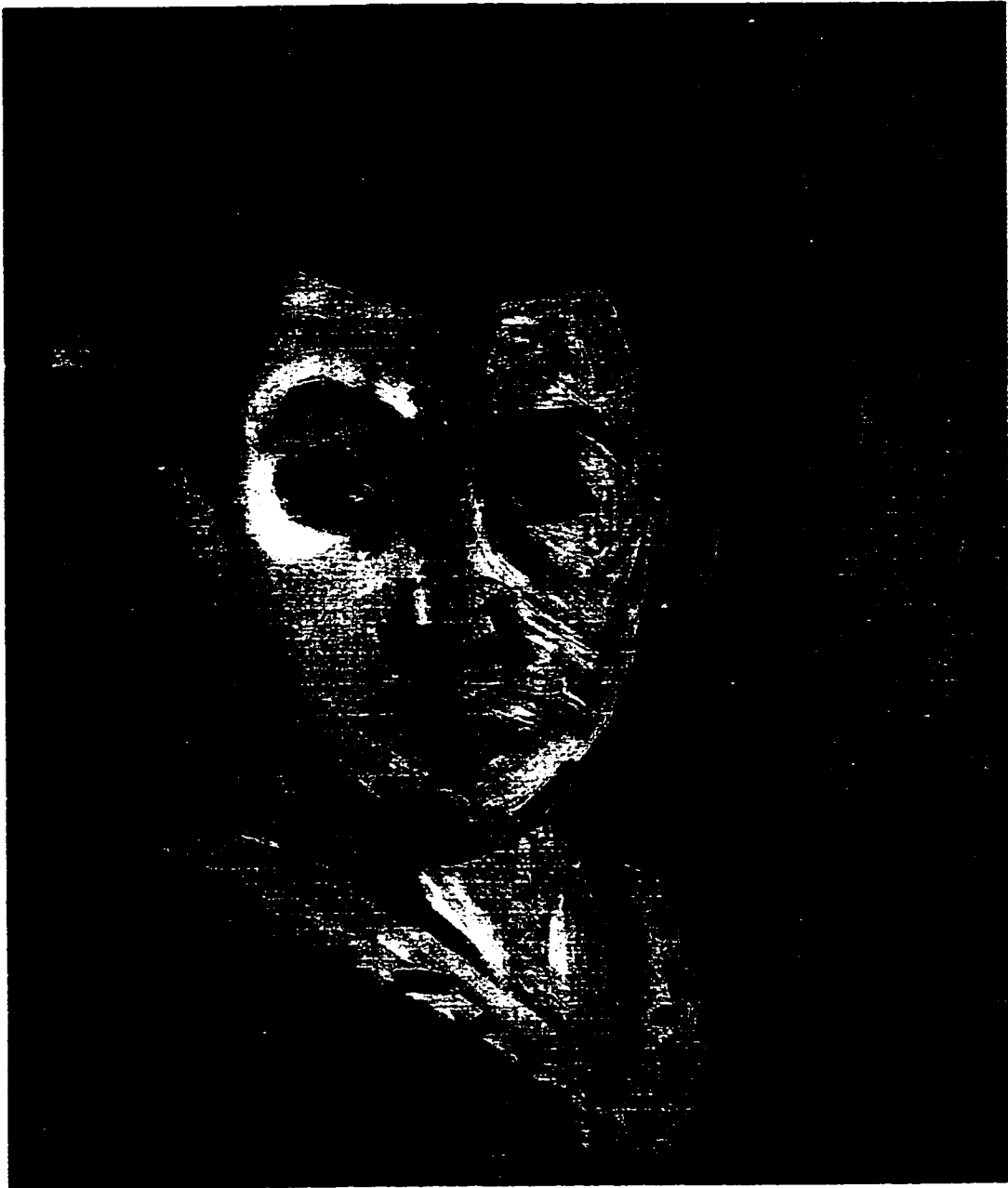








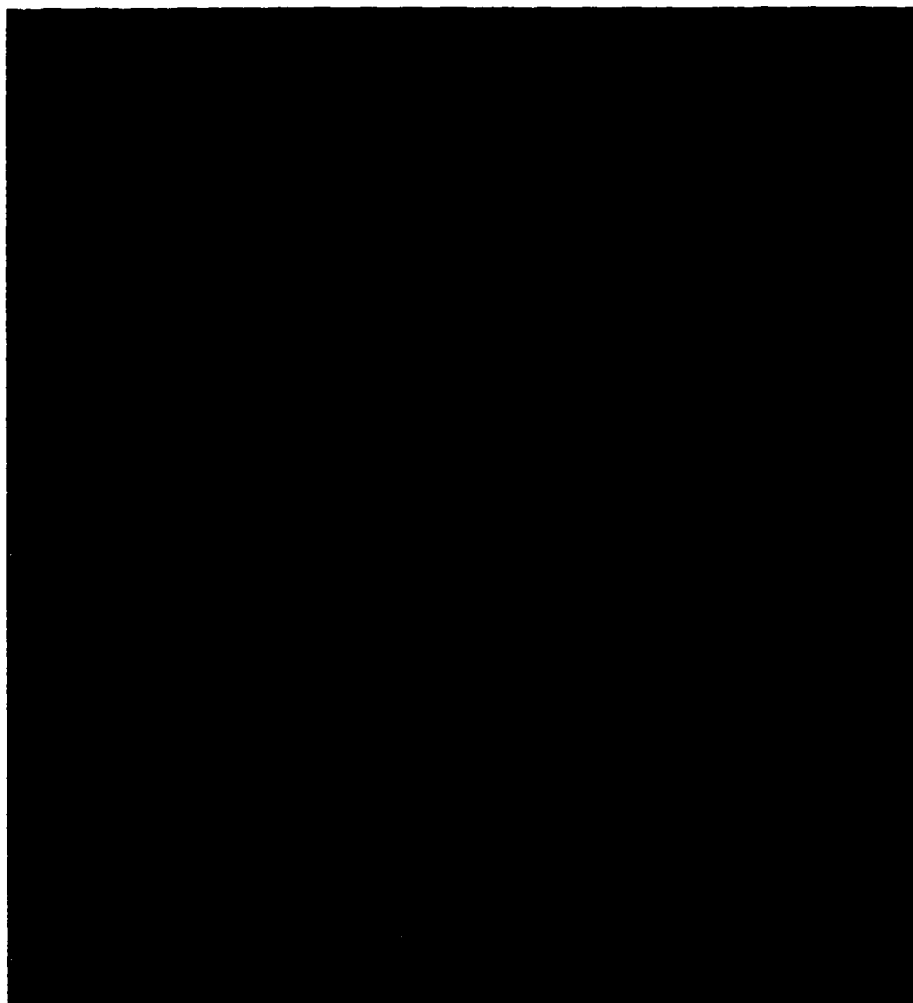


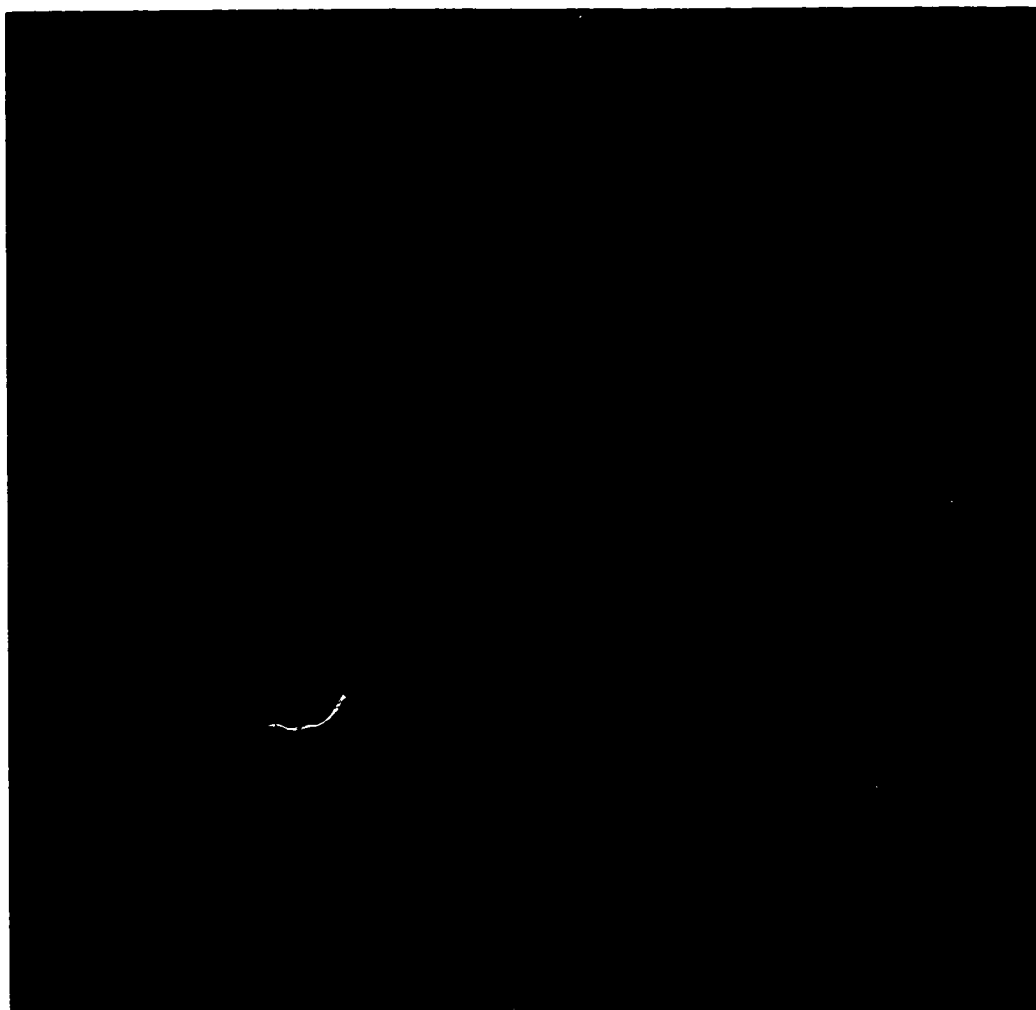






















Bibliography

—Philosophy Books

Ackrill, J.L. *Aristotle the Philosopher*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981.

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*. Tr. W.D. Ross. Reprinted in McKeon, ed. *The Basic Works of Aristotle*.

Aristotle, *On the Parts of Animals*. Tr. William Ogle. Reprinted in McKeon, ed. *The Basic Works of Aristotle*.

Aristotle. *Physics I & II*. Tr. R.P. Hardie and R.K. Gaye. Reprinted in McKeon, ed. *The Basic Works of Aristotle*.

Ayer, Alfred Jules. *Language, Truth and Logic*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1952.

Budd, Malcolm. *Values of Art: Pictures, Poetry and Music*. London: The Penguin Press, 1995.

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

Danto, Arthur. *Beyond the Brillo Box: The Visual Arts in Post-Historical Perspective*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1992.

Dickie, George. *Art and the Aesthetic: An Institutional Analysis*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974.

Goodman, Nelson. *Fact, Fiction and Forecast*, Fourth Edition. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983.

Grice, Paul. *Studies in the Way of Words*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989.

Hume, David. *A Treatise of Human Nature*. (1739) Peter Nidditch, ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978.

Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason*. (1787) Tr. and Ed. Norman Kemp Smith. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965.

Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Judgement*. (1790) Tr. James Creed Meredith. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1988.

Katz, Jerrold J. *The Metaphysics of Meaning*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1990.

Katz, Jerrold J. *Realistic Rationalism*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1998.

Lear, Jonathan. *Aristotle: The Desire to Understand*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

Locke, John. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. (1689) P.H. Nidditch, ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975.

Margolis, Joseph. *The Language of Art and Art Criticism*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1965.

