Arthur Danto's Philosophy of Art

By

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy in Philosophy

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Acknowledgements

I would particularly like to thank my supervisor, Professor Stephen Houlgate, for his advice, support and encouragement throughout the last four years and Mr. Martin Warner for his criticism and suggestions. I have already had the opportunity, at the conferences at Murcia (2003) and Cork (2004), to thank Professor Danto personally for two things. First, for generating, through his writings, my interest in philosophical aesthetics, and second, for his wide-ranging discussions with me at those conferences about the nature of art.

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own work and I confirm that it has not been submitted for a degree at another university

Note on the Text

References to the sources listed in the bibliography are given in the parentheses following quotations, in the footnotes and in the list of illustrations; the date of the work, page number, and author where this is not obvious, are listed. In the bibliography if the date of the first publication is shown, and the original is difficult to consult, the most widely-available reprint is also listed. The page numbers in the latter cases refer to the reprint. In the quotations ellipses indicate omissions from the original text except where stated.

Arthur Danto's Philosophy of Art

Abstract

The thesis is a critical examination of Danto's philosophy of art. It begins with his article 'The Artworld' where he proposes a special *is* of artistic identification to distinguish artworks. Danto's idea of the artworld is discussed, a historical and contextual theory of art, which arose from his attempt to explain the difference between Warhol's *Brillo Boxes* sculpture and an indiscernible stack of everyday Brillo boxes. It is argued that Danto unsuccessfully attempts to shore up his artworld concept with the special *is*.

The technique of comparing indiscernible counterparts, from Danto's book *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*, is examined. It is argued that the technique is philosophically redundant, but it is a redundant premise which has been added to a valid inference (Danto's historical and contextual view of art: his artworld theory) therefore, this does not make the original inference invalid.

Danto's treatment of metaphor, expression, and style is shown to result in four claims. First, artworks embody rhetorical ellipsis. Second, artworks share features of metaphor: they are intensional (with an *s*) in structure and cannot be paraphrased. Third, a work of art expresses what it is a metaphor for by the way it depicts its subject. Fourth, artworks embody style.

The conclusion, has two parts. The first part gives a summary of the criticism of Danto's theory of art: (1) there are logical inconsistencies in his concept of the *is* of artistic identification and in his use of indiscernible counterparts, (2) his theory suffers by being over-inclusive and (3) he uses circular arguments. The second part is based on a response to the criticism: it provides a definition of art. This has three elements. First, an argument is proposed for a spectrum of artistic presence in which all human activity and artefacts can be placed. Second, there is an acceptance of Danto's view of art (or artistic presence) being both intentional (with a *t*) and intensional (with an *s*); however, by applying these concepts to a spectrum, the problem of over-inclusiveness is avoided. Finally, it is argued there can be no wholly non-circular account of art.

Introduction

Monks, I will teach you Dhamma – the Parable of the Raft – for crossing
over, not for retaining. Listen to it, attend carefully. and I will speak.
Majjhima-nikāya I, 134-5 (Conze,1990, pp.87-8)

I. Danto's Philosophy of Art and Philosophy of the History of Art

Arthur Danto's writings on art can be placed in three categories: first, philosophy of
art, second, philosophy of the history of art and third, art criticism. The dissertation
deals exclusively (or, as I shall explain shortly, almost so) with the first of these: it
provides a critical examination of Danto's philosophy of art. I could proceed without
further comment, having stated my objective, but I shall very briefly explain in the
introduction why I believe Danto's philosophy of art underlies the other two
categories. The last category – art criticism: notably Danto's writing as art critic of
The Nation magazine – I leave with no further comment; it incorporates ideas from
the other two categories from which it is largely derivative. The second category,
Danto's philosophy of the history of art, encompasses three major themes: first, his
loosely Hegelian view of art history and its related concept of the end of art, second,
a theory of the philosophical disenfranchisement of art (Danto's historical survey of
the relationship between philosophy and art), and finally, his recent writings on the
abuse of beauty: a development of the disenfranchisement theme.

Danto, as I shall explain shortly, uses his theory of the end of art,
part of his philosophy of the history of art, to support his philosophy of art. It is
necessary, therefore, to comment on the relationship between his philosophy of art
and the first of these three themes in his philosophy of the history of art: his concept
of the end of art. Two questions arise: firstly, does his theory of the end of art
depend on the philosophy of art, and, vice versa, does the philosophy of art depend

on his theory of the end of art? I believe the answer to the first question is yes, and the answer to the second is no; I shall explain briefly why in the remainder of this section of the introduction. These answers, I believe, justify my view of Danto's philosophy of art as the underlying category of his writings on art and explain my focus on his philosophy of art as the subject of the dissertation. The second section of the introduction outlines my approach to the subject and the structure of the dissertation.

How does Danto link his philosophy of art with his philosophy of the history of art? His philosophy of art is an attempt to define art in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions. If any condition a applies to *all* art, then a is a necessary condition of art. Danto believes a major problem with this approach is how we can be sure that in the future there will not be some new type of art which fails to satisfy condition a. The condition a would cease to be a necessary or, obviously, a sufficient condition of art. This is where Danto invokes his philosophy of the history of art. His bold claim is that the history of art has ended: that pop art has shown that anything can now become art; this marks the end of the modernist narrative of art and indeed the end of the whole history of the concept of art as a narrative. The historical development of the concept of art – not the history of art as such – is over. A history of art after the end of art can still be written and can take the form of a narrative; such a narrative history would not, however, trace any changes in what it means to be a work of art. Danto argues that whatever condition is proposed as a definition of art it must now include the possibility of anything becoming art and, therefore, be immune to counter-examples.

I shall now briefly outline Danto's theory of the end of art. He traces two narratives in the history of art.[1] First, the search for verisimilitude in art: the

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[1] These two narratives are explained in detail in chapter three 'Master Narratives and Critical Principles' and chapter four 'Modernism and the Critique of Pure Art: the Historical Vision of Clement Greenberg' of *After the End of Art* (Danto, 1997a).

search for the correct depiction of the visual world by artistic imitation, particularly in painting. Danto calls this the Vasarian narrative, and its era runs from the Renaissance through to the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Danto makes the point that although Vasari's famous book was called *The Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, it was the painters who created the historical narrative with their successive and improving attempts at mimesis. He sees this era ending with the invention of photography, particularly cinematic photography and the realisation that although imitation had been the main aim of art it could not now be a necessary feature of art. Danto believes that towards the end of the Vasarian era painting had largely achieved its goal of mimesis and that, coincidentally, this role had been taken over by photography. Art had to find a new narrative, and the one which gradually emerged was modernism: this emerging narrative involved the reflexive questioning of the nature of art from within art itself. So Danto's second narrative is the development of modernism seen as an increasing move towards self-reflection in art; he labels this the Greenbergian era – again after another writer on art: Clement Greenberg. In the Greenbergian era Danto identifies a foundationalist approach where each individual form of art was seen as striving for a purity of expression through a process of self-examination of its own techniques and materials. Greenberg traces this through the development of modernism culminating in abstract expressionism. Danto believes this second narrative ends with pop art and the realisation that anything can become art. This realisation becomes apparent when we look at two indiscernible objects, one a work of art the other an everyday thing, and when we notice that the difference between the two cannot be identified as a visual difference (see illustration 1). A theory of art is needed which addresses the non-discernible or non-manifest features which must distinguish art from non-art.

This is where the link between Danto's philosophy of art and his philosophy of the history of art lies. If his philosophy of art can accommodate the possibility of anything becoming art, his theory of the end of art provides a way of indemnifying his definition of art, with its necessary and sufficient conditions, against

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any future counter-examples. As I have mentioned. his theory of the end of art proposes that there can be no further development of the concept of art; since anything can become art, there can be no further changes to what can count as art. If the history of art is over, although new works of art will continue to be produced. none will have the ability to nullify Danto's essentialist definition. He says: "having reached this point [the end of art] ... art has exhausted its conceptual mission. It has brought us to a stage of thought essentially *outside* history, where at last we can contemplate the possibility of a universal definition of art and vindicate therewith the philosophical aspiration of the ages, a definition which will not be threatened by historical overthrow" (Danto, 1986, p.209). In other words, no new developments in art can possibly emerge in the future which would derail Danto's definition: we have all the evidence we require to produce a real (essentialist) definition of art because the narrative history of art is at an end. I note here that Danto's stated need to indemnify his philosophy of art against future counter-examples is a result of his strong essentialist position in relation to defining art.

In the conclusion I return to this point and suggest that other approaches to defining art, including the one which I propose, avoid Danto's concern for providing such an indemnity. I do not intend to explain the development of Danto's philosophy of the history of art in detail here, but a crucial point is that it arises out of and relies on the technique of comparing indiscernible counterparts. We have reached 'the end of art', Danto believes, because pop art has raised the question of what art is in terms of indiscernibles.[2] As I shall explain in the next chapter. Andy Warhol's *Brillo Boxes* sculpture (see illustration 6) alerted Danto to the fact that we can have two indiscernible objects one of which is an artwork and one not. The lesson of pop art is that anything can become art without this making a visually

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2. The End of Art' is the title of Danto's 1984 essay which is reprinted in Danto, 1986, pp.81-115; he uses the term in a loosely Hegelian sense: more accurately he is referring to the end of the history of art.

discernible difference to the object, and if anything can become art, art's developmental history is complete. In other words, no matter how many new works of art are produced in the future, they will not alter what it *means* to be a work of art; art as a concept will not come to be anything new. Art will still be produced in its post-historical period, but it will have no over-arching narrative structure: the historical development of the concept of art is over. There is an ambiguity in the idea that anything can become art. On the one hand, it can mean that the concept of art becomes completely open: art becomes a meaningless concept because there is nothing peculiar to art and the history of art is irreducibly open-ended. On the other hand, it can mean that anything can now be understood to fall under the concept of art which has been *definitively understood*. Danto accepts the latter meaning; his contextual philosophy of art, as I shall explain, settles and closes the concept of art.

Danto's philosophy of the history of art relies on the comparison of indiscernibles, but, as I shall explain in chapters two and three, his philosophy of art relies on the very same technique. Therefore the invocation of his philosophy of the history of art to support his philosophy of art is circular. In these later chapters I shall be explaining my concerns about the technique of comparing indiscernibles: how I regard it as philosophically redundant and telling us nothing that we do not already know about the artistic status of the objects under consideration. In other words, in using the technique of comparing artworks with indiscernible everyday objects, the decision about what an artwork is must already have been made *before the thought experiment can take place*. For Danto, an artwork is defined by its context: it has a history and acquires a provenance, and it should be noted that these features are non-discernible features. As a method, comparing indiscernibles in this way is inextricably linked to an essentialist distinction about what art is. Noël Carroll sums this argument up: "to invoke indiscernibility in a characterization of a philosophy of art history that is meant to defend the possibility of essentialist theory is circular; for it supposes the viability of essentialist theory – by dint of its

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assumptions about indiscernibility – in the course of an argument whose very conclusion is ostensibly that essentialist theory is viable" (Carroll, 1993, p.98).

I return to the two questions which I posed at the beginning of this section: does Danto's theory of the end of art depend on his philosophy of art, and, vice versa, does his philosophy of art depend on his theory of the end of art? The answer to the first is yes. Danto's concept of the end of art relies on the technique of comparing indiscernible counterparts, but invoking this technique presupposes an essentialist definition of art. Therefore the concept of the end of art relies on Danto's definition of art. His end of art (hence also his philosophy of the history of art) and his philosophy of art both rely on comparing indiscernibles, but the crucial point is that Danto's use of indiscernibles presupposes his definition of art, and this definition *is* his philosophy of art. The answer to the second question is therefore, in my opinion, no: Danto's philosophy of art, contrary to his own view, cannot rely on his philosophy of the history of art for its indemnity and must stand or fall on its own merits. This philosophy of art and its methodology underpin the concept of the end of art upon which Danto's philosophy of the history of art rests. The purpose of my dissertation, therefore, is a critical examination of Danto's philosophy of art.

II. The Structure of the Dissertation

Before I outline the structure of the dissertation I need to make three points. First, throughout his earlier writings Danto makes frequent reference to the term 'aesthetic': referring to the aesthetic sense, to aesthetic predicates, properties, and responses. However, his discussion, certainly in *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*, is restricted to the consideration of works of art: there is no mention of the sublime in nature for instance. I follow Danto in using 'aesthetic' to refer exclusively to artworks in my discussion. Danto, of course, is well aware of the greater scope of the word 'aesthetic', and he does discuss Kant's treatment of the aesthetic sense – all judgements of taste including those relating to both works of art

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and nature – at some length in the final chapter of his recent book *The Abuse of Beauty*.[3] I also discuss this distinction briefly in the conclusion when I examine the concept of fine art: I specifically use Kant's taxonomy of the aesthetic sense as a comparison with both Danto's and my own view.

Secondly, and in a similar vein, Danto refers to 'art', 'fine art', 'works of art' or 'artworks' throughout his writings: he makes a clear distinction between art and non-art. In the conclusion I put forward a very different view of the nature of art which questions the veracity and utility of this art/non-art duality. Again, however, throughout the main body of the dissertation I follow Danto in his use of the term 'art' which I later argue to be unsustainably restricted. Finally, a word about the illustrations: I refer frequently to particular works of art in the dissertation; I have provided illustrations only where I believe the work referred to is likely to be unfamiliar or where I am referring to some specific detail of the work. As some works are referred to several times, the illustrations are collected at the end of the dissertation.

The dissertation is a critical examination of Danto's philosophy of art. It concentrates on his two most important and influential publications in this field: the much-anthologised 1964 article 'The Artworld' and his 1981 book *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*. My critique is in three chapters. The first chapter examines Danto's earliest work on aesthetics: his article 'The Artworld' where Danto begins by outlining two theories of art: IT (the imitation theory) and RT (the reality theory). His aim is to show that art cannot be purely a matter of imitation, and he introduces the first of his indiscernibility thought experiments, the two indiscernible but quite different paintings *Newton's First Law* and *Newton's Third Law*, into the discussion. He proposes a special *is* of artistic identification to explain the difference between art and non-art, and I outline my criticisms of the concept: it uses imprecise language, it is too exclusive and it is internally

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[3] Danto, 2003a, chapter 7, 'The Beautiful and the Sublime'.

inconsistent. I examine Danto's concept of the artworld which arose from his attempt to identify and explain the difference between Andy Warhol's *Brillo Boxes* sculpture and an indiscernible stack of everyday Brillo boxes (see illustrations 1 and 6, both incidentally show the sculpture, not everyday Brillo cartons).

I identify five, later increased to six, principles of art which make up Danto's philosophy of art: a complex, hybrid theory which I summarise as embodying intentionality (with a *t*) and intensionality (with an *s*). Intentionality (with a *t*) entails expression, representation and interpretation within a historical context (historical reflexivity). Intensionality (with an *s*) suggests that art cannot be paraphrased and that its interpretation is in a sense inexhaustible; art embodies rhetorical ellipsis and it shares certain structural features with metaphor. Danto moves on to discuss artistic predicates and explains how our idea of art accommodates new predicates: he uses his concept of the style matrix – a form of truth table. He illustrates how new forms of art arise with the acceptance of new artistically-relevant predicates: a process involving the introduction of additional columns in his style matrix.

I address an obvious objection to Danto's approach: what if the ready-mades and other examples of contemporary art which he uses are simply not art at all. I reject this objection, and I put forward arguments to counter it. I argue first, that the objection rests on an assumption of a degree of formalism in its view of art: the existence of some formal or 'aesthetic' quality in the work. Second, I argue that the objection ignores that these objects have already been accepted as art by the artworld. However, this reliance on the artworld to identify art leads to another objection to Danto's theory: the claim that his argument relies on an unacceptable level of circularity. This is a claim which I endorse; it reappears and is discussed at several points in the dissertation, and I explain my own view on the issue in the conclusion. Chapter one closes by looking at the link between the special *is* of artistic identification and the 'artworld' concept. Danto, I argue, attempts to shore

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up his artworld concept with the special *is* of artistic identification, and I explain why I believe he fails in this task.

Chapter two examines Danto's technique of comparing indiscernible counterparts. I concentrate on the first six chapters of *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* and discuss six of the twenty-three examples of indiscernibles that Danto uses to illustrate his arguments. From this discussion I identify six principles encompassing Danto's philosophy of art: (1) art is the result of human endeavour by an artist, (2) artworks acquire a history and a provenance, (3) artworks embody meaning (they are expressive), which meaning is a result of the artist's intention, (4) that meaning requires a subject about which the artist projects a point of view by means of rhetorical ellipsis, (5) artworks require interpretation and finally, (6) they are produced and interpreted within a historical context. I then consider Joseph Margolis's criticism of Danto's technique of comparing indiscernible counterparts; a development of Margolis's criticism of the *is* of artistic identification which was introduced in chapter one. I also look at how George Dickie's institutional theory of art relates to Danto's theory of art noting that Dickie, by introducing his idea of art as an inflected concept, accepts the circularity involved in his own definition of art as inevitable. I conclude that Danto's technique of comparing indiscernible counterparts is philosophically redundant, but I believe it is a redundant premise which has been added to a valid inference (Danto's historical and contextual view of art: his artworld theory). Therefore, this does not make the original inference invalid. Danto's contextual and historical view of art is, I argue, a genuine insight, and the technique of comparing indiscernible counterparts is not required to demonstrate its validity.

Chapter three is devoted to the final chapter of *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* 'Metaphor, Expression, and Style'. Danto introduces the concepts of rhetoric and ellipsis which he identifies as important features of art. Following on from this, he proposes that interpretation in art requires an element of filling-in or bridging the enthymematic gap. Danto's discussion here results in four claims. First, artworks embody rhetorical ellipsis; they also have complex internal

cognitive relationships where contextualism is involved both in their production and interpretation. Second. artworks have similar features to metaphors: they are intensional (with an *s*) in structure; they include reference to a representation and they cannot be paraphrased. Third, a work of art expresses what it is a metaphor for by the *way* it depicts its subject; metaphoric transfer takes artworks beyond the literal. Fourth. artworks are expressive: they embody *style*.

The conclusion to the dissertation. chapter four, is in two parts. The first part is a summary of my criticism of Danto's theory of art. The criticism has three major elements: (1) I identify logical inconsistencies in his concept of the *is* of artistic identification and in his use of indiscernible counterparts. (2) I believe that Danto has failed to provide an adequate definition of art: his theory suffers by being over-inclusive, and finally. (3) Danto's philosophy of art uses arguments which are circular. The second part of chapter four is a response to the criticism of the first part; it provides an outline of my own theory of art: towards a definition of art. This has three major elements. First, arising from my criticism of Danto's insistence on an art/non-art duality, a proposal for the existence of a spectrum of artistic presence in which all human activity and artefacts can be located. Second. an acceptance of Danto's view of art (or artistic presence on my view) as being both intentional and intensional. but I argue that by applying these concepts to a spectrum of artistic presence I avoid the problem of over-inclusiveness in Danto's account of art. Finally. I argue that there can be no wholly non-circular account of art; I accept George Dickie's view of art as an inflected concept.

Chapter One
Danto and the Artworld Theory

The whole world can become aestheticized without

there being any change in the world at all.

Arthur Danto   *Mysticism and Morality* (1976, p.86)

I. Introduction: Art as Mimesis, Mirror Images

In this chapter I examine Arthur Danto's theory of art put forward in his famous paper 'The Artworld' (1964). The paper marks the beginning of Danto's interest in aesthetics. 'The Artworld' together with his 1981 book *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* are the key documents in the development of Danto's philosophy of art and have become classics in the field of contemporary aesthetics. The ideas and concepts introduced in 'The Artworld' are developed and refined in *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*: I discuss them in chapters two and three. For example, Danto introduces his technique of comparing indiscernible counterparts in the paper, and I address it briefly in section V of this chapter. I return to examine his more detailed exposition of the subject in chapter two.

The paper starts with a discussion of art as mimesis using the mirror image as an example. Danto begins with two opposing views on the subject: "Hamlet and Socrates, though in praise and deprecation respectively. spoke of art as a mirror held up to nature" (1964, p.202). As usual in Danto's writings, we are given no references, but the relevant passages are easily identified. The mention of Socrates and mirrors refers to the beginning of Book Ten of Plato's *Republic*. The discussion centres on the work of the mimetic artist and Plato's view that such artists produce representations which are at two removes from reality. Artists produce

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representations of articles made by craftsmen (beds are used as an example): the articles made by the craftsmen already being at one remove from reality: one remove from the essential Platonic form of the article. Plato's reference to mirror images is used in his attempt to devalue art. He does this by proposing that the same result as the representation produced by the artist can easily be achieved by using a mirror: "it's not difficult, and can be done in various ways quite quickly. The quickest way is to take a mirror and turn it round in all directions; before long you will create sun and stars and earth, yourself and all other animals and plants. and all the other objects we mentioned just now" (596d-e, 1955, p.372). To the objection that they would only be reflections comes the reply: "quite right ... and very much to the point. For a painter is a craftsman of just this kind, I think" (596e, 1955, p.372).

Danto stays with the discussion of mirror images: the next examples which he discusses come from Shakespeare. Hamlet's view of the nature of the link between mirror images and art is seen as more positive. There are three references to mirrors or glasses, as Shakespeare refers to them, in Hamlet (3·1·147, 3·2·18 and 3·4·18). In each the glass does more than merely reflect: it reveals the truth by showing things as they really are, rather than how they seem to be. In Hamlet's interview with the Queen he says "come, come and sit you down, you shall not budge. / You go not till I set you up a glass / Where you may see the innermost part of you" (3·4·18-20). Danto sees Hamlet identifying one important property of mirrors overlooked by Plato: the ability to show us true images of ourselves. Danto also believes that art serves this second purpose: "so art, insofar as it is mirrorlike, reveals us to ourselves. and is. even by socratic criteria, of some cognitive utility after all" (1964, p.202). This cognitive view of art, that it in some way embodies knowledge, is a key issue for Danto, and the remainder of the paper is an attempt to explore and justify this view. But is Danto justified in choosing Hamlet as an example? Does Shakespeare link mirrors directly to art in the way that Plato does in his discussion in the Republic? In one of the references to mirrors in Hamlet, Shakespeare does provide just such a direct link to art: the art of theatre. Hamlet

instructs the players (who are about to perform *The Murder of Gonzago*) in their art "to hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature; to show the virtue of her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure" (3·2·18-20). The purpose of the play within the play is certainly cognitive: to "catch the conscience of the king" (2·2·558).

Danto finds another difficulty with Socrates' discussion. If art is imitation, as Plato avows, then mirror images, which are likewise imitations, must also be considered as art. Danto's logic is flawed here: the conclusion, that mirror images are art, does not follow from the two premises. However, leaving the point of logic aside, Plato, in Book Ten of *The Republic*, suggests that there is no ontological difference between mirror images and painting. The last quotation I used from *The Republic* makes this clear. I should mention in passing that, earlier in *The Republic*, Plato distinguishes between mimetic and narrative art. Elsewhere he also discusses other theories of art: for example poetry as divine inspiration in *Ion* and *Phaedrus*; so for Plato not all art is mimetic. Danto is focusing on one aspect of Plato's theory of art.[1]

Danto finds Plato's view on art in Book Ten of *The Republic* untenable. Plato's theory of art requires that mirror images be art; Danto believes that mirror images are not art, and therefore the theory is flawed. His argument is that since mirror images are *not* art but they *are* imitations, being an imitation cannot be a sufficient condition of art. Danto suggests that because art, from the time of Socrates virtually to the present day, has been primarily engaged with imitation, this deficiency has not been noticed. Danto believes that this deficiency was not apparent until the advent of photography which, with its ability to provide instant imitations at the press of a button, triggered the recognition of the shortcoming of the theory of art as imitation. Danto does not explain why this is so; we are left to assume that it is because photography is imitation but is not art. But he does not distinguish between

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[1] Later Danto appears to acknowledge the complexity of Plato's view of art (see 1981, p.11).

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photography which is not art and that which is; remember he himself champions some photography, such as Robert Mapplethorpe's, as art (see Danto, 1995). I shall return to the question of why some photography is art shortly. Once accepted, Danto believes this shortcoming of Plato's theory quickly led to the rejection of imitation as a *necessary* condition of art. Danto mentions the achievement of Kandinsky as an example. He does not specify exactly which achievement, but presumably he is referring to the development by Kandinsky of the first purely abstract paintings in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Danto makes the point that the situation now has been reversed: it is difficult for some work which displays mimetic qualities to be considered as art at all.

In relation to the Socratic discussion Danto's view is that the disputants know what the concept of art includes; he says: "the aim is to match a real defining expression to a term in active use, and the test for adequacy presumably consists in showing that the former analyzes and applies to all and only those things of which the latter is true" (1964, p.202). In other words, it is a matter of finding a suitable definition for those articles which are already known to be art: "their antecedent ability to do this is precisely what the adequacy of the theory is to be tested against, the problem being only to make explicit what they already know"(1964, p.202).

Danto points out the problem with this approach: in the present day it is no easy matter to distinguish what is and what is not art. Danto states his solution to this problem: the requirement for an *artistic theory*. A theory of art is required to enable us to distinguish what is artistic terrain, and the reason "lies in the fact that terrain is constituted artistic in virtue of artistic theories, so that one use of theories, in addition to helping us discriminate art from the rest, consists in making art possible" (1964, p.203). Put another way, Danto believes that the theories of art are in part constitutive of what art is, and thus it is theory that makes certain types of art possible. Before I move on, however, I need to mention two objections to this approach. Firstly, what about everyday, non-philosophical conceptions of art: surely not all art is reliant on theory. I address this issue in section VIII, the conclusion to

this chapter. I argue that all art can be related to a general cultural inheritance, but I accept that there is an element of circularity in this response. Secondly, if theory makes certain types of art possible, this precludes a theory of art being wrong. For example, Plato's imitation theory as a theory makes mimetic art possible; so, contra Danto, it must be correct. This objection is addressed by Danto's view that theory *in part* constitutes what art is. There are other elements of art which, as I shall explain in chapters two and three, Danto proposes as necessary conditions of art: theory alone is not enough to constitute art. This sole dependence on imitation theory, Danto believes, explains the problem with the Socratic approach to art. Plato's theory of art is deficient because, being reliant on mimesis, it includes mirror images within the realm of art; a place in which Danto believes they clearly do not belong. Again I should emphasise that Danto has chosen to discuss only one element of Plato's complex and wide-ranging theory of art.

This marks the end of Danto's introduction to the paper. He concludes with the blunt statement of his proposition: that to determine what is art an *artistic theory* is required. The remainder of the paper provides his justification for this view. Summing up the introduction, Danto has attempted to discredit the mimetic theory of art. His argument is twofold: firstly, that the imitation theory is too inclusive: it includes both mirror images and, although not explicitly stated, all photography within art. Secondly, it is too exclusive: it excludes abstract art, for instance. This assumes of course that abstract art and other non-mimetic artforms are indeed art; this subject is discussed in detail in section VII of this chapter 'But is it Art?'.

The first part of Danto's argument, the problem with the Socratic definition of art being too inclusive, is reasonable. Most people would agree that holiday snaps and mirror images are not art. However, it is possible to have art which consists of both photography and a mirror image: the late Helen Chadwick's self-portrait *Vanity* is a well-known example (illustration 2). Danto's theory will have to explain how this is possible. The second part of the argument: how it is possible to have a theory of art which includes abstract art, has simply been

identified at this stage; we await the justification. We were reminded of Kandinsky's achievement, but, so far, it has not been explained why a theory should enable us to consider abstract art as being art. We will also need to know how to distinguish photographic art, like Chadwick's, from holiday snaps. The theory will have to accommodate the vast array of new art forms: for instance ready-mades, video art, performance art, outsider art, body art and appropriational art. We must be provided with a theory to explain if and why these things are art. I move on in the next section to examine how Danto develops this idea of artistic theory. He begins by examining two existing theories of art: imitation theory and reality theory. He has of course just dismissed the imitation theory but in his re-examination of it, as I shall explain, he is interested in the *change* from imitation theory to reality theory. At this stage I should point out that Danto's artistic theory did not achieve its full development and refinement until 1981, with the publication of *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*, seventeen years after 'The Artworld' article.

II. Imitation and Reality Theories of Art

In this section Danto begins with the issue of how we would deal with the discovery of a completely new class of artworks – a group of objects that were newly created or newly found and that were quite different from our accepted view of art. Although Danto asks us to visualise a completely new set of objects, we can readily think of many examples from the history of twentieth-century art that would fit this scenario: in fact, he chooses one example himself, from the world of painting, to look at in detail: the post-Impressionists. Danto's idea is that the treatment of new artworks has parallels with the situation in science where some recently discovered facts do not fit with the current scientific theory. He suggests that the (initially tempting) way of accommodating this wayward evidence in science, the line of least resistance, which allows us to retain a well-regarded and valuable theory, is by way

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of auxiliary hypotheses. I believe there is a major flaw with this analogy which I will explain shortly; for the present I continue with Danto's exposition.

Danto returns to the theory of mimesis in art and gives it a title: the Imitation Theory of Art (IT). He goes on to say that IT has suffered from the imposition of auxiliary hypotheses, and he proceeds to explain how this has happened. He examines the move away from purely mimetic art in the work of the post-Impressionists. The example he discusses is the widespread contemporary auxiliary hypothesis which was added to IT: the suggestion that those responsible for these 'aberrant' objects were tricksters, charlatans or simply inept. Although Danto does not go into detail, there is plenty of well-documented historical evidence to substantiate the claim that the post-Impressionists were regarded by many contemporary critics as incompetents or pranksters.[2] He then asks us to suppose that this auxiliary hypothesis can be proven to be mistaken. And this supposition is not unreasonable; we can discover, for instance, that the post-Impressionists (Danto stays with this example) were quite capable of producing mimetic art in the current academic manner. Also that they were not trying to make money or mischief by deception and that they had an unquestionable belief in the importance and seriousness of their work. If the auxiliary hypothesis fails, what then is required? Danto says that what is needed is a new theory which will accommodate all the old examples of art, and, in addition, allow the new examples to be taken up into the domain of art. Again, Danto asks us to compare the situation in art to that in science where at certain stages a well proven theory is overthrown: what Danto calls a conceptual revolution has taken place.[3]

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[2] Louis Leroy's review 'The Exhibition of the Impressionists' is a famous example reprinted in Harrison, Wood and Gaiger, 1998, p.573-76. The critical response to Manet's painting is another well-documented example, see Hamilton, 1954.

[3] Although he does not mention him in the paper, the inspiration for this idea comes from Thomas Kuhn. Danto acknowledges his debt to Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* in Danto,

Danto applies this idea of a completely new theory, a conceptual revolution, to the development of post-Impressionist painting. Using the then current theory of art (IT) these new post-Impressionist paintings would have to be dismissed as inept, shoddy, unfinished or as some kind of tasteless joke. Danto explains: "to get them accepted *as* art ... required not so much a revolution in taste as a theoretical revision of rather considerable proportions, involving not only the artistic enfranchisement of these objects, but an emphasis upon newly significant features of existing artworks, so that quite different accounts of their status as artworks would now have to be given" (1964, p.203). Another result of this conceptual revolution was that other objects, until then not considered as being art, were brought into the artistic fold. Danto gives the examples of the tribal masks and Chinese pottery that were transferred from anthropological museums to art museums. He emphasises that nothing has been taken *out* of the fine art fold; it is that new items have been *added*. The question of whether anything can cease to be art is addressed in chapter two; in summary, my answer, based on Danto's contextualism, is a qualified no. We will see how an artwork acquires a provenance and a history from which it cannot escape. It could however, if it was a ready-made, be used again for its original purpose: perhaps its provenance and history may be unknown or forgotten.

Danto qualifies the previous discussion: he acknowledges that he provides a simplified view. In fact, there were several replacing theories around at the time of the post-Impressionists, but he is concentrating on one particular theory which was very clearly and explicitly put forward and promoted as a replacement theory for IT. The theory in question, which he calls The Reality Theory of Art (RT), is based on the idea that "the artists in question were to be understood not as unsuccessfully imitating real forms but as successfully creating new ones, quite as real as the forms which the older art had been thought, in its best examples, to be

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1999a, p.1-3. Kuhn's concept of scientific progress as a series of paradigm shifts is also mentioned in Danto, 1986, p.202.

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creditably imitating" (1964, p.204). This Reality Theory of Art (RT), as Danto refers to it, was formulated by Roger Fry and Clive Bell who championed the post-Impressionists in Britain in the early part of the twentieth century.[4] Fry, in 1917, summarised the achievement of Cézanne, Gauguin and Van Gogh as being "the re-establishment of purely aesthetic criteria in place of the criterion of conformity to appearance – the rediscovery of the principles of structural design and harmony" (1961, p.19). Danto does not look at the theory in any detail; he does not look at either the 'art as expression' element in Fry's writing or the development of the concept of 'significant form' in Bell's. Danto's only aim at this stage is to provide an example of a theory of art which does not rely on the principle of mimesis and which has superseded the imitation theory.

The theory he chooses (RT) serves this purpose well. Danto explains how "one might almost interpret the crude drawing in Van Gogh and Cézanne, the dislocation of form from contour in Rouault and Dufy, the arbitrary use of color planes in Gauguin and the Fauves, as so many ways of drawing attention to the fact that these were *non-imitations*, specifically intended not to deceive" (1964, p.204). However, we must note that here Danto assumes, incorrectly I believe, that the purpose of all figurative art before the post-Impressionists was deception; with a few exceptions such as trompe l'œil, figurative art does not exclusively aim to deceive. Danto fails to distinguish between the rare cases of mimetic art which aims to deceive and figurative art which can serve other purposes besides imitation: amongst other qualities it can be didactic, decorative or tragic. Returning to RT, these new entities are not intended to be imitations but new creations in their own right. Danto takes Van Gogh's *Potato Eaters* as an example; here we have not an imitation of potato eaters but a new entity: a non-imitation which has "as much right to be called a real object as did its putative subjects" (1964, p.204). In other words, Danto

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[4] Roger Fry coined the term post-Impressionism for an exhibition at the Grafton Galleries in 1911. He chose it as the most vague and non-committal he could think of! See Fry, 1961, p.227.

believes that this new theory (RT) has enabled the work of the post-Impressionists. as well as other objects such as tribal art and Chinese pottery, to be accommodated in the category of art from where, using IT, they would have been barred. The ontological status of artworks has been changed; the Socratic theory of mimesis has been shown to be no longer adequate. I have previously mentioned, however, that the theory of mimesis is only one aspect of Plato's view of art and that for Plato art serves other purposes as well; Danto fails to acknowledge the breadth and complexity of the Socratic discussion of art.

The difficulty with Danto's approach lies where it begins: with his analogy. He asked us to "suppose one thinks of the discovery of a whole new class of artworks as something *analogous* to the discovery of a whole new class of facts anywhere, viz., as something for theoreticians to explain" (1964, p.203, emphasis added). But facts are not the same as artworks; Danto's mistake is to treat them as the same; his mistake is a mistake of category. Scientific facts, which Danto chooses for his analogy, are discovered and must be accommodated within a theory. This, of course, is an over-simplification but here I only intend to show the difference in status between facts and artworks. Artworks are created not discovered. I will have to return later to discuss the special case of ready-mades and why they should still be considered as being 'created'. Danto has *already accepted*, in the quotation above, that these objects are a whole new class of artworks. He calls them that quite bluntly; they are *already* artworks. The new theory is used to explain why they are works of art: why they enjoy the special status of artworks. The theory comes after it has been decided that these new objects are indeed works of art. Danto is thus begging the question: he has assumed the very point that is at issue. In other words, he has already accepted that these things are artworks: the theory is put in place afterwards to justify why this is so. This process is appropriate for accommodating scientific facts but not with explaining why a new set of objects should be considered as artworks.

This problem points to a wider issue: the difficulty of providing a definition of art, indeed, if such a definition is possible. Any successful definition of art would have to be immune to any future counter-examples. Put in another way, for a definition to be successful it must be able to accommodate any potential new work of art that may be encountered. In the introduction I have already considered this in relation to Danto's philosophy of the history of art; I will return to the problem of the definition of art in chapter three when I look at Danto's fully developed philosophy of art. In the conclusion I will also look at the issue of whether it is either necessary or possible to arrive at a definition of art. At present, I am simply pointing out a problem with Danto's analogy between the reception of new artworks, as they relate to art theory, and of new scientific facts, as they relate to scientific theory. I continue with Danto's exposition of RT.

Danto believes that we must use Reality Theory not Imitation Theory in order to understand the art that surrounds us today. We must assume that he includes everything which is now considered art: all the historical works now in our museums and galleries as well as contemporary art which he concentrates on. He chooses two examples of mimetic art, where perhaps IT might have been thought appropriate, to illustrate the inability of IT to explain the works in question. He discusses the paintings of Roy Lichtenstein and Jasper Johns pointing out that, although they are seemingly straightforward imitations of everyday images, they are new entities: new works of art. For example, Roy Lichtenstein's paintings are obviously huge blow-ups of comic strip panels. Danto makes the point that an illustration of a Lichtenstein painting in an art book is indiscernible from a photograph of Milton Caniff's original panel for the comic strip. Danto argues that what makes the Lichtenstein painting a new entity is the huge scale; the painting is not an imitation – was never intended as an imitation – of the *Steve Canyon* character in the comic book. It is a new creation, and we must use RT to explain it; an explanation in terms of IT will tell us nothing about the essential quality of the

work. Note that for the first time in the discussion the issue of indiscernibility. which will feature so prominently in Danto's argument. has been raised.

Danto, with a waggish reference back to Plato's discussion of beds. ends the discussion of RT by looking at two artists. Robert Rauschenberg and Claus Oldenburg, both of whom have used real beds as part of their artwork (see illustrations 3 and 4). Danto makes the point that, although they are vastly expensive as beds and that they live in art galleries, they could be mistaken by someone as being just beds. Danto invents the hard-headed character Testadura to act as a philistine: "he [Testadura] attributes the paintstreaks on Rauschenberg's bed to the slovenliness of the owner, and the bias in the Oldenburg bed to the ineptitude of the builder or the whimsy, perhaps, of whoever had it 'custom made' " (1964. p.205). The important point that Danto makes is that they could still serve as beds; Testadura could sleep in them. If he did so he would be mistaking art for reality. But the artworks, by courtesy of the very theory itself (RT), have their own reality. Danto poses some questions: "they [the birds who tried to peck Zeuxis' grapes] mistook art for reality, and so has Testadura. But it was meant to *be* reality, according to RT. Can one have mistaken reality for reality? How shall we describe Testadura's error? What, after all, prevents Oldenburg's creation from being a misshapen bed?" (1964, p.205). Danto has highlighted a clear difference between Fry's use of the word *reality* and the everyday use of the word to distinguish the presence of objects. He decides that this is the same as asking what it is that makes these items art: how do you distinguish a real bed from one of Oldenburg's or Rauschenberg's works of art? It is this question which he attempts to answer with his idea of the *is* of artistic identification. I examine this concept in the next section.

III. The *Is* of Artistic Identification

Danto continues using his example of the bed. He reminds us that the two examples of beds in art which he uses. Oldenburg's *Bedroom Ensemble* and Rauschenberg's

Bed, could be used to sleep on. In this particular form of art they are not images of beds but actual beds. How is Danto's character Testadura to distinguish beds in art from beds which simply serve the purpose for which they are normally used? Danto makes the obvious point that one cannot discover that a bed is not, after all, a bed. This leads him to the first part of his explanation: he points out a parallel with the Strawsonian concept of individuals.[5] It should be noted that Danto asks us to assume the correctness of Strawson's view here; he does not give us any justification or argument. Danto suggests that mistaking a work of art for a bed is rather like "mistaking a person for a material body when the truth is that a person *is* a material body in the sense that a whole class of predicates, sensibly applicable to material bodies, are sensibly, and by appeal to no different criteria, applicable to persons" (1964, p.205-6). However, a person is, in this Strawsonian view, not just a material body but an enduring entity with a material body and also with psychological properties; the two sets of features being inseparable. In other words, just as one cannot discover that the bed in Oldenburg's *Bedroom Ensemble* is not a bed, similarly, one cannot discover that a person is not a material body.

Danto notices that, in the two works he is discussing, the beds in question are only *part* of the artwork. The Rauschenberg bed is a compound creation; it is a bed smeared with paint: Danto calls it a 'paint-bed'. Here Danto points out, again, the parallel with P. F. Strawson's account of persons. According to Strawson, a person is not just a material body with thoughts added but a complex irreducible whole: an individual. In his account Danto is suggesting that works of art, like individuals, are in a sense primitive and cannot be reduced to their constitutive elements; in a strong sense they are irreducible. I return to a similar argument in chapter three: Danto's view that artworks are intensional (with an *s*) in structure and cannot be paraphrased. Danto then generalises in an attempt to characterise artworks, but he is quite specific that he is discussing a special class of

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[5] As outlined in his book *Individuals*, see Strawson, 1959.

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artworks: those that contain real objects as part of their make-up. He explains: "not every part of an artwork *A* is part of a real object *R* when *R* is part of *A* and can, moreover, be detached from *A* and seen *merely* as *R* even though it would not be incorrect to say that *A* is *R*, that the artwork is a bed. It is the 'is' which requires clarification here" (1964, p.206). Danto builds his argument on this last point: that there is a special use of the word *is* involved, and he believes that it is a use which occurs predominantly in the discussion of artworks.

Danto begins by clarifying what this special use is *not*: it is "not the *is* of either identity or predication; nor is it the *is* of existence, of identification, or some special *is* made up to serve a philosophic end" (1964, p.206). He gives a number of examples; I will discuss one: the painting *The Fall of Icarus* by Pieter Bruegel the Elder (see illustration 5). Danto imagines pointing out the figure of Icarus to a companion in the gallery. At first glance the painting seems to be a traditional pastoral composition; the title perhaps alerts us to look for something more. Closer inspection reveals the unfortunate Icarus plunging to his death, but the image of Icarus is tiny in relation to the whole painting. Danto uses this need for the tiny figure, 'that white dab' as he refers to it, to be pointed out to many viewers as an example of his special use of the word *is*. He explains that in pointing out to his companion that the white dab is Icarus "we do not mean, in these instances, that whatever is pointed to stands for, or represents, what it is said to be, for the *word* 'Icarus' stands for or represents Icarus: yet I would not in the same sense of *is* point to the word and say 'That is Icarus' " (1964, p.206). Danto completes his explanation and here I quote the final section in full.

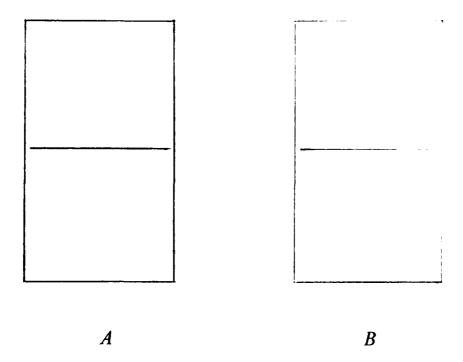> The sentence "That *a* is *b*" is perfectly compatible with "That *a* is not *b*" when the first employs this sense of *is* and the second employs some other, though *a* and *b* are used non-ambiguously throughout. Often, indeed, the truth of the first *requires* the truth of the second. The first, in fact, is incompatible with "That *a* is not *b*" only when the *is* is used nonambiguously throughout. For want of a word I shall

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designate this the *is of artistic identification*; in each case in which it is used, the *a* stands for some specific physical property of, or physical part of, an object; and, finally, it is a necessary condition for something to be an artwork that some part or property of it be designible by the subject of a sentence that employs this special *is*. (1964, p.206)

Danto is saying, using an example of my own, that the special *is* of artistic identification when used to point to a painting of a book and saying 'that is a book' is compatible with saying 'that is not a book but a painting'. However, a similar use of is could apply to a photograph of a book or the written title of a book, and both would also be compatible with saying 'that is not a book'. As I shall explain in the next section, this is one of my criticisms of Danto's *is* of artistic identification: it applies to such a wide range of other things that it is of little use in distinguishing art. At the end of the last quotation we have the statement of the first part of Danto's definition of art: he provides us with a *necessary* condition of art. I will be looking at criticism of this idea in the next section; for the present I continue with the unfolding of Danto's theory.