McKeon, Richard, ed. *The Basic Works of Aristotle*. New York: Random House, 1941.

Moore, G.E. *Principia Ethica*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966.

Mothersill, Mary. *Beauty Restored*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984.

Rollins, Mark, ed. *Danto and His Critics*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1993.

Rorty, Richard. *Objectivity, Relativism and Truth: Philosophical Papers, Vol. 1*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1991.

Stroud, Barry. *Hume*. New York: Routledge, 1977.

Tillman, Frank and Steven Cahn, eds. *Philosophy of Art and Aesthetics From Plato to Wittgenstein*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1969.

—Philosophy Articles

Carroll, Noël. "Beauty and the Genealogy of Art Theory." *The Philosophical Forum*, Vol. 22, No. 4, 1991.

Carroll, Noël. "Art, Practice, and Narrative." *The Monist*, Vol. 71, No. 2. April, 1988.

Carroll, Noël. "Essence, Expression and History." In Rollins, ed. *Danto and His Critics*.

Danto, Arthur. "The Artworld." *Journal of Philosophy* Vol. 61, No. 19, 1964.

- Danto, Arthur. "Responses and Replies." In Rollins, ed. *Danto and His Critics*.
- Dickie, George. "A Tale of Two Artworlds." In Rollins, ed. *Danto And His Critics*.
- Fodor, Jerry. "Deja vu All Over Again: How Danto's Aesthetics Recapitulates the Philosophy of Mind." In Rollins, ed. *Danto And His Critics*.
- Fodor, Jerry. "You Can Fool Some of the People All of the Time, Everything Else being Equal; Hedged Laws and Psychological Explanations." *Mind*, Vol. 100, 1990.
- Grice, Paul. "Logic and Conversation." (1967) In H.P. Grice. *Studies in the Way of Words*.
- Grice, Paul. "Utterer's Meaning and Intentions." (1967) In H.P. Grice. *Studies in the Way of Words*.
- Harrison, Bernard. "Some Uses of 'Good' in Criticism." In Francis J. Coleman, ed. *Aesthetics: Contemporary Studies in Aesthetics*.
- Hempel, Carl. "Provisoes: A Problem Concerning the Inferential Function of Scientific Theories." *Erkenntnis* 28, 1988.
- Isenberg, Arnold. "Critical Communication." *The Philosophical Review*, 58, 1949.
- Kivy, Peter. "A Failure of Aesthetic Emotivism." *Philosophical Studies* 38, 1980.
- Kivy, Peter. "What Makes "Aesthetic" terms *Aesthetic*?" *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 36, 1975.
- Kivy, Peter. "Aesthetic Concepts: Some Fresh Considerations." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. xxx, No. xxx.
- Mothersill, Mary. "Critical Reasons," in Francis J. Coleman, ed. *Aesthetics: Contemporary Studies in Aesthetics*.
- Sartwell, Crispin. "Aesthetic Dualism and the Transfiguration of the Commonplace." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*. Vol. xxx, xxx, 1988.
- Schiffer, Stephen. "Ceteris Paribus Laws." *Mind*, Vol. 100, 1990.
- Sibley, Frank. "Aesthetic Concepts." Reprinted in Frank Tillman and Steven Cahn, eds. *Philosophy of Art and Aesthetics From Plato to Wittgenstein*.

Wartofsky, Marx. "Art, Artworlds, and Ideology," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, xxx, xxx.

Weitz, Morris. "Reasons in Criticism." Reprinted in Weitz, ed. xxx.

Wimsatt, W.K. and Monroe Beardsley. "The Intentional Fallacy." Reprinted in Steven Cahn and Frank Tillman, eds. *Philosophy of Art and Aesthetics from Plato to Wittgenstein*.

Wollheim, Richard. "Danto's Gallery of Indiscernibles." In Rollins, ed., *Danto And His Critics*.

—Art History, Criticism, and History

Baldwin, Marshall, ed. *Christianity Through the Thirteenth Century*. New York: Harper & Row, 1970.