Danto moves on to his famous example of the two identical paintings. He proposes a hypothetical commission for two paintings: one painter is asked to produce a work illustrating and entitled *Newton's First Law*; the second is asked to produce a work called *Newton's Third Law*. Both paintings turn out to be identical and are illustrated on the next page.[6]

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[6]Danto, 1964, p.207. Danto labels the illustrations *A* and *B*. He then refers to the painters as *A* and *B*, but in the following paragraph he again refers to the paintings as *A* and *B*. He is, confusingly, using *A* and *B* as the names of both the painters and their respective works.

A   B

The two painters, as we would expect, explain their work in completely different ways. *B* explains his work as the opposition of two masses: one pressing down the other pressing up; this relates to Newton's third law (if one body exerts a force on another, there is an equal and opposite force, or reaction, exerted by the second body on the first). *A* explains his work as a line of the movement of a single particle through space; this relates to Newton's first law (a body continues in a state of rest or uniform motion in a straight line unless it is acted on by an external force).

Danto notes a feature of both paintings: that the black line crossing the centre of the white canvases goes right across the paintings from side to side. In the case of picture *A* "the path goes from edge to edge, to give the sense of its *going beyond*" (1964, p.207). In the case of *B* he says: "to regard the middle line as an edge (mass meeting mass) imposes the need to identify the top and bottom half of the pictures as rectangles" (1964, p.207). In passing, I mention a very odd feature of the illustration that Danto uses: the fact that the horizontal line, inexplicably and totally at odds with the whole argument, does not meet the edge of the picture: it does not do exactly what Danto says it must.[7] Danto goes on to explain a number of

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[7] This is the case in the original article in *The Journal of Philosophy*, and it occurs in every other

other possible and quite plausible explanations of the paintings. The line could indicate the edge of one mass (either the top or bottom rectangle) giving the pictures a strong spatial or three-dimensional interpretation. Or the whole area of the picture could be a flat surface "which the line is *above (Jetflight)*, or *below (Submarine-path)*, or *on (Line)*, or *in (Fissure)*" (1964, p.207). He then proposes two other interpretations where the line is extended through space: the line becomes a plane. Unlike the interpretation from painter *B*, the space could extend beyond the edge of the rectangle: the viewer being in the same space. Or it could be a plane within the confines of the rectangular space of the picture. So, at this stage, Danto has given us ten different interpretations of the paintings.

He makes three general points. Firstly, that the interpretations, or identifications as he calls them, in several instances require us to consider the existence of other interpretations. For example the interpretation with the mass at the top of the painting and the void at the bottom requires us to consider the reversal: the mass at the bottom and the void at the top. Secondly, some interpretations seem to suggest further similar interpretations and that these form a group: for example, those based on reading the picture as a flat surface. Thirdly, another strong feature is that one interpretation usually precludes others: the readings tend to be incompatible with each other. The several readings could therefore be considered as separate artworks: "even though each artwork contains the identical real object as part of itself – or at least parts of the identical real object as parts of itself" (1964, p.208). Danto also makes the point that senseless interpretations are possible but, of course, would be unjustifiable. Finally, he points out how each interpretation creates, what is in effect, a different world giving as an example a poetic reading of the painting: as a clear sky reflected in a perfectly smooth expanse of water (interpretation number eleven).

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reprint of the article I have encountered. The mistake is corrected in *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* where Danto uses the same example. See Danto, 1981, p.121.

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Danto now brings Testadura back into the argument who complains that all that he can see is the white canvas with a black line. And he is quite correct; that is all there is to see.[8] Danto explains: "we cannot help him until he has mastered the *is of artistic identification* and so *constitutes* it a work of art. If he cannot achieve this, he will never look upon artworks" (1964, p.208). Danto's last interpretation of the painting, number twelve, is a purely abstract one entitled *No. 7* by its artist. This artist is adamant that all there is to see is paint. Danto asks the question: how can this interpretation be different from Testadura's? Danto's answer contains the basis of his fully-fledged theory of the 'artworld'. The abstract painter has, according to Danto, rejected any of the approaches that have been identified; he has eschewed any literal interpretation and is using the medium in its own right. The manifestation of the paint on the canvas is the essential quality of the artwork. But he has achieved this position through working within an atmosphere of art history. He relies on theories of art and his knowledge of past and recent artworks. It is his background and his knowledge of contemporary art which has enabled him to achieve this position. He requires this knowledge to be in a position to reject all the other interpretations: to return to what he considers the true reality of paint on canvas. Danto provides us with a summary of his theory and it is here that he introduces the term 'artworld'.

His [the abstract painter's] identification of what he has made is logically dependent upon the theories and history he rejects. The difference between his utterance and Testadura's "This is black paint and white paint and nothing more" lies in the fact that he is still using the *is* of artistic identification, so that his use of "That black paint is black paint" is not a tautology. Testadura is not at that stage. To see something as art requires something the eye cannot decry [*sic*] – an

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[8] The relevance of Danto's superscription becomes apparent: "HAMLET: Do you see nothing there? / GERTRUDE: Nothing at all; yet all that is I see", *Hamlet*, 3·4·131-2.

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atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of the history of art: an artworld. (1964, p.209)[9]

In the first two sections of 'The Artworld' paper Danto has discussed the two theories of art, IT and RT, and he has outlined his idea of the special *is* of artistic identification. He has also introduced his concept of the 'artworld'. In the final two sections he goes on the examine the artworld concept in more detail. At this stage I need to point out that Danto sees his two ideas, the *is* of artistic identification and the artworld, as being interdependent. This is evident from the quotation above and similar statements supporting this interdependence appear later in the paper. The implication is that the artworld concept requires the *is* of artistic identification to succeed. In the next section, section IV, I will look at criticism of the *is* of artistic identification. The criticism shows, I believe, that the idea of the *is* of artistic identification is inherently flawed. I return to look at the artworld concept in section V; I also examine the link between the *is* of artistic identification and the artworld in the conclusion to this chapter.

IV. Problems with the *Is* of Artistic Identification

The concept of the *is* of artistic identification is open to three areas of criticism: firstly, it relies on imprecise use of language, secondly, that it is too exclusive and thirdly, it is internally inconsistent. I shall consider each of these in turn. I begin with Danto's imprecise use of language recalling that in introducing the *is* of artistic identification he discussed two works of art incorporating real beds. He said "the artwork is a bed" (1964, p.206); it is this use of *is* that Danto identifies as the *is* of artistic identification. The problem here is that this usage of *is* is quite common, and it is not used uniquely for identifying art. Taking the example in the quotation above, it is simply a colloquial shortening of a sentence something like: 'the major feature of

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[9] The wrong word is used in this quotation: it should be *descry* rather than *decry*.

this artwork is that it incorporates a real bed.' There is a metonymic element involved here; there is a substitution of a feature of the artwork for the artwork itself when discussing the work in question. But this elliptical use of language does not help us to identify any essential qualities of *artworks*.

To explain why, I will return to another of Danto's examples: Pieter Bruegel the Elder's painting *The Fall of Icarus*. I repeat what Danto has to say about the figure of Icarus: "in the gallery I point, for my companion's benefit, to a spot in the painting before us and say 'That white dab is Icarus.' We do not mean, in these instances, that whatever is pointed to stands for, or represents, what it is said to be, for the *word* 'Icarus' stands for or represents Icarus: yet I would not in the same sense of *is* point to the word and say 'That is Icarus' " (1964, p.206). Danto misses an important distinction here. In cases like the example of Icarus we have more than one way of representing objects: we have visual representation using images and representation using words. Contrary to what Danto tells us, the white dab *does* represent Icarus to us visually just as the word 'Icarus' represents Icarus to us in a linguistic way. The problem I have identified here is that Danto's special use of *is* has many other manifestations outside the identification of artworks. I see a picture of a car and say 'that is a Morgan': I am using this same sense of *is* here. The picture is not a car nor is it an artwork. In this case, and in the case of *The Fall of Icarus*, the *is* Danto is referring to is no more than the *is* of representational identification. To give another example: looking at some holiday snaps I can say 'that white spot is me standing in front of the Eiffel Tower.' The use of *is* here is Danto's use, but it is the *is* of representational identification. In fact, this use is so widespread that it seems to be of very little value in doing what Danto claims that it does: identifying art. Calling it the *is* of artistic identification gives it a particularity which is unjustified. Danto does say that it is a necessary condition of art, but it is in such widespread use outside art that it fails to serve any useful purpose. In other words the *is* of artistic identification is too inclusive to be of any help in deciding what is art.

If the first difficulty suggests that the *is* of artistic identification is too inclusive; the second difficulty I identify suggests the opposite problem: that the term is too exclusive. If this special use of *is*, in the *is of artistic identification*, is purely representational, as Danto's example of *The Fall of Icarus* suggests, can it really be a necessary condition of an artwork? What about non-representational art? What about the example Danto uses of the 10th Street abstractionalist who painted *No.* ¯ which I discussed in the previous section? William Kennick in commenting on 'The Artworld' paper says: "Danto admits that there are such things as 'pure abstractions,' but he does not take their existence as showing that his claim [about the special use of *is*] is false. For he holds that to say such things as 'this is black paint and nothing more', which one would suppose is to employ only the 'is' of ordinary identification, is still to use the 'is' of artistic identification" (1964, p.586).

In this view the *is* of artistic identification is too exclusive. Put in another way, Kennick believes that Danto has conflated two meanings of *is* within his concept of *the is of artistic identification*: the representational meaning initially, when discussing *The Fall of Icarus*, but the *is* of straightforward identification when he is considering abstract art. It is interesting to note that it is at this very point in the discussion, when Danto begins to discuss abstract art, that he first introduces the artworld concept. It is at this moment that he tacitly accepts that the *is* of artistic identification and the artworld concept are interdependent. Danto needs the concept of the artworld, the atmosphere of theories and art history, to explain abstract art, and he bolsters up the *is* of artistic identification, at this stage, by linking it with the artworld concept. I will return to this question of the interdependence of the two ideas later in the chapter.

I move on to the third area of criticism of the *is* of artistic identification: that it is internally inconsistent. Joseph Margolis believes Danto's theory to be flatly incoherent: that the argument he uses results in the unreality of artworks. I should point out why Margolis believes his objection is so important. The wording he refers to is Danto's only definition of the *is* of artistic identification. The reason why

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Margolis scrutinises it so closely is that Danto returns time after time to invoke the special *is*. but this is his only definition of it. To explain Margolis's objection I need to return to Danto's exact wording; discussing the *is* of artistic identification it will be recalled that he said: "the sentence 'That a is b' is perfectly compatible with 'That a is not b' when the first employs this sense of *is* and the second employs some other, though **a and b** are used non-ambiguously throughout. Often, indeed, the truth of the first *requires* the truth of the second. The first, in fact, is incompatible with 'That a is not b' only when the *is* is used non-ambiguously throughout" (1964, p.206). I have emboldened the 'a and b' and the '*is*' to highlight that the first use of 'non-ambiguously throughout' refers to the **a and b**, whilst the second use refers to the *is*. This is an important distinction as will be seen.

Margolis comments on this passage: "I draw your attention, however, to two features of what Danto says. First, he says (in effect) that 'That a is b' may be true, *in* the sense of the '*is* of artistic identification' *if and only if* 'That a is not b' is true *in* (say) the sense of the '*is*' of existence and/or identity. I do not see how that can be gainsaid. Danto means that, in asserting the first, one is *never* speaking *of* what is, *as such*, real, but only 'making' attributions (in the sense of the '*is* of artistic identification') *of what is, independently, real or exists* (but is not an artwork)" (1998, p.366). In other words, 'that *a* is *b*' is compatible with 'that *a* is not *b*' when the first *is* is the *is* of artistic identification. For example, in looking at a bucolic landscape painting I say 'that white blob is a sheep' which is quite compatible with saying 'that white blob is not a sheep' because I know it is not a real sheep. Danto takes this further: he says that 'that *a* is *b*' is incompatible with 'that *a* is not *b*' *only* when the *is* is used nonambiguously in each case. In other words, if I use the *is* of artistic identification in both cases, I cannot say that the white blob is a sheep and is not a sheep. The word 'only' is important here: it leads to a necessary condition of the truth of the *is* of artistic identification. So in the second case ('*a* is not *b*'), if the *is* is not the *is* of artistic identification, to be compatible it must be some other use of *is*. From this Margolis deduces that Danto is saying that '*a* is *b*' (using the *is* of

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artistic identification) is true *if and only if* 'a is not b' (using *is* in some other way). Hence we have a necessary condition of using the *is* of artistic identification: it can be used only when the artwork is not the real thing (the subject of the artwork) to which the special *is* refers. The *is* of artistic identification is therefore limited to making attributions about this real thing (the subject of the artwork) which is itself not the artwork. Danto is saying that viewing something (some part or property of it) using the *is* of artistic identification is a *necessary* feature of art and this is why, as I have already mentioned, Margolis believes his definition is so important. In summary, Margolis's first point is that the sentence 'that a is b' where the *is* is the *is* of artistic identification, is a statement making a secondary attribution about what really exists (the subject of the artwork) not the artwork itself.

Margolis moves on to his second point. I again need Danto's full wording which follows on directly from the previous quotation: "for want of a word I shall designate this the *is of artistic identification*; in each case in which it is used, the *a* stands for some specific physical property of, or physical part of, an **object**; and, finally, it is a necessary condition for something to be an artwork that some part or property of it be designable by the subject of a sentence that employs this special *is*" (1964, p.206, bold face added). The crucial word in this part of the quotation is 'object' (which I have emboldened); note that the 'object' here, as we are told in the first part of the quotation, stands for or refers to some real thing which is not the artwork. Margolis comments on this part of Danto's quotation: "he says that one can speak in this way *only if*, in speaking *of* an artwork, one restricts what one is speaking *of* to what conforms with the '*is* of artistic identification' and *only if what* is 'identified' in that sense *is* 'some specific physical property of, or physical part of, an [existent] object [that is *not*, as such, an artwork]' " (1998, p.366). The square brackets in this quotation are Margolis's own. So, in talking of artworks, using the *is* of artistic identification, we are referring to physical objects so that, Margolis argues, we cannot assign any intentional properties to them: the physical objects do not and are unable to possess such properties. If we are referring to physical objects

Margolis also notes that they must be perceptually discernible properties of those objects and not perceptually discernible properties of artworks because on Danto's argument there are none to see beyond those of the physical object.

In this sense Margolis believes that Danto, in using the *is* of artistic identification, has "somehow lost the existence and reality of artworks!" (1998. p.367). Margolis explains that artworks, using this definition, must "lack the intentionally complex properties we impute to 'them' (*whenever* we treat physical objects *as* artworks, by way of the 'is of artistic identification'). Artworks cannot be physical objects, for the simple reason that the first '*possess*' (within the imaginative idiom of the 'is of artistic identification') properties that the second really (and necessarily) lack" (1998, pp.367-8). He concludes: "*if* artworks happen to be sensorily indiscernible from real things, but exist, *then* artworks must be discernible in *some sense;* and if there is *no* discernible difference that marks an artwork as really different from a thing that is not an artwork, then there are no artworks unless (following Leibniz's well-known account) artworks *are identical with 'real' things*. (Which on the argument is false)" (1998, p.369).

Put another way, when I use this *is* to identify artwork, the artwork (or part or feature of it), the *a* in the quotations, refers to some physical part or property of the object. The *a* in the quotations, say the white blob (in my example above), stands for a physical entity or component of an object (in my example the sheep). Margolis believes that Danto's argument proposes that in identifying artworks, we must use the *is* of artistic identification (because it is a necessary condition), and, in doing so, we must refer to some physical property of the real thing which exists but is not an artwork. Margolis believes that, on Danto's argument, in speaking of art we are speaking *of* some aspect of a physical thing, but in treating it this way, using the *is* of artistic identification, Danto is imputing to it (this aspect of a physical thing) "intentional properties that it does not and cannot possess" (Margolis, 1998, p.366). This is because, in using the special *is*, I am always referring imaginatively to something which exists but is not the artwork. If, as

Danto states in his argument, artworks or parts of artworks are real things they cannot also possess the intentional properties (what Danto later calls 'aboutness') which he, Danto, believes they must. In other words, in speaking of artworks, as I am speaking of a *physical* part or property of a real thing, I must be speaking about something which is discernible *perceptually* in the real thing. Therefore I cannot be referring to the perceptual properties of artworks because the only perceptually discernible properties, on Danto's argument, are in the real thing.

In summary, Margolis's second point is that in speaking of artworks, using the *is* of artistic identification, we are speaking only of the perceptual properties of physical objects and therefore cannot assign intentional properties to them. Both Danto and Margolis agree that artworks have intentional properties, therefore Margolis believes that Danto has lost the reality of artworks in his definition.

It may be argued that Margolis is putting too much emphasis on the exact wording of Danto's definition of the special *is*: after all, Danto does say elsewhere, and quite clearly, that works of art are real things interpreted in terms of the special *is* of artistic identification. Later in *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* Danto says: "one may be a realist about objects and an idealist about artworks; this is the germ of the truth in saying without the artworld there is no art" (1981, p.125). Margolis would accept Danto's view that artworks are real things created and interpreted in an artistic context; his argument here is specifically about Danto's special *is*: that it is of no use (because of its internal incoherence) in explaining what this specific *artistic* context (rather than any other context) is. Margolis's argument, and I agree with him on this, is not against Danto's contextual theory of art (which he largely accepts) but with his insistence on using what Margolis considers the flawed concept of the *is* of artistic identification.

Margolis's argument now moves on to concentrate on the question of indiscernibility. However, before I can address this issue adequately, I need to explain Danto's concept of the artworld and look at his further use of indiscernibles

in his 1981 book *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*. I will do this in the next chapter and also return to Margolis's argument in this wider context.

I have discussed three criticisms of the *is* of artistic identification; first, it uses imprecise language and is too inclusive, second, it is too exclusive and finally, Margolis's argument that Danto's concept is internally incoherent. I endorse all three criticisms and believe that the concept is fundamentally flawed. My concern is heightened because, as I shall explain, Danto relies on the *is* of artistic identification to support other concepts. In the following section I go back to 'The Artworld' paper and look at Danto's explanation of the artworld concept. As promised, I will discuss the link between the *is* of artistic identification and the artworld concept in the conclusion to this chapter; this is the first occasion where Danto invokes the special *is* to support another concept.

V. The Artworld Concept

Towards the end of section III, I explained how Danto introduced the artworld concept into the discussion. In section IV, I left this concept to discuss problems connected with the *is* of artistic identification. I return now to Danto's explanation of the artworld concept. Recapping, Danto introduced the idea in this way: "to see something as art requires something the eye cannot decry [*sic*] – an atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of the history of art: an artworld" (1964, p.209). Danto begins his discussion with the example of Andy Warhol's *Brillo Box* sculpture (see illustration 6). The work consists of nothing more than high stacks of facsimile Brillo cartons built up from the floor of the gallery.[10]

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[10] Exhibited by Warhol in the Stable Gallery, East 74th Street, Manhattan, New York. The exhibition opened on 21st April 1964. Danto's 'Artworld' article was published just six months after the opening of the exhibition.

The question Danto raises is: why do we consider Warhol's *Brillo Box* sculpture as being art when the real article in the shop is not? An initial objection might well be to say that Warhol's boxes are not art. Danto seems to be aware of this objection, although he does not mention it explicitly. He brushes the implied objection aside saying: "they happen to be of wood, painted to look like cardboard, and why not?" (1964, p.209). However, he does go some way towards providing a justification: he identifies three attributes which Warhol's *Brillo Box* shares with more traditional art. Firstly, he mentions that Warhol is producing extremely lifelike replicas of Brillo boxes in plywood. He suggests that this is a similar process to that used by traditional sculptors creating lifelike replicas of the human figure in bronze (he could have mentioned other materials: wood or polyvinyl), and interestingly the process is one that takes us back to a mimetic theory of art. Secondly, the replicas are technically accomplished: they are very skilfully made and painstakingly produced. They are hand-crafted and require technical ability in both joinery and silk screen printing. Thirdly, they are limited in number and, in common with many works of art, command a high price.[11] I will have to return to this objection that Warhol's *Brillo Box* sculpture, or indeed a work of art made from real Brillo boxes, is not, perhaps, a work of art at all. The objection raises some significant philosophical issues that Danto does not address in the paper; I devote section VII of this chapter to the problem.

Danto puts these issues aside; he asks if Warhol needs to make the Brillo boxes at all. Could he not just use regular Brillo boxes? With a question which looks forward to the title of his later book *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* Danto asks: "is this man [Warhol] a kind of Midas, turning whatever he touches into the gold of pure art? And the whole world consisting of latent artworks waiting, like

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11 Danto says the cost of the boxes happens to be 2×10^3 their real life counterparts. If the cartons cost $5 in 1964 this would give the figure of $10,000: by today's prices a ridiculously low figure for a Warhol.

the bread and wine of reality, to be transfigured, through some dark mystery, into the indiscernible flesh and blood of the sacrament?" (1964, p.209). Danto uses the word *transfiguration* in explaining how everyday objects become works of art. I question his choice of word; transfiguration implies a change in the appearance of the object, both in its everyday and religious usages. Danto has correctly identified what has occurred to the everyday objects in his use of the metaphor of the Christian sacrament but has used the wrong word: the process is one of *transubstantiation* not *transfiguration*. The bread and wine continue to look the same, but the Christian belief is that their essence has been changed; they become the body and blood of Christ. The process is similar with the everyday objects; their appearance is unchanged, but they have been transubstantiated into artworks. It is their essence not their appearance that has changed.

With this issue, Danto has raised the vexed question of ready-mades: those everyday objects exhibited in galleries, in some cases exactly as they are, as works of art. His concept of the artworld will have to accommodate these articles as well as Warhol's facsimiles. Danto conflates the two issues of ready-mades and facsimiles in posing another question: "the impressive thing is that it [Warhol's *Brillo Box* sculpture] is art at all. But if it is, why are not the indiscernible Brillo boxes that are in the stockroom? Or *has* the whole distinction between art and reality broken down?" (1964, p.209).

In his attempt to answer this question Danto examines some hypothetical examples of ready-mades. He takes the instance of an artist exhibiting real Brillo boxes in a gallery, and he considers how we could criticise the display "as dull, repetitive, self-plagiarizing – or (more profoundly) claim that he is obsessed by regularity and repetition, as in *Marienbad*. Or he piles them high, leaving a narrow path; we tread our way through the smooth opaque stacks and find it an unsettling experience, and write it up as the closing in of consumer products, confining us as

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prisoners: or we say he is a modern pyramid builder" (1964, p.210).[12] He makes the point that we do not criticise the piles of cartons in the storeroom in these terms. The reason, Danto believes, is because the storeroom is not a gallery; it is the fact that the boxes are displayed in a gallery that stops them from being mere real objects. In other words, Danto believes that we cannot consider the Brillo boxes in the gallery setting as Brillo boxes; their placement in the gallery has altered their status and the way we look at them. The artist has used the Brillo boxes as a material; an unusual material perhaps, maybe one that has not been used before, but nevertheless a material just as much as paint, plaster or plywood. In the examples he uses Danto says that the Brillo boxes are a sculptural material, and they are used to create what is a sculptural installation within the gallery.

Of course there could be mistakes: an art gallery's annual delivery of Brillo boxes, stacked randomly and temporarily in the foyer, could be mistaken for an artwork. The resulting 'artwork' could be described by an unsuspecting critic, given to using high-flown language, as an insightful comment on the play between the repetitive nature of mass production and the stochastic patterns manifested in modern society. But there could be mistakes with more traditional art. An artwork in a gallery could be away on loan and be replaced by a replica. We may fail to notice the label informing us of the change and believe we are looking at the original.

Elsewhere Danto discusses the case of Han van Meegeren (1997a, pp.206-7)[13] whose *Christ at Emmaeus* was painted with the sole intention of fooling the artworld establishment into believing that it was a genuine Vermeer. Once van Meegeren had succeeded in this task his idea was to reveal the deception and be considered as great a painter as Vermeer. He did succeed in the first part of his plan.

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[12] The reference to *Marienbad* is to the 1961 Alain Resnais film *L'Année Dernière à Marienbad* with script by Alain Robbe-Grillet.

[13] Danto refers to him as Hans Van Meegeren instead of Han van Meegeren; the forger's story is told in Wynne, 2006.

the painting was considered genuine by a Vermeer expert. but the immense value of his 'genuine' Vermeer distracted him from his original plan until its real provenance was discovered. Danto makes the point that the second part of van Meegeren's plan, to be considered as great a painter as Vermeer, was doomed to failure. His 'Vermeer' of 1936 had no relevance to the art of Europe just after the Weimar Republic; as Danto points out van Meegeren could *mention* Vermeer's style he could never *use* it: "he could but pretend to use it by pretending it was by Vermeer – that is, as a forger" (1997a, p.206). Danto mentions style here intimating that it is innate to the individual. I shall return to discuss this in chapter three, section IVd; style is seen by Danto as an important attribute of art: it enables the artist to represent to others their own way of viewing the world.

Danto believes that this difference, the change in status between everyday objects and works of art consisting of these objects, must be attributed to a theory of art. Placing everyday objects in a gallery embeds them in a world of artistic theory: an artworld. The important consequence of this move is that it now means that artworks cannot be identified purely by discernible features. It must be *non-discernible features* which separate works of art from the everyday objects they resemble. Danto also brings the question of history into the debate; he believes that to understand art a knowledge of art history is required. The corollary to this being that the artist is producing an artwork at a particular moment in history cognisant of the artworks, both her own and those of other artists, and the theory surrounding their creation. Danto moves on to state his artworld concept in full: "what in the end makes the difference between a Brillo box and a work of art consisting of a Brillo box is a certain theory of art. It is the theory that takes it up into the world of art, and keeps it from collapsing into the real object which it is (in a sense of *is* other than of artistic identification)" (1964, p.210). This is all that Danto says about the artworld at this stage in relation to the status of artworks. In the final section of the paper he moves on to discuss what happens when new theories of art emerge and explains his idea of the style matrix. Before I look at this section, I will do what

Danto has omitted to do: look in more detail at what exactly is implied in his artworld concept, and to tease out what it says about the ontological status of artworks.

If it is theory that takes an everyday object from being just what it is, an everyday object, up into the artworld, what are the features or properties of the theory that enable this to happen? I am looking for a set of ideas or system of principles which will explain the instances of art that Danto has discussed and used as examples; I have identified five principles. The first one may seem trivial: it is that art is a product of human endeavour: it has been designed, fabricated or arranged by the artist. But the non-trivial aspect I wish to emphasise is that this applies to ready-mades as well as more traditionally crafted artworks. Take Danto's example of the artist arranging actual Brillo boxes (rather than Warhol's carefully crafted facsimiles); how have these been 'produced' by the artist? The answer is that the artist has acquired them (they could be natural objects: found objects), negotiated with a gallery to exhibit them, decided how to display them, arranged the display and carried out the multitude of tasks necessary for an exhibition. She has obtained sponsorship, arranged publicity, organised a catalogue and has a budget to work within. It is this total process that constitutes the artwork; even in a case like this, arranging Brillo boxes, it is a product of considerable human endeavour. In deciding how to display them the artist has consciously chosen a particular arrangement. She might choose to fling them randomly across the gallery; but that would be a conscious choice made for a particular reason. In doing this, perhaps she would be trying to achieve what our unsuspecting critic thought the random stack of Brillo boxes in the foyer exemplified in his high-flown description. In this sense Danto's view of art is traditional in that art is seen as the result of meaningful human construction or arrangement rather than the result of natural contingency or of necessity. In the case of the ready-mades, the work of art is not solely the object: it is the object, the reason for its display and the contextual interpretation it engenders as a statement about art. I might well argue that in this case the final product is

trivial and superficial; this is quite an acceptable view: all art does not have to be good art or great art. I could equally argue that much traditional art is trivial and superficial. Danto is concerned with the classificatory features of art; he is not offering an evaluatory theory at this stage.

The second principle is that the artwork has acquired a history and therefore a provenance. The actual Brillo boxes in my trivial example have been irrevocably changed: they have been transubstantiated. They cease to be ordinary Brillo boxes, mere real things; they are now *the* Brillo boxes that were used in a certain exhibition in gallery X by artist Y. This may or may not confer esteem and value on the articles; they may or may not survive. But their status has been changed; they have ceased to be mere real objects. Duchamp's original signed snow shovel used in *In Advance of a Broken Arm* has disappeared; if it were to be found, and its provenance proven, it would no doubt command a seven figure sum and a place in one of the world's leading art galleries. There is no way today of repeating Duchamp's creative act of 1915 when he suspended the everyday snow shovel from the ceiling of his studio and produced *In Advance of a Broken Arm*. I could buy a snow shovel and hang it up to remind me of the act. *In Advance of a Broken Arm* was a particular creation at a particular time: it was not just a snow shovel. It was a complex creative act that can never be repeated anymore than van Meegeren could produce a new Vermeer in 1936. This change in status is, of course, not unique to artwork. Everyday objects can acquire value by virtue of their history. The rectangular piece of wood on my writing desk, acting as a paperweight, is valuable to me. I happen to be interested in naval history and this piece of wood is teak from deck of H.M.S. Iron Duke.

My third principle links the intention of the artist with meaning. Returning to Danto's two painters *A* and *B* and their respective paintings, *Newton's First Law* and *Newton's Third Law*, it is evident from Danto's discussion of these two works that works of art embody meaning, and the meaning is, in some way, a manifestation of the intention of the artist. Recall how *B* explained that his work is a

representation of Newton's third law of motion by his reference to the two equally opposed masses. There are at least eleven other possible interpretations of the painting. The viewer needs to know B's intention to be able to understand the picture. The meaning, as Danto has pointed out in the case of the his 10th Street abstractionist, could well be that there is no *meaning* in the traditional sense: that the artist is only concerned with the physical quality of the paint on the canvas. What if I did not know what the artist's intention was, or I was unsure? The answer is surely that this is unfortunate: I could never fully understand the artwork. Titian's *Venus of Urbino* is a classic case where we are unlikely ever to fully understand the intention of the artist. The lack of documentation, the unresolved issues concerning the interpretation of the setting and the problems with the historical context conspire to make a definitive understanding of Titian's intentions unlikely to be achieved.[14] Of course this does not stop us appreciating the wonderful qualities it does have: beauty, colour and sensuousness. The fact that we will probably never fully understand Titian's intention also adds an enigmatic quality to our appreciation of the painting. In his later work, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*, Danto develops the idea of this elliptical element in interpretation: the importance of what is not stated, what remains unknown and what the viewer must add to the process herself. Ellipsis assumes an important place in the development of Danto's theory of interpretation; I shall return to discuss the issue in the chapter three.

Which brings me to the final two principles: the viewer must interpret the artwork and this interpretation takes place within a historical setting. Danto believes that interpretation is a necessary feature of viewing works of art. It is interpretation which provides a direct link between the artist's intention and the viewer discovering the meaning of a work. Artworks themselves generate interpretations, but the viewer, through their own interpretation, constitutes the artwork. Artworks call for interpretation to the extent that they are products of specific artistic intentions which

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[14] The issues involved are explained in Rona Goffen's book on the subject, see Goffen, 1997.

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may relate to manifest or non-manifest properties. Interpretation by the viewer does not therefore operate in an arbitrary manner; it brings out the object's 'own' character as an 'artwork' by discovering the artist's intention in relation to the artwork. Interpretation does not independently create an artwork, the artist creates the artwork but interpretation gives life to the work or lets it be seen for what it is. By interpreting a work of art we uncover its meaning, and one important element of this process is attempting to understand the artist's intention. The interpretation may turn out to be correct or it may be ill-informed and incorrect. In some cases the interpretation could be partially right, or the correct interpretation is impossible to identify – as I have explained in the case of *The Venus of Urbino*. I could quite easily understand someone looking at *B*'s picture *Newton's Third Law* and, perhaps not knowing what Newton's third law was, deciding that the painting should be interpreted along the lines of one of the other interpretations I have discussed. They would have to accept that their interpretation was speculative and that others could exist; in fact we may see a painting's ability to generate different interpretations as one of the attributes of art. I shall return to discuss this point in chapter three. Someone unfamiliar with the story of Icarus would be puzzled by Bruegel's painting, and they may assume, mistakenly, that the figure landing in the sea has fallen from the ship or been pushed from the cliffs. Danto makes the point that the work of art is produced and viewed in a historical context. Talking about Warhol's *Brillo Box* he says: "it could not have been art fifty years ago. But then there could not have been, everything being equal, flight insurance in the Middle Ages, or Etruscan typewriter erasers" (1964, p.210). Understanding Warhol's *Brillo Box* requires an understanding of the development of the history of art up to 1964. This would include the development of Imitation Theory (IT), Realist Theory (RT), abstract expressionism and the radical change that Warhol and others introduced into art with the advent of pop art: an understanding of how elements and images of popular culture were introduced into an artworld dominated for so long by classical or religious iconography.

There is a strong element of historicism in Danto's artworld concept: the view that cultural phenomena are determined by history. This applies to the viewer and the artist; they both have histories which are brought to and constitute part of the artworld. I take an artist as an example: Warhol was situated in a particular historical context; this complex setting included a very particular cultural background and the fact that he had a range of very specific talents and influences. He had the experience of his previous work behind him and the opportunities open to him at that particular moment in the history of art. It was this unique combination of circumstances that made the *Brillo Box* sculpture possible in 1964.[15]

Summing up, I have identified five principles which feature in Danto's concept of the artworld. Art is (1) the result of human endeavour by an artist, (2) artworks acquire a history and a provenance, (3) artworks embody meaning (they are expressive), which meaning is a result of the artist's intention, (4) artworks require interpretation and finally, (5) they are produced and interpreted within a historical context. Danto sums up: "the world has to be ready for certain things, the artworld no less than the real one. It is the role of artistic theories, these days as always, to make the artworld, and art possible" (1964, p.210).

Danto returns to comment on the Platonic view of art as mimesis with a supposition on the difference between art and reality: "perhaps this [difference] was already dimly sensed by the early framers of the IT who, inchoately realizing the nonreality of art, were perhaps limited only in supposing that the sole way objects had of being other than real is to be sham, so that artworks necessarily had to be imitations of real objects" (1964, p.210). I shall return to look at criticism of the artworld concept in the conclusion to the chapter, section VIII. I now continue with an analysis of Danto's argument in the final section of the 'Artworld' paper where he

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[15] Warhol's background is covered in Bastian, 2001 and the three-part television series *Andy Warhol: the Complete Picture* screened on BBC 2 on 27/1/02, 3/2/02 and 10/2/02. Danto makes a couple of appearances and some brief comments.

looks at the relationships between the different theories that make art possible and how new theories occur.

VI. Theories of Art and the Style Matrix

Danto begins his discussion of this topic with an ambiguous and puzzling statement. In looking at the various theories of art, and how they relate to one another, he says that in doing so "I shall beg some of the hardest philosophical questions I know" (1964, p.211). Is Danto using *begging the question* in the common but incorrect usage of saying that the discussion simply follows on from the issues raised in the previous debate? Or is he using the phrase correctly, and saying that the arguments in his forthcoming discussion assume the very points at issue? In other words that a proposition is assumed in the course of ostensibly proving it. Perhaps Danto is forewarning us of one major difficulty with his artworld theory: that there is an element of circularity in the argument. I shall return to comment on this in the conclusion to this chapter and again in the conclusion, chapter four.

The argument starts on a hesitant note: "I shall now think of pairs of predicates related to each other as 'opposites', conceding straight off the vagueness of this *demodé* term" (1964, p.211). The term certainly does create difficulties as I shall explain. Danto distinguishes contradictory predicates from opposites saying contradictions apply to all objects in the universe whereas opposites apply to a limited set. An object must be a member of a particular set before either of a pair of opposites apply to it. He then clarifies the fact that opposites are not contraries; both statements may be false in the case of contraries. Danto then says that for the limited set of objects to which a particular pair of opposites apply the opposites have all the properties of contradictions. His argument proceeds:

> If F and non-F are opposites, an object o must be of a certain kind K
>
> before either of these sensibly applies; but if o is a member of K, then
>
> o is either F or non-F, to the exclusion of the other. The class of pairs

of opposites that sensibly apply to the *(ō) Ko* I shall designate as the class of *K-relevant predicates*. And a necessary condition for an object to be of a kind *K* is that at least one pair of *K*-relevant opposites be sensibly applicable to it. But, in fact. if an object is of kind *K*. at least and at most one of each *K*-relevant pair of opposites applies to it. (1964, p.211)

Danto next looks at particular *K*-relevant predicates for the class *K* (artworks). He considers the hypothetical situation where all works of art have been non-*F*: no work of art up to that particular time has been *F*. Danto suggests that it might not be realised that non-*F* is actually a *K*-relevant predicate. He takes another predicate *G* and supposes that all works of art up to now have been *G*: similarly, it might not have been realised that non-*G* was an artistically-relevant predicate. He takes this a step further and suggests that, because non-*G* was never considered as a relevant predicate, *G* might have been considered as a defining characteristic of the class *K* (artworks). In other words, G has been considered a defining attribute of artworks whereas it is only one of a pair of artistically-relevant predicates, and it should never have been used as the basis of a sustainable definition.

Danto now becomes specific: *F* is called *is expressionist* and non-*F*, *is not expressionist*. Similarly *G* becomes *is representational* and non-*G*, *is not representational*. He assumes that these are the only two K-relevant predicates in critical use. A style matrix is constructed. along the lines of a truth table, showing all possible combinations of K-relevant predicates and their opposites. This is shown below (1964, p.211):

F	*G*
+	+
+	−
−	+
−	−

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There are four possible combinations: each of the four rows indicate a style available, at that time, within the critical arena. Danto gives examples for each row: from top to bottom, Fauvism, abstract expressionism, classicism (Danto specifically mentions Ingres) and hard-edge abstraction. If K-relevant predicates are introduced to the matrix they will add to the number of columns. The number of possible styles (rows) will increase according to the series 4, 8, 16, 32, 64 ... (2 to the power of the number of columns in use). Danto then supposes that "an artist determines that H shall henceforth be artistically relevant for his paintings. Then, in fact, both H and non-H become artistically relevant for *all* paintings, and if his is the first and only painting that is H, every other painting in existence becomes non-H" (1964, p.212). As each new column is introduced the number of styles (rows) available is doubled. Danto sees an enrichment of the whole artworld, coupled with an increase in complexity, whenever a new relevant predicate is added to the matrix.

As with any truth table, there will always be a bottom row containing nothing but minuses, and this, Danto believes, is the domain of purists who believe they have removed all but the most essential features of art. But, in fact, they occupy just one possible style combination amongst the many, equally relevant, combinations of artistically-relevant predicates which are available. These bottom-row purists take their place in the artworld as one possibility within a complex variety of styles; all possible combinations are within the same matrix and are therefore equally valid. He says: "strictly speaking, a black square by Reinhardt is artistically as rich as Titian's *Sacred and Profound Love*. This explains how less is more" (1964, p.212).

Danto believes that individuals or institutions can, for reasons of taste, fashion or dogma, restrict the remit of the matrix. Each column which is removed – say a museum decides it will only exhibit representational work – halves the number of styles available. But it will only apply to their particular situation; it is their decision taken on whatever grounds they propose. The artworld still has the full range of styles available once all the artistically relevant predicates have been

legitimated. The breakthrough comes with the addition of a new column: this occurs when an artist introduces a completely new artistically-relevant predicate. Kandinsky's introduction of abstract painting would be a good example of the introduction of a new column. This is, in fact, Danto's column G *(representational and non-representational)*; it doubles the number of possible styles available.

It will be noticed that this introduction has two results. Firstly, it allows other artists to occupy or colonise the new styles that are opened up, and secondly, it alters the critical framework (via the matrix) of every other existing work of art. For Danto, this is "a remarkable feature of contemporary art, and for those unfamiliar with the matrix, it is hard, and perhaps impossible to recognise certain positions as occupied by artworks. Nor would these things be artworks without the theories and the histories of the Artworld" (1964, p.212). So when pop art (and its concomitant opposite predicate non-pop art) entered the artworld the artworld became richer and more complex by having the matrix doubled in size. The critical framework was enlarged and altered for all existing works of art. Although Danto's essay 'The End of Art' was not published until 1984, I mentioned the theory in the introduction and I should briefly explain how it relates to the matrix. The end of art theory, which postulates that anything can become art, suggests that there can be no new predicates which will alter what is already included within the concept of art: what it means to be a work of art. However, we can reconcile this with the matrix: within the 'final' concept of art and after pop art, we can still have new predicates emerging, for example 'land art' and its opposite 'not land art'. They emerge, take their place in the matrix but do not alter, cannot alter, what it means to be an artwork because anything can be an artwork. Danto ends his paper by referring back to *Hamlet* and the conceit that "Brillo boxes may reveal us to ourselves as well as anything might: as a mirror held up to nature, they might serve to catch the conscience of our kings" (1964, p.212).[16] I assume, although it is not certain, that

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[16] The reference is to *Hamlet* 2.2.557-8 (HAMLET: The play's the thing / Wherein I'll catch the

Danto is referring to the Brillo boxes that have already been 'transfigured' by Andy Warhol in his *Brillo Box* sculpture.

Before I leave Danto's style matrix I shall point out two problems. The first was mentioned by Danto at the beginning of the discussion: the use of the term *opposites* and its vagueness. Danto says that within a given set of objects opposites behave as contradictories. The difficulty in applying this to works of art is that it assumes that there is a simple either/or distinction for any particular predicate. I shall take one of Danto's predicates as an example: *is representational* and its opposite *is not representational*. If I consider the four examples from painting that Danto identified for his style matrix, Fauvism, classicism, abstract expressionism and hard-edge abstraction, I find that the situation is not as neat as Danto suggests. Rather than either/or I could imagine a scale with *is representational* at the top and *is not representational* at the bottom. The four examples would occupy different positions. Classicism (Ingres) at the top with Fauvism somewhat below; hard-edge abstraction at the bottom with abstract expressionism very close but not quite at the bottom. A close inspection of Jackson Pollock's work, for instance, will reveal some representational elements, although this issue is admittedly still a controversial subject.[17] All other painters that I could consider would fit somewhere on the scale; quite a few would occupy positions mid-scale.

Danto's simplification does not invalidate his message: that new works of art enrich and broaden the scope of the whole field of artistic endeavour, but I question whether the quasi-logical approach he adopts adds anything to the argument. I must also question Danto's approach here in reducing art to a collection of predicates. At the beginning of section III of this chapter we saw that Danto suggested a parallel between artworks and Strawson's concept of the individual: where an individual is seen as irreducible to a set of predicates. For Strawson the

conscience of the king.)

17 See 'Reading Jackson Pollock Abstractly' in Krauss, 1986, pp.221-42.

individual is a complex organic whole: an irreducible category of being. There is an element of inconsistency here in Danto's approach: earlier in 'The Artworld' paper he suggests the parallel between art and Strawson's concept of individuals; now, with his style matrix he separates art into discrete predicates. He fails to notice or to address the incompatibility between these two approaches.

I now come to the second difficulty with Danto's style matrix. Although it explains, albeit with the reservations I have expressed above, that the artworld changes as it expands, it is silent on the question of how this occurs. Just how is a new work of art accepted as art? Who does the accepting? What is the process whereby a putative new artform is taken up into the artworld? The style matrix itself embodies the relatively modest claim that new art changes how we view the whole of art both past and present.[18] Danto's much more far-reaching claim is that a new

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[18] Although Danto makes no mention of him in 'The Artworld' article, he later acknowledges his debt to T. S. Eliot for this way of seeing art in its historical context. In 1997 writing about the artworld concept Danto says: "I was thinking of the world of artworks as a kind of community of internally related objects. There is no question but that the inspiration for this way of thinking came from T. S. Eliot's essay 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' which had a great impact on me at the time" (1997a, pp.163-4). The key passage from Eliot's essay is: "no poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead. I mean this as a principle of aesthetic, not merely historical, criticism. The necessity that he shall conform, that he shall cohere, is not one-sided; what happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it ... the *whole* existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered; and so the relations, proportions, values of each work of art towards the whole are readjusted" (Eliot, 1995, p.55). At the end of the essay discussing the task of the poet Eliot says: "he is not likely to know what is to be done unless he lives in what is not merely the present, but the present moment of the past, unless he is conscious, not of what is dead, but of what is already living" (Eliot, 1995, p.59).

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theory is required, but the question remains: what is it about the new theory that enables it to confer artworld status? We need to understand the process whereby a new column (a new artistically-relevant predicate) is incorporated into the style matrix. To address this crucial point I shall have to return to some of the issues raised in section V about Danto's artworld concept. I also need to address the point made at the beginning of this section: that the artworld argument contains a degree of circularity. I do this in the conclusion: section VIII. Before this, however, I return to one of my promises: to look at the question of whether Danto has missed an obvious point – that much of this contemporary art may, in fact, not be art at all.

VII. But is it Art?

I begin the discussion with a brief comment on definitions of art. As I have explained, Danto attempts to define art in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions: to provide a 'real' definition. It has, however, been argued that to search for a definition of art in this way is misguided. The arguments are based on Wittgenstein's idea that a concept like *game* cannot be defined by a set of necessary and sufficient conditions; it is characterised by reference to a family-resemblance class.[19] Morris Weitz applied this idea to art; his argument is set out in his 1956 article 'The Role of Theory in Aesthetics'.[20] In summary, he puts forward the view that art is an 'open concept': that artworks are characterised as a family-resemblance class and that a 'real' definition of art is impossible. Danto, amongst others, rejects this view: he considers the concept of family resemblance to be totally inappropriate to works of art. He argues that family resemblance is a genetic quality which can be scientifically proven; family members may or may not look alike. This genetic criterion is obviously absent in art, and Danto believes the use of the concept

[19] In *Philosophical Investigations* sections 65-77.

[20] Reprinted in Neill & Ridley, 1995, pp.183-92.

'family-resemblance class' in relation to art is an illicit appropriation of the term. He also believes that the family resemblance approach is too slack, too inclusive: anything, it could be argued with a little imagination, bears some resemblance to something else. However, if you try to qualify the family-resemblance class in some way to avoid this criticism you are delimiting or defining art: the very thing the theory says is impossible. This is a very brief summary of a widespread and famous debate in aesthetics;[21] I revisit the issue of defining art in our conclusion, chapter four, and give my own view on the subject.

I return to my question; but is it art? Danto assumes that the ready-mades and other new forms of art are indeed art, but might he not be mistaken in this assumption? I mentioned in section V three reasons why a work of art like *Brillo Box* might be considered art in a similar way to more traditional art: it is mimetic, it requires skill to produce and it has a high market value. B. R. Tilghman, in his book *But is it Art?* raises other issues; he argues that Danto is mistaken: "Danto is assuming that the readymades of Duchamp and the products of the conceptualists are works of art. One would think, however, that this assumption is one that wants arguing for; I know of no demand arising either out of logic or out of the history of art and its practices of appreciation requiring these things to be accepted as art" (1984, p.98). Tilghman questions whether this new art has any aesthetic value, a point he makes saying: "what, then, would one be missing if one took *Brillo Box* [Warhol's sculpture] merely as ... a Brillo box? ... It is not that one would be lacking in appreciation for there is no aesthetic character to appreciate. Nor would one be

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[21]Danto discusses it briefly in *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*, 1981, pp.56-66. Maurice Mandelbaum provides a well-known rebuttal of the family resemblance approach in 'Family Resemblances and Generalisations Concerning the Arts', see Mandelbaum,1995. Noël Carroll sums up the arguments in his introduction to *Theories of Art Today* 'Some Dialectical Backstory: the Neo-Wittgensteinian Challenge', see Carroll, 2000, pp.5-15.

lacking any normal reaction to something of abiding human significance" (1984, p.118, the first ellipsis is in the original text).

I will consider three counter arguments to Tilghman's view. Firstly, that the works he objects to have already been accepted by the artworld. Secondly, that he assumes that art has to have aesthetic qualities of a formal kind, and finally, that Danto has provided an answer to the question in his artworld concept. I discuss the counter arguments in turn. The works I have been looking at, the ready-mades and Warhol's *Brillo Box*, are now widely regarded as being art by those participating in the artworld. Andy Warhol has undoubtedly assumed a position as one of the most well-known and well-regarded artists in the second half of the twentieth century. Duchamp's ready-mades appear as significant milestones in histories of modern art. There is clear evidence that these objects are widely accepted as art; they appear as star exhibits in museums of modern art, they are photographed, they appear in publications and are discussed in history of art courses throughout the world. This acceptance of ready-mades and pop art, I would suggest, is widespread and not limited to an artworld elite. For example, if one asks anyone with the slightest interest in art, who is the most famous artist of the second half of the twentieth century? the answer, in my experience, is usually Andy Warhol. The acceptance of ready-mades as art is of course not uncontested, but my argument is that they are widely accepted as art particularly by those operating within or interested in the artworld. Tilghman's view, however, is that to consider these objects as art requires arguing for; he saw no demand from the history of art why they should be considered as art. But the history of art *does* provide such a demand: these objects have *already been accepted* into the artworld. They have an important place in the history of art.

This counter argument to Tilghman's view is itself open to an objection: that it relies on the members of the artworld to confer artistic status on an object, and this reliance on expert opinion is circular. This objection cannot be denied logically. However, it is still a strong recommendation for artistic status that a

significant part of the cultural establishment, with the benefit of its members' knowledge and experience, believes that these objects are artworks. I return to comment on part of Tilghman's quotation: "I know of no demand arising either out of logic or out of the history of art and its practices of appreciation requiring these things to be accepted as art" (1984, p.98). His point of logic I discuss in the second and third objections to his view, but his reference to the history of art is untenable: art history has accepted these objects as art, and that acceptance, however unpalatable it may be to Tilghman, is a matter of fact.

I move on to the second objection to Tilghman's view: that he assumes that art must have an aesthetic quality, and he believes that ready-mades and Warhol's *Brillo Box* do not possess such a quality. Danto does not accept this assumption. He believes that the aesthetic quality of art is determined by its historical location and that this changes over time. Danto says: "I am trying to state that the 'aesthetic object' is not some eternally fixed Platonic entity, a joy forever beyond time, space, and history, eternally there for the rapt appreciation of connoisseurs. It is not just that appreciation is a function of the cognitive location of the aesthete, but that the aesthetic qualities of the work are a function of their own historical identity" (1981, p.111).

For the justification of this view I must go back to his explanation of how a regular Brillo box could become a work of art. I explained in section V how Danto believes Warhol's *Brillo Box* sculpture, or indeed real Brillo boxes arranged by his fictitious artist in a gallery, achieved the status of artworks. Danto says it is because of an atmosphere of artistic theory: it is theory that allows these objects to be taken up into the artworld. One of the features of the theory was that the objects were taken up into the artworld within a specific artistic context at a particular moment in time. The aesthetic considerations at that moment in time will be different from any other moment: in many cases substantially different. The aesthetic considerations that apply to Warhol's *Brillo Box* are inapplicable to Bruegel's *The Fall of Icarus*. Tilghman is advocating aesthetic formalism: he believes that some

discernible aesthetic qualities must be present in a work of art; he believes that the aesthetic qualities that apply to the Bruegel are missing in the Warhol and that it is therefore not art. Danto is suggesting that a radically different set of *non-discernible* qualities apply to the latter. The issue between Tilghman and Danto is whether these non-discernible qualities of artworks which Danto identifies are able to constitute the objects as art. To address this adequately I need to consider the full development of Danto's theory of art; I do this in chapter three with a discussion of his treatment of metaphor, expression and style.

The third counter argument to Tilghman's question is that Danto has provided an answer to the question with his artworld concept. How has he achieved this? Danto's artworld theory explains how an artist can 'transfigure' (to stay with Danto's questionable term) *any* object into a work of art. I explained in section V how Danto believes this happens and the scope of his explanation provides an answer to Tilghman's question: are these everyday items really art? Danto's artworld concept explains that when objects like Brillo boxes are taken up into the artworld they are no longer everyday objects: they have been transfigured; they have acquired a history and an artistic provenance. Asking if these objects are capable of being art has already been addressed by Danto: he explains how *any* everyday object can become a work of art. This is the important point that Danto is stressing: *any* object can, potentially, become a work of art. If anything can be art, the question of whether any particular object is capable of being art is answered: yes, it can be art, if that status is conferred upon it by the process Danto has outlined in his explanation of the artworld concept. A consequence of this view is that there is no requirement for any discernible aesthetic properties to be present or to be taken into account. I have shown how Danto's view is that it is the non-discernible properties that enable these objects to be taken up into the artworld. This third response also relies on a circular argument: saying what is art requires reference to a concept, the artworld, which itself is defined by reference to art. I shall return to examine this in more detail in the next section and again in the overall conclusion, chapter four.

VIII. Conclusion

There are two objections to Danto's artworld concept that I have not considered so far. Firstly, if anything can be art, this approach is so inclusive it could accommodate some ludicrous possibilities. Secondly, there is surely some art which is not produced by artists; if it is not produced by artists how, on Danto's argument, can it be art? I consider these objections in turn.

The first objection to Danto's theory is obvious: if any object or statement can be taken up into the artworld, we must surely accept some quite outrageous proposals. For example an artist could decree that the whole world is art. Timothy Binkley in his paper 'Piece: Contra Aesthetics' (1977, pp.93-4) gives an example from contemporary art practice: Robert Barry's exhibition in Amsterdam in 1969 in which nothing was exhibited; the gallery door was locked for two weeks. This idea of the inaccessible exhibition has reappeared in slightly different incarnations with monotonous regularity ever since; at least in 1969 it had an element of iconoclastic novelty. Binkley compares this example with another: the occasional Sunday painter who produces a few terrible water-colours. He considers that both Barry's intervention and the awful water-colours are indeed art, but they are not very good art. Binkley, like Danto, believes that these examples are art because they have been given that status by artists. Likewise my fictitious artist who proclaims that the whole world is art is quite entitled to say that his statement is art. The fact is that most people would regard his 'artistic' statement as trite and worthless. My fictitious artist's statement is certainly preposterous but there is no compelling reason why this should debar it from the status of art. The fact that Danto's theory can and, as I have explained, does allow art to be trivialised, and to allow for the inclusion of poor art, does not refute the theory. Any area of human endeavour can be trivialised; art is no exception. I said before that the Brillo boxes exhibited in a gallery would be changed forever: they would acquire a history. But this history could be decidedly worthless, as in the case of our fictitious artist. In a

similar vein, it could be argued that, because of my fictitious artist's statement that the whole world is art, the artworld has been given a barely perceptible different history. Although the artist's statement would have a history, it would be a history that was of very little or, arguably, of no consequence.

Duchamp's ready-mades have been labelled as examples of outrageous or trivial objects being given artwork status. However, it must not be forgotten that Duchamp's ready-mades have had enormous influence on the history of art. The development of art and its subsequent history has been irrevocably and significantly changed by Duchamp's works. Put another way, some works of art, and this applies to ready-mades as well as to traditional art, are significant and influential, others are worthless. What I have not addressed here is how Danto's theory distinguishes good art from poor art: how we make value judgements about art. Danto does not cover the issue in 'The Artworld'. Danto's evaluative theory of art develops from two areas which I mentioned at the beginning of the introduction: firstly, his art criticism and secondly, his theme of the abuse of beauty. Both areas lie outside the scope of this dissertation, but in summary, the first is contextually based: a form of sophisticated subjectivism; the second a development of his disenfranchisement of art thesis.

I move on to the second objection: if art status is conferred by artists, what about art that is produced by people who are not artists? I could return to my Sunday painter: she might or might not consider herself to be an artist, but there are more problematical cases. What about art created by anonymous people outside the recognised professional artworld: outsider art. Jean Dubuffet coined the term *art brut* to cover this type of art: art produced by people with no training, with no regard of themselves as artists or perhaps from a culture with no separate concepts of art or artists. How can work like this be accommodated within Danto's theory? Surely Danto is stipulating that conferral of artistic status is given by an *artist* within an artworld, and in *art brut* there is no artist: at least there is no one who would call themselves an artist. The answer is that Danto's theory allows for inclusion in the

artworld by virtue of an artefact's or action's creation *for interpretation*. The interplay between the creator's intention – the expression of a point of view – and its interpretation allows a wider view of 'artist' to be accommodated in Danto's theory. It is the fact that this type of art needs to be interpreted that brings it into the artworld, and we have seen that interpretation is a key feature of Danto's theory: art is interpreted by an audience. It is this feature which brings *art brut* into the artworld. This aspect of Danto's theory is developed in the final chapter of *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* 'Metaphor, Expression and Style': art as rhetorical ellipsis; I address it in detail in chapter three.

This issue has been clearly identified by George Dickie in his institutional theory of art which identifies art as "any artefact ... 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)" (1974, p.204). Danto does not highlight this aspect of his theory in 'The Artworld' paper but it is implied; I have already mentioned his strong emphasis on interpretation throughout the discussion. There are other significant differences between Danto's and Dickie's artworld concepts but, as they are not relevant at this point in the discussion, I leave them for the present; however, I do return to discuss the issue in the next chapter. Before I leave this objection I need to make two points. Firstly, although Danto does not address the issue of *art brut* in 'The Artworld' paper, looking at his later writings on the subject we can see that he has been a strong and continuing advocate of outsider art; he clearly sees it as inhabiting the artworld.[22] Secondly, although this discussion has focused on outsider art it raises issues that apply equally to the status of a wide range of folk art, tribal art and historical artefacts where most of the work is either created anonymously or by non-professional artists.

I now return to an area of criticism of Danto's artworld theory which I have mentioned previously: that the artworld concept embodies circularity of

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[22] For example see his article 'Outsider Art' in Danto, 2000, pp.242-9.

argument. The criticism is that Danto's artworld concept always requires some reference to art to identify it. In other words, his definition of art relies on the artworld concept which concept itself requires a reference back to art to define it: the argument is therefore circular. In addressing this issue I consider three areas of criticism of the artworld theory. In each of these three areas of criticism I provide a counter argument, but it becomes clear that the counter arguments rely on a reference to some broad concept of culture which itself includes an element of art, and it is this reference that demonstrates and highlights the circularity in Danto's argument. The three areas are: firstly, that Danto believes that art requires a subject and that there may be art which has no subject matter at all. Secondly, Danto believes that art must be capable of interpretation, or identification as he calls it, and some art may not require any interpretation. Thirdly, that interpretation requires a knowledge of art theory and that some interpretations take place without the benefit of any such knowledge.

The first area of criticism considers Danto's view that artworks have a subject matter: they are about something. I have explained that Danto believes artworks embody meaning; they have a quality which he later calls 'aboutness'. The obvious objection to this is that there may well be works of art that do not embody any meaning at all: for example minimalist art. Danto picks this objection up later in his 1981 book *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*. He considers an imaginary artist J who produces a monochrome painting which the artist insists is untitled and is about nothing at all. But Danto points out that J's statement about nothing is itself a statement about something: it is a statement about minimalism. The artist's work was produced within a particular milieu in which minimalism was the subject of current speculation; this debate has a well-documented history, and J's work and the history of its production are inescapably embedded within this historical context. J was working in an atmosphere of artistic theory in which the debate about minimalism was a central issue. Danto makes the point that the difference between a sheet of primed board and J's painting – assuming they are indiscernible – is that the

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board is a thing "and things, as a class lack aboutness just because they are things. 'Untitled,' by contrast, is an artwork, and artworks are ... typically about something" (1981, p.3). Danto here is relying on the fact that 'Untitled' is saying something about the artworld; the problem, and it reappears in several places, is that his argument is circular. He is relying on the concept of the artworld to explain his concept of aboutness in this problematical area where there is no obvious subject matter to point to. J's painting is about the artworld, that atmosphere of artistic theory as Danto defines it, and the fact that it is about the artworld gives it its status as art unlike the indiscernible primed board which is about nothing. So Danto is using the artworld concept to identify one of his constituent features of art. In other words, he needs the concept of the artworld to define what is an artwork. He is begging the question.

A similar argument applies to another of Danto's requirements for something to be an artwork: that it must be capable of interpretation or identification as he calls it. This is my second example of circularity of argument manifesting itself in the artworld concept. I have explained that Danto believes that works of art require interpretation, but an objection surely is that there are some works of art that do not require any interpretation at all: art that we respond to on a purely sensuous or emotional level. Simple folk music is an example that springs to mind; arguably this does not require any interpretation. A counter argument suggests that however basic and non-referential the work of art is seen to be, it is produced and enjoyed in a cultural setting. It is this enjoyment within a cultural setting which can be considered as interpretation in a wider sense of the word. The simplest folk music, to use my example above, is enjoyed or interpreted within a specific cultural setting. In other words, it is this cultural milieu, a combination of environment, tradition, experience and teaching, which enables the folk music to be made and appreciated.

There is still a problem of circularity here. The word culture already implies an artworld. Culture already includes art as part of its definition: as a manifestation of the intellectual and artistic achievement of a community. We can

explain the context of folk music and the circumstances of its development and appreciation, but the explanation fails to tell us why it is art. We have failed to escape from the concept of culture which presupposes an artworld. Culture includes art but the definition of art requires the concept of culture; again the argument is circular. Notwithstanding the argument above about cultural embeddedness, there does seem to remain a basic level of artistic experience that does not require any interpretation. It is the first-hearing or first-seeing impact of some art that seems to operate at a physiological level and sub-cultural depth.

I shall now consider the third criticism of the artworld concept: that it requires a knowledge of art theory on the part of the viewer or interpreter. Danto is suggesting that interpretation depends on a knowledge of art history; I repeat his summary: "To see something as art requires something the eye cannot decry [sic] – an atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of the history of art: an artworld" (1964, p.209). This knowledge, as I have explained in the case of *art brut*, may be provided by the interpreter alone and not necessarily by the artist; it may be, and usually is, provided by both. But do we need this knowledge of the history of art to interpret art? Are there not situations where this is not the case? Most people would accept Rembrandt's *The Night Watch* as being a work of art without having any theory of art to substantiate the opinion or indeed without being able to locate the picture clearly in any well-defined history of art. The counter argument involves some referral to a form of general cultural inheritance and knowledge, but this is a nebulous and ill-defined concept. Note that it still contains a reference to culture which, as I have already explained, itself contains, within its definition, an element of artistic achievement; again I find the argument is circular. I have identified a significant element of circularity in Danto's argument, but is it a vicious circularity: does it irreparably damage his case? I will return to this point to discuss just how damaging the circularity is in the conclusion, chapter four. In the next chapter I shall also consider a view of art, by George Dickie, which accepts and accommodates this

circularity. I now look at another criticism of the artworld concept: that it suffers from a lack of definition.

The lack of definition or clarity is evident in two areas. Firstly, we are never given a clear view of what an art theory is. We are never clear whether we are dealing with epistemological or ontological issues. We have Danto's IT and RT explained at the beginning of the paper which suggests an art historical approach to theory: applying those theories already in existence. Danto does say that: "it is in terms of RT that we must understand the artworks around us today" (1964, p.204). We also have new theories explained by reference to Danto's idea of conceptual revolution, when the older theories fail to accommodate new developments in art. But Danto moves on, later in the paper, to identify features of theory that imply a more essentialist role: to provide the basis for the identification of the defining features of artworks. It is never clear what the status of the theories we are using is supposed to be; are they historical and epistemological theories like IT and RT or essentialist theories aiming to address the question of the ontological status of art? Rather than a new theory of art, is Danto, particularly with his style matrix, providing us with a theory about theories of art and their importance?

The second area where this lack of definition arises is in relation to the nature of the link between Danto's theory and art itself. What exactly is the nature of this link between art theory and art? Is it a contingent link or one of logical necessity? When he is discussing the historical context of new works of art Danto claims that it is the role of artistic theory to make art possible: for example Warhol's *Brillo Box* sculpture, he believes, was only possible in 1964 because of the artistic theories emerging at that time. This lack of clarity on this point suggests that Danto is not distinguishing his philosophy of art from his philosophy of the history of art; an issue I have already discussed in the introduction. William Kennick points to this confusion when he comments on Danto's view that art theories make art possible: "I do not know what sort of necessity is at issue in this claim; that is, whether Danto's words express a contingent view about the relation between art theory and art, or

whether they express a logically necessary relation between the concepts of art and of art theory" (1964, p.586). As I have already shown, Danto rejects essentialism, the view of art as "some eternally fixed Platonic entity" (1981, p.111), but his own claim about the possibility of a definition of art is essentialist. Also, although I have not examined it in detail, his philosophy of the history of art is essentialist: his claim that because the history of art has ended, there can be no possibility of future counter-examples to overthrow his definition of art. His is a quasi-Hegelian claim: that the true nature of art has not always been manifest but has gradually become apparent over time. So Danto is rejecting certain aspects of essentialism and at the same time accepting others. This uncertainty or vacillation, as I shall explain in the next chapter, is what provokes and underlies Joseph Margolis's criticism of Danto's theory of art.

An issue I promised to return to is the nature of the link between Danto's two concepts: the *is* of artistic identification and the artworld. I have identified a substantial degree of circularity in Danto's artworld concept: art is defined by reference to the artworld which in turn has to be defined by some reference back to art. This latter reference can be direct, say by reference to artists, or indirect, with reference to a concept like culture which itself includes an element of art. Direct or indirect I believe there is an unacceptable degree of circularity in the argument. Danto attempts to use his *is* of artistic identification to break this circularity. He links his special *is* of artistic identification directly to the artworld: "the Brillo box of the artworld may be just the Brillo box of the real one, separated and united by the *is* of artistic identification" (1964, p.210), and again when Testadura can only see black and white paint: "we cannot help him until he has mastered the *is of artistic identification* and so *constitutes* it a work of art" (1964, p.208).

However, we are never told how the *is* of artistic identification and the artworld are linked. This is apparent if I reconsider the previous two quotations. In Testadura's case the link seems to be an imaginative one: Testadura would require

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an imaginative leap to see the white oblong with a horizontal line as any of the possible interpretations Danto discusses. Indeed he could come up with his own, say *Arctic Landscape*. In the case of the *Brillo Boxes* sculpture, Testadura would just see cartons for packing scouring pads. To see it as pop art, as a way of incorporating images from popular culture in gallery art, would require historical or contextual knowledge. Perhaps this lack of precision should come as no surprise: in section IV of this chapter I have exposed the shortcomings of the special *is* the first of which was its use of imprecise language. In one of Danto's examples (*The Fall of Icarus*) Danto's special *is* was shown to be no more than an *is* of representational identification. In another example (the 10th Street abstractionist's painting entitled *No.7*) it was shown to be an *is* of historical location. The latter approach, the *is* of historical location, is undoubtedly capable of wider application than the *is* of representational identification; it is capable of dealing with completely new forms of art and also art which has no representational element. It has the ability to include all the new forms of contemporary art, and, as anything can be art, it is immune to counter-examples. But it pays a heavy price; Danto's special *is* is too inclusive in this sense of historical location. All objects have a historical situation which is unique to them - Hula Hoops for example – but this does not qualify them as art: at least as Danto understands the term art. Danto's attempt to shore up his artworld concept with the use of the *is* of artistic identification has been shown to fail. The *is* of artistic identification is inadequate for the task Danto demands of it.

Danto never relinquishes his use of the special *is* of artistic identification; it appears throughout his later work. What he does do is to attempt to refine his definition of art. He does this by expanding on the concept of indiscernible counterparts and bringing in the idea of rhetorical ellipsis; exploring the roles of metaphor, expression and style in art. In the next two chapters I shall look at these concepts: indiscernibility in chapter two and rhetorical ellipsis in chapter three. They are discussed in his 1981 book *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*, written

seventeen years after 'The Artworld' article. The book provides an extended and considerably refined version of Danto's philosophy of art.

Chapter Two
Danto and the Comparison of Indiscernible Counterparts

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,

But I have promises to keep,

And miles to go before I sleep,

And miles to go before I sleep.

Robert Frost[1]

I. Introduction

In the last chapter I examined Arthur Danto's 1964 paper 'The Artworld.' In that paper Danto outlines his idea of how the creation and appreciation of art is dependent on a background of theory and knowledge. He looks at how artistic theories develop and change; Danto illustrates his argument with two examples, the Imitation Theory and the Reality Theory, before going on to explain his idea of the style matrix and how art accommodates and accepts new theories. He introduces and explains two key concepts underlying his philosophy of art: firstly, the special way of looking which is used primarily to identify art, the *is* of artistic identification, and secondly, the overarching concept of the artworld: that "atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of the history of art" (1964, p.209). In my discussion I followed Danto's explanation and unfolding of these two ideas and outlined my criticism of

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[1] These are the last four lines of 'Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening' (Frost 1955, p.145). See also footnote 6 to this chapter.

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them. In this chapter I follow the subsequent development of Danto's philosophy of art in his 1981 book *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*

In this later book Danto's two key concepts, the *is* of artistic identification and the artworld, remain as foundations of his theory of art; in its first six chapters the book is very much a development and refinement of the ideas put forward in the earlier paper – I return to discuss the final chapter of *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* later. However, the debate is now dominated by the technique of comparing sets of indiscernible counterparts; this becomes the central tool in the development of Danto's argument. In the 'Artworld' paper I have pointed out that Danto made limited use of the comparison of indiscernibles as a technique to explain his theory of art: the two identical paintings *Newton's First Law* and *Newton's Third Law* were used as a key example of the technique in action. Another example was the explanation of the difference between Warhol's *Brillo Box* sculpture and ordinary Brillo boxes. In this later work, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*, the examination of indiscernible counterparts dominates the discussion, and Danto includes many examples throughout the book to illustrate his arguments. I shall devote the next section of this chapter to looking at a selection of the examples used by Danto and an examination of the underlying concept of the comparison of indiscernible counterparts. Danto is economical in his use of examples and extensively re-uses and re-works his previous subjects: the discussion of the two paintings mentioned above, for instance, receives a much fuller and extended discussion. But, as I shall explain, he also introduces a number of new examples.

In the first part of the discussion I examine six examples of Danto's indiscernible counterparts by relating each of them to particular elements of his philosophy of art. For the purposes of my debate I adopt a refinement and formulation of the issue of indiscernibility put forward by John Andrew Fisher in his 1995 paper 'Is There a Problem of Indiscernible Counterparts?' (1995). Fisher, in a successful move to clarify the debate, subdivides the issue of indiscernible counterparts into three separate and quite distinct claims: (1) every real thing can

have an indiscernible counterpart which is an artwork, (2) every artwork can have an indiscernible counterpart which is a different artwork and lastly, (3) every artwork can have an indiscernible counterpart which is an ordinary thing.

I also examine how Danto uses different examples to justify the various principles underlying his theory of art. It will be recalled that in the last chapter I identified five such underlying principles in Danto's theory: my aim will be to show how the examples relate to and support these principles. Before I begin this discussion I intend, by way of anticipation, to add a new principle to the previous list of five: making a new total of six. The reason for this anticipatory move is that in the next chapter I discuss the final part of *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* where this new principle – the idea of art as rhetorical ellipsis – is introduced. I follow Danto's sequence in unfolding his philosophy of art by treating this issue at the end: after the discussion of indiscernible counterparts; however, it does seem sensible to treat this additional principle with the original five – which were introduced in the previous chapter – as a group.

The second part of my discussion of the topic of indiscernible counterparts is critical: I outline and comment on an area of criticism of Danto's use of the technique formulated by Joseph Margolis. His concern with Danto's *is* of identification was discussed in the last chapter, and I promised to return to it. I also intend to redeem a further promise from the last chapter: I will show how Danto's theory differs from the institutional theory of art advanced by George Dickie with which it initially seems to share much common ground. I examine in particular how one of Fisher's sub-claims – (2) every artwork can have an indiscernible counterpart which is a different artwork – provides an argument against Dickie's institutional theory, at least as it is commonly misunderstood by Danto and Richard Wollheim amongst others. I examine the reasons for this misunderstanding.

The conclusion to the chapter examines a further distinction between broad and narrow indiscernibility identified by Fisher. I then provide a review of my discussion and arguments on Danto's use of indiscernible counterparts in his

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philosophy of art. In the next chapter I move on to an examination of the final chapter, chapter seven, of *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*. The first six chapters of the book are very much a development and expansion of the ideas put forward in the 'Artworld' paper. The last chapter, however, as I have briefly mentioned, brings in new material; it discusses the issue of art as rhetoric: particularly the use of expression, metaphor and style. Danto believes that rhetorical ellipsis is an important distinguishing feature of art: this follows from his view of art as embodying meaning and therefore involving interpretation. However, I now begin the work of this chapter: an examination of Danto's use of the technique of comparing sets of indiscernible counterparts.

II. Indiscernible Counterparts Examined

The issue of indiscernible counterparts dominates Danto's 1981 book *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*. Danto sees this as the key issue dominating not only the philosophy of art but philosophy itself: "all philosophical questions, I have argued, have that form: two outwardly indiscernible things can belong to different, indeed to momentously different, philosophical categories" (1997a, p.35).[2] This far-reaching claim is outside the scope of our dissertation but I should point out that Danto sees a close connection between his wider philosophical theories and his theory of art; for Danto the two are inextricably bound together: "art is typically thought to be marginal to philosophy, a kind of ontological frill, whereas it is in my

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[2]A footnote explains that this wider subject is developed at length in Danto's 1989 book *Connections to the World* (1997b in the bibliography). His first use of indiscernible counterparts was not in a specifically aesthetic context, although it involved a work of literature. Its use appears for the first time in his 1968 book *Analytic Philosophy of History* (see 1985, pp.172-81). It concerns a thought experiment about the possibility of a book written in 1815 entitled *The Battle of Iwo Jima* which contains an exact description of the 1945 conflict.

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view absolutely central to thinking about subjects – especially subjects having to do with our own philosophical nature, to which the pertinence of the concept of art seems initially remote" (1999b, p.ix).

It was the advent of a particular piece of pop art that alerted Danto to the significance of the indiscernibility issue in the aesthetic arena: Andy Warhol's *Brillo Box* sculpture of 1964. It suggested to him the question: why should Warhol's *Brillo Box* sculpture be considered as art when an indiscernible stack of everyday Brillo cartons is not? He sums up the situation: "it seems to me that pop, however unlikely it may have appeared to those unsympathetic with it (to most of my friends who were artists, for example) had finally discovered the true form of the philosophical question about art" (1999a, p.5). It is Danto's attempt to answer this philosophical question – how do you account for the difference between a work of art and an indiscernible everyday object? – that leads him to the technique he uses throughout *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*: "it was this insight that equipped me with the method I use in my book" (1981, p.vii). The method referred to is the comparison of sets of indiscernible counterparts.

In *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* Danto discusses some twenty-three examples of indiscernible counterparts in detail with other instances mentioned in passing.[3] In this section I will look at six of these examples in my

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[3] I list the twenty-three examples below together with page references to Danto, 1981.

(1) The imaginary gallery of nine indiscernible red canvasses, pp.1-3.

(2) Six instances of Christ's raised arm in Giotto's tableaux on the North wall of the Arena Chapel, Padua (although strictly speaking these are not indiscernibles), p.4.

(3) Two identical beds one of which is a work of art, pp.11-3.

(4) The first can opener and an indiscernible sculpture produced at exactly the same time, p.29.

(5) Rembrandt's *Polish Rider* and an accidentally produced although indiscernible counterpart, p.31.

(6) The two indiscernible extracts mentioned in Borges' short story *Pierre Menard*: one by

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Cervantes the other by the fictitious author Menard, pp.33-9.

(7) Three indiscernible ties: by Picasso, a child and a forgery of the one by Picasso, p.39-40.

(8) Two indiscernible piles of hemp, an artwork by Robert Morris and an everyday pile of hemp, although coming from Antwerp in the seventeenth century, p.45.

(9) Duchamp's *In Advance of a Broken Arm* and an everyday indiscernible snow shovel, p.45.

(10) A photograph of the World Trade Centre and an indiscernible accidentally produced photograph, p.48.

(11) Wittgenstein's example of a calculus formula and an indiscernible tribal decoration, p.49-50.

(12) Two marbles: one a portrait of the other, p.80.

(13) A thumbtack and a work of art consisting of a thumbtack, pp.92-3.

(14) Duchamp's *Fountain* and an indiscernible urinal, p.93.

(15) Six stained ricepaper panels and an indiscernible work of art, pp.100-1.

(16) A Lichtenstein brush stroke painting of 1965 and an indiscernible canvass produced in 1865, p.113.

(17) Two indiscernible paintings, *Newton's First Law* and *Newton's Third Law*, p.120-3.

(18) Aaron Kuriloff's *Laundry Bag* installation and an indiscernible everyday laundry bag, p.132-3 (see *Artforum*, III:8, 10th May 1965).

(19) The *Manhattan Telephone Directory for 1980* and an indiscernible experimental novel *Metropolis Eighty*, pp.136-8.

(20) Three indiscernible drawings of Mount Fujiyama by i) Hiroshiga, ii) an electrocardiogram and iii) a mechanically drawn artwork, pp.140-1.

(21) Loran's diagram of Cézanne's *Portrait of Madame Cézanne* and Lichtenstein's painting, *Portrait of Madame Cézanne*, which is indiscernible from the diagram, pp.142-4. Danto gives the date of Lichtenstein's work as 1963; in Coplans' monograph on Lichtenstein it is given as 1962.

(22) Two indiscernible stories about a homicide case produced by a 'literary' writer and a *Newsday* crime reporter, both called M, pp.144-6. This example takes its inspiration from Truman Capote's 1966 book *In Cold Blood*, an examination of a real-life murder case written in the form of a novel.

(23) Andy Warhol's *Brillo Box* sculpture and everyday Brillo boxes, p.44 and p.208.

examination of Danto's theory. The six examples are: (i) Danto's famous gallery of nine indiscernible red canvasses, (ii) Rembrandt's *Polish Rider* and an accidentally produced although indiscernible counterpart, (iii) the two indiscernible extracts mentioned in Borges' short story *Pierre Menard*: one by Cervantes the other by the fictional author Menard, (iv) Kuriloff's *Laundry Bag* installation and an indiscernible, everyday laundry bag, (v) the *Manhattan Telephone Directory for 1980* and an indiscernible experimental novel entitled *Metropolis Eighty* and finally (vi) Loran's diagram of Cézanne's *Portrait of Madame Cézanne* and Lichtenstein's 1962 painting, *Portrait of Madame Cézanne*, which is indiscernible from the diagram. I shall identify how Danto uses these examples to explain aspects of his philosophy of art as it is embodied in his concept of the artworld.

It will be recalled that in the previous chapter (section V) I identified five principles underlying Danto's philosophy of art: (1) art is the result of human endeavour by an artist, (2) artworks acquire a history and a provenance, (3) artworks embody meaning (they are expressive), which meaning is a result of the artist's intention, (4) artworks require interpretation and finally, (5) they are produced and interpreted within a historical context. I intend to examine how Danto's examples of indiscernible counterparts are used to support his arguments in relation to each of these principles.

Before I begin, I intend to add an additional principle to the list of five mentioned above. This additional principle comes from the discussion in the final chapter of *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* entitled 'Metaphor, Expression, and Style.' This discussion follows the first six chapters of the book which are devoted largely to the question of indiscernibility, but as comparing indiscernibles is Danto's key technique, I believe it should be used to test all the principles; I therefore bring this new principle into the discussion in anticipation of the final chapter. It remains a moot point why Danto did not begin the book with his discussion of the rhetorical nature of art contained in his final chapter, but I follow his sequence in discussing it after indiscernibility: it is the subject of my next chapter.

The additional principle I introduce in anticipation follows on from my principle (3) that artworks embody meaning (they are expressive), which meaning is a result of the artist's intention. I therefore propose to insert it as a new principle (4) and renumber the final two. The new principle (4) is that the presence of meaning in artworks requires a subject matter about which the artist projects a point of view by means of rhetorical ellipsis. This concept will be discussed in detail in the next chapter; I should, however, provide a brief explanation here. Danto believes that art is expressive by nature; it aims to effect a change in its recipient. It is therefore essentially rhetorical; its aim is to persuade: to bring about a change in the perception of the viewer. He also believes that one of the most powerful rhetorical tools is that of ellipsis; the traditional elliptical trope is the enthymeme, which, being a truncated syllogism, embodies ellipsis. The recipient is required to complete what is missing: to bridge the enthymemetic gap. This process draws the recipient into the interpretive process, and it is this involvement, Danto believes, which gives rhetorical ellipsis, and hence art, its considerable power. As I shall explain in the next chapter, Danto develops this principle, of the artist projecting a point of view, into the concept of style which, he believes, usually involves a reliance on the use of metaphor. The final list of principles thus reads: (1) art is the result of human endeavour by an artist, (2) artworks acquire a history and a provenance, (3) artworks embody meaning (they are expressive), which meaning is a result of the artist's intention, (4) that meaning requires a subject about which the artist projects a point of view by means of rhetorical ellipsis, (5) artworks require interpretation and finally, (6) they are produced and interpreted within a historical context.

To give a degree of precision to the discussion I intend to follow a refinement of Danto's original claim – that artworks have indiscernible counterparts – provided by John Andrew Fisher in his 1995 paper 'Is There a Problem with Indiscernible Counterparts.'[4] Fisher divides the original claim into three separate and

[4] Fisher, 1995; originally presented to American Society for Aesthetics at Asilomar (CA) in 1991.

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quite distinct sub-claims: (1) every real thing can have an indiscernible counterpart which is an artwork, (2) every artwork can have an indiscernible counterpart which is a different artwork and lastly. (3) every artwork can have an indiscernible counterpart which is an ordinary thing. The distinction between sub-claims (1) and (3) perhaps requires a brief explanation. In sub-claim (1) the artwork follows the real thing in time: the real thing is anterior to the artwork; in sub-claim (3) it is the other way round: the artwork is anterior to the ordinary thing; the significance of the distinction will become apparent later. I shall also introduce later in this section a further important division of sub-claim (1): I shall introduce sub-claim (1a) that every representation can have an indiscernible counterpart which is both a representation and an artwork; I shall leave the explanation of this additional distinction for the present. I shall examine how each of these three claims is supported by the examples of indiscernibles Danto has chosen. For instance, sub-claim (1) – every real thing can have an indiscernible counterpart which is an artwork – is supported by example (iv) Kuriloff's *Laundry Bag* installation and an indiscernible everyday laundry bag. Sub-claim (2) – every artwork can have an indiscernible counterpart which is a different artwork – is supported by example (iii) the two indiscernible extracts mentioned in Borges' short story *Pierre Menard*, and sub-claim (3) – every artwork can have an indiscernible counterpart which is an ordinary thing – is supported by example (ii) Rembrandt's *Polish Rider* and an accidentally produced counterpart. I shall then return to examine how the three sub-claims support the six principles underlying Danto's philosophy of art.

Before I move on to examine the examples, two points need to be discussed. Firstly, Danto's use of the term 'indiscernibility' requires clarification and secondly, the basic proposition underlying Danto's use of the term 'indiscernibility' is that *any* material object can have an indiscernible counterpart. I discuss each of these in turn. To begin with the first point, I need to explain what Danto means when he uses the term 'indiscernibility'. Danto mentions Leibniz's law and goes on to explain that his concept of indiscernibility does not involve a conflict with the law.

Danto is using indiscernibility in an everyday sense whereas Leibniz is concerned with the ontological constitution of objects.[5] The difference is important and I will explain it by looking at some examples. Danto uses indiscernibility to refer to the manifest properties of objects: for example, two postage stamps are, for Danto, indiscernible but as indiscernible counterparts are clearly quite distinct and separate objects. Danto regards the two stamps as indiscernible, but he is not denying, (1) that they are separate objects and (2) that there may well be a way of distinguishing them by philatelic or scientific investigation. Microscopic inspection may well be able to tell me the exact location of each stamp from a particular sheet: chemical analysis of the ink and paper may tell me which factory produced the stamps and when. There is therefore no suggestion that the stamps are indiscernible in the way in which the logical principle of Leibniz's law demands: there is no conflict with Leibniz's law. Danto's use of indiscernibility is a different issue; he explains: "it is a consequence of a theory of Leibniz that if two things have the same properties they are identical, and that identity means that, for every property F, *a* is identical with *b* in case, whenever *a* is F, so is *b*. It must follow that if the works in question have all the same properties, they must be identical. But Borges' point [he refers here to the two indiscernible extracts mentioned in Borges' short story *Pierre Menard*] is that they do not. They have only in common those properties that the eye as such might identify" (1981, pp.34-5).

The distinction becomes apparent if I consider a pair of objects from one of Danto's own examples – Duchamp's *Fountain* and a urinal: a similar model from the same manufacturer that Duchamp used in his ready-made. They look the same but clearly are distinct objects: they occupy separate locations in space. As a final example I consider two firebricks, one of which has been used as a murder weapon. In Danto's terms they are indiscernible: no amount of inspection will reveal the difference. However forensic examination would reveal which had been used for the

[5] See for example *Correspondence with Arnauld*, 2.4.11, Leibniz, 1998, p.110.

murder: they are different but the difference is apparent only in their non-manifest properties. Interestingly in this example either or both the bricks could be works of art: say, taken from Carl Andre's firebrick sculpture, *Equivalent VIII*, 1966, whose allusive title refers to this very issue of indiscernibility. John Fisher puts this point in another way: "note that this relationship does not require *absolute* indiscernibility, that is, the sharing of *all* properties, both relational and nonrelational ... Rather, all that Danto requires is that the two items share nonrelational properties that are of typical interest for an item of a given type" (1995, p.468). The existence of these forms of indiscernibles should come as no surprise; I am, of course, surrounded by examples of indiscernible objects of the type that Danto is referring to: tyres in a garage, postage stamps and washing machines; many of the articles that surround me in my daily life have indiscernible counterparts.