Bell, Clive. *Art*. New York: Capricorn Books, 1958.

Bloom, Harold. *The Visionary Company: A Reading of English Romantic Poetry*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971.

Bosing, Walter. *Hieronymus Bosch: Between Heaven and Hell*. Koln: Benedikt Taschen, 1994.

Clark, Kenneth. *Civilisation*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1969.

Ferrier, Jean-Louis. *The Fauves: The Reign of Color*. Paris: Pierre Terrail, 1992.

Gombrich, E.H. *The Story of Art*, 16th Edition. London: Phaidon Press, 1995.

Hartt, Frederick. *Art: A History of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1989.

McCarty, John. *Splatter Movies: Breaking the Last Taboo on the Screen*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984.

Montebello, Philippe de. *The Vatican Collections: The Papacy and Art*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1982).

Ross, Clifford, ed. *Abstract Expressionism: Creators and Critics*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1990.

Rosenberg, Harold. "The American Action Painters." *ARTnews*, Vol. 51, No. 8. Reprinted in Clifford Ross, ed. *Abstract Expressionism: Creators and Critics*.

Southern, R.W. *The Making of the Middle Ages*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953.

Borsch-Supan, Helmut. *Caspar David Friedrich*. Tr. Sarah Twohig. Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1990.

Annete and Luc Vezin, *Kandinsky and Der Blaue Reiter*. Paris: Pierre Terrail, 1992.

Warner, Malcolm. *The Victorians: British Painting 1837-1901*. Washington D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1996.

Wölfflin, Heinrich. *Principles of Art History: The Problem of the Development of Style in Later Art*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1950.

Wood, Michael, Bruce Cole and Adelheid Gealt. *Art of the Western World: From Ancient Greece to Post-Modernism*. New York: Summit Books, 1989.

—Literature, Poetry and Musical Compositions

Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. *To William Wordsworth: Composed On the Night After His Recitation of a Poem on the Growth of an Individual Mind*. (1807) Reprinted in Kathleen Raine, ed. *Samuel Taylor Coleridge: Selected Poetry and Prose*.

Durufle, Maurice. *Requiem*. (1947) Voices of Ascension Chorus and Orchestra. Dennis Keene: Delos, 1995.

St. Francis of Assisi, "The Canticle of Brother Sun." (Date unknown) Tr. B. Fahey, O.F.M. Reprinted in Baldwin, *Christianity Through the Thirteenth Century*.

Haydn, Joseph. *Nelson Mass*. (1798) London Symphony Orchestra/ Choir of King's College, Cambridge. Sir David Willcocks: London Records, 1988.