The second point is that underlying Danto's whole approach is the assumption that any material object can have an indiscernible counterpart. In the examples I have mentioned above this is obvious; I use indiscernible postage stamps every day, but can I generalise this into a principle that covers every physical object? Danto believes I can, as some of his examples clearly show; for instance, one which I shall be discussing later: Rembrandt's *Polish Rider* and an accidentally produced although indiscernible counterpart. I can think of examples of highly complex indiscernible objects, orchids of the same species, aircraft carriers of the same class, identical twins, battle tanks and cloned sheep. An indiscernible counterpart of any object or landscape is conceivable even if some may be highly unlikely; there is no reason why an indiscernible counterpart of any physical object could not exist. This is the principle underlying every thought experiment that Danto subsequently uses. The principle equally applies to sounds, actions and texts. Taking the example of texts, it is quite easy to conceive of three indiscernible postcards with a message reading 'meet me at the Lion at 7.00 p.m. tomorrow' referring to completely different people and places: a pub, the battlecruiser H.M.S. Lion and a performance of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. Danto concentrates on examples from the

visual arts, but four of his examples are based on indiscernible texts: the most famous has its origin in Borges' story *Pierre Menard*.[6] I shall return to discuss this issue of principle in the conclusion to this chapter when I pick up on the point that nothing in this underlying proposition relates the principle of indiscernible counterparts specifically to artworks. For the present I continue with my examination of some of Danto's examples.

I intend to examine six of Danto's examples of indiscernible counterparts; initially I shall look at how they relate to Fisher's three sub-claims about indiscernible artworks. Following this, I consider how they are used to support the six principles I have identified in Danto's philosophy of art. I begin with Kuriloff's *Laundry Bag*: the installation was created from a laundry bag displayed on a mounting board complete with a label telling the viewer it was a laundry bag. This joins other examples of ready-mades that Danto discusses and takes us to the first of Fisher's sub-claims – every real thing can have an indiscernible counterpart which is an artwork. The lesson Danto draws from the ready-mades is that any everyday object can become an artwork in certain situations. Fisher states the argument: "if it is possible to do something to any ordinary thing or (mere) artefact to make it into an artwork, then it follows that any ordinary thing or artefact could have an IC [indiscernible counterpart] that is an artwork. (Because it can have an IC which is not an artwork which is converted into an artwork.)" (1995, p.472). The important consequence of this claim for Danto's theory is that it indicates that works of art cannot be distinguished by discernible properties. If a work of art includes a laundry bag, as does Kuriloff's *Laundry Bag*, I will be unable to distinguish it from an un-transfigured everyday laundry bag simply by looking at it. Danto uses this

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[6]The others being numbers (11), (19) and (22) in the list above (footnote 3). The superscription to this chapter is also an example Danto mentions in a later work: he makes the point that, although the last two lines of the poem use the same words, the meaning is completely different. This distinction was pointed out to him by Vladimir Nabokov, see Danto, 1992, p.66.

argument to reject theories of art, such as aesthetic formalism, where artworks are marked by some perceptually distinguishable property, such as a special 'aesthetic' quality or form. Danto's argument rests on the rhetorical question: if artworks cannot be distinguished by their manifest properties how can any essential quality of art rest in those manifest properties? If every real thing can have an indiscernible counterpart which is an artwork, any recourse to a manifest property, such as 'significant form', to distinguish the artwork as art fails. However, it is important to distinguish Danto's claim – that works of art cannot be distinguished by discernible properties – from two others.

Firstly, Danto is not claiming that every object is an artwork; as I explained in the last chapter, Danto believes there must be a transfiguration: the object must be taken up into the artworld. In the case of *Laundry Bag* the transfiguration is apparent in a number of ways; the setting, an art gallery; the fact that it is mounted, which laundry bags are usually not, and that it is labelled. Danto points out that the very labelling in this piece is an important part of the artistic statement: "the work looks as if it were part of an exhibit for people from outer space ... To label an object so banal and familiar is to dislocate it, to distort the environment" (1981, p.133). An objection springs to mind which is that *Laundry Bag*, by the very visible fact of its mounting and labelling, is clearly discernible from its everyday counterpart. Danto is aware of this and addresses the objection; he chooses an example where there is no label, nothing visible which tells us that it is an artwork. In the example he uses – a remarkably prescient choice, in view of Tracey Emin's notorious work some eighteen years later – the artist J insists that his bed, without J having altered it at all, is a work of art. But J is an artist and his *Bed* is a statement about the status of art objects even though as Danto says: "J would say that it was about nothing, had no interpretation" (1981, p.133). This statement by J is sufficient, in Danto's view, to transfigure the unaltered bed into a work of art. The objection is addressed because, although there has been no visible alteration to the bed, the intention of the artist to create a work of art out of his statement about the bed achieves the transformation.

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J's bed is now not merely a bed but the bed which was the subject of J's statement about art. The bed is no longer just a bed: it is the subject of J's polemic statement which is intended to make a point about the status of the art object; in this case, I must say, a rather trite statement. Danto's point is that in this example there is no manifest property involved: the bed has, however, acquired an artistic history, a provenance, however trivial. I refer back to Danto's six principles of art which I identified earlier in this section; number three of which says that artworks embody meaning (they are expressive), which meaning is a result of the artist's intention. In this example J has an intention: he expresses a meaning which is embodied in his statement about his bed. Noël Carroll makes this point well with another example. He imagines an artist populating a gallery with everyday items in an exhibition called *Exhibition of Real Things*. The artist's aim is to remove the elitism and privilege of fine art; he is as Carroll says "a great demotic leveller" (1993, p.82). The collection and display of these objects has, using Danto's term, transfigured them; Carroll goes on to say: "and yet his [the demotic artist's] collection does not comprise a collection of mere real things; for his collection is charged with meaning. It is a polemic. Given its context in a continuing debate, it signifies like a gesture" (1993, pp.82-3).

The second claim I distinguish from Danto's view – that works of art cannot be identified by discernible properties – is the quite separate and plausible claim that any real thing can become the object of aesthetic consideration. Danto is well aware of this distinction; in a later work he says:

> In some sense Warhol's *Brillo Box* was 'inspired' by the ordinary
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> Brillo boxes it so precisely resembled. But that did not turn the
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> ordinary packing cartons into works of art, even if a case can be made
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> that Warhol elevated them as objects of aesthetic consciousness.
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> *Anything* can become an object of detached aesthetic scrutiny – the
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> teeth of a dead dog to cite an example of St. Augustine's, the purpled
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> eyelids of his dead wife, as was the case of Claude Monet. These of

course were real things, in contrast with works of art or artefacts, but whatever the appearances, the distinction between art and reality, like the distinction between artwork and artefact is absolute. (1992, p.94)

Danto here is following a Kantian view of what constitutes an aesthetic judgement and of what can be subject to aesthetic consideration. Aesthetic judgements or judgements of taste outlined by Kant in Part One of *The Critque of Judgment* would include the beautiful and the sublime, natural as well as man-made objects. Again, Danto's distinction between artwork and artefact has much in common with the taxonomy of art outlined by Kant in section 43 of the third *Critique*. Danto follows Kant in never explicitly setting out why aesthetic judgements exist: he follows the Kantian acceptance of the empirical basis of these aesthetic phenomena. I return to discuss Kant's taxonomy of art in more detail in the conclusion, chapter four. In his paper 'Art and Meaning'[7] Danto gives a very thorough, critical appreciation of the Brillo box design and explains why he believes it to be an outstanding example of packaging design. He attributes its excellence partly to the fact that it was the work of James Harvey, a fine artist by training and an exponent of abstract expressionism, who moved into the field of commercial art. However, Danto here is extolling the Brillo carton's excellence as a package design not as a work of art: the absolute distinction remains.

This second claim – that anything can be the subject of aesthetic scrutiny – is close to another idea: that when we look at these everyday items as art we consider them *as if* they were artworks. But there is an important distinction: Fisher's sub-claim – that every real thing can have an indiscernible counterpart which is an artwork – is saying clearly that the object of scrutiny really *is* an artwork and not that it is to be regarded *as if* it were an artwork. The *as if* claim has such broad generality that it seems to take us no further forward in identifying or particularising art than the claim that anything can be viewed from an aesthetic point of view.

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[7] The paper is published in Danto, 2000; the reference is to p.xxx.

Before I move on from Fisher's first sub-claim I shall look at two other of Danto's examples which support this sub-claim – that every real thing can have an indiscernible counterpart which is an artwork. The first is the *Manhattan Telephone Directory for 1980* and the possibility of it having a number of indiscernible counterparts. Danto's reason for this choice is quite specific: he uses this example to make the point that its indiscernible counterparts could belong to different artistic genres. The artwork he explains could be "a folio of prints, a novel, a poem, or perhaps, in the spirit of novel notation, the score for a musical composition – by Luciano Berio? – in which the names are to be chanted" (1981, p.136). He goes on to provide a detailed and plausible explanation of the circumstances surrounding the production of the experimental novel *Metropolis Eighty* which happens to be an indiscernible counterpart of the *Manhattan Telephone Directory for 1980*. Danto ends his discussion of this example with the speculation "that the phenomenon of confusable counterparts belonging to distinct ontological orders arises only when at least one of the confusable things bears a representational property: where at least one of the counterparts is *about* something, or has a content, or a subject, or a meaning" (1981, pp.138-9). I return to this point shortly when I examine how Danto's examples support the six principles of art embodied in his artworld theory.

The second example, before I move on to Fisher's next sub-claim, picks up on the point made in the last quotation about the question of representation. It is here that I shall introduce the division of sub-claim (1) which was mentioned earlier: it will be recalled that sub-claim (1a) states that every representation can have an indiscernible counterpart which is both a representation and an artwork. My second example concerns Roy Lichtenstein's 1962 painting *Portrait of Madame Cézanne* which, at a hugely different scale, reproduces a well-known diagram by the art critic Erle Loran purporting to identify the compositional structure underlying Cézanne's painting (see illustration 7).[8] Danto makes the point that a reproduction of Loran's

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[8]Amazingly, Loran accused Lichtenstein of plagiarism and the issue caused quite a stir in the

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diagram and a reproduction of Lichtenstein's painting are indiscernible. The figure of the Loran diagram, although it remains just a diagram, is, nevertheless, an illustration of a representation: because a diagram, clearly, represents something. However, the illustration of Lichtenstein's painting represents a work of art which is also a representation. Here we have indiscernible counterparts both of which are representations, but only one is a work of art. Danto concedes the point that accepting both are representations gets us no further towards identifying why only one is an artwork. He makes the point that both, as representations, have content and meaning, but "unless we wished to claim that artworks have some special content, or some special kind of content, which sets them off from other representations altogether, the appeal to content would get us nowhere" (1981, p.143). I shall return to this issue later in this section when I consider the full implications of sub-claim (1a) that every representation can have an indiscernible counterpart that is both a representation and an artwork. For the present I continue with the examination of Danto's examples of indiscernible counterparts.

My fourth example comes from the very beginning of *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*; it is one of Danto's most famous thought experiments: he envisages a gallery composed entirely of indiscernible red rectangular canvasses. There are nine in total and they are: (1) a painting envisaged by Kierkegaard, with astonishing prescience in 1843, of the Israelites crossing the Red Sea,[9] (2) a psychological work entitled *Kierkegaard's Mood*, (3) a tongue in

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artistic press of the time. The original diagram appeared twenty years earlier in Loran's book *Cézanne's Composition*. See Loran, 1963, p.85 and Coplans, 1972, p.74, ill.14.

[9]This appears in the 'Diapsalmata' from *Either/Or*, Kierkegaard, 1944, p.22. The extract reads:

" The result of my life is simply nothing, a mood, a single colour. My result is like the painting of the artist who was to paint a picture of the Israelites crossing the Red Sea. To this end, he painted the whole wall red, explaining that the Israelites had already crossed over, and the Egyptians were drowned."

cheek Moscow landscape called *Red Square*, (4) a minimalist work with the same, wholly-appropriate title, *Red Square*, although it bears the same title for completely different reasons, (5) a Buddhist metaphysical painting, *Nirvana*, based on the concept of 'red dust': the deprecatory Buddhist name for the everyday world: the Samsara world of illusion, (6) *Red Table Cloth* by a disciple of Matisse, (7) a canvas grounded in red by Giorgione, (8) a red-painted surface and finally (9) an anti-art statement by the artist J entitled *Untitled*. It will be noticed that the first six and the last are works of art whereas (7) and (8) are everyday objects, although (7), the canvas grounded by Giorgione, is of considerable interest to art historians.

This gallery of indiscernibles enables me to consider the second and third of Fisher's sub-claims. The first six canvases and the last canvas, the works of art, are used to support the second sub-claim: that every artwork can have an indiscernible counterpart that is a different artwork. It is clear that, although these seven canvasses are indiscernible, they have completely different subjects; they are about different ideas and have quite distinct meanings. They are not interchangeable; each painting has its own history and provenance: they were produced at a specific time within a specific cultural context. The paintings are produced by different artists, have their own titles and were created with quite different motives and intentions on the part of the artists. They are, clearly, distinct works of art: canvas (3) *Red Square* is a completely different work to (4) *Red Square*; despite sharing the same title: the thinking and circumstances behind their creation are radically far apart; the meaning of their titles is quite different.

Danto requires a theory of art that will account for these differences, and I shall discuss later how these examples measure up against the principles underlying his concept of the artworld. As I explained in the previous chapter, the artworld concept brings in a strong element of theoretical background in relation to works of art: the context of their creation, their situation within the development of art history and the history of their own production and appreciation. An immediate objection to Danto's approach is that, although these examples of indiscernibles may happen in

thought experiments, they simply do not occur in practice: in the everyday artworld. But of course they do: one very clear example being appropriational art. Sherrie Levine has re-photographed and repainted famous works of art: the photographs of Walker Evans (see illustration 8) and paintings by Kasimir Malevich for example. Levine's appropriational work probes some of the most basic assumptions about art and gender: questions of male authorship are explored; the idea of distancing the artwork from originality and the deliberate avoidance of self-expression figure strongly in her work.

Levine's work leads into another example of the occurrence of indiscernibles in the artworld. As I have mentioned, Levine appropriates Malevich's work which itself provides us with our next example. One of Malevich's original paintings is a very good example: *Red Square (Painterly Realism of a Peasant Woman in Two Dimensions)*, 1915, (see illustration 9) is remarkably close visually to any one of Danto's imaginary red canvasses; it even shares the first part of its title with Danto's imaginary canvasses (3) and (4). But Malevich's painting has its own history and meaning; his *Red Square* canvas is deeply mystical reflecting his interests in 1915: the links between geometrical symbolism, colour symbolism and spirituality, the parallels with the tradition of Russian icon painting, his interest in the Russian landscape and the life of the peasants and his involvement with the Suprematist movement. Malevich's monochrome canvasses have an important place in the development of twentieth-century art. Here there are two examples of artists producing powerful work and having significant and important places in the history of twentieth-century art; I could slot our chosen examples of their works neatly and seamlessly into Danto's thought experiment.

Before I return to the gallery of indiscernibles and move on to discuss sub-claim three, which, as I have already mentioned, some of Danto's red canvasses also support, I will discuss another of Danto's examples which illustrates sub-claim two: that every artwork can have an indiscernible counterpart which is a different artwork. This example comes from the field of literature: the Borges' short story

Pierre Menard, Author of Don Quixote. The story was written in 1936; it concerns a fictitious author Pierre Menard who sets out to, and does indeed, write extracts that coincide exactly with passages from Cervantes' *Don Quixote.* The climax is reached when two identical passages, one by Cervantes the other by Menard, are compared by the narrator and found to be completely different works of art. Borges writes: "the fragmentary *Don Quixote* of Menard is more subtle than that of Cervantes. The latter indulges in a rather coarse opposition between tales of knighthood and the meagre, provincial reality of his country; Menard chooses as 'reality' the land of Carmen during the century of Lepanto and Lope" (1965, p.48).

Borges is making the same point as Danto does with his seven red canvasses: that indiscernible paintings, or in this case texts, can be completely different works of art. In discussing this example Danto makes it quite clear that we are talking about discernible properties: "they have only in common those properties that the eye as such might identify. So much the worse for the properties that meet the eye, then, in individuating works of art" (1981, p.35). Danto credits Borges with the first realisation, certainly in relation to literary works, that indiscernible artworks could occur. He also credits Borges with identifying that the two extracts not only have different histories themselves but also a different relationship to the history of literature: which fact serves to individuate the works. He explains, in discussing the two stories in Borges' example, that "the works are in part constituted by their location in the history of literature as well as by their relationship to their authors" (1981, pp.35-6).

I now return to Danto's gallery of indiscernibles and examine the two remaining canvasses (7) and (8) which, it will be recalled, were not works of art: the canvas grounded by Giorgione and the red-painted surface; an everyday artefact. These two examples serve to support the third of Fisher's sub-claims: that every artwork can have an indiscernible counterpart which is an ordinary thing. I shall also consider the last of Danto's examples which I have chosen to discuss: Rembrandt's *Polish Rider* and the indiscernible non-artwork object produced accidentally by paint

being dumped on a centrifuge and the resulting spray hitting a surface: this example also supports sub-claim three.

The two non-artwork canvasses, the grounded red canvas and the red surface, can easily be envisaged occurring and being indiscernible with the seven other works of art: the circumstances of their production could be regular day-to-day events. The accidental paint splat which looks like *The Polish Rider* would be, in Danto's words, "a statistical miracle" (1981, p.31) but still a possibility. Other examples, lying between these two extremes, are easy to imagine happening: a ruler covered with black paint could fall across a white canvas to produce an indiscernible counterpart to another of Danto's examples: either *Newton's First Law* or *Newton's Third Law*. There is a similar position with literary works; I can think of a wide range of possibilities: from the everyday occurrence to the highly improbable. A well-known example of the latter being the possibility of typing monkeys reproducing the complete works of Shakespeare; as an example of the former I might easily envisage a short poem by e. e. cummings or Edwin Morgan being produced accidentally on a word processor.

The point I must make, and Danto alludes to it in his example of the canvas grounded by Giorgione, is that these non-artworks also have a history and a reason for being produced, however superficial it might have been. Or in the case of the accidentally produced items, there must be a set of causal circumstances allowing for the possibility of their production. The ordinary red surface, Danto's canvas (8), must have been produced for a reason: it could be quite mundane: as a colour sample or perhaps as an experiment to find the coverage of the particular paint used. The Giorgione as Danto points out, although not a work of art, is of considerable interest to the art historian: enabling her to examine the grounding, material, support and techniques used by a famous artist in preparing to create a work of art. Even the indiscernible counterpart to Rembrandt's *Polish Rider* is not purely accidental: the equipment must have been there for some purpose, even if, as Danto says, whoever was involved was doing it "just to see what would happen" (1981, p.31): the process

as Danto describes it does not involve an artist and the result is not an artwork. But a similar experiment could well have been performed by an avant-garde artist, perhaps a forerunner to Damien Hirst, experimenting with spin paintings; the result would then have been an artwork which might coincidentally looks exactly like Hirst's '*beautiful, kiss my fucking ass painting*' (see illustration 10). Hirst used a centrifuge technique remarkably close to the one Danto suggests in his thought experiment to create this canvas. Again, I find that there is nothing here which enables me to identify art – except that it is carried out by an artist and this is a circular argument – and this brings me to the next part of the discussion which examines how Danto's examples support his concept of the artworld. I now move on to look at how the examples of indiscernible counterparts which I have just discussed support Danto's theory of art.

At the beginning of this section, I set out a revised list of six principles which, as I explained in chapter one (bear in mind I added one more), underlie Danto's concept of the artworld. The six principles are: (1) art is the result of human endeavour by an artist, (2) artworks acquire a history and a provenance, (3) artworks embody meaning (they are expressive), which meaning is a result of the artist's intention, (4) that meaning requires a subject, about which the artist projects a point of view by means of rhetorical ellipsis, (5) artworks require interpretation and finally, (6) they are produced and interpreted within a historical context. I promised to return to examine how the examples of indiscernibles support these six principles. So far, I have chosen six of Danto's examples of indiscernible counterparts and examined how they support Fisher's three sub-claims: (1) every real thing can have an indiscernible counterpart which is an artwork, (2) every artwork can have an indiscernible counterpart which is a different artwork and lastly, (3) every artwork can have an indiscernible counterpart which is an ordinary thing. Recapping, Kuriloff's *Laundry Bag* installation and an indiscernible everyday laundry bag, the *Manhattan Telephone Directory for 1980* and an indiscernible experimental novel *Metropolis Eighty* and Loran's diagram of Cézanne's *Portrait of Madame*

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Cézanne and Lichtenstein's indiscernible painting supported sub-claim (1). The two indiscernible extracts mentioned in Borges' short story *Pierre Menard* and the seven paintings from the imaginary gallery of nine indiscernible red canvasses supported sub-claim (2). Finally, the two remaining squares (non-artworks) from the imaginary gallery of nine indiscernible red canvasses and Rembrandt's *Polish Rider* and an accidentally produced although indiscernible counterpart support sub-claim (3). I have just examined how Fisher's three sub-claims are supported by the six examples of indiscernible counterparts. I intend to proceed by examining how the three sub-claims support the six principles of Danto's theory of art.

The first principle is that art is the result of human endeavour by an artist. The second and third sub-claims self-evidently support this principle; it is the first sub-claim – that every real thing can have an indiscernible counterpart which is an artwork – that requires some clarification. Surely ready-mades are not made by artists. This point has, however, been addressed in chapter one (section V) where it was explained that these everyday objects are, to use Danto's term, 'transfigured' into artworks by the agency of an artist. In the discussion of Kuriloff's *Laundry Bag* installation earlier in this section I also made it clear that Danto did not claim that everyday, un-transfigured objects were works of art. The artists responsible for the ready-mades take up everyday objects into the artworld; in doing so the objects become transfigured, to stay with Danto's loose term, and they cease to be what they were before.

The second principle is that artworks acquire a history and a provenance. This principle, following my discussion in chapter one (section V), is again dependent on the idea of the transfiguration of the commonplace, and little more needs saying other than the comments made above on the first principle. In being taken up into the artworld the everyday objects acquire a history and a provenance. The problem here is one that surfaced in the discussion in the previous chapter: the point was made there that any object - we recall the piece of teak from H.M.S. Iron

Duke – could similarly acquire a history and a provenance; this principle does not help me to distinguish art from non-art.

The third principle is that artworks embody meaning (they are expressive), which meaning is a result of the artist's intention. I shall also include here the fourth principle – that such meaning requires a subject, which projects a point of view by means of rhetorical ellipsis – bearing in mind that a fuller exploration of this latter principle awaits the next chapter. These two principles are supported by Fisher's sub-claim one: that every real thing can have an indiscernible counterpart that is an artwork. I have explained how this can be so in the examples of Kuriloff's *Laundry Bag* installation and the experimental novel *Metropolis Eighty*; these artworks embody meanings which their indiscernible counterparts, the everyday objects, lack. While discussing principle four – that meaning requires a subject, about which the artist projects a point of view by means of rhetorical ellipsis – I am also in a position to discuss the full implications of sub-claim (1a) that every representation can have an indiscernible counterpart which is both a representation and an artwork.

The important example here is Danto's comparison of Loran's diagram of Cézanne's painting *Portrait of Madame Cézanne* with Lichtenstein's indiscernible canvas – they are indiscernible at least in reproductions (see illustration 7). I made the distinction before that Loran's diagram is clearly a representation and not a work of art whereas Lichtenstein's painting is both a representation and a work of art. Where does the difference lie? The Loran diagram tries to explain how Cézanne composed and constructed his painting; the Lichtenstein version is something quite different: it is elliptical in that it invites the viewer to consider how we attempt to address Cézanne's genius in art-historical terms by means of diagrams. Noël Carroll picks this point up when he explains: "the subjects of Loran's diagram and Lichtenstein's painting differ; Loran's painting [*sic*] is about a certain work by Cézanne, whereas Lichtenstein's painting is about Cézanne's vision. The method of address of the Loran diagram is straightforward; the address of the Lichtenstein's

Portrait of Madame Cézanne is rhetorical. which, for Danto. means that it has to be filled-in by the spectator in the manner of a rhetorical question" (1993. p.85). Carroll has conflated rhetoric and ellipsis here; in the following chapter I will highlight the difference. In brief, Danto believes the Lichtenstein painting is *both* elliptical and rhetorical: something is omitted which has to be filled in by the viewer, and the omission itself is a device of persuasion. The distinction between these two indiscernibles is an important one for Danto, and, as I will point out, he returns to it several times later in the book. At this stage, it is the only concept proposed by Danto offering to identify a substantive difference between art and non-art: it offers to provide a potential solution to Danto's quest for a definition of art without employing a circular argument. Danto is well aware of the importance of this distinction and devotes a substantial part of the final chapter of *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* to rhetorical ellipsis in art. In the penultimate chapter he begins to articulate the distinction: "any representation not an artwork can be matched by one that is one, the difference lying in the fact that the artwork uses the way the nonartwork presents its content to make a point about how that content is presented" (1981, p.146). I shall return to discuss this issue of the way an artwork presents its content in the following chapter in greater detail.

The fifth principle was that artworks require interpretation, and this is supported by sub-claims one and three: that every real thing can have an indiscernible counterpart which is an artwork and that every artwork can have an indiscernible counterpart which is an ordinary thing. As I have already explained with the example of Kuriloff's *Laundry Bag* installation, it is the laundry bag's transfiguration into an artwork by the artist that imposes a meaning onto a mere everyday object; an interpretation is then required to understand the everyday object as art. An interpretation is also required to distinguish the artwork from the accidentally produced indiscernible: as in the case of Rembrandt's *Polish Rider* and the paint splat. As I have already pointed out, the difficulty is that many other objects which are not artworks also require interpretation. The *Manhattan Telephone*

Directory for 1980 requires interpretation, or to return to the subject of representations, road signs require interpretation in a similar way to Julian Opie's artworks which resemble road signs (see illustration 11).

The final principle is that artworks are produced and interpreted within a historical context and this is supported by sub-claim two: that every artwork can have an indiscernible counterpart which is a different artwork. The discussion of the seven indiscernible artwork canvasses in Danto's gallery has demonstrated how each one was produced in a different historical context and how each interpretation requires knowledge of the circumstances appertaining at that particular time. With each of the seven canvasses some knowledge of the artist's intention is required, and this is inextricably bound up with the artistic milieu within which the artist was working. Again the criticism may be raised that this principle says nothing particularly to distinguish artworks from non-artworks. For example it does not help to distinguish artworks from everyday things: after all, the road signs in the example mentioned above, which were being compared with Julian Opie's artworks, have their own small place within the history of graphic design and its relation to highway engineering in this country.

In this section I have examined how some of Danto's examples of indiscernible counterparts from *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* are used to support his concept of the artworld. The twenty-three main examples of indiscernibles dominate the book, certainly all but the final chapter. In each case we are asked to agree that the examples used are indeed perceptually indiscernible. The work of Danto's theory is to explain why these indiscernible objects, at least one out of each pair which is an artwork, are different. The whole basis of Danto's theory of art as Carroll says "must explain how the relevant distinction is possible" (1993, p.80). In the next section I shall look at Joseph Margolis's criticism of the method Danto has pinned his faith on; in the conclusion I shall consider whether his faith in this method – the comparison of indiscernible counterparts – is justified.

III. Joseph Margolis's Criticism of Danto's Method of Comparing Indiscernibles

I begin by re-emphasising the centrality of the method of comparing indiscernible counterparts to Danto's work not only in aesthetics but, as I have already mentioned, in his overall philosophical project; he explains: "it is here, at the boundaries between radically different but otherwise indistinguishable worlds, that philosophy itself must begin ... It cannot be a philosophical possibility that a genuine division between philosophers can consist of the presence in one world and the absence from another of some concrete thing" (1997b, p.13). Much criticism of Danto focuses on his philosophy of the history of art ignoring the indiscernibility question which is the basis of his philosophy of art. As I have explained in the previous chapter, Danto's philosophy of the history of art is reliant on his philosophy of art; it is crucial, therefore, to examine his use of indiscernible counterparts before an informed view of his philosophy of the history of art is possible: a consideration much overlooked in discussions of Danto's writings on art.

Margolis and Danto have much in common: they are exact contemporaries (both were born in 1924) both are or were professors of philosophy at American universities and both have an interest in and write extensively about art. They also disagree fundamentally about art: there is a long-standing argument between them over the question of how we perceive works of art. This disagreement culminated in a series of three articles published in *The British Journal of Aesthetics* between 1998 and 2000;[10] it is these articles that I shall be referring to, for the most

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[10]The first by Margolis, 'Farewell to Danto and Goodman' Vol. 38, No. 4, October 1998, pp.353-74, the second by Danto 'Indiscernibility and Perception: a Reply To Joseph Margolis', Vol. 39, No. 3, July 1999, pp.321-9, and the third by Margolis 'A Closer Look at Danto's Account of Art and Perception' Vol. 40, No. 3, July 2000, pp.326-39 (referred to in the bibliography as Margolis,1998, Danto, 1999c and Margolis, 2000a. The first is also reprinted with revisions as

part, in my discussion. Margolis has three major criticisms of Danto's use of the comparison of indiscernibles. Firstly, that Danto in examining indiscernibles uses the logically incoherent concept of the *is* of artistic identification. Secondly, that Danto has to identify an artwork perceptually in order to get his experiments going (in which he argues that artworks are perceptually indiscernible) and thirdly, that the work of art must be *discernible* as such before the *indiscernibility* issue can arise. They are not separated as such by Margolis but I have done so to help structure and clarify the discussion. I shall address the three criticisms in turn.

It will be recalled that in chapter one I have already outlined Margolis's criticism of Danto's idea of the special *is* of artistic identification. It is the starting point of Margolis's first criticism of indiscernible counterparts. At the end of the discussion in chapter one, it will be recalled, I mentioned that Margolis's criticism moved on from Danto's *is* of artistic identification to consider his use of indiscernible counterparts. I promised to return to consider his criticism of this latter issue and I intend to redeem that promise now.

Margolis's argument against Danto's *is* of artistic identification is crucial to his criticism of Danto's indiscernibility thought experiments; it relies, as I have explained in chapter one, on a close reading of key passages in 'The Artworld' article; they are given in full in section IV of chapter one, together with Margolis's criticism, and I do not repeat them here. Margolis argued, it will be recalled, that Danto's concept of the *is* of artistic identification was logically incoherent: that Danto had lost the reality of artworks. He believes that Danto is saying, on the one hand, artworks are real, and, on the other hand, Danto's definition of the *is* of artistic identification results in artworks being unreal. They are unreal in the sense that, if they are identified by Danto's special *is*, they are unable to possess the intentional properties which both Danto and Margolis agree are essential to art.

Chapter 2 of *Selves and Other Texts*, Margolis, 2001a).

The first criticism Margolis has of Danto's indiscernibles is that he continues to use the incoherent concept of the *is* of artistic identification. In summary, Margolis believes that Danto's argument proposes that in identifying artworks, we must use the *is* of artistic identification (because it is a necessary condition), and, in doing so – Danto states this quite clearly – we must refer to some physical property of the real thing which exists but is not an artwork. As I have explained in chapter one, Margolis believes that on Danto's argument in speaking of artworks, as we are speaking of a *physical* part or property of a real thing, we must therefore be speaking about something which is discernible *perceptually* in the real thing. So we cannot be referring to the perceptual properties of artworks because the only perceptually discernible properties are in the real thing which on Danto's argument are not artworks. Danto believes the artwork is the real thing interpreted in terms of the *is* of artistic identification. Margolis believes that Danto needs to invoke the *is* of artistic identification to constitute an artwork *before* any interpretation can take place. To identify an artwork Danto needs the special *is* which Margolis believes is an incoherent concept.

Margolis goes on to apply the results of this criticism of Danto's *is* of artistic identification to the indiscernibility issue, and I pick up his argument again at this point. Margolis says of the latter: "it is not that the perceptual properties *of* artworks and 'real' things are (may be) indiscernibly the same; it is rather that we are *never* [on Danto's argument] perceptually confronted with more than the properties of real things. Of course. But if that is so, then *all* of Danto's famous puzzle cases evaporate. His indiscernibility charge *never rightly arises!*" (1998, p.368). This is because Margolis's criticism of Danto's argument – about the *is* of artistic identification – explains how "he [Danto] has somehow lost the existence and reality of artworks!" (1998, p.367). Margolis discusses Danto's example of the gallery of indiscernible red squares and concludes that "if the eye cannot 'determine' the *actual* or *real* 'difference' between an artwork and 'a mere real thing', then we cannot ever discern the real presence of an artwork; and if there *are* no artworks discerned as

such, or if there are no artworks *period*, then indiscernibility never arises as a real puzzle ... Artworks cannot be real enough to be denoted and individuated if they are not real enough to have discernible properties *qua* art. That is Danto's *pons*" (1998. p.369).

I now move on to consider the second area of Margolis's criticism; the question of how we perceive works of art: Margolis believes that Danto is profoundly mistaken in his view of this issue. To explain Margolis's view I will use, and elaborate on, an example which Margolis refers to briefly in his final reply to Danto: it is from Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*: the case of the swinging stone.[11] I shall re-formulate it in terms of a thought experiment. Two people, one an Aristotelian, the other a follower of Galileo, are shown a swinging stone and asked to comment on what they see. Both say they see a swinging stone, but I point out that they have merely given me a description and ask them *what* it is they see; I receive very different comments. The Aristotelian says she sees a heavy object attempting by its own nature to move from a higher position to a lower one, eventually coming to rest. The process being seen as one of controlled or constrained falling: the control being provided by the chain; as Kuhn puts it, it is a case of "falling with difficulty" (1996, p.119). Galileo's follower however sees a pendulum: a remarkable device which attempts to achieve an isochronous movement indefinitely: the period being determined solely by the length of the pendulum irrespective of the amplitude. The point I wish to highlight is that initially both observers arrive at the same description: a swinging stone; Kuhn says: "note that genius [Galileo's] does not here manifest itself in more accurate or objective observation of the swinging body. Descriptively, the Aristotelian perception is just as accurate" (1996, p.119).

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[11] Margolis refers to it at the end of Margolis, 2000a, p.339. The original is in Kuhn, 1996, pp.118-20.

I now move to another thought experiment which brings in art. I consider two people, a builder and a museum curator; both are asked to view and comment on a monochrome rectangle of grey metallic-looking material. and both say it is a rectangle of grey metallic-looking material. As with the previous case. I persevere and ask not for a description but what the object is. The builder suggests either a cover for some item of site plant, or a sample board, or a piece of building cladding. The museum curator suggests either part of a cover for a domestic appliance, or a wall tile, or (she obviously works at the Tate Modern) possibly a work of art. Both say that without further information or investigation they cannot be sure what the object is. The object is in fact part of a work of art, a component of one of Carl Andre's gallery installations. I could also envisage indiscernibles of the object on display at the same time; they could all be parts of Andre's installation, or six different objects each corresponding to one of the observers' guesses, or all completely different objects not thought of by either viewer.

Margolis believes there are two broad levels of perception occurring in these thought experiments: firstly, a descriptive one (for example the response that the object is a swinging stone), and secondly, one which has an epistemic component: it involves a guess (in an abductive sense) concerning what we know about the nature and function of the object. It is the latter which brings into play the background knowledge of the viewer and contextual issues. It must be noted that the two levels are not completely separate; there is some overlap; some background knowledge is involved in the first level. Margolis believes that Danto has used the descriptive level of perception and misappropriated the results at the other, epistemic level. This epistemic level Margolis calls the primary sense of 'perceive'. where perception is penetrated and influenced by cultural and contextual knowledge. This latter being how we usually 'perceive' works of art amongst other things which we see in a cultural context: a very obvious example of how this would work in my thought experiment would be if the grey rectangle were seen arranged in an art gallery with other similar pieces and labelled 'Gallery Installation by Carl Andre'.

Both observers would be under no misapprehension at all about the nature of the object they were looking at. Margolis believes Danto has, incorrectly, used the results of his indiscernibility thought experiments, which operate at the descriptive level, to formulate a theory about the ontological status of works of art: objects which we normally perceive at the other level (the primary or epistemic level). Margolis puts it this way:

> Now, the verbal slippage (the sleight of hand) that I see is this: the sense of 'indiscernible' that holds in speaking of indiscernible *red squares* is made to play the same role (without defence) in speaking of *indiscernibly different paintings* or the *indiscernible difference between a painting and a mere object daubed with paint*, all the while we neglect to ask ourselves whether the difference between a mere red thing (a red square) and a painting in the form of a red square (*Red Dust*, say) could be, or ever needs to be, outfitted with a distinctive sense of 'perceive' (that incorporates the other) in virtue of which the difference (between the objects, not the colours) *is perceptible* and could be rightly said to be 'descried' *by* perceiving a pertinent difference. (2000a, pp.337-8)

Margolis believes that this is where Danto makes a fundamental error with his thought experiments. He believes that Danto's phrasing of the question, in terms of what is the difference between the red square which is a work of art and the red square which is not, hides the assumption that we have already *perceptually* identified the former red square as a work of art and thus 'freighted', as Margolis terms it, our perception. Our response is already coloured by our prior acceptance of the red square, which is an artwork, as art. Margolis believes we should be questioning when the acceptance of the first red square as a work of art occurred. He believes the acceptance is prior to Danto's question concerning indiscernibility, and there is therefore already some perceptual difference involved which involves the fuller or 'primary' level of perception: the second level which I identified in my own

thought experiment. What kind of difference would enable us to decide that the first square was a work of art? In Margolis's wider view of perception, it would be that the perception involves the artwork's emergence from a cultural background: perhaps the fact that it is in a gallery, it has a label, a frame, a catalogue description or is accompanied by a statement from the artist. Margolis believes that Danto is perceptually identifying an artwork in order to compare it with its 'perceptually indiscernible' counterpart. In other words, the criticism is that Danto contradicts himself by relying on the very thing he denies to make his point: he has to identify an artwork perceptually in order to get his experiment going (in which he argues that artworks are perceptually indiscernible).

Margolis's third and final argument against Danto's use of indiscernible counterparts he regards as his most telling. He calls it his "*reductio*" argument (1998, p.370), although his previous criticisms have all been formulated on the refutation of Danto's assumptions by deriving contradictions or false assumptions from them. He explains his final criticism: "the 'sensory' indiscernibility of the difference between an artwork and some 'mere real thing' is (must be) internal to the common conceptual space in which artworks and mere real things are themselves differentiated. In that sense, artworks must be 'discernible'. They must be discernible if, contingently they are on occasion sensorily indiscernible from other works or mere real things!" (1998. pp.370-1). In other words, he believes that works of art must be *discernible* as such before the indiscernibility issue can arise. When I look at a work of art, say Warhol's *Brillo Box*, I bring knowledge of pop art and the artist to my interpretation. But Margolis's point is that Danto in using his indiscernibility thought experiments has provided us with nothing which identifies the specific (ontological) nature of art. A sales representative, for example, with no knowledge of pop art or Warhol would bring knowledge of Brillo pads as scouring tools and their place in the development and marketing of such materials when they looked at *Brillo Box* the sculpture; they would be using the same process as Danto describes. Margolis believes that Danto is trying to separate a pure form of

perception for his thought experiments, and for Margolis there is no such 'pure' perception: "there is no mere 'sensory' perception that we can report, except what we agree to abstract from the culturally freighted perceptual reportings that we normally learn to make" (1998, p.371). Danto's comparison of indiscernibles is just such an abstraction in what Margolis believes is an unsuccessful attempt to isolate 'pure' sensory perception.

In his reply to these criticisms (1999c) Danto returns to the gallery of indiscernible red canvasses; he stresses that the thought experiment was designed to show that these examples are perceptually indistinguishable yet completely different works of art: "I sought, in brief, to separate perception from interpretation, whereas Margolis has a theory in which perception is infused with interpretation, so that we never merely see a plane figure covered with colours" (1999c, p.324). Danto puts forward another thought experiment to make his point: he asks us to imagine that one of the red canvasses in this gallery is stolen and the curator replaces it with another, although the labelling is not changed. The visitors will be looking at say *Red Dust* but believe they are seeing *The Israelites Crossing the Red Sea*; the perceptual 'freight' they bring to the examination of *Red Dust* will be that appropriate to the other picture which, as I have already explained, is a totally different painting. Danto's view of perception, as this illustration shows, is that it is essentially what remains when the interpretational elements are removed; he believes that interpretation, at least at this basic level, cannot penetrate perception. He sums up his position: "the problem as I see it has to do with what fallback position one has if, with no objective change in what one perceives, one discovers that one was wrong not in terms of what one sees with one's eyes but in terms of what one needs to see it as art" (1999c, p.327). This situation of misinterpretation or changing interpretations is widespread in art: it is not limited to the monochrome paintings in Danto's hypothetical gallery; Danto explains how his own interpretation of Watteau's *L'embarquement à Cythère* changed after discovering that the *à* in the title can mean *from* as well as *to*. Another famous example is Goethe's

misinterpretation of Gerhard Terborch's *L'Instruction Paternelle* (see illustration 13) in *Elective Affinities*.[12] Goethe, in the novel, explains the subject of the painting as a knightly father admonishing his daughter; we now know that the young lady is a prostitute agreeing terms with a potential client!

Margolis believes that in discussing these questions of interpretation we have already decided that we are discussing works of art. However, once this decision has been made he is happy to accept that varying, perhaps changing, or indeed mistaken interpretations may occur. In his reply to Danto's response to his original paper Margolis accepts that the comparison of indiscernibles does in certain restricted circumstances apply to art: he says that "certain forms of contemporary art, it is true, are peculiarly susceptible to indiscernibles. I put it to you that conceptual art often *does* rely – and relies entirely – on artists' intentions, as appears with ready-mades and appropriational art; but such art very often has no further interest for us beyond our grasping the point of the pertinent intention or trick or joke" (2000a, p.330). This is a common objection to Danto's approach: that it relates to a special, and very limited, class of art which is susceptible to the approach of comparing indiscernibles.[13] However, my brief discussion of Sherrie Levine's work indicated that appropriational art does raise deep, complex and fundamental issues about its subject matter and the nature of art. I shall return to this issue in the conclusion to this chapter when I discuss the difference between attenuated indiscernibility – of which this objection is an example – and Danto's broader claim.

Before I move on I will outline my own view of Margolis's criticisms. In chapter one I have already endorsed Margolis's criticism of the *is* of artistic identification: that it is logically incoherent. Margolis's first criticism is that Danto uses this special *is* in his explanation of indiscernible counterparts, and I

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[12]The passage referred to is from *Elective Affinities* pp.191-2, see Goethe, 1971.

[13]A typical example of this approach is Nan Stalnaker's in her article on 'Fakes and Forgeries' in Gaut and Lopes, 2001, pp.402-3.

clearly accept this point. The second criticism is that Danto has to identify an artwork perceptually as art to get his thought experiments going (in which he argues that artworks are perceptually indiscernible), and I agree with Margolis that Danto has to perceive a distinction somewhere between two indiscernible works of art or a work of art and an everyday object. In his last criticism Margolis argues there can be no absolute indiscernibility; if there were, Danto's thought experiments could not be envisaged. The discernible difference, wherever or whenever it occurs, must be sensory and take place in a culturally conditioned environment. I also agree with Margolis on this point: Danto's attempt to isolate 'pure' perception is untenable wherever we are addressing culturally and historically situated objects such as artworks. However in the conclusion to this chapter I explain why I believe this does not compromise Danto's theory of art: I explain how his theory of art does not rely on either the *is* of artistic identification or the indiscernibility thought experiments. As I shall point out, this is a point Margolis makes himself. However, before I do this, I move on to consider the relation between Danto's artworld and Dickie's institutional theory of art.

IV. The Artworld and the Institutional Theory of Art

In chapter one I mentioned briefly how George Dickie's institutional theory of art was similar to Danto's artworld concept. This was evident in two areas: firstly, in the area of interpretation; both theories were seen to be dependent on the process of interpreting works of art. Secondly, both theories disavow any reliance on purely aesthetic qualities in art. In this section I intend to look at the differences between the two theories and examine how one aspect of Danto's technique of comparing indiscernible counterparts – Fisher's sub-claim (2) every artwork can have an indiscernible counterpart which is a different artwork – provides an argument against Dickie's institutional theory at least *as Danto understands it*. I have highlighted the last phrase; there is a significant difference between Danto's understanding of the

institutional theory (and incidentally many others') and Dickie's own.[14] To begin with, I need to make this distinction clear. I do not, however, intend to provide a detailed explanation of Dickie's theory and its development. My main concern lies with its relation to Danto's technique of comparing indiscernibles, and as both theories are in general agreement about the results of the thought experiments, I concentrate on how the theories differ.

George Dickie's first version of the institutional theory appeared in 1969 in which he explained that "a work of art in the descriptive sense is 1) an artefact 2) upon which society or some sub-group of a society has conferred the status of candidate for appreciation" (1969, p.252). It was this wording, particularly the phrase *society or some sub-group of a society*, that engendered a wide-spread and still prevalent misunderstanding of Dickie's theory. The phrase was, it still is, taken to refer to a wide-ranging group of curators, critics, collectors and commentators who could themselves confer the status of artwork on an object, acting individually or somehow in concert. Dickie did not mean this at all: he saw the *society* as being composed of artists; it is artists alone who make art and confer artwork status on objects; he clarifies this point saying: "even at this early date the theory focuses on the actions of artists when they create art" (2000, p.93). He has also explained that he carefully chose the word *society* to cover cases of multiple authorship such as a group of people making a film which otherwise might have been excluded from his definition. Dickie has revised the definition several times since this first version; his later versions remove any reference to the word *society* from the definition but the misunderstanding about the earlier version has proved very

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[14] See for example Richard Wollheim's criticism of the theory in *Painting as Art* (Wollheim, 1987, p.15) or Garry Hagberg in *Art as Language* (Hagberg, 1995, p.150-61). A recent example appears in Cynthia Freeland's *But is it Art?* (Freeland, 2001, p.55.)

persistent. He complains that the misunderstanding has even been enshrined in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy.*[15]

As late as 1992 Danto is still choosing to misinterpret Dickie's theory saying: "his notion of the artworld was pretty much the body of experts who confer that status [of being an artwork] on something by fiat. In a way, Dickie's theory implies a kind of empowering elite" (1992, p.38) and slightly later: "the crux of his theory is that something is art when declared to be art by the artworld" (1992, p.38). Clearly Dickie himself sees *artists* creating art or conferring artistic status on objects; the misinterpretation of his theory by Danto and others sees the conferral being given by members of the artworld. How does 'artworld' differ from 'artists' in this debate? Why is the difference important? There are two reasons; firstly, if anyone in the artworld can confer artistic status this could remove the element of the artist's intention from the process of creating art. On both Dickie's and Danto's account of art the intention of the artist is a necessary feature of art. The ability of anyone in the artworld to randomly confer artistic status goes completely against this. A curator could decide that a snow shovel, say, any snow shovel, is a work of art; we have lost the intention of the artist and therefore by Dickie's and Danto's account we have lost art per se. Secondly, looking at the issue in another way, if anyone in the artworld, curator or critic, can 'create' a work of art, are we not conferring the status of artist on those very people: we have simply enlarged the pool of artists. They must surely have some reason for conferring artistic status on whatever they choose; so the reason becomes *their* artist's intention, they become artists, and we return to Dickie's view of conferral of artistic status by artists. It is the misinterpreted theory that Danto and Richard Wollheim criticise so unfairly. Again from *Beyond the Brillo Box* in 1992 Danto says:

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[15]Dickie, 2000, p.95, he refers to *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, 1994, pp.378-9.

Who is the art world? is the standard question, along with: How does one get to be a member of it? "Do the representatives, if they exist, pass in review all candidates for the status of art, and do they then, while conferring this status on some, deny it to others?" Richard Wollheim slyly asks. Who keeps records of these decisions: are they announced in art magazines? Do art writers wait outside the judging chambers, desperate to phone their publication with the scoops? How literally can Dickie mean what he says?[16]

Reading this it is easy to understand Dickie's obvious exasperation with this misinterpretation of his theory. However, I leave the misunderstanding for the present but return to it shortly to examine how it results in unwarranted criticism of the institutional theory. I move on now to look at the technique of comparing indiscernible counterparts in relation to Dickie's institutional theory.

I consider two issues, firstly, how Dickie views the technique and secondly, I return to look at how the technique has been used to criticise the misinterpreted institutional theory: the unwarranted criticism I mentioned above. The first issue is easily dealt with: Dickie fully accepts the usefulness of the technique of comparing indiscernible counterparts; he acknowledges Danto's origination of the technique and its relevance to artworks; he states quite clearly that he has adopted the technique himself (2000, p.96-7). He fully accepts that the result of comparing these indiscernible pairs – where one is an artwork and the other not – is that the difference between them lies in the context of the artworks: which he, along with Danto, believes to be lodged in their non-manifest qualities. It is these qualities which must give artworks their status; Dickie says: "I accept Danto's argument, but I give a different account of what the context is, namely the institutional account embodied in the definitions I have given" (2000, p.97). His reference to definitions in

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[16]Danto, 1992, p.38, the Richard Wollheim quotation is from Wollheim, 1987, p.15.

this quotation – note the plural – is to the various changes and improvements he has incorporated into his definition since 1969.[17]

The second issue is that of how the technique of comparing indiscernible counterparts has been used to criticise the misinterpreted institutional theory. It is the second of Fisher's sub-claims – every artwork can have an indiscernible counterpart which is a different artwork – which is invoked here. Fisher makes the point that the institutional theory fails to explain *why* certain objects achieve artwork status: it simply explains *how* they achieve that status. With this view he clearly joins the 'misinterpretation' camp. Fisher explains: "but to explain (B) [his own sub-claim two: every artwork can have an indiscernible counterpart which is a different artwork], as the problem requires, is necessarily to address the basis for content in artworks, because it requires an explanation of the difference in the qualities and interpretation of two indiscernible artworks. Hence, (B) provides a direct challenge to the adequacy of the institutional theory" (1995, p.475). In other words Fisher is arguing that the institutional theory cannot explain the difference between two indiscernibles both of which are artworks. In his view two indiscernible objects 'labelled' as art by the institutional elite would be incapable of being distinguished once they had been accepted as art. He believes that the institutional theory can tell us how they became artworks but cannot explain why they are artworks: it cannot explain how they can possibly be completely different works of art. The explanation which, as I have already explained, Dickie emphasises is that the distinction lies in the artists' different intentions. Fisher has the same view of the institutional theory as Danto and Wollheim and, with them, has missed this essential element: that art is created by artists and the context of the creation of art involves artistic intention. So Dickie's view, rather than the misinterpreted version, is very close to Danto's own artworld theory. Take away the misunderstanding about the interpretation of the

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[17]His preferred version is in *The Art Circle: A Theory of Art*, 1984, p. 80-2. *Art and Value*, 2001 also provides a wider discussion, pp.52-73.

word *society* in Dickie's original formulation of his theory and Danto's artworld theory and Dickie's institutional theory are very similar. Dickie puts more emphasis on the institutional and social aspects of the creation of art, but, along with Danto, he believes that it is the non-manifest qualities, particularly the contextual issues surrounding the creation of artworks, that are crucial in defining them as art. Both theories, Danto's artworld and Dickie's institutional theory – certainly in the latter's correctly interpreted form – have a great deal in common. Fisher refers to Danto's theory as contextualism, and it is a very apt label for both theories: the term makes quite clear the overriding emphasis both theories place on the importance of context.

Before I move on from Dickie's institutional theory I shall raise one final issue: the spectre of circularity of argument which I discussed in chapter one. There I identified circularity as a major criticism of Danto's artworld theory; as I have already explained, Dickie's theory, being similar in its contextualism to Danto's theory, is surely open to the same criticism. How does Dickie respond? His answer gives rise to an initial element of surprise: he openly accepts the circularity as an inevitable and intrinsic part of his theory. I will explain his reasons for this view; it is perhaps the most unusual and original feature of his theory. Dickie identifies five linked elements in his theory: artist, work of art, public, artworld and artworld system. He accepts that his definition of art involves circularity: each element is dependent on another as part of its definition.

Dickie, however, distinguishes the circularity in his theory from the circularity involved in, say, Bell's concept of significant form which he uses as an example (2000, pp. 101-2). Significant form is a technical term and we need to have the term explained to us; Bell's explanation of significant form, as that which causes aesthetic emotion, is no real definition: it relies on a circular relationship between significant form and aesthetic emotion which tells us very little. Dickie believes that the five elements in his definition of art are of a different order: we accept and understand them from an early age; they are part of our cultural identity. Dickie explains:

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Art teachers and parents teach children how to be artists and how to display their work. Children are taught how to draw and color and how to put their drawings on the refrigerator door for others to see. What children are being taught are basic *cultural roles* of which every competent member of our society has at least a rudimentary understanding. These cultural roles are, I believe, invented very early on in primitive societies and persist through time into all structural societies. (2000, p.101)

Dickie calls this set of five elements – artist, work of art, public, artworld and artworld system – an 'inflected concept'; they are acquired and used as an inter-related and interdependent set. Dickie is using 'inflected' in its technical sense of bending or turning inward. He sees the five elements providing support and relying on each other; no single element can be fully understood or appreciated in isolation: the set has to be seen as a whole. It is this idea of an inflected concept which, for Dickie, legitimates the circularity in his definition of art: in other words the circularity is an integral part of the definition. It also distinguishes it from the technical definitions such as Bell's significant form. Dickie sees art as a cultural construct along with other social concepts: "there is nothing mysterious about such sets of concepts. I suspect that many of our cultural phenomena involve inflected notions, notions that are interdefined and are learned as a set" (2000, p.102). Dickie develops an important distinction between what he calls natural-kind and cultural-kind activities. He gives as an example one of the most basic animal activities required for survival: the need for nourishment. The natural-kind activities would be gathering food and hunting; the cultural-kind would be ritualised activities involving the preparation or eating of food in a certain way. Dickie applies this distinction to theories of art; he sees expressionist theories as being natural-kind whereas his institutional theory is cultural-kind: "on this [the institutional] theory, art is a cultural invention. Art may involve natural-kind activities such as the appreciation of basic aesthetic qualities, but the institutional theory does not see such

appreciation as essential to art" (2000, p.107). This is another area where Danto and Dickie are in broad agreement. Before I leave the discussion of Dickie's institutional theory of art I shall summarise the difference between it and Danto's artworld theory: both, it has been explained, are contextual theories. Dickie's theory accepts the circularity in his own definition of art as inevitable: in fact as an essential part of his definition of art as an inflected concept. Danto attempts to break the circularity with his concept of the *is* of artistic identification and his use of the technique of comparing indiscernible counterparts. His aim is to provide a non-circular definition of art grounded on *a priori* principles. I leave the institutional theory of art now but I will return to the idea of art as a cultural construct, and particularly to Joseph Margolis's extreme form of culturalism, in the next section, the conclusion to this chapter. Here I intend to review the various threads of my discussion on indiscernibility.

V. Conclusion

Before I review my discussion of indiscernible counterparts I need to address one more issue: this is the distinction that John Andrew Fisher draws between broad indiscernibility and narrow indiscernibility: what he calls "the attenuated problem of indiscernible counterparts" (1995, p.481). He suggests that if supposing the indiscernibility thought experiments apply in a universal way raises concerns, perhaps an attenuated form would be acceptable. The attenuated form would replace the three original sub-claims with the following: (*1'*) *some* real things can have indiscernible counterparts which are artworks, *(2')* *some* artworks can have indiscernible counterparts which are different artworks and lastly. (*3'*) *some* artworks can have indiscernible counterparts which are ordinary things. The word *every* in the original formulation has been replaced by *some*. It is a straightforward and uncontroversial exercise to find some instances of artworks that can be accommodated in each of these three sub-claims: for instance from the cases

included in Danto's list of twenty-three examples of indiscernibles. The ease of finding evidence to support this claim, however, tends to divert attention from a serious difficulty it engenders.

In the revised sub-claim *(1')* – some real things can have indiscernible counterparts which are artworks – I am accepting that broad indiscernibility is false. Because in taking away the *some* I am left with the *remainder* (of real things) which do not have indiscernible counterparts. There are similar results with revised sub-claims *(2')* and *(3')*. Note that once I have exchanged 'some' for 'every', revised sub-claims *(1')* and *(3')* are logically equivalent. If I accept the revised sub-claims *(2')* and *(3')* I am in effect denying the original sub-claims (2) and (3); there are going to be artworks that do not have an indiscernible counterpart which is a different artwork and artworks that do not have an indiscernible counterpart which is a non-artwork. In denying broad indiscernibility it seems I have to accept that some artworks are unique; that they are artworks by virtue of some non-relational property. But Danto's treatment of ready-mades shows that two objects, one an artwork, one not, can be indiscernible. Narrow indiscernibility cannot account for the difference in the contextual history and provenance of these objects which is where Danto believes the difference between them lies.

Narrow Indiscernibility creates a special class of artworks that do not have indiscernible counterparts and the difficulty lies in identifying which features of this special class determines that it cannot have such counterparts. Fisher says: "the attenuated problem has the strange property of undercutting itself by generating through suggestion a mirror-image problem of why there are some things *without* indiscernible counterparts" (1995, p.483). How would this group of artworks without indiscernible counterparts be identified? Any identification would imply some non-contextual or non-relational property; it implies that artworks form some natural-kind group. It is the existence of such a natural-kind distinction to identify art that Danto has consistently denied. Narrow indiscernibility has created a sub-class which forms a natural-kind group, and I am given no indication of how to identify

the members of this group. Narrow indiscernibility re-introduces the very problem that Danto has been so careful to avoid: the existence of some form of art that would be immune to the technique of indiscernible counterparts: artefacts that could be identified as art by their discernible properties. Danto's whole argument on indiscernibles rests on the basic premise that any material object can have an indiscernible counterpart, and if I accept this premise, narrow indiscernibility fails. Whatever form of art proposed by the narrow indiscernibility argument would, on Danto's argument, have an actual indiscernible counterpart or the possibility of acquiring one. I now return to broad indiscernibility and review the arguments we have encountered in this chapter.

The array of indiscernible counterparts used by Danto ranges from the existent to the plausible to the extremely unlikely; the important matter of principle for Danto is that they are all possible; I have just pointed out that Danto's whole case rests on the basic premise that any material object can have an indiscernible counterpart. Once this basic premise is accepted *any* artwork can have an indiscernible counterpart. Danto's case is strengthened by the fact that in some cases we are not considering thought experiments but *existent works of art*: Danto's use of ready-mades is an example; I also pointed out appropriational art; in both these genres indiscernibility is a crucial element of the art. So we are not dealing exclusively with thought experiments; examples of indiscernibles, of the type Danto has chosen, exist in the artworld today. At the other end of the range we have Danto's examples which are highly improbable: such as the accidentally produced indiscernible counterpart to Rembrandt's *Polish Rider*. However unlikely this accidental counterpart is, there is no difference in principle between it and other more probable or extant examples. I should mention here that there are highly complex works of art that do have indiscernible counterparts: two consecutive castings of Rodin's *The Kiss* are indiscernible. Forgeries provide another example where the history of production of the artwork and the forgery are radically different

yet the two may well be indiscernible even to experts, as I explained in the case of van Meegeren's 'Vermeers'.

However, the premise that any artwork can have an indiscernible counterpart brings with it the problem that it tells us nothing about an object's status as art: after all, *anything* can have an indiscernible counterpart. Throughout the explanation of Danto's technique of comparing indiscernible counterparts, I have pointed out on several occasions that there is nothing in the technique which helps us to distinguish artworks from non-artworks. For example, I pointed out that the canvas grounded by Giorgione was not a work of art, but, had it existed, it would have had a complex, rich and interesting history of its own. I examined the technique of indiscernible counterparts and looked at how the examples supported Danto's six principles embodied in his artworld concept. In all but one of the principles there was nothing that related specifically to art. For example, some of the objects in the indiscernibility examples which were not artworks match five of the principles closely; they could be products of human endeavour, have a history and provenance, embody meaning and require interpretation within a historical context: the Loran diagram of Cézanne's painting is a good example.

The only principle which did, at this stage in the discussion, seem to relate specifically to art was the additional principle I added: the idea of art as rhetorical ellipsis. Danto's view is that art is self-reflexive, that artworks are making a point about their own content; his claim is that artworks achieve this in the way in which they present their content to an audience. The difference between Loran's diagram and Lichtenstein's painting of the diagram is used by Danto to illustrate this distinction. However, I believe that the use of indiscernible counterparts is not needed to support this additional principle – the idea that art embodies rhetorical ellipsis. For example, in a later discussion of Guercino's *Saint Luke Displaying a Painting of the Virgin* (see illustration 12) Danto makes this same point without using indiscernible counterparts (Danto, 1991b, pp.212-5). He examines in detail how the painting operates at a number of historical and cultural levels: it is a

religious painting with an obvious religious subject; it is a painting about style in painting – we note how the style of Saint Luke's painting in Guercino's painting is a historical style (historical that is in Guercino's time); it is a painting about viewing paintings – Saint Luke's gesture invites us to comment on his painting. We see it from our own historical perspective; we see the style of Guercino and are able to trace the influences on his work: how he incorporates both Carraccesque and Caravaggesque elements; we note how his style changes over his career. I return shortly to the question, mentioned above, of whether the technique of comparing indiscernible counterparts is really necessary to support Danto's contextual theory of art. The next chapter looks in detail at Danto's view of art as being self-reflexive and rhetorical in nature.

I examined criticisms levelled by Joseph Margolis against Danto's technique of comparing indiscernible counterparts. In summary, Danto relies on the flawed concept of the *is* of artistic identification to identify art. I restated Margolis's argument from chapter one that Danto's concept of the *is* of artistic identification is logically incoherent. If the concept is flawed the experiments fail; in fact they can never do what Danto suggests they do: which is to tell us anything at all about the nature of art. I believe Margolis's criticism of Danto's use of indiscernibility is correct; however, I do believe that Danto's insights into art, particularly his six principles, do not rely on the *is* of artistic identification or the issue of indiscernibility. This is a point which Margolis makes briefly himself: "if you allow the argument [his own view of artworks as culturally emergent real entities], then there is no need for a special '*is* of artistic identification'. It is quite enough to admit artworks as a special kind of entity" (1998, p.372). I shall return to the issue shortly and explain my own position; I shall also briefly outline Margolis's own theory of art which justifies this view.

I also agreed with Margolis that Danto has to identify an artwork perceptually in order to get his indiscernibility thought experiments going; experiments in which he argues that artworks are perceptually indiscernible.

Margolis's final criticism, which I endorse, is that Danto makes a fundamental error about how we perceive works of art. Margolis identified two broad levels of perception (although Margolis does not refer to them as such): firstly, a descriptive level and secondly, an epistemic level where perception is penetrated by cultural and historical knowledge. It is the epistemic level, which Margolis refers to as a 'primary' level of perception, which we use in viewing works of art. Margolis believes Danto's mistake is to use the first descriptive level in his indiscernibility thought experiments and use the results to make ontological assertions about how we perceive works of art. He believes Danto is misapplying the results of one level to the other level: it is an unsuccessful attempt to isolate 'pure' perception.

The way we accept artworks as art must involve being told about them or reading about them or seeing them in a gallery: all of which involve cultural and contextual elements being present in the process. The 'art' objects in question, in Danto's indiscernibility thought experiments, must already be discernible as works of art. Margolis says: "I find it impossible to avoid the conclusion that perceptual indiscernibilities of Danto's sort are completely irrelevant (or only very marginally relevant) to the actual concept of what a painting is, though they are hardly irrelevant to distinguishing one painting from another or a painting from something that happens not to be a painting at all, or a kind of painting that deliberately generates certain indiscernibilities parasitic on an already operative distinction" (2000a, pp.328-9). With the last phrase *parasitic on an already operative distinction* Margolis believes he has identified one feature which limits the applicability of indiscernibility to a certain type of painting; the phrase identifies minimalist paintings and ready-mades; genres that are, in their very subject and style, already inextricably linked to the question of indiscernibility: indiscernibility is part of their meaning.

It goes further than this for Margolis: the problem strikes at the very core of Danto's philosophy of art: Margolis believes that we are ineluctably involved in interpretation in the very act of constituting objects for interpretation: in other words we are involved in a hermeneutic circle of discourse. He believes Danto does

not address this issue adequately: he says "it is quite clear that his [Danto's] general philosophical orientation is uneasily – and unsatisfactorily – divided between his appreciation of the complexities of cultural phenomena, particularly historicity and intentionality, and his residual commitment to a relatively inflexible physicalism and extensionalism" (2001a, p.25). Margolis provides an alternative view and how to follow it up; he says: "I hesitate to offer Danto my own solution – that is, a doctrine favouring physically embodied but culturally emergent (real) entities. But it is a solution that links artworks and selves, that (contra Danto) accepts in the frankest way the thesis of cultural realism."[18]

Before I move on, I very briefly outline Margolis's own solution mentioned above: his own theory of art. He espouses realism and relativism. He sees works of art as culturally-emergent, irreducible, real entities which he views in a similar way to Peter Strawson's conception of individuals. He believes that we understand artworks relative to our interpretative practices which are marked by what he calls 'consensual tolerances'; he explains: "what I say here is that objectivity must be a constructed artefact of our consensual practice – whether construed bivalently or relativistically. Furthermore what holds for predication holds for reference and denotation and for all linguistic powers that bear on servicing truth-claims" (1999a, p.63). Margolis goes on to highlight the problem of using any theory of artistic judgement or criticism based exclusively on bivalency. The ubiquity of this approach, the exclusive reliance on bivalent logic, he sees as having relegated what he calls 'intentional utterances' (he gives examples - artworks, histories, deeds, speech acts) to a level of widely accepted irrelevance. I should stress here that Margolis is not trying to banish the use of bivalent logic in any field whatsoever, rather he is arguing that in certain areas of human endeavour, art being a prime example, its singular use is severely limiting. His approach is summed up well in the

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[18]Margolis, 1998, p.372. A footnote refers to Margolis, 1995a, for the follow-up.

title of his paper: 'The Eclipse and Recovery of Analytic Aesthetics'.[19] His 'recovery' gives art an important place: "the arts, I am convinced, may be shown to provide a better clue than the usual accounts of the natural sciences about how, for instance, to recover 'objectivity' at the end of the century" (1999a, p.3) and later: " I have tried to make a beginning here, and in doing so have tried to show how the best puzzles of epistemology, the philosophy of mind, and the other disciplines favored in the analytic world could be productively recovered *via* the seemingly marginal questions raised in the philosophy of art and history and culture" (2001a, p.xiii).

His is an attempt to develop an ontology of art which sees works of art as culturally emerging entities, and he arrives at a critical theory of art based on what he calls 'robust relativism'. The relativism appears as a consequence of his rejection of bivalency. He develops the idea that "predicative objectivity is not criterial but collective, consensually tolerant, grounded in the discursive practices of an enabling society, and subject to historical drift" (2000b, p.125). Margolis foregrounds the philosophical dispute between essentialism and anti-foundationalism and relates it to modernism versus postmodernism, but he rejects both. Rather he sees the crucial debate is between what he calls 'modal invariance', modernism, postmodernism et al, which he rejects, and the claims of his philosophy of continual flux. His approach is historically based, he uses the term 'historicity' to explain the emergent process which typifies what he calls encultured objects like artworks. Hermeneutics is an important element in his theory. Richard Shusterman summarises this aspect succinctly: "this ... 'hermeneuticizing' naturalism, recognising that interpretation not only functions to explain or elucidate the entities or texts that we encounter, but that it is already actively involved in constituting those entities as entities for interpretation."[20]

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[19]Originally published in Richard Shusterman, ed., *Analytic Aesthetics*, Blackwell, 1989, pp161-89. Reprinted as Chapter 1 of Margolis, 2001a.

[20]Entry on Margolis in Cooper, 1992, p.275.

I moved on to examine George Dickie's institutional theory of art as it relates to the indiscernibility issue. I found an anomalous situation: the institutional theory has been widely misunderstood and the technique of comparing indiscernible counterparts has been used as an argument against the theory in its commonly misunderstood form. Dickie accepts the results of Danto's thought experiments and has stressed that art is created by artists within a historical and societal context: this is the key feature of his institutional theory. The theory, I found, was very close to Danto's: both stress the importance of context in the creation and appreciation of art. The emphasis they place on aspects of the context does differ: Dickie places more emphasis on society and Danto on individuals, but I stress that it is a matter of emphasis rather than of principle. One aspect of Dickie's approach addresses an issue which I have discussed at several points in the discussion; the claim that the arguments used by Danto are circular: that the artworld is defined by some reference to art or culture (which itself involves an artistic element). Dickie fully accepts the circularity but claims that it is not vicious: the five elements of his artworld form an 'inflected concept' which he argues legitimates the circularity.

Finally, in the conclusion I address the issue of whether Danto's chosen technique – the comparison of indiscernible counterparts – achieves the aim he set out to obtain: to explain how Warhol's *Brillo Box* sculpture is a work of art when an everyday Brillo box is not. I have explained earlier how Margolis's criticism of the technique exposes a problem. The problem, as I have explained, is that Danto must have, at some stage, discerned one of the two objects as a work of art. Therefore Margolis believes, and I endorse his criticism, that the indiscernibility thought experiments cannot tell us anything about the status of the object qua art. We have already decided, or been told, that one or both the objects are works of art: the ontological distinction has already been made. The indiscernibility thought experiment is unnecessary; what is important is that Warhol's *Brillo Box* should have a history and a provenance as a work of art, and Margolis believes that this must have been discernible (he uses the term 'sensorily' discernible) in some way.

otherwise the indiscernibility issue could never have arisen. If we did not know, somehow, that *Brillo Box* was a work of art, Danto's thought experiments could not have started. This is a crucial point and one with which I am in agreement with Margolis: a contextual theory of art does not require, and certainly cannot be justified by, the technique of comparing indiscernible counterparts.

To clarify this point I propose a thought experiment which does not rely on indiscernible counterparts. The experiment supports the views of both Danto and Margolis that works of art have a history and acquire a provenance; to use Margolis's phrase works of art are culturally-emergent entities.[21] A recent exhibition at the Henry Moore Institute displayed a selection of objects entitled UMOs, Unidentified Museum Objects; the purpose and function of these fascinating objects, all from the British Museum, was, and remains, unknown; in some cases we have no indication of how they were made.[22] My thought experiment proposes an object in such an exhibition: say a piece of smooth stone of an unusual shape. I know nothing more about the object; it could be a natural object weathered in a peculiar way, an artwork, a ritual object or a mere utensil. Some time later I read that correspondence from a deceased curator has been discovered which provides uncontroverted evidence that this object is a hitherto unknown work by Brancusi. Nothing has changed in my perception of the object; I could be gazing at the object in the museum as I am told about the discovery; but my interpretation of it has changed: the object ceases to be a UMO; it takes its place in art history as a part of our understanding of the development of modern sculpture. The object now has a history and a provenance and in future will be displayed, with the correct attribution and labelling, in the fine art section of the museum. The object which I previously

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[21] John Dewey uses a similar thought experiment in *Art as Experience*, see Dewey, 1980, pp.48-9.

[22] '*Unidentified Museum Objects*' The Henry Moore Institute, Leeds, 12/12/2001 - 28/2/2002; items from The British Museum, a virtual tour of the exhibition is available at

<www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/compass>

regarded, say, as a piece of weathered stone, I now *know* to be a work of art without any change in its manifest properties.

It could be argued that my thought experiment uses indiscernible counterparts separated by time rather than space. My response is that indiscernible counterparts, by definition, must be separated by space not time: an indiscernible counterpart is *another* object or thing that is identical with some object. It is trivially true that the objects we encounter are usually unchanged from one moment to the next; the suggestion that indiscernible counterparts are separated by time would result in nearly every object being an indiscernible counterpart. We accept this basic level of indiscernibility as we look at objects, but Danto exclusively relies on indiscernible *counterparts* in *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*; my argument so far is that the *counterparts* are not required to support the contextual theory of art which Danto advocates.

However, if one accepts that indiscernibility over time (although Danto does not use it) rather than the use of indiscernible counterparts is an issue, I propose another thought experiment. I am walking on a beach with an artist who picks up a weathered stone, and at the moment I see it she explains it is her latest 'found object' artwork. The object from that moment has an artistic provenance and context. It has ceased to be a mere lump of stone; it is the latest found object artwork 'created' by my artist companion who, of course, has a long and successful career exhibiting such objects in galleries. Indiscernibility either in space or time has no part in explaining why this object has been transformed (transubstantiated as I prefer to say) into an artwork. Note that I are not denying that, although this object does not have one, it could have an indiscernible counterpart. But, it may be objected, in this thought experiment the object (the weathered stone) is itself indiscernible over time. I now consider an artist who produces artworks by dropping inks into a tank of water as a performance piece. The piece is constantly changing; there is no record of the performance (the artist stipulates this) and the work cannot be recreated. In this case there is no indiscernibility in space or over time. In this

situation, as with the accidental copy of Rembrandt's *Polish Rider*, it is possible that there could be an indiscernible counterpart of this work, but, given the absence of any record, the indiscernible counterpart could never be identified as such.

Danto, as I have already explained, relies on examples of indiscernible *counterparts*; they are the basis of his whole philosophical system and are used throughout *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*. Danto's claim is that it is through the use of indiscernible counterparts that we are able to distinguish art from non-art. My thought experiments show that any object or performance may be, or may become, a work of art *without* having an indiscernible counterpart: what makes it art is the context of its creation (choice in the case of a found object) and its provenance. There is no need to resort to indiscernible counterparts or indiscernibility in time to support Danto's claim that works of art are such by virtue of their history and provenance; this applies to *Brillo Box* or any other of Danto's examples. Danto's thought experiments do provide a fascinating insight into the wide range of contemporary art: its diversity, the unusual techniques and approaches involved and the thinking that underlies its creations; however, I believe the technique itself is philosophically redundant. Although the technique is redundant, I believe it is a redundant premise which has been added to a valid inference (Danto's historical and contextual view of art) and this does not make the original inference invalid. Danto's contextual and historical view of art is a genuine insight; it does not require the technique of comparing indiscernible counterparts to demonstrate its validity. The answer to Danto's question – what is the difference between Warhol's *Brillo Box* sculpture and an everyday Brillo box? – is that *Brillo Box* is part of the artworld as Danto defines it; the everyday Brillo box is not. Warhol's *Brillo Box* embodies the six principles of art which I have identified as constituents of Danto's theory. Brillo boxes do not do so in the same way.

This raises the issue of how Danto separates art from non-art: an important issue I shall return to in the final chapter: the conclusion. The fact that *Brillo Box* and Brillo boxes are indiscernible counterparts is not necessary to enable

me to account for the difference between them – that one is an artwork the other not. It can alert me to the problem – it did just this for Danto in 1964 – and enable me to develop a theory: in Danto's case incorporating the six principles which I have discussed. I believe that once Danto has used indiscernible counterparts to alert himself to the contextual nature of art, they can serve no further purpose in defining art. As the traveller in the Buddhist parable finds, once you have crossed a river there is no point in continuing to carry the raft across a desert.[23] Indiscernibility is an interesting feature of some contemporary art. and, as I have explained. it is used as an essential ingredient of some of this art: in appropriational art indiscernibility is a part of the meaning of the works. Perhaps we are intrigued by indiscernibility because, *in this particular form*, it has only been a feature of art since the advent of pop and the existence of works like Warhol's *Brillo Box* sculpture.

I emphasise *in this particular* form because finally I would like to point out that the existence of indiscernible counterparts in art is not something new; as a feature of art it has a long and varied history. Throughout the history of painting there are many examples of artists producing several versions of successful canvasses; these have been accepted by patrons, collectors and curators as works of art. The casting of several versions of sculptures in bronze was and is commonplace; the production of prints is by its very nature the production of sets of indiscernible counterparts. So indiscernibility has a long history in art. The indiscernibility identified in these examples is of a form that Danto does not address: it raises many interesting issues, the nature of types and tokens, the status of multiple. machine-made copies. whether the original version of a painting has special significance and the status of artworks produced in studios by artists' assistants. This varied nature and history of indiscernible counterparts is outside the scope of the dissertation but I mention it to counter the impression, perhaps given by Danto, that indiscernibility is a unique feature of contemporary art.

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[23]See the superscription to the Introduction, p. 1.

Returning to Danto's theory, we are still left with the difficulty of circularity of argument: the problem that the history which artworks have necessarily acquired is defined in relation to, or is reliant on, some concept of art or culture. And this concept of art is needed somewhere along the line to explain why a work qualifies for its status as art. I accept that my UMO and other thought experiments do not resolve the problem of circularity. At the end of the last chapter I considered the circularity inherent in Danto's concept of the artworld and his attempt to break the circularity using the *is* of artistic identification. In Danto's original example, Pieter Bruegel's *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus*, I pointed out that the special *is* was no more than the *is* of representational identification. Later Danto used the special *is* as an *is* of historical location. In this use it proved capable of wider application and capable of explaining and accommodating the wide range of new artforms we encounter today. The problem I identified with the revised application of the special *is* was that it was too inclusive: every object has a historical location. So the key issue is how do you particularise art? Dickie, I have explained, attempts to particularise art within this broad historical context by his idea of art as an inflected concept. Margolis addresses the same issue with his concept of cultural realism: his idea of artworks as culturally-emergent real entities. Danto attempts to particularise art, to narrow the definition of art within the wider historical context, by proposing that art is essentially rhetorical in nature. This is the subject of the last chapter of *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* 'Metaphor, Expression and Style', and it is this subject which I address in the next chapter. My own view is explained in the conclusion to the dissertation, chapter four.

Chapter Three
Art as Rhetorical Ellipsis: Metaphor, Expression and Style

If we seek the light of external facts, the only cases

of thought which we can find are of thought in signs

C. S. Peirce (1991, p.49)

I. Introduction

In the last chapter I identified how Danto introduced an important new subject area into his discussion of art; it is contained in chapter seven, the final chapter, of *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*. This new subject area is his examination of metaphor, expression and style; it is the final element in his fully developed philosophy of art, and it rests on Danto's belief that art is essentially rhetorical and elliptical in nature. The discussion follows on from Danto's examination of artistic representation and indiscernibility which I examined in the last chapter. The new subject area is introduced at length in the latter part of his chapter six, 'Works of Art and Mere Representations', together with an explanation of why this new topic is required: that it identifies a feature which enables his theory to distinguish works of art from non-artworks. The aim of this chapter is to formulate Danto's theory of art as rhetorical ellipsis and to explain how this leads to the concept of intensionality (with an *s*) in art. Danto's contextual and historical theory of art, as I have explained, is intentional (with a *t*) in that it requires an artist, with an intention, expressing meaning through the artwork which requires interpretation within a historical setting. Intentionality which, for Danto, is synonymous with 'aboutness', underlies his artworld theory. Danto's overarching theory of art, however, is both intentional and intensional. As well as explaining intensionality in this chapter, I make two major

criticisms of the concept as it applies to art. First, I assert that the concept is over-inclusive: it includes other things beside art and therefore cannot be used to distinguish art from non-art. Second, it rests on a circular argument. It relies on Danto's concept of the artworld, which I have already argued includes an element of circularity, to identify rhetorical ellipsis in art as opposed to rhetorical ellipsis outside art. However, in addition to developing these criticisms, this chapter aims to show the fruitfulness of Danto's notion of rhetorical ellipsis. This notion is indeed important for understanding 'artistic presence', even if it falls short of specifying necessary and sufficient conditions for art.

Danto also raises an initial potential objection to his view of rhetorical expression in art: that it may simply be a somewhat richer or different form of content. Danto addresses the potential objection at length, and, in section III of this chapter, I follow him in the arguments he uses to rebut the objection. Danto's introduction and treatment of the potential objection sets the scene for his detailed examination of metaphor, expression and style: the three key features arising from his view of art as embodying rhetorical ellipsis. These issues, as I have already mentioned, are the subject matter of the final chapter of *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*, and I devote section IV of the chapter to Danto's discussion of these three concepts. In the conclusion to the chapter I address two questions. Firstly, are there any works of art that do not embody metaphor, expression and style? Secondly, are there any non-artworks that do embody these three features? A positive answer to either question would severely damage Danto's philosophy of art. I also look at Danto's more recent views on defining art in his 2003 book *The Abuse of Beauty*. I now begin the discussion and look at how and why Danto introduces the concept of rhetorical ellipsis into his philosophy of art.

II. Art as Rhetorical Ellipsis Introduced

Danto uses two indiscernibility thought experiments to introduce his idea that art is rhetorical and elliptical in nature. His primary aim is to attempt to distinguish works of art from non-artworks. If he is able to achieve this, if he is able to determine the features which establish this difference, he will have identified some necessary and perhaps sufficient or jointly sufficient conditions of art. The first thought experiment is used as an eliminatory tool; it is designed to identify those concepts which *cannot* be used to distinguish artworks from non-artworks. Danto uses the experiment to highlight and eliminate three such concepts, and he explains why they are deficient for his purpose. This leads him on to identify the need for some other approach: some new concept to distinguish art. The second thought experiment provides this other approach and Danto's answer to the problem of how to identify art: it is used to show how rhetorical ellipsis *can* be used to point out the difference he is seeking between artworks and non-artworks. The first thought experiment is one I have already discussed; it examines the difference between Loran's diagram of Cézanne's *Portrait of Madame Cézanne* and the Lichtenstein painting based on the diagram; the second is text based, and it was inspired by Truman Capote's novel *In Cold Blood*. I shall examine these two thought experiments in turn.

In section II of the last chapter, one of the examples of indiscernible counterparts which I examined was Danto's comparison of Erle Loran's diagram of Cézanne's painting *Portrait of Madame Cézanne* and Roy Lichtenstein's painting based on that diagram (see illustration 7). The point was made that, although they are of widely different scales and materials, they are indiscernible when illustrated in books. Danto uses this example to identify some deficiencies with three concepts which, he suggests, may be promising candidates for use in distinguishing artworks from non-artworks. He asks a question: what makes one of the pair a work of art while the other remains a diagram? Why is Lichtenstein's canvas a work of art when it is indiscernible, at least in illustrations, from Loran's diagram? Both are

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representations and both have artistic subject matter. but. as I have explained in the last chapter, they embody quite different meanings: the Loran diagram is about the compositional features of Cézanne's painting; Lichtenstein's canvas is much more complex and can be read as being concerned with a number of different themes. I mention three, although this is not an exhaustive exegesis. Firstly. the painting can be read as being concerned with the way art historians use diagrams to try to explain works of art: in this case to explain Cézanne's genius. In other words. it invites us to reflect on the use of diagrams as a tool of art-historical analysis. Diagrams are usually used to explain mathematically exact principles in the sciences: how appropriate is it that diagrams should be used to explain works of art? Secondly, the painting can be read as being about the way Cézanne moved towards treating his subjects as geometricised figures and why he took this direction in his art. We see this aspect in art-historical terms: in relation to the development of post-Impressionism and how it can be read as part of the move towards Cubism and abstraction in painting in the early twentieth century. Thirdly. Lichtenstein's painting can be read as being about Cézanne's treatment of his subject: the artist's wife. It helps explain how Cézanne's vision as an artist can be seen to have taken precedence over his intense and troubled relationship with his wife. As Danto tells us, the Lichtenstein painting is about this relationship:

> But then how singularly apt to apply this geometrizing vision to Cézanne's *wife*, treated as though she was a Euclidean problem! For we know the sexual side of this man. in whom prude and satyr warred. and we know the passion and violence of his relationship with this woman. with whom he lived out of wedlock and by whom he had a son. And if the source and focus of all this feeling should be reduced to a kind of formula. how much this must tell us of the final triumph of the artistic impulse in his soul. even if it entailed a certain dehumanizing transfiguration of the subject. (Danto, 1981. p.143)

It should be noted that each of these three readings opens up a host of issues that could be explained, researched and debated at length. Each reading has generated volumes devoted to its respective topic.

From his consideration of these indiscernible counterparts Danto puts forward three conclusions: three possible concepts which could explain how to distinguish an artwork from a non-artwork. He then goes on to identify why the three concepts fail to enable us to make the distinction we are seeking. Firstly, Danto reminds us that so far his analysis has shown that Loran's diagram and Lichtenstein's painting have different content. One may have more complex, multi-layered and allusive content than the other, but, as I explained in chapter two, we can have works of art which look the same yet are both quite different. It will be recalled that this is the case identified in Fisher's sub-claim (2) – every artwork can have an indiscernible counterpart which is a different artwork – for example the indiscernible extracts mentioned in Borges' story *Pierre Menard*. So the question remains, what is it about the content, what is special about the content of Lichtenstein's painting, which makes it a work of art? Before I proceed, I need to make a distinction between content and subject matter: the latter term is general in that several quite different objects, not necessarily works of art, could be about one subject. For example, a thematic collection of (different) postage stamps could all contain images of animals. Content is a specific term relating to a particular object, although indiscernible objects like current first class postage stamps can have the same content. We need to note that both the Loran diagram and Lichtenstein's painting share the same subject matter: they are both about art. Therefore simply being about an artistic subject cannot help us to make the distinction we are looking for: why one is a work of art and the other a mere diagram. In other words, being about art or treating an artistic subject is not a distinguishing feature of art: the Loran diagram is about an artistic subject but is not a work of art.

Secondly, Danto makes the point that although one of the two, the Lichtenstein painting, is *widely accepted* as a work of art, this acceptance is not

adequate, in philosophical terms, to point out the difference. The fact that the Lichtenstein canvas has a place in the history of art cannot be used to tell us philosophically why it is art: history can tell us what is regarded or accepted as art, but it does not tell us why it should be accepted as art. The problem is one I identified with the institutional theory of art which I discussed in the last chapter: that the institutional theory is circular in that it defines art by using the term art or some similar expression, such as culture, which already includes an artistic element or a reference back to art.

Thirdly, we cannot rely on any special type of *formal quality* to distinguish the artwork. This would run counter to the results of Danto's previous deliberations on the nature of art; as the debate we encountered in the last chapter has shown, two objects can share the same formal properties yet one be a work of art and the other not. The Lichtenstein painting and the Loran diagram do share, at least in illustrations, the same formal properties. Summing up, we have two indiscernible objects, one a work of art the other not, where the content is different; we find that neither subject matter, nor art history nor any formal quality is able to establish the difference we are looking for: the difference between a work of art and a non-artwork. The reasons have been illustrated by Danto's first thought experiment: although the Loran diagram and the Lichtenstein canvas have different content, they are both about artistic subjects, both share identical formal properties, and, although the painting is accepted as art, the institutional acceptance of the Lichtenstein as art rests on an argument which is circular. It should also be noted here that, as I have previously mentioned, both the Loran diagram and the Lichtenstein painting are representations. Danto now moves on to his second thought experiment which addresses the issue of content.

Danto suggests another thought experiment in an attempt to resolve the problem of how to distinguish artworks from non-artworks; he attempts to devise a thought experiment where we have two indiscernible works, one a work of art, the other not, but both having the same *content*. He explains: "suppose we can find a

pair of things which not only resemble one another outwardly to whatever required degree, and have moreover the identical content, but where one of them is a work of art and the other not" (Danto, 1981, p.144). The example he chooses takes its inspiration from Truman Capote's novel *In Cold Blood*. This compulsive book is written in the form of a detailed report on an actual murder case; it makes use of the author's interviews with witnesses and others involved. It was publicised, when first published in 1966, as the first non-fiction novel.[1] As a literary work it probes the distinction between fact and fiction, and it points to the difficulty of making this distinction in any work of reportage. Danto uses a similar scenario in his new thought experiment: he suggests an author M who produces a similar work to Capote's: M is an avant-garde novelist exploring the boundaries of fiction. The novelist M chooses to use the form of a newspaper report, and his work is, in a similar way to Capote's, an investigation of a real-life murder case. Danto asks us to compare this work with the newspaper report of the same homicide incident; the newspaper report happens to be identical, word for word, with M's novel, and it is written by a reporter whose name coincidentally also happens to be M. The first M, with his interest in vérité, has his work, including photographs, printed on newsprint in tabloid format, and it is indiscernible from the second M's newspaper article. Danto makes the point that although they are indiscernible and share the same content, the first is a work of art whilst the second remains a newspaper report.