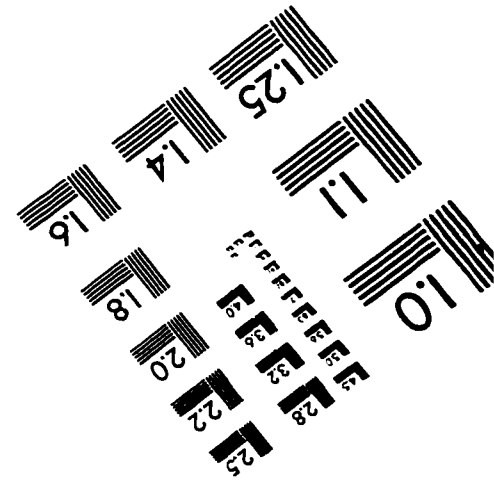
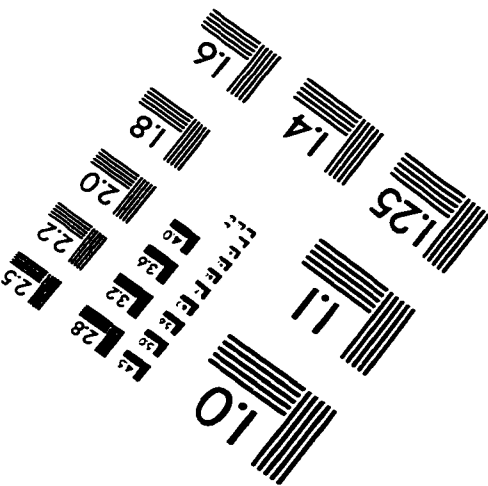
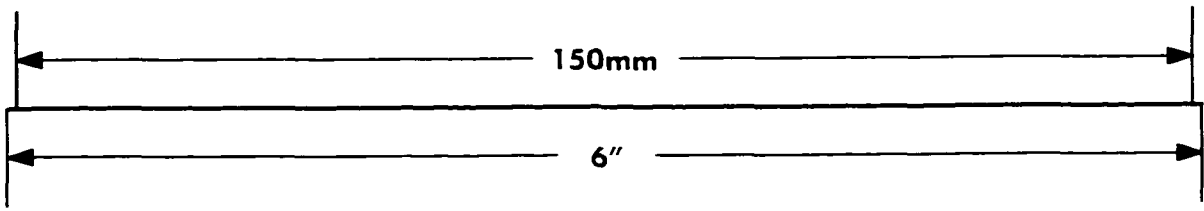
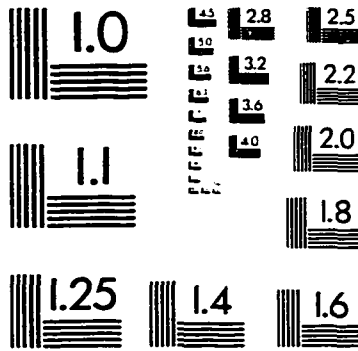
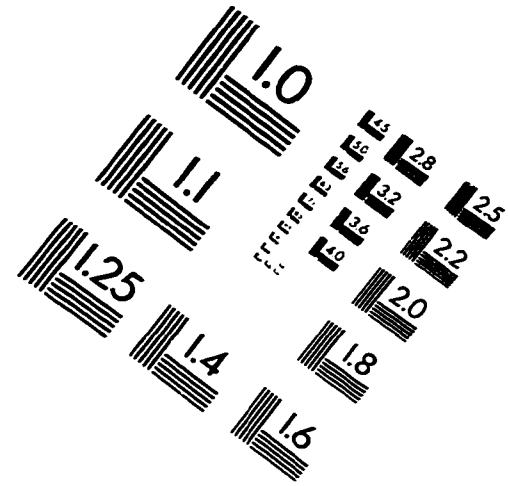
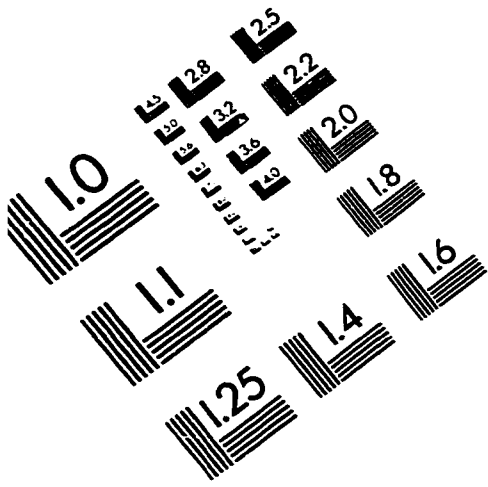
Raine, Kathleen, ed. *Samuel Taylor Coleridge: Selected Poetry and Prose*. London: Penguin Books, 1957.

[Attributed to] da Todi, Jacopone. "Stabat Mater." (1306) Tr. E. Caswell. Reprinted in Baldwin, ed. *Christianity Through the Thirteenth Century*.

Wordsworth, William. *Lines Written a Few Miles from Tintern Abbey*. (1798) Reprinted in Stephen Gill and Duncan Wu. *William Wordsworth: Selected Poetry*.

Wu, Duncan and Stephen Gill. *William Wordsworth: Selected Poetry*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)



APPLIED IMAGE . Inc
 1653 East Main Street
 Rochester, NY 14609 USA
 Phone: 716/482-0300
 Fax: 716/288-5989

© 1993, Applied Image, Inc., All Rights Reserved