The artwork, the first M's avant-garde novel, uses the form of a newspaper story to comment on how we rely on the format and presentation of newspaper articles to tell us about events in the world; in contrast the newspaper story is nothing more than a piece of reportage. Danto points out where he believes the difference between these two works lies: "the nonfiction story [the first M's

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[1] The case was the apparently unmotivated murder of the Clutter family, father, mother and two children, on a remote Kansas farm in 1959; the perpetrators, two small-time crooks, were hanged for the offences in 1965. See Capote, 1966.

artwork] uses the form of a newspaper story to make a point. The newspaper story [the second M's mere report], by contrast, uses that form because that is the way newspaper stories are; the writer is not making any special point by using that form" (Danto, 1981, p.146). Danto goes on to suggest a parallel between this example and the way pop artists use everyday images to comment on contemporary art and culture. The presentation of the content is used as a stylistic device by the artist to comment on what otherwise would be a commonplace of popular culture. Hence the extensive use of soup cans, comics and photographs of film stars in pop art. From this Danto formulates a principle: **"any representation not an artwork can be matched by one that is one, the difference lying in the fact that the artwork uses the way the nonartwork presents its content to make a point about how that content is presented"** (Danto, 1981, p.146, bold face added).

In other words there are different levels of meaning embodied in the artwork: it is inviting us to interpret the way the content is used and presented as a way of expressing something about how we relate to the subject and the medium used for its presentation. The existence of these other levels of meaning enables Danto to bring in his two new concepts: that art is *rhetorical* in nature and that this rhetorical element involves *ellipsis*. I will now explain these two concepts which I address in turn. However, I must emphasise that Danto sees them together as part of his definition of art. I need to restate the list of principles underlying his theory of art which I identified in the previous chapter: (1) art is the result of human endeavour by an artist, (2) artworks acquire a history and a provenance, (3) artworks embody meaning (they are expressive), which meaning is a result of the artist's intention, (4) that meaning requires a subject about which the artist projects a point of view by means of rhetorical ellipsis, (5) artworks require interpretation and finally, (6) they are produced and interpreted within a historical context. Principle number (4) links rhetoric to ellipsis; principles number (3) and (5) bring in expression and interpretation. Although I discuss rhetoric and ellipsis separately at this stage for the

purpose of exposition, they should be read together, and with the other principles, as an inter-related whole.

Danto introduces his first new concept, that of the rhetorical nature of art, into his theory at this point. He believes that rhetoric is involved in art because art is expressive: it must be interpreted by the viewer, and this introduces the awareness of a level of meaning which goes beyond the mere subject matter of the representation. The artist, in expressing, addresses an audience with the aim of eliciting a certain response; this elicitation brings with it an element of persuasion which is essentially a rhetorical device. Looking at a work of art is a two-way process: the artist addressing the viewer, and the viewer interpreting the artwork, usually but not always in the artist's absence. Going back to Danto's previous discussion of art in chapter one, this incorporation of meaning in art is what he calls 'aboutness': the fact that works of art must be about something. Addressing an audience about something is an intentional act: there is a link between artist, work and audience. The aim is to generate a response which is elicited to a large extent by the work of art (I have shown earlier how the audience also adds to the process of interpretation and how the balance between the two can change). Danto sums up this rhetorical element of art: "it may just be one of the main offices of art less to represent the world than to represent it in such a way as to cause us to view it with a certain attitude and with a special vision" (1981, p.167). I accept at this stage that many other human products, like newspapers, embody this rhetorical element: they put forward a point of view and aim to persuade. However, recalling the previous point, rhetoric should not be considered in isolation; it is part of a *set* of principles underlying Danto's theory of art.

I now move on to explain the second concept of ellipsis: ellipsis is involved when the viewer is required to fill in or complete an interpretation. As I have already mentioned, interpretation is essentially a two-way process: the viewer must provide an element which is missing in the presentation of the work itself. The other levels of meaning which Danto has already identified in artworks – see the

discussion of Lichtenstein's painting above – are not explicitly or fully stated: they are not explained *in* the artwork. The interpretation requires the viewer to participate and in doing so to *add* something as part of the process. Here I need to make a distinction between the element of ellipsis, the omission *in* the artwork itself and the completion or filling in by the viewer as part of the interpretative process. The distinction is between (1) ellipsis as a feature of the artwork and (2) the subsequent process of filling in or completion by the viewer. Interpreting a work of art is not a matter of reading a message from the artwork: it requires the viewer to think about why the artist chose to do the work in the way she did. This is the difference I have already identified between M the journalist's newspaper report and M the avant-garde author's experimental novel. Interpretation is not a matter of the one-way reception of information from an artwork. It is this two-part process involving ellipsis in the artwork and completion by the viewer which Danto suggests is an essential feature of artistic interpretation. In passing I mention that Danto sees this elliptical element of art being closely identified with the concept of metaphor and this will be discussed in detail later in section IV. Before I move on I should add that not all rhetoric requires the same degree of ellipsis; rhetoric as a device of persuasion can engender other more immediate responses: shock, endorsement, fear and anger amongst many.

From this explanation it can also be seen why Danto believes the two elements of rhetoric and ellipsis are inter-related; the rhetorical nature of the process of interpretation inevitably involves the viewer responding to the work of art, by filling-in, by completion or by adopting a position in relation to the work; the response is to the elliptical element contained in the artwork. If the viewer contributes something to the process, ellipsis must be involved; there must be something in the original presentation which is missing or demands completion. I refer back to the different subject areas of interpretation I previously identified in Lichtenstein's painting of the Loran diagram: these are examples of the other levels of meaning I mention above. Danto makes the point himself when he refers back to

these two works again; he believes that the difference between the two is that "Lichtenstein uses the diagram *rhetorically*. Loran does not use the idiom of diagrams; he simply uses diagrams (which happen, since they are diagrams, to be in that idiom). Whatever Lichtenstein is doing, he is not diagramming" (1981, p.147). In other words, Loran simply uses the diagram as a diagram; Loran's is a contribution to the psychology of art; it is not a work of art itself which the Lichtenstein painting is.

From his consideration of this thought experiment Danto suggests that it is the elements of rhetorical usage and ellipsis which must characterise art; these are the crucial areas where the artwork and the non-artwork differ and can be distinguished. He goes on to propose a thesis: **"that works of art, in categorical contrast with mere representations, use the means of representation in a way that is not exhaustively specified when one has exhaustively specified what is being represented"** (1981, p.147-8, bold face added). In summary, there are two elements involved in interpreting works of art. Firstly, an element of rhetoric: we are moved to question how we should respond to the work. Secondly, an element of ellipsis: something is omitted which we are required to fill in. We formulate our own response; we develop our own interpretation: our own input as viewers is part of the process of responding to a work of art. Further, this response is to the way the content is presented, and because we, as interpreters, are adding to the process, the outcome cannot be predicted. It should be noted here that Danto, by his own admission, has introduced the concept of rhetorical ellipsis into his theory of art in a casual way. The full explanation and development of the two concepts comes later; the concepts are embodied in the thesis which Danto goes on to examine in greater detail in the last chapter of *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*.

Two obvious problems spring to mind with the thesis. Firstly, that there may well be non-artworks which exhibit elements of rhetorical ellipsis. In which case how do we distinguish rhetorical ellipsis in art from the same concept in non-art, without involving a circular argument? There is also the corollary – are there any

artworks which do not embody these features? I shall leave this criticism for the present but I return to it in the conclusion to this chapter. after I have discussed Danto's full explanation of his thesis. Secondly, an objection which is raised by Danto himself which I now explain. His thesis, it will be recalled, is concerned with how expression and content in an artwork are linked. The objection he raises is that the features of art which he has identified, rhetorical usage and ellipsis, may just turn out to be a part of the content, albeit at a different level; he explains: "but how do I know that what I have called expression is not after all part of the content of the work, so that in the end Lichtenstein's work has a somewhat richer and somewhat different content than the Loran diagram, and the nonfiction story contains some information about the cultural place of the newspaper idiom in addition to whatever criminal facts it also records" (1981, p.148). I examine this objection in the next section of this chapter.

Before I do this however I shall make two points about Danto's thesis. Firstly, I refer to his repetition of the word 'exhaustively'. This repetition tells us that in works of art when the content has been fully identified, the means of representation is used in a way that is not and cannot ever be fully specified. In other words we cannot explain, paraphrase or fully describe a work of art. This reinforces Danto's idea of ellipsis: there is something which requires completion by the interpreter. The lack of total definition in the means of representation invites the interpreter to question or complete the treatment of the subject. The interpretation of the presentation is not fully determined: it allows for the possibility of further interpretation. There are two different issues here. Firstly, the open-ended nature of works of art due to the elliptical element which they embody. Secondly, the open-ended nature of interpretation itself due to the changing circumstances at the moment of interpretation. These two issues taken together give a situation in which the artist can assume what the response will be but can never be sure her artwork will engender that particular response. Such further interpretations could never themselves be fully anticipated by virtue of the unknown future conditions of their

attribution: this is a simple result of Danto's contextualism which I considered in the last chapter. Danto has added the elliptical element to the contextualism I discussed in chapter one. It will be seen later in this chapter how the idea of art not being capable of full explanation or paraphrase re-emerges in Danto's concept of intensionality (note with an *s* not a *t*) in art.

Secondly, it should be noted that although Danto's *principle* mentions indiscernibility, the actual *thesis* does not – see the two quotations above, both in bold face. I mention this here and refer back to the result of my consideration of the indiscernibility issue in the previous chapter. The point I make now is that Danto's *thesis* does not depend on the use of his technique of comparing indiscernibles. As I pointed out in my previous discussion in the last chapter, although the technique helps to identify and illustrate Danto's theory of art, it is not a requirement of the theory. I believe Danto's new thesis also stands without the need for indiscernible examples. I shall explain why, and I give two reasons. Firstly, in the thought experiment using M's experimental novel and the other M's newspaper report, the examples are certainly indiscernible. But indiscernibility is not necessary to make Danto's point. His point is made and his argument secured by Capote's *In Cold Blood* which does not have an indiscernible counterpart. Capote's 'novel' is factual: a work of reportage yet also a work of art because it is a comment on the boundaries between fact and fiction in the process of reporting. *In Cold Blood* embodies the element of rhetorical ellipsis which Danto has identified as a distinguishing feature of art; the indiscernibility thought experiment using the two Ms' work adds nothing of significance *philosophically* to the argument: it merely acts as an illustration. I accept that works of art can have indiscernible counterparts and that some do. I also accept that Danto's indiscernibility thought experiments alert us to the importance of the non-manifest features of art. However, I have already shown in chapter two that any object can have an indiscernible counterpart and that having an indiscernible counterpart cannot help us to particularise art. The second reason is that Danto's use of the Loran diagram and the Lichtenstein canvas as an example of indiscernibility is

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questionable: unlike most of his other examples these two objects are not indiscernible; one is a diagram in a book the other is a sizeable painting. Danto avoids this issue by referring to illustrations, but this introduces another issue which seriously complicates the debate: the question of how illustrations of works of art relate to originals.

Before I move on I pause to restate Danto's thesis "**that works of art, in categorical contrast with mere representations, use the means of representation in a way that is not exhaustively specified when one has exhaustively specified what is being represented**" (1981, p.147-8, bold face added). This is the thesis which I will be discussing in detail in section IV of the present chapter. Before that, however, I follow Danto in his identification and discussion of the previously-mentioned objection to his thesis: that rhetorical ellipsis in art may turn out to be no more than some form of content.

III. An Objection Considered

It will be recalled that Danto's original aim was to distinguish between two indiscernible representations, both ostensibly having the same content, one of which was an artwork, the other not so. He previously put forward the view that the difference between the two lies in the way the work of art uses the means of representation to express a point of view about its content. Danto's objection, which, as I will explain, he sets out to counter, is that what he has identified as expression may be no more than a part of the content. For example, the avant-garde author M's story may contain information about how newspapers relate to the society in which they are produced and read; this is in addition to the information about the murder enquiry the story reports on. Danto suggests that there may be two levels of content involved in examples like the one above: the first level, simply what they are about, in our avant-garde author's case, the murder enquiry, and the second level, that they are about the way the first level is presented: in our example, about

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how newspapers report such cases. The second level would raise wider cultural issues; for example in the case of crime reports, why they are reported in such detail and why the reports are read so avidly. Danto explains: "suppose that in addition to being about whatever they are about, they are about the way they are about that – having, as it were, first- and second-order contents. They are complex, semantically speaking, incorporating into themselves a subtle piece of self-reference" (1981, pp.148-9). He sums up his objection by asking whether all representations which contain any element of self-referentiality are works of art.

The objection is based on the nature of the link between content and expression in representations. Danto addresses the objection by attempting to show that content cannot be responsible for the rhetorical and elliptical elements of expression in art which he proposes as necessary conditions. He does this by examining two theories of art: the Transparent Theory and the Opaque Theory, and he goes on to explain why both theories are defective. Each theory focuses on an element of content, and Danto explains why that particular element cannot contain the rhetorical and elliptical elements of art: the necessary conditions of art which he has advanced. The first, the Transparent Theory, Danto uses to show how *imitation* cannot account for rhetorical ellipsis; the second, the Opaque Theory, he uses to show how the *materials* used in the artwork cannot serve the purpose either. With this accomplished, Danto believes he has established that the *content* of artworks cannot be responsible for the element of rhetorical ellipsis which his theory demands. I now look at why Danto believes this objection is so important; why he raises it and why he needs to counter it. Danto has just examined an example of indiscernibles (the two Ms' stories) where one is a work of art and the other is not; yet the two share the same *content*. If this is so, Danto argues, content cannot explain the difference between art and non-art. He has already argued that artworks express something about content. If the expression is a form of content (which the objection states) then Danto's theory fails. He would be failing because he would be seeking the difference between art and non-art in a place his theory rejects: in content. The

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Transparency Theory argues that in art the medium is transparent: art is about its content. So it cannot accommodate Danto's theory of expressing something *about* content: it is just content. If the transparency theory is true Danto's theory fails; if the theory is false the objection to his original theory is countered: his theory stands. Similarly with the Opaque Theory: this argues that art is just its material so, again, it cannot express anything about content. If the Opaque Theory is true Danto's theory fails; if it is false the objection is defeated.

I will look at the two theories in turn and explain why I believe Danto's treatment of them fails to confirm his view that content cannot be responsible in some way for the rhetorical aspect of artworks. Danto devotes a considerable amount of space to refuting his objection for the reason I have outlined above and I follow him shortly in his discussion. However, before I do so I need to question if the objection itself is valid, and I do so now. As I have explained, Danto's objection rests on his indiscernible example of the two Ms' stories; one is an artwork and the other is not, but they both share, according to Danto, the same *content*. The belief that they share the same content is crucial to the objection: if the two stories share the same content, content cannot be responsible for the difference between them, and content cannot be used to distinguish art from non-art. However, Danto has ignored his own earlier discussion about the contextual nature of art. It will be recalled from chapter one that Danto believes that what distinguishes ready-mades from everyday objects, 'mere real things', is a theory of art, an 'artworld'. It is the context of their production, display and appreciation which distinguishes the ready-mades as art. As Danto pointed out, it is the non-manifest properties which we need to distinguish art. But, surely, these non-manifest properties are part of the *content*, and, if so, Danto's objection is flawed. In other words, the content includes the intentional and historical aspects of art which I accept are non-manifest. Returning to the two Ms' stories, I believe the content is different because the intention of the authors and the context of their creation were different. In putting forward the objection Danto takes content to refer to the discernible properties and

he ignores context. In the 'Artworld' article Danto put forward an argument that context was an essential feature of art; in raising the objection he has ignored the contextual nature of art.

I allow Danto his narrow view of content for the present and continue with his discussion of the objection. As I will show in the discussion. I have a major concern about Danto's treatment of the objection: again, it relates to the issue of content. Danto's Transparency Theory is a variation of his Imitation Theory of Art which I have already discussed in chapter one. It will be recalled that he invoked the Imitation Theory to introduce his artworld concept. Recapping the earlier discussion, Danto examined Plato's arguments in Book X of *The Republic*. Plato sees art – or mimetic art to be precise – as an attempt to imitate nature and to deceive the viewer into believing that what she is looking at *is* the object depicted. Plato compares works of art with mirror images; art produces images which are representations of objects in the same way that a mirror produces images of objects. Danto is ignoring Plato's other views of art; for example its role in the education of the Guardians in Book III of *The Republic* or its ecstatic or inspirational function in *Phaedrus*. And, although he mentions it, he is putting to one side the Aristotelian view of imitation: that the aim of figurative art may not be to deceive but to allow the viewer to take pleasure in imitations, even if they are of distasteful subjects, or to enable us to learn about the objects depicted.[2] This raises an important issue that Danto ignores: the view that most figurative art does not aim solely at illusion and that there are other purposes behind imitation. As well as the Aristotelian view of imitation, figurative art may be predominantly narrative, commemorative, didactic, religious, or decorative. I shall return to this point shortly.

Danto is restricting his discussion at this point to art as illusion. This is the basis of his Transparency Theory: if art achieves its aim of deceiving the viewer, the medium of the artwork becomes transparent: we will be unaware of the medium

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[2] Danto (1981, p.14) quotes *Poetics* 1448b, 10-11, 1996, p.6-7.

used by the artist. Danto explains the theory using a famous illustration: the Da Vincian example of the wall of glass. Leonardo envisages a sheet of glass between the artist and the subject as a way of reproducing perspective: the surface of the glass is marked to produce an image of the object behind the wall of glass.[3] If the marking (painting) is done perfectly, the result, as Danto explains, will be that "the medium must, as it were, be invisible, and this requirement is perfectly symbolized by the pane of glass which is presumed transparent, something we cannot see but only through ... If the pane of glass were not a means, it would be a metaphor for mimetic representation, and accordingly I take the logical invisibility of the medium to be the chief feature of imitation theory" (1981, p.151). Danto is using another example of indiscernibles: he is comparing what is on the glass, the painted image, with what we see through the glass. His point (not Da Vinci's, he was concerned purely with perspective) is that if these quite different images are indiscernible, the painted image shares the properties of the image seen though the glass which is only content. If the medium is transparent, Danto believes that the logical consequence of the theory is that the only thing we can be looking at is the content: that is all there is to see. We cannot be sure whether we are looking through the pane of glass or at the marks on the surface of the glass. Both the view through the glass and the marks on its surface share the same content and therefore Danto believes that content cannot be responsible for the rhetorical component of art because rhetorical ellipsis, according to Danto's theory, says something about the content. Put another way, according to the Transparent Theory there is no way of distinguishing the real thing from the artwork because they are indiscernible; art then is reduced to just its content. The result is that art cannot account for the rhetorical element which Danto believes it must embody. Rhetorical ellipsis goes beyond the content: it comments on it. It will be recalled that this is embodied in Danto's thesis: "that works of art, in categorical contrast with mere representations, use the means of representation in a way that is

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[3] Leonardo Da Vinci, 1954, vol.II, p343

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not exhaustively specified when one has exhaustively specified what is being represented" (1981, p.147-8). He says: "it is a clear consequence of this theory that whatever response an audience has to an artwork must *ipso facto* be a response to the content of the artwork. Less pragmatically, whatever properties the artwork has are simply the properties of whatever the artwork shows – media being ideally empty" (1981, p.153). This, however, leads to a question: why cannot the content of an artwork itself point to something about itself? Why cannot rhetorical ellipsis be embodied in the content? For example, the content of Giorgione's *Tempest* itself draws us into speculation about why the figures are there and what they are doing. I shall return to this objection at the end of this section.

This leads to Danto's other objection to the Transparency Theory of art which refers to the issue of aesthetic predicates. He begins by considering the predicate 'is beautiful'. He believes that a consequence of the Transparency Theory is that when we say an artwork is beautiful we are saying no more than it is of a beautiful subject. If there is no distinction between an artwork and its subject, assuming the medium to be transparent, it follows that any attribution of an aesthetic predicate to the artwork is also making exactly the same attribution to the subject of the artwork. The Transparency Theory does not give any information about how the predicate 'is beautiful' is to be applied; it does not tell us what is beautiful. But it does enable the predicate 'is a beautiful work of art' to be used: simply find a beautiful object and create a work of art successfully imitating the object to the extent that the medium is transparent. His objection to the Transparency Theory here is that if we try to attach an aesthetic predicate to the subject of the artwork we find we have done no more than attach the predicate to the content of the artwork. In other words, whenever a work of art acquires the predicate 'is x' it is because the subject has that predicate.

Danto moves on to highlight the inadequacy of the Transparency Theory by examining other aesthetic predicates that apply to art besides 'is beautiful'. The inadequacy is highlighted by considering the wide range of aesthetic

predicates which we do apply to works of art. He chooses the botanical drawings of André Racz[4] as an example (illustration 14), and he provides a list of aesthetic predicates which were applied to the drawings in art journal reviews of an exhibition of Racz's work: " 'powerful,' 'swift,' 'fluid,' 'have depth,' 'have solidity,' 'sharp,' 'eloquent,' 'delicate' " (1981, p.155). His argument is that most of these terms, in fact all but the last, would not be applied to the actual flowers which are the subjects of the drawings. Danto believes that this makes clear the inadequacy of the Transparency Theory of art. If that theory were accepted all the predicates applying to the artwork would also apply to the subject. I believe that Danto, as I shall explain shortly, has failed to distinguish subject matter from content. It would clearly be inappropriate to describe flowers as being powerful but we can quite easily understand that drawings of flowers could be described in this way. Danto believes that the language we use to talk about art points to something which is beyond the capability of the Transparency Theory to accommodate. He makes the point that the language we use to describe art also tends to be used to interpret and to evaluate art; as Danto puts it: "the language of aesthetic description and the language of aesthetic appreciation are of a piece" (1981, p.156). He goes back to the flower drawings of André Racz and proposes a thought experiment. Suppose we read the art journal reviews of Racz's work without being aware of the subject matter of the drawings; Danto points out that nothing about the descriptions of the drawings, the artworks, would necessarily tell us anything about what the subject matter was. Nothing would tell us that the drawings are of flowers. He says: "but perhaps the most useful observation to make is that the terms used so interestingly (and as it happens, so intelligently) of Racz's work do not entail that the drawings are in fact of anything at all. In a way, told that there was a set of powerful, fluid, energetic drawings being shown at the Ruth White Gallery, I could hardly tell what they were of, or if they

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[4] André Racz (1916-1994), Romanian artist who settled in New York. Fellow teacher at Columbia University and friend of Danto who dedicated his *Mysticism and Morality* to Racz (see Danto1976).

were of anything" (1981, p.159). In summary. Danto argues that the Transparency Theory locates the core of art in its content. But if, according to Danto's thesis. rhetorical ellipsis is a feature of art, and if rhetorical ellipsis is about the way content is presented then art must be more than content which the Transparency Theory avows.

I return to the Transparency Theory at the end of the section to give our my own view; I now move on to consider the other theory Danto discusses: the Opaque Theory. He explains that this theory is the opposite of the Transparent Theory. Criticising the Transparency Theory. Danto attempted to show how *content* or subject matter could not be responsible for the rhetorical nature of art; he now uses the Opaque Theory to try to show that *material* cannot be responsible for this element of art. The Opaque Theory proposes that artworks are only the materials of which they are composed: the canvas and paint. the paper and pigments or the vibrations in the air. Danto refers to the type of painting, and the once fashionable reductionist view of art that went with it, which attempts to reduce art to being nothing more its own material: what the art critic Joseph Mashek has called hardcore painting (1981, p.159). As examples I suggest the work of Sam Francis in painting or the sculptural work of Carl Andre; in both these artists' work the material initially seems to be all that the work is about. Danto makes the point that, if we subscribe to the Opaque Theory, in describing such hardcore paintings we can only legitimately use language which is appropriate for describing the materials used. Once we use the terms we normally apply to art. like the ones used to describe Racz's flower drawings, the theory has failed. We might describe the material of Francis's paintings as runny or viscous but we could not say that it was powerful. If we did we would be talking about how the paint was applied and for what purpose it was used: we would be bringing the rhetorical element into the discussion. Put in another way, hardcore paintings aspire to a condition of being solely about the materials they use. But once they are discussed in terms other than those applying to materials, then the other attributes of art, such as the ones Danto has identified in Racz's drawings.

return. Danto believes that this shows that material cannot be responsible for the rhetorical element of art he has identified. The materiality gives way to other concerns and the Opaque Theory is inadequate. Danto says of these paintings: "the moment an artistic predicate is applied – such as 'has depth' – we have left the material correlate behind and are dealing with the work of art, which can no more be identified with matter than with content" (1981. p.159).

Let me now return to Danto's overall argument. Recapping, he proposed a thesis "**that works of art, in categorical contrast with mere representations, use the means of representation in a way that is not exhaustively specified when one has exhaustively specified what is being represented**" (1981, p.147-8, bold face added). He goes on to explain why this thesis leads to his view that the elements of rhetoric and ellipsis are necessary conditions of art. Before discussing this in detail, Danto identified a potential objection: that what he has identified as rhetorical ellipsis in art may be no more than a form of content. It is this initial objection which I have been considering in this section. To address the objection Danto discussed the Transparency Theory and the Opaque Theory. He has attempted to demonstrate that if these theories are accepted then the rhetorical and elliptical elements of art can be part of the content and the objection stands; his aim has been to criticise and reject the two theories and thus defeat the objection. I agree with Danto that the Transparency and the Opaque Theories fail, but my argument is that this does not prove that rhetorical ellipsis cannot be part of the content of artworks. Danto has assumed that by showing the two theories are false the objection is defeated. In the remainder of this section I explain why I believe he is mistaken in this assumption.

In addressing his objection Danto treats art disjunctively: he treats art as if it falls either under the Transparency Theory of art (which, as we have seen, is a development of his Imitation Theory) on the one hand, or, on the other hand, under the Opaque Theory: the view that art is nothing more than the materials from which it is made. The problem with this approach is that very little art falls fully under the

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aegis of either theory. For instance, very little figurative art is purely imitative: it may well contain an element of imitation but its primary aim is not to deceive the viewer into thinking that she is looking at the subject of the artwork. There are exceptions: *trompe l'oeil* or *trampantojo* art is primarily designed to deceive the viewer in this way; but it is a rare exception. The majority of figurative art uses imitation. but it is the way that the imitation is carried out and presented to the viewer which is important. I have already mentioned Cézanne's painting, *Portrait of Madame Cézanne*, and explained some of the reasons why Cézanne painted his wife in this geometrical and clearly non-mimetic way. Surely. in this case. the way he painted his wife *is* an essential part of the *content* of the work of art and involves a rhetorical element in its interpretation.

I suggest that this is the case with most figurative art; Danto's argument addresses the extreme position (*trompe l'oeil* art for instance) but fails to address the majority of figurative art where imitation is not the primary aim. There is a similar objection to the Opaque Theory – there is some artwork which is primarily about the material it uses – but with the majority of art the material is used to express something beyond its materiality. Carl Andre's firebrick installations – I mentioned Andre's work as an exemplar of the Opaque Theory – are not simply about firebricks: they are works of art that invite us to address how we relate to traditional and non-traditional art materials in a gallery setting; they raise the very rhetorical issues Danto has identified as being essential to art.

I return to my initial criticism of Danto's objection – that is the original objection which he tries to refute – made in the beginning of this section: I suggested that. in raising the objection. Danto ignores his own theory of the contextual nature of art. It is these contextual issues which are able to provide the rhetorical element of art's content. Carl Andre's firebricks are a rhetorical statement. the subject matter is bricks; the content is the specific display of the bricks as a rhetorical statement in a gallery. Danto. I believe. in his discussion of the objection has failed to distinguish between subject matter and content.

Danto has polarised art in an attempt to address his objection: in his argument to defeat the two theories he considers art to be either purely mimetic or purely concerned with material. Most art, I believe, lies between these extremes and the rhetorical element of art can be seen to be part of the content. In Cézanne's *Portrait of Madame Cézanne*, for example, I identified a form of content which does exhibit the rhetorical element which Danto puts forward as a necessary condition of art. In other words, Danto has assumed that showing the Transparency and Opaque Theories to be defective is sufficient to address his objection; this assumption I believe is flawed. There are other elements besides subject matter or materials involved in works of art: for example, as I have shown with Cézanne, how the subject is represented and how the material is used.

In summary, I believe that although Danto has shown the Transparency Theory and the Opaque Theory to be defective, this does not overcome his objection – that some form of content may be responsible for the rhetorical and elliptical elements of art. I suggest his view of content – "by content I have in mind whatever would elicit equivalent stimuli with the object represented" (1981, p.164) – is limited; he has omitted the intentional properties which he argues elsewhere are necessary features of art. I now move on to look at how Danto develops his view of art as rhetorical ellipsis in the final chapter of *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* 'Metaphor, Expression and Style.'

IV. Metaphor, Expression and Style

Danto sets out his exposition of these topics in four parts. Firstly, he continues his examination of rhetoric and ellipsis in art, to which he adds the concepts of enthymeme and metaphor. Secondly, he looks in more detail at metaphor and explains why he believes its intensional structure is an important feature of art. Thirdly, he outlines his view of expression in art and compares his own view with that of Nelson Goodman. Fourthly and finally, he explains his view of the role of

style in art; he concentrates on distinguishing between style and manner using Plato's *Ion* as an example. I follow Danto's sequence and deal with these four parts in turn; I devote a sub-section to each subject.

IVa. Rhetorical Ellipsis Continued: Enthymeme and Metaphor Introduced

The first part of Danto's final chapter in *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* continues his examination of rhetoric and ellipsis in art; he also introduces and discusses the concepts of enthymeme and metaphor. He begins with rhetoric; initially he makes the point that the purpose of rhetoric is to bring about a change in the recipient (the auditor or viewer): to alter their view about the subject in question. Whatever is being relayed about the subject is, in addition, being carried out in a way designed to alter the perception of the subject by the auditor or viewer. He returns to the Loran diagram (see illustration 7); its aim is to relate certain information about the structure of Cézanne's painting to the viewer. That is its function, and I judge it by how well it achieves this aim as a diagram. As I have already shown, the Lichtenstein painting of Loran's diagram does more than this: it uses the diagram format rhetorically to make a number of points about a much wider range of issues. Now, Danto is aware that rhetoric may well be unavoidably involved in all types of communication. Loran's choice of the diagram as a means of communication is rhetorical in that it uses a 'scientific' format where it is not usually encountered; it is used with the rhetorical purpose of giving a certain air of objectivity to his argument as well as being a very clear and succinct way of relating information about the structure of Cézanne's painting. Danto at this stage notes the pervasiveness of rhetoric in all communication and moves on, and I return to this point shortly and again in the conclusion.

The next step in Danto's argument is to demonstrate that rhetoric is involved in visual as well as written communication: he does this using a number of examples. I will mention one of these: an image of Napoleon as a Roman emperor. A

standard definition of a metaphor is that it is a figure of speech in which a linguistic expression is applied to an object to which it is not literally applicable in order to suggest some similarity. For example, 'he is a lion in battle'. In the image which Danto suggests, of Napoleon as a Roman emperor. I recognise Napoleon; I also recognise the Roman outfit, and I appreciate that Napoleon did not usually wear these clothes. I can see how the visual metaphor parallels the literary one: I have an object, Napoleon, shown dressed in a way not usually seen or expected (the equivalent of the non-literal application) to suggest some similarity (that Napoleon has the attributes of a Roman Emperor). Danto explains why an artist would choose to depict Napoleon as a Roman emperor, and, although he does not mention any specific work, he could have had Canova's colossal marble statue of Napoleon in mind.[5] The sculptor did not represent Napoleon in fancy-dress; the aim was to imply that Napoleon shared the qualities of imperial grandeur and omnipotence we usually attribute to a Roman emperor. Danto contrasts that situation with one where Napoleon simply acts as a model for a sculpture of a Roman emperor – albeit a very unlikely occurrence. In this second situation the model stands for whoever they are modelling, and this is why Napoleon would have made an extremely bad model: he would have been instantly recognisable as himself. Danto makes the point that, in the first example, Napoleon as Roman emperor – what he terms an instance of "metaphoric transformation" (1981, p.173) – the identity of the subject remains constant and recognisable: Napoleon is seen as Napoleon throughout. Danto believes that the distinction between these three, visually indiscernible examples – Napoleon dressed up, Napoleon as Roman emperor and Napoleon as model – will help us to differentiate art from non-art. The distinction will also help to elucidate

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[5] The colossal marble statue *Napoleon Bonaparte in the Pose of a Roman Emperor* by Antonio Canova, produced between 1802 and 1810, is now in The Wellington Museum, Apsley House, London.

why a difference in content alone, the issue he addressed in his previous chapter, cannot be used to identify art from non-art: the content is the same in all three cases.

Danto moves on to examine rhetoric in more detail. He approaches the subject in Aristotelian terms: as a psychological device intended to result in the generation of an attitude or emotion in the recipient. He says "it is not implausible to see Aristotle in the *Rhetoric* working out the structures of a pathetic syllogism which are supposed to terminate in a certain sort of emotion" (1981, p.169). In dealing with emotions we are considering states of mind, not merely moves in logic. Aristotle believes that rhetoric is the counterpart of dialectic and that both are made use of in all human deliberation; in *The Art of Rhetoric* (henceforth *Rhetoric*) he says: "it is, then, established that rhetoric is not concerned with any single delimited kind of subject but is like dialectic" (*1355b*, 1991, p.69). I mentioned above that Danto noted that there is an element of rhetoric in all human communication and this stems from the Aristotelian notion of the universal need for both dialectic and rhetoric. It also reflects the somewhat fuzzy distinction between the two which is evident in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*. Danto believes the rhetorician is demonstrating two things: firstly, why we ought to feel an emotion, and secondly, taking the audience back to experience the original emotion. Aristotle's discussion of rhetoric identifies its three components: firstly, *ethos*, dealing with the character of the speaker, secondly, *pathos*, engaging the feelings and finally *logos*, a sound argument. The third element, *logos* or argument had two main categories: firstly, example, the rhetorical equivalent of induction, and secondly, enthymeme, the rhetorical equivalent of syllogism. It is the enthymeme which Aristotle identifies as the most appropriate logical form for rhetorical use; it is Danto's next task to examine why this should be so. The answer, as I shall explain, is central to Danto's theory of art.

His discussion of the enthymeme begins with a definition: an enthymeme is an argument with an unstated premise or conclusion. As something is missing, the enthymeme is a rhetorical device which is essentially elliptical in nature. In *Rhetoric* Aristotle explains: "both enthymeme and example must concern things

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that for the most part can be otherwise ... and arise from few facts, often fewer than with the first syllogism; for if any of them were well known, there would be no need to mention them. The hearer supplies them for himself" (*1357a*, 1991, p.77). In other words, an argument is capable of being followed but what is missing must be supplied by the *auditor*, and this is the crucial point for Danto. The auditor is contributing to the process and must add something to enable the argument to be followed. The rhetorical power of the enthymeme is psychological and this is manifest in two important ways. Firstly, the auditor becomes involved, and being involved, being drawn into an argument, generates heightened interest. Secondly, as a participant in the argument, the auditor is in a way persuaded by herself and therefore more easily convinced than she would be by another person's argument. Danto explains that the process "involves a complex interrelation between the framer and the reader of the enthymeme. The latter must himself fill the gap deliberately left open by the former: he must supply what is missing and draw his own conclusions ... In a small way, the audience for the enthymeme acts as all readers ideally should, participating in the process rather than just being encoded with information as a tabula rasa" (1981, p.170).

Danto claims that a similar element of ellipsis is present in metaphor, and he believes that they can be seen as enthymematic in structure. He outlines Aristotle's view that a metaphor relates one term to another by way of a hidden middle term. Without accepting that Aristotle has found the correct logical structure of metaphors, Danto believes that in understanding metaphors the hearer, viewer or reader is involved in filling in or finding this middle term: that metaphors are essentially elliptical in nature. He believes that metaphors share the same crucial feature as enthymemes: that they demand involvement with and completion by their audience. However, there is a difference (it is not a sharp difference; there is overlap): enthymemes require specific knowledge to complete the gap; metaphor usually allows for wider interpretation. I either have the knowledge to complete the enthymeme or not; with metaphor, although specific knowledge may be necessary,

there is more opportunity to think about the elements and discover the links between them. Danto returns to his example of Napoleon to make another point. The viewer, to make sense of the metaphor, must know who Napoleon was and how he usually dressed in 18th-century France; the same applies to Roman emperors. If the audience does not have this knowledge the metaphorical import is missed entirely. The metaphor answers the original question which, it will be recalled, was why did the artist choose to depict Napoleon in this way? This, Danto points out, is a different question to simply asking why Napoleon is wearing these odd clothes, the answer to which may well be non-metaphoric. The difference is one that Danto has identified before: the metaphor is dealing with a *representation*, and, as I have explained, this is another key feature of Danto's theory of art. A final distinction is made; in the latter case, Napoleon just wearing a Roman outfit, there is the possibility that the clothes could have some metaphoric significance for Napoleon himself. I therefore must be aware that a picture of this latter possibility – a picture *of* a metaphor – is not necessarily, in fact will usually not be, a metaphoric picture. As Danto points out, "it is crucial to distinguish the form of a representation from the content of the representation" (1981, p.172).

I now return to a previous example: the difference between the Loran diagram of Cézanne's *Portrait of Madame Cézanne* and the Lichtenstein painting of Loran's diagram. How does the Lichtenstein painting operate as a metaphor? I refer back to our standard definition of a metaphor – it is a figure of speech in which a linguistic expression is applied to an object to which it is not literally applicable in order to suggest some similarity. The Lichtenstein work is a very large studio painting, 68"x 56", on canvas. The diagrammatic subject matter is not usually seen in a large studio painting: it seems out of place in this huge canvas; so here we have the non-literal application from our definition. But there is another non-literal element at work: the title of the painting is *Portrait of Madame Cézanne* yet its subject matter is Loran's diagram of that painting (see illustration 7). So what similarity is there, as my definition suggests must exist, between a large studio painting of a diagram of a

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painting from a book and that original painting? The similarity lies between Erle Loran's diagrammatic attempt to explain the structure of Cézanne's painting and Cézanne's own schematised vision of the world generated through his approach to painting which embodies a process similar to that used in a diagram: geometrification and simplification. In a letter to Emile Bernard, Cézanne says: "treat nature by the cylinder, the sphere, the cone, everything in its proper perspective so that each side of an object or plane is directed towards a central point".[6] This is the main metaphor in Lichtenstein's painting; there are others, and I will mention three without discussing them: firstly, the relationship between Cézanne and the subject of his painting, his wife; secondly, Cézanne and his acceptance by the artworld; and thirdly, how art historians attempt to explain painting and the suitability of the methods they adopt.

Danto applies the results of his discussion on rhetoric, enthymeme and metaphor to this earlier example. It will be recalled, Danto pointed out that in the case of Napoleon as a Roman emperor – the case of metaphoric transformation – the subject, Napoleon, was recognisable throughout the process. In fact, he had to be recognisable throughout for the metaphor to work. Danto believes a similar metaphoric transformation is at play in the case of Lichtenstein's painting of the Loran diagram. The original painting, Cézanne's *Portrait of Madame Cézanne*, is recognisable throughout. Lichtenstein's canvas is saying something about Cézanne's painting: it is a comment on how Cézanne has geometicised his images to produce a schematised figure and how this relates to the diagrammatic format used by Loran. As with the Napoleon example, the viewer must know both the diagram and Cézanne's paintings to appreciate the metaphor which is central to Lichtenstein's painting. Danto concludes by pulling together the results of his consideration of both examples and proposes that it is *transfigurative representation* which is involved here. It is not representation as such; it is this transfigurative representation which,

[6]The letter is from Aix-en-Provence dated 15th April 1904, see Cézanne, 2004, p.158.

he believes, distinguishes representation in *art*. Danto explains the transfigurative process in the Lichtenstein painting: "it is a transfiguration of the portrait [Cézanne's], in which the portrait – like Napoleon – retains its identity through a substitution which is meant to illuminate it under novel attributes: to see that portrait as a diagram is to see that artist as seeing the world as a schematized structure" (1981, p.172). The transfiguration happens consciously in the two examples which he has discussed, but he believes that it takes place unconsciously or naively in other artworks. He concludes that "to understand the artwork is to grasp the metaphor that is, I think, always there" (1981, p.172).

In the following passage, which Danto admits is very speculative, he looks at the impact of this metaphoric transfiguration on the viewer, and he chooses specifically to address the impact of masterpieces on the individual. He distinguishes masterpieces from two other classes of art. Firstly, that which is merely beautiful and secondly, and interestingly, from the minimalist art which he has tended to use for his examples. The implication being that the minimalist art, although it is art, is not of the first rank. He believes that in the case of masterpieces, the greatest metaphors in art are those in which the viewer identifies herself with the subject, and he gives Anna Karenina or Elizabeth Bennett [*sic*] as examples from literature where the reader is drawn into the world of the character: to some extent living the life of the character in a make-believe world. The power of the metaphor here, he believes, is that "the artwork becomes a metaphor for life and life is transfigured" (1981, p.172). He is, of course, referring to the reader's life; to see one's own life through the metaphor of Anna's life is to be changed by the experience. Danto suggests that this, not unfamiliar, experience in art of enabling us to enter into another world is a result of this metaphoric transfiguration; the reader is the subject and is transfigured by the experience.

But do the situations Danto describes really embody metaphoric transformation? It is telling that the examples he gives are from literature: from novels to be precise. In novels we do, in many cases, tend to associate ourselves

with the protagonists; we are drawn into sharing their experiences and expectations, but, I suggest, this is a case of empathy and escapism. The transformation is empathetic rather than metaphoric. Danto believes this feeling is a mark of great art, but we can have this feeling very strongly with trivial art, for example with Mills and Boon novels (so I am told) and with adventure stories. Danto sees this situation as "the enactment of a metaphoric transformation with oneself as subject" (1981, p.173). I can accept the empathetic aspect and that this type of literature can and does transform lives, but I question whether metaphor is involved in this aspect of the art. Danto is conflating the empathetic response to a novel with metaphor which of course they may well contain. The story of Anna Karenina, which he uses as an example, is part of a metaphor, which runs through the novel, of the problems facing Russian society at a particular time. However, our identification with Anna is not metaphoric transformation, although I accept it could transform our life. Danto ends this speculative passage suggesting that "we must descend from the heights on which it is difficult not to sound portentous" (1981, p.173) and concludes his examination of the rhetorical nature of art by discussing four features.

The first feature is that, if we accept Danto's view that the structure of artworks shares certain features with metaphor, it will be impossible to paraphrase an artwork or explain it fully in other terms. The reason is clear: if artworks require participation – to identify the metaphor and resolve the enthymematic gap – there is an input required by the individual viewer which can never be fully determined by another person. This input is provided from *outside* the artwork and therefore cannot be entirely predicted or described. In other words, the interpretation of an artwork depends on the person involved in the interpretation and what they bring to the interpretation; we can never know in advance what they will contribute to the experience. There is a second reason why a description of a metaphor is deficient: to describe a metaphor: the attempt to paraphrase it is inevitably to lose some of its power; the impact of the original metaphor must be *felt*. This second reason, Danto believes, explains why criticism can never replace art. It may be possible to critically

unravel in minute detail many aspects of a metaphor, but this will never replace *feeling* the original. However, Danto does accept the importance of criticism: it is to ensure that the background information necessary to understand the metaphor retains its cultural currency. Put another way, one function of criticism is to ensure the metaphoric allusions required to interpret a work of art are capable of being understood by the community. It is not so much the danger of the metaphor becoming a cliché, rather that a metaphor may die: the information necessary to interpret it may cease to be generally available. Danto says that metaphors "go dead in a way that sometimes requires scholarly resurrection. And it is the value of such disciplines as the history of art and literature to make such works approachable again" (1981, p.174).

The second feature which Danto raises follows on from his view of the uniqueness of individual works of art. It is raised to forestall a possible argument: an argument proposing that we consider art having some unique feature in a similar way to a primitive quality. He suggests that, given the uniqueness of works of art, a view could be taken that they are irreducible in the way that certain empiricist theories view primitive qualities such as colours. Danto's account is confusing here; the traditional empiricist view, say in Locke, would regard colour as a secondary quality; the primary qualities would be solidity, shape, extension, motion, rest and number. However, he suggests that if, as his own account of the empiricist view proposes, works of art are *themselves* such basic objects in the world, the unique nature of art would be explained. Danto rejects this theory. He argues that works of art are distinguished by internal relations which involve a cognitive process of interpretation: we encounter and interact with works of art in a two-way process. The process we have seen demonstrated in the case of metaphor. It is this which distinguishes them from the primitive qualities of the empiricists. Danto believes there is a cognitive element involved in the interpretation of artworks which is absent in the case of basic qualities like 'red'. He suggests that those who advise us to look to 'the work itself', and here we believe he is referring to aesthetic formalists, are in

danger of accepting a form of this reductive view. He suggests that they tend to treat art as a primitive quality – treating art as 'significant form' would be an example – and disregard the complexity of the cognitive response which his theory has advanced.

The third feature which Danto raises is that his theory of art is contextualist. To interpret a work of art requires, as I have explained, a degree of historical knowledge to enable the metaphor to be understood or the enthymematic gap to be completed. So an ahistorical theory of art cannot be defended. This leads to another characteristic of art: that it is intentional. Art's rhetorical and enthymematic nature involves the intention of the artist being an essential feature. Danto believes that the rhetorical process is intentional: that rhetoric requires an advocate and a respondent and that the advocacy has a purpose; he believes this is an "analytic truth" (1981, p.175). If we accept that rhetoric is a feature of art then it follows that art must be intentional. We have the artist and the interpreter corresponding to the advocate and respondent, and it follows that there is an *intention* behind the artist's creation. The intention may be misunderstood, it may, in later circumstances, be incapable of being fully or correctly interpreted, but a relationship between the artist and the viewer underlies any attempt at interpretation. Danto also makes the point that the intention need not be conscious: the rhetorical and metaphorical structure of art could still be in operation in circumstances where the artist was unaware of their import.

I move on to the fourth and final feature which Danto discusses: he believes the structure of rhetoric and metaphor in art is linked with other representational features, rather than with content. He refers back to his discussion earlier in the book: his original objection, it will be recalled, was that what he takes as distinguishing art from non-art may be just another form of content. He believes his establishment of rhetoric and metaphor as essential features of art has proved that content cannot be responsible for the distinction he is seeking. His examples have shown that content cannot by itself provide a way of interpreting a metaphor: other

elements of representation are needed. Underlying the process of interpreting metaphors, and hence art, are two key features. Firstly, the intentional nature of art: art is characterised by the intention of the artist, and it is this which brings rhetoric into art. Secondly, the contextual nature of art: interpretation takes place within a historical context. These two features go a long way towards explaining why works having the same content, the three versions of Napoleon in Roman clothes for example, could be different works of art. Summing up the discussion so far, Danto has identified and explained the importance of metaphor in art: it is a trope in which rhetoric, intention and context work together. He moves on to look at some of the logical features of metaphor. I now begin the second subject in my exposition of the final chapter in *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*.

IVb. Metaphor

The discussion begins with three topics; I examine them in turn. The first discusses metaphor and clichés, the second, deviant metaphors and the third, metaphors as intensional structures. To avoid any confusion, I perhaps need to point out that Danto believes that art is both *intentional* and *intensional*.[7] The question of intentionality was considered in the discussion in the previous section: it is concerned with the intention of the artist. Intensionality, Danto believes, as I shall explain shortly, is a feature of the logical structure of metaphors. The latter point is crucial in this present argument: from his consideration of the intensional structure of metaphor Danto outlines a theory linking intensionality to *how* representations depict their subject matter: what he calls style. The first two topics, clichés and deviant metaphors are used, as I shall explain, to introduce the final topic of intensionality.

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[7] Interestingly Margolis also believes that interpretive discourse is both intentional and intensional. He introduces the term 'Intentional' (distinguished by its capital) which incorporates both and is a feature of his culturally emergent entities such as artworks. See Margolis, 1995b, pp.13-4.

He concludes his examination of metaphor by looking in detail at intensionality: he then examines four contexts which explain how his theory operates.

I begin with a general comment: Danto explains that metaphors can be both visual and linguistic, and, therefore, a theory of metaphor must take account of both areas. Music is not mentioned at this stage but it is introduced later in his discussion of expression – which itself involves metaphor. He points out that there are theories of metaphor which relate purely to the grammatical features of sentences but that these are unlikely to be able to accommodate visual metaphors: we simply do not have a grammar of images. These theories, although useful, cannot be used to explain visual as well as linguistic metaphors. There must be some other essential feature of metaphor which characterises both the linguistic and the visual forms. He makes it clear that he does not aim to address this difference in detail in the present book but that he has covered the issue elsewhere.[8] He mentions the issue in passing to guard against a narrow view of metaphor which deals with one area only.

The first of the three topics examines the relationship between metaphor and clichés. Danto accepts that everyday language is full of clichés and that clichés are stale metaphors. But, the original metaphor behind a cliché entered language at some time as a vibrant new figure of speech, and it was its novelty and power which led to its success and to its over-use. To appreciate cliché, he believes, requires a cultural competence rather than just linguistic ability; it is this competence which distinguishes the over-used metaphor or cliché from the literal meaning of the words it employs. Danto uses the examples of "the water was boiling" and "his blood was boiling" (1981, p.177). The first could be literally true; the second cannot be: the subject would be dead long before the boiling point of blood. The first can be

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[8] In his books prior to *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*, this subject is addressed in *What Philosophy Is*, Danto,1968c, pp.23-5. There is also a section on metaphor in *Nietzsche as Philosopher*, Danto, 1965b, pp.38-47. His most recent discussion is in his essay 'Metaphor and Cognition', see Danto, 1992, pp.72-87.

paraphrased perfectly well as 'the water is now at 212 degrees Fahrenheit', the second cannot. For Danto it is this last feature of metaphors, the fact that we cannot paraphrase or substitute for them or within them, which is crucial; he says: "it is the mark of metaphors in general to resist such substitutions and precisifications, the explanation of which must, I think, give us the key to this concept" (1981, p.177). This leads into Danto's explanation of metaphors as intensional structures in the next point but one. He finishes his discussion of clichés by making the comment that there are of course visual clichés as well as linguistic ones; he gives the example of the comic book depiction of a knock to the head, 'seeing stars', as an illustration.

The second topic concerns metaphor and deviance. Danto acknowledges the strength of the theory that metaphors are deviant utterances: the theory is an attempt to distinguish literal utterances from metaphors in a structural way. He believes the theory is correct in approaching the problem by examining sentences rather than words: this brings in the element of the context in which metaphors are created. But he believes the theory suffers from a major drawback: it provides no foolproof method of determining when deviance is occurring or how it is to be identified. In other words, in many situations this form of structural analysis seems incapable of picking up the author's intention. He explains with an example: we are asked to consider two hypothetical paintings of Napoleon dressed as Madame Récamier. The first is metaphorical: it is perhaps intended to show that Récamier's salon was more powerful and enduring than Napoleon's Empire. The second, however unlikely, is a picture of Napoleon dressed in woman's clothes because he was a transvestite; this painting of course would be quite literal. Both paintings are identical. Danto highlights the difference: "one is a metaphor, the other not. One, if metaphor be deviant, is a deviant portrait; the other a portrait, nondeviant in itself, of deviancy (perversion) ... The metaphorical truth of the one is consistent with the nonmetaphorical truth of the other" (1981, p.178). In this example we have two indiscernible paintings, one is metaphorical and deviant, the other is non-metaphorical, although its subject is deviancy. Danto argues that, as the

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paintings are indiscernible, we cannot tell whether we are faced with metaphorical deviancy or literal deviancy. Therefore a deviant utterance cannot always be used to distinguish metaphor because there is always the possibility we are looking at a literal, non-metaphoric deviant utterance. Danto suggests that his next topic, examining metaphors as intensional structures, will provide a means of identifying metaphors by highlighting their logical structure, and he emphasises that this would apply to all metaphors, visual as well as linguistic.

I now move on to the third and final topic and examine metaphor as an intensional structure. A standard definition of an intensional entity is that it violates the principle of extensionality: the principle that equivalence implies identity. If, say, a context is intensional, its extension may change if an expression contained in the context is replaced by a coextensive expression. With many sentences this is not the case; their truth or falsity depends on the truth conditions of the things being discussed: the sentences are extensional. Intensional contexts are different: their truth value depends on *how* the things are discussed. I shall explain this by looking at some examples which illustrate this difference shortly. By this definition, I shall explain that intensional entities will include such things as concepts, conditions, attributes, and relations. I will return shortly to consider the issue of how the way a thing is discussed relates to intensionality in works of art. The question of replacement is a crucial feature of the definition of intensionality: intensional entities cannot allow replacement of terms with coextensive terms. Danto believes that a feature of metaphors is that their expressions cannot be substituted: they are therefore intensional in structure. He uses an example from Shakespeare: "But, soft! what light through yonder window breaks? / It is the east, and Juliet is the sun." (*Romeo and Juliet*, II.ii.2-3). Clearly a substitution here of, say, a scientific description of the sun would destroy the metaphor. Such a description would be quite correct when applied to the sun but meaningless when applied to Juliet. Danto also believes that this example shows that ambiguity is not a key feature in metaphor: an ambiguous term would give two or more readings. Romeo's metaphor is quite

clear and unambiguous: where intensionality is involved there can be no substitution; in which case ambiguity is precluded. Danto does accept that an argument could be put forward, in some cases, for an element of ambiguity in metaphor: his previous example of 'his blood boiled' for instance; it is unclear whether this is a metaphor or a sentence using an ambiguous predicate. However, without further discussion Danto moves on to the next stage in his argument: "I shall proceed by assuming that metaphorical contexts are in fact intensional ... and that the first philosophical step to be taken in understanding metaphorical construction is to find out why" (1981, p.179).

Danto's next step is to examine a number of contexts to clarify the nature of intensionality and its opposite extensionality. He begins with a discussion of belief contexts: statements where someone is said to believe something. As an example, I could consider someone who believes that Sydney is the capital of Australia.[9] This is not an unwarranted belief: Sydney is the largest city in the country and has many of the features you would expect to find in a capital. I know that Canberra is in fact the capital of Australia. But, in my example, the person concerned will most certainly not believe that Sydney is Canberra. So, I cannot substitute Canberra for the capital of Australia in this sentence which ascribes a belief: belief statements are non-extensional or intensional in nature. As I have already mentioned, statements involving attributions of the mind, usually termed propositional attitudes, are intensional: for example those statements involving feelings of desire, doubt, certainty, fear or hope. Danto however warns against believing that this mental reference is the mark of intensionality. He gives other cases of intensional statements where the mental attribution is not so marked: modal contexts and quotational contexts are two examples.

Danto's aim is to find a general theory of intensionality: some special feature of intensional contexts which is true in every instance and which only applies

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[9]Danto uses a similar example in 'Metaphor and Cognition', see Danto, 1992, p.80.

to such contexts. Until such a general theory is available Danto warns against any theory which deals with one particular type of intensional context: such a theory must, he believes, be viewed as *ad hoc*. He considers one such *ad hoc* theory of this type which was developed to accommodate modal and other similar contexts: it makes use of possible worlds. The theory, he believes, does indeed explain modal contexts very well, but he doubts whether it is able to accommodate attributive contexts. Modal contexts are those in which a claim is made about a possibility or necessity; attributive contexts are those where someone is said to believe something: for instance my example of someone who was said to believe that Sydney is the capital of Australia: I attribute a belief to them. He concludes, although he gives no reasons, that "I find it hard to see how a possible-world structure will convincingly resolve contexts of direct discourse, cases in which it is true that *m* said '*a* is F' and false that he said '*b* is F,' for all that *a* is identical with *b*" (1981, p.181). Danto is stating here, without any elaboration, the standard view from the study of intensional logic: that possible-world structures are inapplicable to attributive contexts. He now puts forward his own theory which looks at the process of how we understand metaphor; he believes this theory *can* be generalised to cover all the contexts he has discussed. The theory he proposes is this:

> The explanation of the logical peculiarity of intensional contexts is that the words these sentences make use of do not refer to what they ordinarily refer to in routine nonintensional discourse. They refer, rather, to the form in which the things ordinarily referred to by those words are represented: they include among their truth conditions some reference to a representation. (1981, p.181)

It is the reference to a representation which is the key point here; an example will help to explain Danto's position. When I say that *x* believes that Wagner is a great composer, it is not the same as saying that *x* believes that the person who wrote the opera *Parsifal* is a great composer. The difference lies in the fact that I – it is the *I* which is crucial – am attributing beliefs to *x*. I are not talking about Wagner or

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Parsifal in these statements; I am explaining, albeit in a partial way, how *x* represents her interpretation of Wagner to others. The statement 'Wagner is a great composer' is extensional; I can substitute a coextensive term for Wagner, such as 'the composer of *Parsifal*', and the truth of the statement is unchanged. The statement 'x believes Wagner is a great composer' is intensional: I cannot substitute 'the composer of *Parsifal*' because I have no knowledge of whether x knows that the composer of *Parsifal* was indeed Wagner; the form of the words is important. My assertions are about components of a representation – of how *x* sees the world – and they are, therefore, in this context not about the meaning of the words contained in the statement in isolation, or in some other context. I have already explained that a statement of x's belief could be literally false: x, because of her particular circumstances, could believe that *Parsifal* was composed by Verdi. My assertions are about components of a representation – of how *x* sees the world – and they are, therefore, in this context not about the meaning of the words contained in the statement taken in isolation or in a different situation. Danto concludes that: "since intensional contexts are about something quite different from what expressions using the words they use would be about, it is small wonder that substitution and quantification seem blocked. They are so only because they have no business being used with reference to the same things they would be used with reference to in nonintensional contexts" (1981, pp.181-2).

To see how his theory can be used to explain metaphor, as a preparatory step, Danto looks at four examples of different contexts where intensionality is evident: quotations, modalities, psychological ascriptions and texts. He begins with quotations, believing that they offer the most clear example of a situation in which words cannot be substituted with synonyms. The quotation must replicate exactly what was said; this is trivially true, but, as I shall explain, the semantics of quotation can become much more complicated. I follow Danto here and begin my discussion with quotations, and I choose this context out of the four examples mentioned to discuss in some detail. My choice is based on Danto's view that "the parallels

between them [quotational contexts] and other intensional contexts are much closer than one might have believed. In brief, I mean quotational contexts to stand as my model for the others I want to discuss" (Danto, 1981, p.184).

Danto chooses a subject which he admits may be overly complicated: he chooses to discuss allusive quotations, and from a number of examples I will concentrate on one which he chooses from a novel by Anthony Trollope. Danto uses an allusive quotation which he says is used by Mr. Daubeny in *Phineas Finn*: where Mr Daubeny cites Virgil in Latin.[10] In fact in the passage it is Mr. Gresham who makes full use of the quotation, although Mr. Daubeny replies to him with a truncated version – I will refer to Mr. Gresham from now on. To understand the example, some of the background to this chapter of the novel is required. We are in Parliament (Trollope was writing around 1874) and the Queen's speech of the Liberal government has just been read. The subject of the disestablishment of the Church is in the air and the speech mentions that the subject will have to be considered. Mr Gresham, the leader of the Conservatives, uses this as an opportunity to argue for disestablishment: his, until then, private and passionate belief. As a Conservative, he is an unlikely advocate for such a momentous change; he has the difficult problem of convincing his dissenting fellow conservatives to follow him, not to mention his opponents, the Liberals. This is where Mr Gresham uses the quotation from Virgil: "turning to the Dissenters who usually supported him, and pointing over the table to his opponents, he uttered that well-worn quotation, *Quod minime reris,*— then he paused, and began again; *Quod minime reris,— Graiâ pandetur ab urbe* " (strange as it may seem, will start from a Greek city).[11]

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[10]Danto, 1981, pp.182-4. He quotes the wrong book: it is in fact *Phineas Redux*, see Trollope, 1973, chapter 8, 'The Address'.

[11]Trollope, 1973, p.83. The Latin quotation is from Virgil, 1991, *Book VI.98*. Earlier editions misquote Virgil: "*Quo nimium reris*" (1952) instead of "*Quod minime reris*" (1973)!

The complexity of the allusion is apparent: the speaker is flattering the audience in their ability to understand the relevance of the partial quotation to the subject being discussed. The quotation relies on the completion of the ellipsis by Mr Gresham's audience; it relies on their ability to know the location of the quotation in the story of *The Aeneid*. The audience must know that it is spoken by the Sybil and that the quotation's full meaning relies on the knowledge of the previous line as well as the line quoted: "your road to safety, strange as it may seem, will start from a Greek city" (*Book VI.97-8* 1991, p.135). It also relies on a knowledge of the plot of *The Aeneid* to see the relevance of the quotation to the position Mr Gresham finds himself in: in its relation to the question of disestablishment it suggests that the way forward for disestablishment in Parliament has a parallel with the Sybil's lines. The task will begin in what is usually regarded as the enemy camp: in this case with Mr Gresham, the opposition leader. Danto believes that "such [allusive] quotations have always a metaphoric pragmatics in excess of any metaphor the quotation itself may have if it is already a metaphor; and commonly the quotation is made to establish a recognised parallel between the situation it is applied to currently and the situation intended by the source of the expression quoted" (1981, p.182).

The flattery in Mr Gresham's use of the quotation is rhetorical: it is an allusive device used to form a bond between the speaker and his usual opponents, the Liberals and, as well, his, perhaps bemused and startled, fellow Conservatives. The rhetorical device relies on a shared educational background and literary knowledge between quoter and audience which implies a joint sense of community, ambition and purpose. Such allusive quotations in literature operate at a number of metaphoric levels, or, in the words of Danto's theory, they provide a number of tiered representations. They are complex assertions about components of a representation: in this example about how Trollope represents the world of Victorian politics to us, the readers, in his novel. Firstly, there may be a metaphor in the quotation itself: in this case a mixture of metaphor and, at least for Aeneas, reality. For Aeneas the road is a metaphor for the coming journey, but parts of his journey

may well be made by road. Secondly, there is the recognition of the literary metaphor within the dialogue: the recognition of the parallels in the quotation by the characters in the novel. Thirdly, the metaphorical dialogue between writer and reader: the reader is expected to understand the tactical, rhetorical use of the metaphor as a component of the novel's development. We can see how these levels operate separately. For instance, the last element has a strong contextual or historical component. Writing in 1874, Trollope could rely on his educated readership having a knowledge of Latin and Virgil. The situation is different today; no popular novelist, as Trollope was, could rely on this knowledge today: this third level of metaphor has changed into a matter of scholarship rather than common knowledge. It has taken on a historical component: we are now reading a Victorian novel. Danto sums up the situation:

> Whatever the case, Mr Daubeny, [Mr Gresham] in quoting Virgil, is making a very complex claim, some of the truth conditions of which are satisfied by Virgil's words themselves, some of which are satisfied by whatever will have satisfied what Virgil's words will have been about, and some of which must be satisfied by that, whatever it is, which the sentence into which Q [the quotation] is taken are about – and then there are truth conditions having to do with the relationship between the last two sets of truth conditions. The complexity is due to the various levels upon which Mr Daubeny's [Mr Gresham's] utterance must be taken. His words refer to some words, to what those words were meant to refer to, to what he means for them to refer to, and so on. So his allusive quotation, as must any, plays a very complex role in the discourse it facilitates. (1981, pp.183-4)

Following the discussion of this specific allusive quotation, Danto returns to the more general issues of quotations and intensionality. He makes the point that it is the characteristics of specific words which makes the quotation intensional: outside the quotational context the same words could be substituted by others with

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no fundamental change to the meaning. But, Danto also believes that the allusive quotation, Mr Gresham's words in his example, are not totally intensional: there is a primary level of meaning, which we have identified above, which is the non-intensional meaning of the words quoted. The words of the quotation, as I have shown, exist in a tiered hierarchy of representation which is a feature of the allusive quotation: it is this complexity which Danto has unpacked in his discussion.

Danto goes on to discuss the three other contexts: modalities, psychological ascriptions and texts. In each he points out the intensional nature of the contexts, and that, as with quotations, there is always a reference to a representation. This he sees as the crucial point: "the explanation of their intensionality follows if what accounts for intensionality is finally reference to representation" (1981, p.187). He then goes on to summarise his view of metaphor and art. He makes the point that metaphors are not about the meaning of the words in their non-metaphoric usage – in many cases they are literally untrue – they are about the way the words are presented and are dependent on the historical context in which they are used. The interpretation of the contextual nature of metaphor is dependent on the understanding of the audience and will change over time: what Danto calls "the cultural framework of the times" (1981, p.189). This explains why metaphors can die or can become clichés through over-use. I now come to the key feature of metaphors: Danto believes that they embody some of the structural features of art which he has identified earlier in his discussion about intensionality: "they do not merely represent subjects, but properties of the mode of representation itself must be a constituent in understanding them" (1981, p.189). The discussion of metaphor has striking similarities with Danto's discussion of the contextual nature of art; he illustrates this by referring to an example he has used before. Looking back to the discussion on the Loran diagram of Cézanne's *Portrait of Madame Cézanne* and the Lichtenstein painting of the diagram we can appreciate the parallels. Lichtenstein's canvas is concerned with issues absent in the Loran diagram in the same way that Shakespeare's metaphor about Juliet is about much more than the

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small star at the centre of our solar system. In the previous discussion I have identified how Lichtenstein's painting also operates at a number of levels in a similar way to Trollope's metaphoric use of Virgil's quotation; the parallels are striking.

Danto concludes his discussion of metaphor: "it is after all, a commonplace that every metaphor is a little poem. By dint of the features we have identified, metaphors are minor works of art" (1981, p.189). So, the key issue that Danto identifies from his discussion is that metaphors share some of the features of works of art, particularly rhetorical ellipsis and intensional structure. This must mean either that all metaphors are art or that rhetorical ellipsis and intensionality are not confined to art. The implications of the second, relatively weak, claim – that rhetorical ellipsis and intensionality are not confined to art – I will leave for the present and return to it in the conclusion. The first claim – that all metaphors are art – requires further comment here: from Danto's quotation above I assume he is inclined to this view. The claim initially seems to provide a promising approach to a definition of art: if art and metaphor share the common features of intensionality and rhetorical ellipsis, perhaps we have identified a necessary condition of art. There is, however, a major problem with this claim: the problem of how we delimit metaphor.

Theories of metaphor can be divided into two types. Firstly, those which propose that there is a literal aspect to language and that metaphor is a secondary attribute: a specific use of language. Secondly, those which believe that the basis of all language is metaphorical and that any literal reading is precluded. Paul Ricoeur sums up this second approach: "that discourse on metaphor is itself infected by the universal metaphoricity of philosophical discourse. In this regard, one can speak of a paradox of the auto-implication of metaphor" (2003, p.338). In other words we can have no non-circular account of metaphor because the language of that account would be metaphoric. I side with the latter view: I believe that metaphor is a widespread and inescapable feature of most, if not all, language: that metaphor permeates language far beyond the obvious textbook examples; for instance, the one I used previously 'he was a lion in battle'. Without entering into a

lengthy discussion on the ubiquity of metaphor in language. I give some examples to support my view: in the previous sentence the words 'widespread' and 'beyond' can be considered spatial metaphors, the word 'permeates' is biological and 'inescapable' is social. Ricoeur points to the spatial metaphor in the word 'metaphor' itself. Danto's idea of the transfiguration of the commonplace can be viewed as a metaphor operating on two levels: firstly, the metaphoric basis of the word 'transfiguration' itself and secondly, the metaphoric transfer involved in the artistic process of pop art elevating the status of items from popular culture. I leave the issue without further discussion[12] aware that I have rather sketchily put forward my view that metaphor is a widespread and underlying feature of language. Given this position, it is evident that a proposed definition of art based on the common features of art and metaphor, would now include all language as well as art and is far too inclusive to serve any useful purpose. If we cannot delimit metaphor, a definition of art relying on metaphor suffers the same problem of delimitation. I now move on to examine the second part of Danto's final chapter of *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*: the role of expression in art.

IVc. Expression

Danto's initial view of expression in art is heavily indebted to Nelson Goodman's treatment of the subject in *Languages of Art* (1976, Part II.8, pp.85-95) although, as I shall explain, he does point out some difficulties with Goodman's approach. Danto initially suggests that expression in art may provide a link, lying midway, as he

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[12]Some philosophers have gone further and proposed that metaphor lies behind all philosophy. Nietzsche in his 1873 'On Truth and Lie in an Extra-moral Sense' (see Nietzsche, 2000) and Derrida in his 1978, 'The Retrait of Metaphor' and his 1982 'White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy'. The title of the latter alludes to the importance Derrida places on dead metaphor which he believes brings into play the basic oppositions which characterise metaphysics.

believes, between rhetoric and style. I will return to this point when I discuss style. His starting point is a discussion of Goodman's view of expression as metaphoric exemplification. As Danto has treated metaphor at some length, he begins his discussion with the concept of exemplification which he regards as one of the most straightforward cases of representation, but, as I shall explain, it turns out to be quite complex. Goodman explains exemplification in *Languages of Art* by referring to the small pieces of cloth used by tailors as samples: they exemplify, in one way, by possessing certain properties of the material: for instance texture, colour and quality; other properties are exemplified in another way: by reference. For example, I would be shocked if my garment was made up of 5cm squares of the material: the swatch exemplifies the final garment within a certain commonly understood frame of reference. The swatches are samples which act as symbols of the finished garment within a well-defined and commonly-understood context. Goodman says: "to have without symbolizing is merely to possess, while to symbolize without having is to refer in some way other than by exemplifying. The swatch exemplifies only those properties that it both has and refers to." (1976, p.53). I shall now consider this distinction in relation to expression. Expression, Goodman believes, is a form of metaphoric exemplification, and this is a common, but not exclusive feature of art. Works of art express the properties they metaphorically exemplify. The crucial aspect here is that of metaphoric transfer: Goodman believes that metaphor takes the subject which is being referred to in the metaphor into a different realm. New distinctions and qualities arise that could never emerge from purely literal predicates. In this way, for example, Donatello's *David*, a statue of a young man, expresses sensuality and homoeroticism which has little to do with its biblical subject matter.

Danto uses an example from Goodman to highlight the problem of expression: he asks how music is able to express sadness. How do sounds manage to convey a feeling of sadness? Following Goodman, he rejects theories of a causal nature: those suggesting that the sadness is an expression of the composer's sadness or that it engenders sadness in those who hear it. He points out that the composer

may not have been sad whilst writing her sad music and that any piece of music may make us feel sad because it reminds us of a sad event having nothing to do with the music in question. Goodman's solution is to invoke metaphor and to use it to explain expression. In his introduction to *Languages of Art*, Goodman points out that the 'languages' of his title should strictly be called 'symbol systems' (1976, pp.xi-xii.): the symbols develop in a context, and, of course, they must be understood in a context. This understanding requires a syntax: a set of rules required for understanding and analysis to be possible. I have mentioned that Goodman believes that metaphor requires the transfer of predicates: the transfer of coextensive terms or 'labels' as Goodman refers to them. These labels belong to a family, a schema or extended realm, which operates within the syntactical and cultural context. The metaphoric term does not apply literally but it *must* apply within a syntactical context; thus sad music is sad within a particular cultural framework which can change and develop over time. Goodman sums up his approach to expression: "what is expressed is metaphorically exemplified. What expresses sadness is metaphorically sad. And what is metaphorically sad is actually but not literally sad. i.e.. comes under a transferred application of some label coextensive with 'sad' " (1976, p.85). It can now be seen how close Goodman's and Danto's theories of metaphor are: both propose an element of transfer; as will be recalled from the discussion of Danto's idea of 'metaphoric transformation' earlier in this section, and both are context dependent.

Danto and Goodman discuss the problem of artistic predicates. They both accept that some predicates can be literally true of works of art: a sculpture, being made of marble, may be literally very heavy, but this same sculpture may well express lightness. Goodman uses this idea to make his famous distinction between denotation and exemplification. The same sculpture, if it happens to be a portrait, will denote its subject. As I have explained earlier with the example of Canova's statue of Napoleon, the sculpture denotes its subject but also exemplifies other qualities, grandeur, ostentation and self-importance. Goodman stresses that art can

contain both denotation and exemplification; the two are not mutually exclusive. Danto goes on to explain his own views on artistic predicates which, as I shall explain shortly, are similar to Goodman's. He refers back to his previous explanation of artistic predicates; his aim is to make it clear that in our discussions about art we must go beyond any set of artistic or emotional predicates: relying on a set of 'artistic' predicates tells us nothing about the essential nature of art. In the previous chapter of *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*, it will be recalled, Danto examined artistic predicates in relation to the flower drawings of André Racz: he explained that emotional predicates could also be used as expressive predicates. In that discussion he explained that many of the predicates applying to Racz's drawings would not apply to their subject matter: the flowers themselves. Now he adds a note of caution: any expressive predicate we could possibly think of could apply, in some circumstance, to a particular work of art. Danto is warning against an attempt to match expressive predicates with artistic predicates; the links between the two are complex. He raises three arguments against an oversimplified view of the "assimilation of the expressive to the artistic vocabulary" (1981, p.193).

Firstly, a drawing may express power and yet not be a powerful drawing in any usual artistic sense: it may be a drawing of a powerful animal. Or, it may express something badly or incompetently. Artistic predicates, such as those identified in the discussion of Racz's work seem ill-suited to these situations: they lack the ability to describe these circumstances. Secondly, the language used to describe art tends to be evaluative and Danto suggests that this is not the case with all expressive predicates. This leads Danto to draw the distinction between the use of literal artistic predicates and the metaphoric use of ordinary predicates. He says: "someone who praises Beauvais [Cathedral] for its verticality, or uses 'verticality' to praise it, is of course not praising it for standing erect. But using verticality as an artworld predicate ... leaves open the question of whether Beauvais expresses verticality, which may be one with asking whether its artworld verticality carries a metaphoric connotation" (1981, p.193). It is at this point that Danto believes that

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style becomes an issue: we are discussing what a work of art expresses *together* with the means it uses to do so; I will return to this point shortly.

His third argument against the assimilation of the expressive to the artistic vocabulary draws on the previous two. It is that artistic predicates are often used as part of the metaphor in art. We saw this in the example of Beauvais: the verticality is part of a religious metaphor for striving to rise above the everyday world and achieve a union with God; he says: "the inference from 'metaphorically exemplified' to 'not literally exemplified' is no more a warranted one than its parallel from 'metaphorically true' to 'literally false' " (1981, p.192). Danto returns to his well-used example: the difference between the Loran diagram of Cézanne's *Portrait of Madame Cézanne* and Lichtenstein's painting of the diagram. Both use the predicate of 'being diagrammatic'; the way in which it is used is, however, completely different. The Loran diagram is just that: a diagram; the Lichtenstein painting uses the predicate as a metaphor for how we look at paintings. Danto says: " 'diagrammatic' is an artistic predicate as applied to Lichtenstein, but a literal one as applied to Loran, but the diagrammicity of the former enters into any account of the metaphor in which its expression consists" (1981, p.193). It is at this point that the difference between Danto's and Goodman's views on expression becomes apparent: in the discussion Danto has taken us through Goodman's idea of expression as metaphoric exemplification and explored the common ground as well as the differences. Goodman's theory, as the title of his book indicates, concerns *Languages of Art* and it is, as the sub-title states *An Approach to a Theory of Symbols*. Art, he believes, must be understood within a syntax through a process where expression operates by metaphoric exemplification: a process involving the transfer of meaning attached to predicates which operate non-literally or metaphorically. Danto's theory, on the other hand, sees works of art expressing – again he sees the process involving a transfer of attributes – what they are a metaphor for by the way in which the representation is carried out. He has taken us from Goodman's metaphoric exemplification to his own theory which he restates:

that a work of art expresses what it is a metaphor for, and the question of the way this is carried out – *how* it is achieved – raises the question of style, the third and final topic he discusses.

Before Danto leaves the issue of expression and moves on to discuss style, he discusses a number of works of art and explains how his own theory of metaphor and expression applies to them. The two that are discussed at length are Cézanne's *Portrait of Madame Cézanne* and Rembrandt's *Bathsheba with King David's Letter* (illustration 15) – referred to by Danto as *Portrait of Hendrijke Stoeffels* [sic] *as Bathsheba*. I shall briefly examine the second example. Danto refers to Kenneth Clark's well-known comment on Rembrandt's *Bathsheba* – "one looks at the unflinching modelling of her round, solid body, which is seen with such love that it becomes beautiful" (1978. p.108) – to make his point. Danto believes that a comment like this could only apply to a work of art. Applying his theory to this painting, he explains that the painting is an expression, a metaphoric exemplification to use Goodman's term, of the love Rembrandt felt for his model and lover, Hendrickje Stoffels. The central metaphor of the painting is Rembrandt's use of an unexceptional and quite plain woman, whose naked body is showing signs of age, as a character in the biblical story of Bathsheba: a woman of such overwhelming beauty that it drove King David to commit murder to possess her. Danto believes that Kenneth Clark's quotation identifies this central metaphor clearly: the metaphoric transfer between Rembrandt's 'unflinching modelling' of Hendrickje and how she 'becomes beautiful' in the context of his depiction of her in this setting. Danto sums up his discussion on metaphor and expression: "the philosophical point is that the concept of expression can be reduced to the concept of metaphor, when the way in which something is represented is taken in connection with the subject represented" (1981, p.197). In other words, the artist can depict a subject, which may or may not itself be metaphorical, metaphorically by the way the subject is expressed. The important point is that the manner of representation must be seen in conjunction with the actual subject matter depicted.

IVd. Style

As I have mentioned, the discussion of the way something is represented leads Danto into his treatment of style in the last chapter of *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*. Style is the last of the three major subject areas under discussion in this chapter: 'Metaphor, Expression and Style'. Danto begins with the etymology of the word 'style', from the Latin *stilus*, a sharp instrument for writing by incising. The stylus, as well as recording the written message, leaves its own mark: the mark of *how* it was done. This gives Danto his initial definition of style: "we may thus reserve the term style for this *how*, as what remains of a representation when we subtract its content" (1981, p.197). In the case of style the artist expresses herself in the way in which the subject matter of whatever she is representing is represented: it is concerned with the relationship between the artist and her representation.

Danto uses Plato's *Ion* as an example to analyse this relationship. Socrates uses Ion the Rhapsodist to point out the distinction between art (*technē*, craft or artistry) and inspiration. The rather pompous Ion, it will be recalled, complains to Socrates that he can recite Homer wonderfully (he is far from modest) but the other poets not so well, and he seeks an explanation. Socrates, with gentle irony, leads the none too smart Ion to see that art – remember it is Plato's use of the term as *technē* – can be learnt, but that inspiration is a divine gift. A gift, after all, must be given, otherwise it would not be a gift, and, therefore, according to Socrates, cannot be acquired by instruction. Each art, like medicine, warfare and sculpture (to use Plato's examples in *Ion*), has its own knowledge, but poetry is not an art in this sense: it is divine inspiration. Socrates uses the famous metaphor of the magnet which forms a chain of power to illustrate the way this inspiration is passed from the author, through the rhapsodist to the audience. Art, by Socrates' definition, can be acquired by learning, and if this is so, anyone could be taught to be an artist: artists could be chosen at random to work from manuals. This is the crucial point for Danto: the difference between Ion's inspired performance and a performance by

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someone who ostensibly does the same thing. but using acquired knowledge, marks the difference between style and manner. Style is innate, manner can be acquired, although Danto adds an important proviso: "though from the outside there may be no particular difference to be observed" (1981, p.200); he then addresses this seemingly contradictory situation.

Before I do this, I must point out a problem with Danto's view of style; one which, as I shall explain, he barely acknowledges: the problem of whether style can be perfected. On Danto's (and Plato's) view, if style is innate, it cannot be perfected. This seems counter to what we see in the works of many artists whose style develops and improves over the course of their careers. Danto accepts that there is a need for basic skill in art: "of course there is no art without knowledge, without skills, without training ... Only when one can draw or play [a musical instrument] do questions of style arise" (1981, p.201). The problem is that he regards the ability to draw or play as a threshold: once it is achieved, art can begin and style can come into play. But this is surely an over-simplification. As artists improve their skills, their inspiration takes off in new directions; there is a continual interaction between skill and inspiration: the latter feeding off the former. Danto's account of innate style fails to address this developmental aspect of style. It is silent on the subtle relationship between technique and contextual influences (social and political) on the one hand and the *development* of inspiration on the other.

I return to Danto's explanation of the contradiction between two indiscernible works of art, one produced by innate style, the other by acquired manner. Danto brings into the discussion his distinction between basic and non-basic actions: a distinction which appears in one of his earliest published papers from 1963.[13] Actions, Danto believes, can be divided into two fundamental kinds. Non-basic actions take place through the agency of another action: thus a person's paralysed arm can be moved by that same person's other non-paralysed arm: this is

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[13]See Danto, 1963 and 1965a.

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non-basic action. The basic action is a person normally moving their arm: there is no other agency involved. Danto applies the same distinction to cognitions: he says: "basic cognitions and basic actions are defined through the absence of the mediating cognition and action" (1981, pp.200-1). Ion's performances of Homer are then seen as basic actions, but there is no reason why the same performance could not take place non-basically: if the necessary instruction and training had been available. Style, Danto believes, is close to the former performance: it is unmediated or basic: he says that "style is the man himself. It is the way he is made, as it were, without the benefit of having acquired something else" (1981, p.201). The second performance would rely on manner rather than style: it has been enabled through the mediation of art or knowledge. In other words, manner can be perfected, but style is innate. This distinction between basic and non-basic performances, Danto suggests, is crucial, and he devotes the remainder of the chapter to examining why this is so. He poses a question: why should style relate to basic actions and manner to non-basic? He concludes: "I believe that something of deep human importance resides in the answer, but I also suspect that something like the difference between what is art and what is not may reside here as well" (1981, p.201).

The discussion begins by exploring a possible link between the indiscernible pairs which he has examined previously and basic and non-basic actions. He suggests that the artwork object in the indiscernible pair may be the result of a basic action, and the non-artwork, the result of a non-basic action. He gives an example: someone could learn to paint in Rembrandt's style, but the crucial question, for Danto, is how the paintings were produced. The painter using Rembrandt's style would be using acquired knowledge or art (using Socrates' usage); however, the results would not be works of art. Danto would see a difference between Warhol's multiples, a set of everyday articles like soup cans, and anyone else producing an indiscernible set: the latter would not be art: it would be produced in Warhol's style but without the conceptual context within which Warhol created his works of art. Warhol however could have created as many sets of his

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work as he chose (still works of art), and Mike Bidlo – the appropriational artist – could produce other works of art, indiscernible from Warhol's, because the context in which he works is appropriational: he uses Warhol's work as part of his own style.

Danto suggests that a similar distinction is apparent in moral judgements. He takes Aristotle's famous distinction in *The Nicomachean Ethics*, between someone doing temperate actions and the actions of a temperate man, as an example. The distinction for Aristotle is concerned with motive: "but it is not the man who does these [temperate actions] that is just and temperate, but the man who also does them *as* just and temperate men do them" (*1105b*, 1954, p.35). Carrying out actions because you know they are temperate is distinguished from doing temperate actions because you are a temperate person: the latter is the case of truly moral actions. Danto's point is that there is no definitive list of temperate (or moral) actions. Being a temperate person requires being temperate in all situations, including those which not been encountered before: it is the ability to be temperate in novel situations. Danto has chosen this Aristotelian distinction to point to an analogue between artistic style and moral judgements. Yet this passage from Book II of *The Nicomachean Ethics* is an inappropriate choice: Aristotle is at pains to point out that there is a difference between art and the virtues in this situation. In a section just before the one referred to by Danto, Aristotle says: "the case of the arts and that of the virtues are not similar; for the products of the arts have their goodness in themselves, so that it is enough that they should have a certain character, but if the acts that are in accordance with the virtues have themselves a certain character it does not follow that they are done justly or temperately."[14]

Staying with the issue of moral judgements, Danto goes on to briefly mention Kant: he believes Kant's moral system is based on this same distinction and that it also applies to what Kant identified as the faculty of taste. Taste, Danto believes, is not something which involves following a set of rules, although someone

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[14]*1105a*, 1954, p.34, a similar distinction is made later in *1140a-b*, 1954, p.141-3.

may achieve a tasteful result by following such rules. Danto believes that following rules of taste is similar to producing something by using knowledge or art in Socrates' example; however, there can be no set of rules which will make someone a person of taste. The same applies to art, and Danto uses three examples to explain the point. Firstly, due to his ability to compose a seemingly endless stream of marvellous fugues, Bach was accused of using a fugue-producing machine. Danto says that had such a machine existed the resulting fugues would have been "*logically styleless*" (1981, p.203) because they would lack the very attributes which would create style in a work of art. Secondly, Danto returns to one of his examples of indiscernibles (number seven in our list in chapter two): a tie painted uniformly blue by Picasso: anyone could replicate such a tie but the result would be styleless, or rather the copy would be in the style of Picasso. Thirdly, Danto makes a similar point generally; he discusses replicas of artworks; exact replicas to be precise, and, again, he believes that such a replica will be logically styleless: "it will perhaps *show* but not *have* a style" (1981, p.204). The original and the replica may be indiscernible, but it is the non-manifest properties that distinguish the work of art: the context of its creation, display and appreciation in the artworld. Danto returns to "the intuition that style is the man" (1981, p.204) and begins by offering a word of caution: what he has to say in the final section of the chapter is allusive and speculative as it relies on another topic. I follow Danto in mentioning these arguments in the knowledge that they are not fully developed in *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*. I return to discuss their significance and the issue of their speculative nature in the conclusion.

Danto begins by recapitulating his arguments so far: he makes three points. Firstly, that our way of seeing the world is as a system of representations. Secondly, that how things are represented is as important as what is represented, and thirdly, certain features of intensional structures play an important role in how we see and represent the world. He expands the point concerning intensionality, making the link between intensionality and sentential states: "I have argued that for such

characteristically psychological sentences as '*m* believes that *s*' to be true, *m* must be in a sentential state which the sentence *s* pictures, and that the belief is true if the sentential state pictured by *s* is true" (1981, p.205). He believes there are two types of argument supporting a theory of sentential states which he mentions very briefly; in a later paper he does develop the arguments at some length.[15] I refer to them in passing: a full discussion is outside the scope of this dissertation. Firstly, from psycholinguistics: that for thought, argument and language to occur there must be some sentential basis to those activities. In other words, thoughts, to some extent, must have the form of sentences. Secondly, from cases in psychoanalysis where it is shown that certain chains of association – in some well-known cases of fetishism and the interpretation of dreams – rely on punning links: the existence of such links imply that an acoustical imagery must be at play in the mental sphere.[16] In his earlier paper on this subject Danto explains: "this sort of interchange presupposes properties of representations – in this instance associated phonetic values – distinct from their meanings, inseparable from their representational properties" (1999b, p.125). In other words Danto uses the Saussurian distinction; these substitutions operate at the level of sounds: at the level of signifier rather than signified. Danto believes that these examples from psychoanalysis, if mapped onto an intensional structure, could enable his distinction, between what we represent and how we represent it, to operate.

Danto's theory of representation relies on the distinction between *what* we represent and *how* we represent it, and the claim that *how* we represent things is style. I believe his sharp distinction between what we represent (content) and how

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[15]Danto develops his argument in 'Outline of a Theory of Sentential States', 1984, re-published in Danto, 1999b, pp.82-97.

[16]Danto had already developed this idea and discussed a number of cases in detail in 'Freudian Explanations and the Language of the Unconscious', 1978, re-published in Danto, 1999b, pp.122-46.

we represent it (style) is inconsistent with his earlier discussion of metaphor and expression. Recalling the earlier example of Rembrandt's *Bathsheba with King David's Letter*; there Danto argued that what was represented was inseparable from how it was represented. His explanation of the power of this painting involved the complex metaphorical interplay between content and style; he said this depended on "the *way* in which something is represented is taken in connection with the subject represented" (1981, p.197).

He summarises his theory: that we are representational systems, whether it be of words or images (probably both), which he sees as an extension of C. S. Peirce's view that man *is* a sign. Danto mentions and quotes Peirce briefly and I should point out, in passing, his indebtedness to Peirce's theory of signs. Danto's view of interpretation owes a great deal to Peirce's triadic distinction between object, sign and interpretant.[17] For Peirce signs acquire meaning through their relation to subsequent thoughts: what Peirce terms an interpretant; he says: "I define a Sign as anything which is so determined by something else, called its Object, and so determines an effect on a person, which effect I call its Interpretant, that the latter is thereby mediately determined by the former" (see Hardwick, 1977, pp.80-1). Yet Peirce's semiotic theory does not involve a clear distinction between content and how we represent it. Peirce's underlying distinction between object, sign and

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[17]There is an interesting parallel here with the late Paul Ricoeur's theory of interpretation from *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*. Ricoeur uses Peirce's same triadic distinction in developing his 'new triangle of interpretation' where he says: "the object is the text itself; the sign is the depth semantics disclosed by structural analysis; and the series of interpretants is the chain of interpretations produced by the interpreting community and incorporated into the dynamics of the text, as the work of meaning upon itself" (see Ricoeur, 1981, pp.163-4). Ricoeur, as Danto, sees interpretation as being incapable of derivation from anterior stages: the process is additive and creative throughout.

interpretant describes a process in which a sign always achieves its meaning through interpretation; for Peirce there can be no 'pure' content.

Danto returns us to art because he sees art embodying this 'how' element in its process of externalisation or expression; he says: "in art particularly, it is this external physiognomy of an inner system of representation that I wish to claim style refers to" (1981, p.205). Recalling his previous example: Danto believes that style is linked to Ion's inspired performance but not to a performance using acquired knowledge or art (in Plato's usage).

The discussion returns to the issues of belief statements and intensionality; he suggests that when we believe something, we tend to act according to our beliefs: we refer to the world through actions. We act as though the world is a reflection of our beliefs. He highlights the distinction between the avowal and the ascription of a belief which he illustrates by referring to two situations. Firstly, someone saying she believes x, knowing that x is false; which Danto says is a contradiction. This is a lie rather than a contradiction, but the lie makes Danto's point. The idea that in expressing my beliefs I am *ideally* trying to convey how the world is, but when ascribing beliefs to another, I aim to capture not the truth about the world but the truth about how that person represents the world. Secondly, someone saying that another person believes x, still knowing that x is false, but there is no contradiction here. Danto says: "when I refer to another man's beliefs I am referring to him, whereas he, when expressing his beliefs, is not referring to himself but to the world. The beliefs in question are transparent to the believer; he reads the world through them without reading them" (1981, p.206). Danto believes this is true of representations as well: "I represent the world, not my representations of the world" (1981, p.206), and this is why for Danto style is the man: those representations are a reflection of the way the man views the world. The representations are seen by others but are opaque to their creators; it is for this reason that Danto believes Plato's knowledge or art (which is acquired) cannot be responsible for style: style must be innate. Danto argues that the distinction between

1) the transparency of a belief to the believer and 2) the belief as seen from the outside in an attribution of belief is the reason why style is innate. He believes that the artist as stylist is unaware of her style; if she is unaware, she cannot have learnt it: otherwise she would be aware of it as part of the learning process.

The problem with Danto's argument goes back to a point of criticism I identified previously: Danto's failure to account for the complex inter-relation between acquired skills and inspiration (as seen in an artist's style). Danto's account relies on an unwarranted dualism: the separation of manner, achieved through the acquisition of skills, and style which is innate and therefore incapable of being learnt. I can see why Danto links style to personality and why, given this link and the previously established link between style and art, we cannot learn to identify an artist's style by referring to a checklist. Learning to recognise an artist's style is a complex exercise; in making an attribution we must make reference to what we know about the artist as a person, their personality, their life and their works. The artist's view is their own view of the world and the special feature of art is that it enables us to see *their* view. Danto sums up his view of representation: "what, then, is interesting and essential in art is the spontaneous ability the artist has of enabling us to see his way of seeing the world – not just the world as if the painting were like a window, but the world as given by him" (1981, p.207).

In summary I have discussed two criticisms of Danto's theory of style. Firstly, the difficulty of his theory allowing style to be perfected, secondly, his view is based on a sharp distinction between content and style which is inconsistent with his theory of expression and metaphor. He also invokes Peirce's semiotic theory which itself denies the distinction between content and style. Danto's quotation above brings me to my final criticism of his theory of style: he fails to take into account the artist's intention in his explanation of style. If style is innate and spontaneous, how can it account for the artist's intention? I have previously said that the artist's intention can be unconscious, but it can also be conscious. Danto's explanation of style does not show how conscious intention could operate as a part

of innate style. It would imply that the artist's intention was part of the content, but Danto has argued previously that intention is a contextual, non-manifest attribute and therefore cannot be part of the content.

Danto finally returns to Warhol's *Brillo Box* sculpture and how one accounts for the difference between it and a stack of Brillo cartons: the question he set out to answer at the beginning of the book. Danto's answer, he re-affirms, is that Warhol's *Brillo Box* sculpture is a metaphor; the scouring pad box as work of art, and it embodies, as the title of his book states, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*. Warhol's *Brillo Box* cannot be art by virtue of what it is representing; it is after all indiscernible from regular Brillo boxes; it is a representation of the everyday packing cartons. Danto believes that what makes it art was its creation and display by a particular person at a particular time as a metaphor for the powerful visual imagery of the popular culture which surrounds us, and which before that time was widely considered as having no place in art.

V. Conclusion

So far I have been primarily concerned with the final chapter of *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace;* at this stage it is perhaps worthwhile going back to remind ourselves of the overall purpose of the whole book. I reiterate what I said at the end of the last section: Danto is trying to explain why Warhol's *Brillo Box* sculpture is a work of art and an indiscernible pile of Brillo boxes is not. Danto believes that to address this question requires formulating a definition of art. In the preface he says: "since any definition of art must compass [*sic*] the Brillo boxes, it is plain that no such definition can be based upon an examination of the artworks. It was this insight that equipped me with the method I use in my book, in which I pursue that elusive definition" (1981, p vii.). In the conclusion to this chapter I shall examine how successful Danto has been in his quest for a definition of art in relation to the subjects discussed in his final chapter: 'Metaphor, Expression and Style'.

At this point I should perhaps recapitulate the main claims arising from Danto's discussion on these themes: there are four key areas. Firstly, artworks embody rhetorical ellipsis: they cannot be paraphrased, they have complex internal cognitive relationships and contextualism is involved in interpreting them. Secondly, artworks have similar features to metaphors: they are intensional in structure; they include reference to a representation. Thirdly, works of art do more than represent subjects. The way they represent or the mode of representation is involved in understanding them; metaphoric transfer takes artworks beyond the literal. Fourthly, artworks are expressive: they embody style which is innate, unlike manner which can be acquired. Style is a feature of the artistic process: it enables the artist, unknowingly, to allow us to see their way of viewing the world: it is transparent to the artist but opaque to the viewer. Finally Danto adds a speculative coda to the discussion: he suggests that intensional structures and sentential states play a role in how we see and interpret the world. We act as though the world is a reflection of our beliefs. Style, he believes, is particularly evident in art and is concerned with *how* we represent things rather than *what* we represent.

I should also restate Danto's six principles underlying art which I identified in chapter two; they were: (1) art is the result of human endeavour by an artist, (2) artworks acquire a history and a provenance, (3) artworks embody meaning (they are expressive), which meaning is a result of the artist's intention, (4) that meaning requires a subject about which the artist projects a point of view by means of rhetorical ellipsis, (5) artworks require interpretation and finally, (6) they are produced and interpreted within a historical context. The present discussion has focused on principles (1), (3) and (4) which examine how the artist represents his or her subject. Chapters one and two have focused more on principles (2), (5) and (6) which are concerned with interpretation by the viewer and the historical nature of artworks: the contextual element of Danto's theory of art.

At this stage it is also necessary to recall the main purpose behind my discussion in the first three chapters. My aim was to identify whether Danto's theory

provides a definition of art without circularity: without reliance on some reference to art, the artworld or culture. In chapter one I examined and rejected the *is* of artistic identification as a way of identifying art. I explained it was too inclusive; it was no more than the *is* of representational identification. I also found Danto's definition of the special *is* to be logically inconsistent. In chapter two I considered Danto's technique of comparing indiscernible counterparts and again I found it wanting as a means of identifying works of art. A contextual theory of art, I argued, need not rely on indiscernible counterparts: they are philosophically redundant. The one area I considered could possibly provide a way of distinguishing art was principle number (4) – that meaning requires a subject about which the artist projects a point of view by means of rhetorical ellipsis. It will be recalled that this principle was introduced into chapter two in anticipation of the full discussion in this chapter. The example I chose to illustrate this was one used by Danto himself, the Loran diagram of Cézanne's *Portrait of Madame Cézanne*: the diagram embodies all the principles with the exception of number (4); the Lichtenstein painting embodied all the principles without exception. I suggested principle (4) – that meaning requires a subject about which the artist projects a point of view by means of rhetorical ellipsis – did seem to offer a way of distinguishing art, and in this chapter I have concentrated on expounding Danto's views on this principle; the title of the chapter sets the subject matter out: 'Metaphor, Expression and Style'. I now intend to test principle (4) by asking two questions. Firstly, are there any works of art that do not embody the principle? If all artworks do embody the principle, it will be a *necessary* condition. Secondly, are there any non-artworks that do embody the principle? If there are non-artworks that embody the principle it cannot be a *sufficient* condition. I consider each question in turn in relation to rhetorical ellipsis and style: the key issues in principle number (4).

I begin by asking whether there are any artworks that do not embody rhetorical ellipsis or style. I shall look at three situations where the presence of rhetorical ellipsis is questionable: firstly, 'plain-speaking' artworks, secondly.

absolute music and thirdly, geometrical designs. I begin with 'plain-speaking' artworks. Danto's claim that art embodies rhetorical ellipsis is criticised by Noël Carroll as being too restrictive. Carroll says that there are artworks which are quite simple; what he calls " 'plain-speaking' artworks" (1993, p.101): works which say what they have to say in a direct manner without any recourse to rhetoric or ellipsis. The example Carroll uses is the last scene from Hogarth's *A Harlot's Progress* (illustration 16) which he says: "has a subject and may even warrant a bit of interpretation, but not in virtue of having left anything out. Nor is its didactic address metaphorical. The moral of the picture is quite literally presented" (1993, p.101). Carroll has chosen this scene from Hogarth for its plain-speaking attributes; it is figurative and part of a clearly presented and well-illustrated series which tells a straightforward story. A closer inspection, however, shows that the work is both metaphorical and rhetorical. The central metaphor of the series is the young woman's life seen as a symbol of the corruption of innocence by the powerful and the wealthy. Its tale is clearly told and the metaphor may be obvious, but Moll's story is a symbol of the widespread venality and moral turpitude in eighteenth-century society; it is not just about Moll: it is about Hogarth's world. The last in the series, *Moll's Funeral*, is not, as Carroll suggests, simply a picture of a harlot's wake, it is the culmination of the metaphor. There are other metaphors: for example the theme of sexual disease occurs here and throughout the series. It is also rhetorical: we are drawn into the story; we ask questions: who is the child? Why did Moll die aged twenty-three as the plate on the coffin states? Contrary to Carroll, I believe that this engraving is a good choice to *illustrate* the rhetorical and elliptical nature of art.[18] Finally, Hogarth's work serves as an illustration of style in art: it is

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[18]Carroll's choice is strange: on p.125 of *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* Danto himself mentions Charles Lamb's comment on Hogarth: "Other pictures we look at, – his prints we read" (from 'On the Genius and Character of William Hogarth', Lamb, 1912, p.82). Danto also uses this quotation (actually he misquotes slightly) as a superscription to chapter six of *The Body/Body*

instantly recognisable as his own distinct way of representing the world in which he lived.

Figurative art and literature are areas where rhetoric and metaphor are easily identified, but what about art forms where this may not be the case? I now move to my second area, I ask whether absolute music can be considered either rhetorical or elliptical? An argument can be put forward that such music is elliptical in that the very nature of music is based on rhythm which is essentially an elliptical device. Rhythm depends on the anticipation of a coming beat which is a form of ellipsis. In my previous discussion I have identified the relationship between ellipsis and rhetoric; ellipsis is the omission of something that allows for completion as part of the rhetorical process; the invitation or context which sets out the ellipsis is a form of questioning, and this occurs in music. There are two problems with this argument; firstly, it is that it is too general: it could apply to any and all pieces of music. Such a general statement about the nature of music does not help us to interpret or understand a *particular* piece of music. Nor does it help us to distinguish music which we consider as art from other kinds of music, however ephemeral or trite they may be. Secondly, this elliptical element would seem to apply to any rhythmic sound: we certainly anticipate a dripping tap that is not usually considered a musical artform. It would not help us to distinguish Steve Reich's *Clapping Music* – which consists solely of clapping – from the applause following its performance.

The objections are addressed by several theories of music: without being drawn into a long discussion, I shall briefly mention three. Each takes this basic rhetorical premise and develops a theory of music which is both complex and is able to explain particular works. The first is Kendall Walton's and is based on a rhetorical assumption: that music involves an imaginative experience; the listener is drawn into a dialogue which may involve motion, resolution and conflict. It is interesting that

Problem, Danto, 1999.

Walton sees the special power of music as resting with this mixture of imaginative freedom and close involvement. The act of imagination is less determinate than with figurative art, but this very lack of a determinate 'subject', Walton believes, gives music its unique power. He says: "it is as though I am inside the music, or it is inside me" (1994, p.54). This idea is a reminder of Danto's account of rhetoric which I discussed earlier in the chapter: where the involvement of the viewer was suggested as a way of explaining the power of art. Secondly, I mention a theory Danto has referred to himself: Goodman's concept of metaphoric exemplification. I explained it earlier in this chapter when I looked at Danto's discussion of expression: reference was made to Goodman's explanation of sad music in his *Languages of Art*. Goodman sees music's expressiveness not as a property of the work but as bearing a symbolic relationship to it. Exemplification, as I have explained, can be both literal and metaphoric which allows Goodman to bring intramusical reference, such as allusion and variation, into his account. Thirdly, a theory of music which relies heavily on metaphor: in fact it proposes metaphor as the central, overarching feature of music. Zuckerkandl in *Sound and Symbol* (1956) sees metaphor as the indispensable basis of musical appreciation: an integral part of the imaginative participation which music involves us with. Metaphors of space, time and movement are seen as an essential feature of music. For example, movement is referred to frequently in talking about music, but there is no literal movement: such descriptions of music are inherently metaphoric. In summary, there are persuasive arguments for absolute music to be seen as embodying rhetorical ellipsis; the three theories of music I have mentioned all rely on an underlying element of ellipsis.

I move on to discuss my third area: geometric ornamentation; do artefacts using such designs embody rhetorical ellipsis? I choose as an example a painted urn of the Yangshao culture (illustration 17); how can these purely geometrical designs be considered rhetorical? Well, I can ask how these pots were produced and why they were decorated in this way. I can answer the first question; I know details of the coiling technique used in the construction and how they were

finished and fired. I can also speculate on the reasons for the decorations: for example Wilhelm Worringer's ideas of the 'Gothic will to form' and the 'Gothic line' provides a historical and psychological explanation of the urge for abstraction which he sees running through the whole of the history of art (see Worringer, 1953 and 1994). This is not the place to discuss Worringer's theory and other counter-theories and explanations of geometrical designs; my point is that the response to these objects can be considered rhetorical: I can ask why they were made, why they were decorated in this particular manner. The problem here again is one of over-generality: all works of art can be considered rhetorical and elliptical in this way; I could say the same of any human act or product, but surely this is far too inclusive.

This point leads into my second question: are there any non-artworks that do embody the principle? Before I address the second question, I summarise the answer to the first. The discussion has shown that all the artworks I have put forward have been shown to embody an element of rhetorical ellipsis. This only provides me with an inductive argument: on the evidence of the artworks I have examined, rhetorical ellipsis is a necessary condition of art. However, if, as my last examples suggests, every artefact, every product of human endeavour, can be considered to embody rhetorical ellipsis I am no nearer to finding a sufficient condition for art. So, I now consider my second question: are there any non-artworks which do employ rhetorical ellipsis? This is easier to deal with; from the nature of rhetoric as a form of persuasion, it is clear that rhetoric is frequently used in other situations besides works of art. Examples are plentiful: all forms of advocacy, political statements, all forms of debate, many newspaper articles and most advertisements. However, I have not provided an argument that all rhetoric involves ellipsis; nor do I need to do so. My purpose will be served if I can identify some element of ellipsis in the areas of non-art mentioned above: I will have identified rhetorical ellipsis outside of the realm of works of art.

Without going into detail. I give a number of examples, relying on ellipsis to a greater or lesser extent, to make my point. Some advertisements have omitted the name of the product altogether: the product name is left out to draw the reader or viewer into a dialogue: to become involved in thinking about the product. Many newspaper headlines and catchphrases operate on this same principle. Advocates frequently ask us to put ourselves in the place of *x*: we are invited to complete our response: we are asked to complete the elliptical element. Politicians' failures are paraded and we are left to draw the consequences ourselves. The episodic nature of reality television and soap opera rely on speculation about what comes next. Noël Carroll finds an example within the artworld, which is not a work of art, which satisfies all Danto's conditions, including the requirement to embody rhetorical ellipsis (1993, p.103-4). He puts forward the artistic manifesto as a candidate, and he is surely right in this. At this point I should also mention intensionality; it is clear from my previous discussion that intensionality, in a similar way to rhetoric, applies to many sentential structures besides artworks. The answer to my second question is clearly that there are non-artworks that embody rhetorical ellipsis; it is not a sufficient condition of art.

The conclusion that rhetorical ellipsis applies to non-art as well as art leads to my second area of criticism: the issue of circularity. Rhetorical ellipsis and intensionality, as I have explained, provide a powerful account of the uniqueness and ineffability of artworks. However, as I have just shown, the concepts apply to some non-art as well. So how do we distinguish the intensionality in art from that which we find in non-art? Danto relies on his artworld theory. The intensional elements of art are identified as such because art is constituted by a theory of art: It is this, Danto's artworld theory, which enables him to distinguish art from non-art and hence to distinguish the intensionality in art from, say, the intensionality I identified in adverts. He says a theory is required to take everyday objects into the artworld. It is this which he uses to distinguish Warhol's *Brillo Box* sculpture from everyday Brillo Boxes. In chapter one I explained the problem of circularity with the artworld

theory and although I provided counter arguments to the circularity claim. I concluded that it was a significant problem with the theory. To distinguish art there was always some reference back to the artworld or to culture which itself includes artistic achievement. In chapter two I discussed George Dickie's response to the problem of circularity: his ideas of inflected concepts. I shall return to discuss the issue and give my own response in the final section of the conclusion, chapter four.

But, perhaps the way Danto expects a definition of art to apply is misguided. His search for a definition of art assumes that there is art, on the one side, and non-art on the other: that art and non-art can be separated and put into two different boxes. He assumes that there is a clear distinction between the two: an artefact is either art or non-art. An alternative approach is to consider all human artefacts and endeavours as having a place on a spectrum ranging from art to non-art. The non-art domain could be utilitarian (relating to food, shelter and procreation), religious, intellectual or recreational This idea of a spectrum, I believe, allows a much more nuanced approach to a definition of art than Danto's art/non-art duality. For example, I can put Warhol's Brillo Box sculpture towards the art end of the spectrum, but the Brillo box design itself can also be credited with an artistic element, albeit of commercial art, although much further towards the other end. This approach does address my previous concern by accepting that all human artefacts have an artistic element, however small it may be in some cases. It would also accept the presence of a rhetorical and elliptical element in all human endeavour. In other words, the rhetorical ellipsis which I have identified in what Danto regards as non-art is due to what I believe is the artistic element it contains: because all human activities and artefacts, on my view, contain some artistic presence. In a way Danto's point holds firm: rhetorical ellipsis characterises art alone though I would add that there is an element of art in every artefact. What would be more problematic for Danto, although it is not a claim I am making, would be the claim that rhetorical ellipsis is a characteristic not just of non-art (in Danto's sense) but also of the non-artistic element in artefacts which by my view also have an artistic presence. I return to

discuss this concept of a spectrum of artistic presence in the final chapter: the conclusion.

For the present, however, I need to mention one problem with the spectrum idea: how do you place the various works on the spectrum without relying on the concept of art. Surely the original problem has just been reformulated: instead of defining art, what is now required is a definition of what constitutes the art end of the spectrum. In his 2003 book *The Abuse of Beauty* Danto adopts a similar approach in his discussion of beauty. He sees a spectrum with the beauty of art at one end and the beauty of nature at the other; the middle ground is occupied by what he calls 'the third realm of beauty': the area where beauty is the result of beautification and is seen in a wide range of human artefacts. Danto is willing to acknowledge James Harvey, the designer of the original Brillo box, as producing an outstanding example of commercial art but not of fine art. Danto still sees a clear distinction between the two: "as with the Brillo boxes of Andy Warhol and James Harvey, aesthetics *could not explain why one was a work of fine art and the other not*, since for all practical purposes they were aesthetically indiscernible" (2003a, pp.6-7, emphasis added). I shall return to look at this question in more detail in the next chapter.

Danto's theory of art has not provided a sustainable definition of art; it fails by being over-inclusive: by including non-artworks; it also only provides an inductive argument for a necessary condition of art. His theory either requires using some aspect of art, the artworld or culture to enable his definition to distinguish what is art from what is not art, or it becomes too all-embracing to serve as a means of identifying artworks. Unlike George Dickie, who, we saw in the previous chapter, is willing to accept a degree of circularity into the definition of art, Danto is unwilling to do so. What Danto has provided is a theory which explains the structure, features and complexities of artworks, but these attributes apply to some non-artworks as well.

However, he has provided us with a series of insights which elucidate, enrich and inform the debate on the nature of art. His ideas on metaphoric transfer, metaphor as a trope where intention and context work together, intensionality, and sentential states are particularly valuable. Danto has identified a parallel structure of intensionality in belief statements and artworks. Our beliefs express our view of the world, not of ourselves; similarly, when we represent the world, we do so through our representations which we do not see: they are for others to observe, and this is why they embody our style. In section IVd of this chapter I criticised Danto's position on style. I argued that although he is correct in identifying an element of transparency in an artist's style, he uses an unwarranted dualism in separating innate style and acquired manner. This is particularly so in relation to the complex inter-relation between these two elements of art and the contextual issues which interact with both. If Danto has failed to define art, he has probed its nature in a sustained and brave attempt to answer his original question: why Warhol's *Brillo Box* sculpture is a work of art and an indiscernible pile of Brillo boxes is not.

As I have mentioned before in this chapter, since *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* Danto has altered his view somewhat; he now adopts a less essentialist position; he suggests his theory identifies some aspects of art rather than providing a comprehensive definition of art. He is not suggesting that his is a complete definition of art, providing necessary and sufficient conditions. Rather that he has identified and justified some features of art: necessary conditions perhaps but clearly not sufficient conditions. He has made this point quite clearly in later works: "*Transfiguration* ... arrived at a provisional formulation of part of a definition of art ... This cannot be the entire story, but if I could not get these conditions to hold, I am unclear what a definition of art without them would look like."[19]

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[19]Danto, 2000, p.xix. Danto has recently restated this view in his opening address to the International Congress at Murcia, see Danto 2003b and 2005a.

Chapter Four

Conclusion: Towards a Definition of Art

We believe that we know something about the things themselves

when we speak of trees, colors, snow, and flowers; and yet we

possess nothing but metaphors for things.

Nietzsche, 'On Truth and Lie in an Extra-moral Sense' (2000, p.55)

I. Introduction

At the end of the last chapter I outlined my view of Danto's theory of art. Here I begin by summarising the shortcomings and positive elements of his theory. I start with the shortcomings; they fall under three broad headings. First, I believe that Danto has failed to provide an adequate definition of art; his theory suffers by being over-inclusive: its conditions apply to some non-artworks as well as the artworks which it attempts to address itself exclusively to. The six principles of Danto's theory of art which I have identified in chapters one and two, either singly or as a group, fail to provide a sufficient condition for art. The six principles were: (1) art is the result of human endeavour by an artist, (2) artworks acquire a history and a provenance, (3) artworks embody meaning (they are expressive), which meaning is a result of the artist's intention, (4) that meaning requires a subject about which the artist projects a point of view by means of rhetorical ellipsis, (5) artworks require interpretation and finally, (6) they are produced and interpreted within a historical context. His theory provides an inductive argument for what remain necessary conditions of art, but they are not sufficient to distinguish art from non-art. Second, methodological: I identified logical inconsistencies in Danto's concepts of the *is* of artistic identification and his use of indiscernible counterparts. Danto's definition of the *is* of

artistic identification is logically incoherent: the special *is* simply makes attributions about what exists (the subject of the artwork) not the artwork itself and it therefore cannot impute any intentional properties to art. This is the sense in which Margolis believes that Danto has lost the reality of artworks. In using indiscernible counterparts Danto fails to recognise that the artwork object of the indiscernible pair must be discernible at some stage, as art, before the thought experiment can begin. I also believe the technique is not necessary to justify Danto's contextual theory of art; although it identifies issues, it is philosophically redundant in the task of defining art. Third, his theory is circular: it requires using some aspect of art or culture to enable us to distinguish art from non-art – the term culture, of course, itself refers to or includes elements of art. I have explained how Danto has moved away from his earlier essentialist position, where his aim was to arrive at a definition of art, to his later view where he accepts the limitations of his theory which he sees, at best, providing and explaining some necessary features of art. This is Danto's only response to the charge of circularity; he puts forward no other argument to explain or accommodate the circularity.

I now look at the positive features of Danto's theory of art. I accept that Danto, with the six principles of art which I have identified in his theory, has provided many insights into the nature of art. In particular, he has produced a theory which encompasses and explains the structure and features of the staggering variety of contemporary artworks and practice. His theory is complex: it embodies intentionality, historicity, contextuality and intensionality. The last of these, intensionality, comes out of Danto's view of art as embodying rhetorical ellipsis; my criticism of this feature of art, as I explained in the last chapter, was that it was still too inclusive. It will be recalled that artistic manifestos, for instance, would have to be included in art; I will return to address this question again later and suggest how rhetorical ellipsis can be applied to art in a way which avoids the criticism which Danto's theory invites. In this chapter I intend to explain my own view on the

question of the definition of art; I ask if Danto's retreat from the essentialist position is justified, or if it is possible to arrive at a more sustainable definition of art.

I shall put forward my own definition of art which has three elements: first, I identify a spectrum of artistic presence in all human products or actions; I discuss this in section II where it is contrasted with Danto's insistence on separating art from non-art. Section III discusses the second element of my definition of art: that art is the result of human endeavour intended for human appreciation; this leads to the view that artistic presence embodies both intentionality and intensionality. Danto, of course, proposes these concepts as features of fine art whereas I propose the concepts apply across a *spectrum of artistic presence*, and this, I believe, fundamentally changes how they relate to the definition which I am seeking. Finally, in section IV, I discuss the third element in my definition of art: the claim that art is an inflected concept, and that, as such, it is impossible to achieve a wholly non-circular account of art.

My definition of art, at least in its first two components, takes a traditional form: the first element provides a genus: a wider class to which art belongs; the second identifies differentiae or distinguishing features within that class. The next section, section II, aims to identify the first component: the genus or wider class; section III then seeks to identify the differentiae. I should point out that it is not until section III that 'artistic' presence can be distinguished from 'political', 'religious' or any other type of presence. The aim of section II is to argue for the existence of a wide range of human activities and products which exhibit artistic presence: I argue against an art/non-art duality or a separate class of fine art. Section III will identify within that wide range, or spectrum, the distinguishing features of *artistic* presence.

II. The Spectrum of Artistic Presence

The primary issue I address in this section was raised in the last chapter: the assumption by Danto that art can be identified as a separate category. He believes that there are two distinct categories: that artworks can be distinguished from non-artworks even though in many cases they may be visually indiscernible, and this position runs through the whole of his writings. In 1981 in *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* he asks why "Warhol's Brillo boxes *were* works of art while their commonplace counterparts, in the back rooms of supermarkets throughout Christendom, were not" (1981. p.vi). In 2003 in *The Abuse of Beauty*, as I have already explained, he distinguishes between *Brillo Boxes* as sculpture and Brillo boxes as graphic design: "as with the Brillo boxes of Andy Warhol and James Harvey, aesthetics could not explain why one was a work of fine art and the other not, since for all practical purposes they were aesthetically indiscernible" (2003a, pp.6-7). In other words, the term 'aesthetic' for Danto does *not* mean 'artistic'; two objects can therefore be aesthetically indiscernible even though one is art and the other not. I should point out, before I continue, that Danto has modified his position on this issue to a degree: I return to discuss this topic later in the discussion. I shall now examine how this assumption of a clear distinction between art and non-art affects the search for a definition of art. The distinction suggests that, if we can separate artworks from non-artworks, there must be some feature of art which enables us to do this: some quality or attribute which we find in art but is missing from non-art. The search for a definition of art, given Danto's view of art, is to identify this essential feature which applies *only* to works of art.

I suggested in the last chapter that this search for the essential features of a separate category of art may well be chimerical: I proposed instead that an element of art is present, to a greater or lesser degree, in all human activity. I now intend to explore this idea in more detail and to see if I can identify what is essential to this all-pervading, artistic element of human endeavour. Recapping, I suggested

that all human activity or the products of human activity can be situated on a spectrum ranging from art at one end to non-art at the other, and I shall label this *the spectrum of artistic presence.*[1] Whatever human artefact or action I am considering could be placed somewhere on this continuum; it could be extremely close to one end by virtue of having virtually no artistic content, say, a brick, or it could be extremely close to the other end, say, a monochrome painting by Malevich. I have shown previously how both of these objects could be placed at either end of the spectrum: the brick could be part of a gallery installation and the monochrome square, a colour sample. I have also examined how Danto's contextualism explains how and why this can happen. Although objects may approach either end of the spectrum, they cannot wholly belong to one end or the other. There is no 'pure' art and there is no human action or artefact without some artistic element however marginal, cursory or minimal it might be.

I also pointed out the significant difficulty with my concept of the spectrum: it leaves me with the question of how to distinguish one end of the spectrum from another and how to distinguish artistic presence itself. How do you recognise and place objects and actions at the art end of the spectrum? Surely this way of approaching a definition of art is merely re-construing the problem: I am simply moving the problem from seeking a definition of 'art' to a definition of 'artistic presence'; I shall return to address this point shortly. However, I believe that there is a significant difference and advantage if I adopt this approach. A definition of art, accepting there is no clear boundary between art and non-art, will attempt to identify this 'artistic presence' across the whole range of human activity and artefacts: there is no need to identify the conditions which relate specifically and uniquely to a separate class of artworks. I believe that this fundamentally changes the type of definition we should expect; it goes beyond a re-construal of the problem: it

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[1] Although the applications are widely dissimilar, for the idea of the spectrum I am indebted to Ronald Hepburn's model of a spectrum of language use. See Hepburn, 1958.

changes its nature in a significant way. Instead of seeking defining features which will enable us to sort artefacts into two classes, art and non-art, we are looking for some aspect or aspects of *all* human activity which, to a greater or lesser degree, endow it with what we call artistic presence. Danto believes anything can *become* art; in doing so it takes on a new character which non-art does not possess. I share the view that anything can become art, but, by contrast, I believe it does so simply by moving up the spectrum of artistic presence. There is no threshold between art and non-art; objects acquire a new position on the spectrum. and I have demonstrated how this can happen without any discernible change in the object: it can happen simply by virtue of where or how an object is displayed. It does not mean taking on a completely new character, but rather in displaying more openly certain features that all human artefacts possess.

Danto in *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* discusses William Kennick's warehouse thought experiment: Kennick imagines someone asked to sort the contents of a warehouse into art and non-art objects.[2] He believes that anyone could quite successfully complete this task; Danto believes that with the advent of pop art, and particularly with works of art like Warhol's *Brillo Box* sculpture, this task would be impossible. On my view, accepting the artistic spectrum concept, the thought experiment would be ungrounded and unnecessary: everything in the warehouse would have some artistic component. I could ask for the objects to be sorted into their relative position on the proposed spectrum: into greater and lesser degrees of artistic make-up. Of course, mistakes could be made; the intrepid sorter could mistake *Brillo Boxes* the sculpture for everyday Brillo boxes (Warhol for Harvey) unless the former was identifiable in some way: perhaps a label or a receipt from Sotheby's for several hundred thousand dollars! Mistakes such as this would not trouble my view of art. With my spectrum approach, the type of definition I am seeking is dependent on how I understand art being constituted in relation to all

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[2]Danto. 1981. pp.60-6. The original thought experiment appears in Kennick, 1958.

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human activity or artefacts. The approach does overcome one of my major objections to Danto's theory: that his theory is too inclusive. If we accept that all human activity has an artistic element, over-inclusiveness ceases to be a problem: the fact that anything can be art, or manifest artistic features, will come as no surprise.

I shall consider the concept of a spectrum of artistic presence in three ways; numbers one and two look at some examples, particularly objects situated at the extremes of the spectrum, and they provide an inductive argument. The first of these looks at the non-art end of the spectrum; I attempt to see if there are any human activities without any artistic constituent at all. The second examines an area closer to the other end of the spectrum; I examine the boundaries between art and non-art, as it is identified by Danto's form of essentialism, to see if the boundary is as distinct as he believes it is. I also see if there are any works of art which might be considered as 'pure' art, existing without any other purpose than being works of art. Before I leave these first two areas (which looked at examples), I briefly consider methodology in relation to inference from examples: my own approach, I argue, is abductive (in a Peircian sense), and I refer back to a point made in my introduction about Danto's philosophy of the history of art. In my third way of addressing this issue I examine two taxonomical approaches which attempt to deduce a definition of fine art. First, Aristotle's view of art in his exposition on the intellectual virtues from *The Nicomachean Ethics*, book VI, section 3, and second, Kant's taxonomy of art from sections 43 and 44 of *The Critique of Judgment*. My aim here is to question the existence of a distinct and separate class of 'fine art'; if this class is unsustainable, the existence of a spectrum of artistic presence is, at this early stage in my argument, at least possible. Following this part of the task, I shall very briefly look at the development of the concept of fine art in the history of art. However, before I move on to address these three areas, I need to make an initial distinction. I referred to human actions or the products of human actions in my idea of the spectrum; I need to distinguish here between voluntary and involuntary actions. I am considering voluntary actions; I am not considering involuntary actions like breathing, sleeping

and dreaming. I accept the distinction between voluntary and involuntary actions is sometimes difficult to draw; say, when some reflex actions or instinctive reactions are considered: the reactions to extreme danger or horror are examples. I should also repeat my earlier warning that in this section I am looking at the genus part of our definition: the wider class to which art belongs; the next section will identify how artistic presence can be distinguished from other 'presences'.

The first issue I address is whether there are some human activities which have no artistic element. Am I correct in believing that all human activity has an artistic element? Surely there are some basic human activities that have no artistic element at all? I will consider some examples, and I choose gardening as my first. The works of Capability Brown, Robert Smithson's landscape interventions like *Spiral Jetty* (1969-70) and Andy Goldsworthy's creations have a clear artistic element, but what about, say, a cottage garden or a suburban allotment: do they really have an artistic element? I believe that they do; it may not be significant, but it is present: I believe it is impossible to do any gardening without making some artistic decisions and incorporating some artistic element into the final product. The artistic decisions may be at a very basic level and the products mundane, but there is *some* element of artistic presence. Decisions about what is grown, where and how it is planted and the way it is cultivated all involve artistic choices. The care of the smallest window box involves decisions about flowers or herbs that call on a range of cultural references that I have identified in my discussions on art. The cultivation of a window box may have a negligible artistic content but my argument is that it has *some*. In other words, human endeavour is contingent: whatever one does could be done otherwise; we are faced with choices about *how* to do or make things. It is this element of *how* which I believe inescapably brings in artistic choices and hence the artistic presence I have identified. This artistic element, however rudimentary or trivial, is applicable to all areas of human activity; even everyday tasks such as walking, driving and eating all occur within a cultural framework which involves some artistic presence. The pervasiveness of this artistic element or presence in all

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areas of human activity is reflected in everyday speech: in the use of phrases like 'the art of ... '; we can fill in the ellipsis by an endless range of terms: warfare, cooking, archery, mathematics, football, murder. Remember at this stage I am considering the genus part of my definition; the differentiae comes in the next section where I distinguish artistic presence from other forms of contingent human activity.

I argue, to take another example, that it is impossible to build any shelter, even a primitive hut or an allotment shed, without some element of artistic decision making. This applies to those areas of human activity which were, quite universally, before the advent of pop art, considered lacking any artistic element: for example kitsch, comics or pornography. All three of these areas have been taken up and used by painters, sculptors and photographers who operate in the fine art arena. For example the images and style of pornography have been taken up by mainstream art. Jeff Koon's explicit images of intercourse, Robert Mapplethorpe's[3] use of sadomasochistic images in his photographs are examples. Mel Ramos uses soft-porn images to highlight the dissemblance in the furtive use of pornography in academic art (see illustration 18, the references are to Ingres *La Source*, 1856). Koons has also incorporated the imagery and subject matter of kitsch into many of his sculptures. An artist whose work I have already discussed, Roy Lichtenstein, has made extensive use of hugely magnified images from comics in his paintings. Comics themselves and the graphic novel have now been accepted as mainstream artforms.

This leads me to the second area I promised to look at: the purported boundary between artworks and non-artworks; is it as clear as Danto believes it is? I have already discussed Warhol's *Brillo Box* sculpture and James Harvey's design for the Brillo box: the latter is accepted by Danto as a brilliant piece of graphic design, but he still denies it fine art status. In other words, for Danto, Warhol's sculpture

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[3]Danto was a supporter of Mapplethorpe when the photographer was being criticised for the pornographic nature of his work; he also, as I have mentioned before, wrote a book on Mapplethorpe's achievement as an artist, see Danto, 1995.

must have some defining feature which makes it art rather than a mere real thing, albeit a real thing incorporating an element of graphic design. I see no *categorical* distinction between the two; both have an artistic element and involve the artist in making aesthetic decisions: Warhol's relates to display in museums, Harvey's to display in supermarkets. In other words, in making contingent decisions about *how* something is carried out or *how* something will look. But even in museums the distinction between art and non-art can be blurred: it is not uncommon to see examples of outstanding graphic and industrial design on display in museums, and the Brillo box design would surely qualify as such an example. There are exhibitions today where it is unclear what is art and what is non-art: a recent example is the exhibition curated by Marina Warner *Only Make Believe*. The show is concerned with childhood and play; it is a mixture of traditional art on that theme, folk art objects and toys.[4] I argue that a similar lack of a categorical difference, a difference in kind, can be identified in all Danto's thought experiments. I take one example which I have discussed before: the *Manhattan Telephone Directory for 1980* and the indiscernible avant-garde novel *Metropolis Eighty*. The telephone directory is a complex piece of graphic art involving aesthetic decisions in its design; I see no difference in kind between these decisions and those facing the author of *Metropolis Eighty*; they have very different intentions and, arguably, very different places on the spectrum, but both have a clear artistic element: they have artistic presence. I should also mention the work of artists who deliberately operate between the traditional boundaries of art and everyday life: Sophie Calle being a well-known exemplar of this approach (see illustration 19) who uses elements of her own life and other peoples' lives as her art.

I also promised to consider if there are any 'pure' works of art situated at the extreme art end of the spectrum and having no other function than being

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[4]The exhibition was at Compton Verney House, 25 March - 5 June 2005, see Warner, Marina, 2005.

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works of art. What about abstract painting, surely this just *is* painting without any other purpose? But here we must consider why they were created and where the paintings are displayed: at a very basic level they were created for display on gallery walls or decoration in a home or a public building. So their function, apart from being works of art, is display or decoration. I see no difference in kind between this aspect of abstract painting and other forms of wall decoration: for example wallpaper. I am not suggesting that abstract expressionism is purely wall display or decoration, rather that a small element of its make-up can be considered in this way. In other words abstract expressionist painting approaches the far end of the spectrum, the fine art end, but never reaches it. I consider this argument applies to all forms of what are generally considered as 'pure' art.

Before I move on to discuss my third argument I shall briefly outline my methodological approach to the question of defining the spectrum of artistic presence. My approach, examining these examples, has been pragmatic, and I should say something briefly about the methodology of pragmatism. I have accepted the Peircian view that there are three forms of inference: abduction, induction and deduction. Peirce believes that pragmatism is "nothing else than the logic of abduction" (1931-5, vol.V, p.19) which is the test for any hypothesis because for Peirce "every conception is a conception of conceivable practical effects" (1931-5, vol.V, p.196). He gives the logical form of abduction as:

> The surprising fact, C, is observed;

> But if A were true, C would be a matter of course;

> Hence there is reason to suspect that A is true. (1931-5, vol.V, p.189)

The point, of course, is that abduction is guessing which Peirce believes is the only form of inference to provide us with new knowledge. His study of logic led him to believe that deduction tells us nothing that we do not already know and that induction is simply used as a test for abduction. The distinction between induction and abduction he explains is that in induction "we conclude that facts, similar to observed facts are true in cases not examined [whereas in abduction] we conclude

the existence of a fact quite different from anything observed ... the former classifies, the latter explains" (1931-5, vol.II, p.636). My concept of the spectrum of artistic presence is abductive in that I believe it overcomes shortcomings in Danto's theory of art but without claiming it provides a final definition: Peircian abduction, the basis of my theory, espouses fallibilism.

I return briefly to a point raised in the introduction: Danto's stated need to indemnify his philosophy of art against future counter-examples for which purpose, as I explained, he invoked his philosophy of the history of art. If the history of art is ended, there can be, according to Danto, no further counter-examples to overthrow his definition of art. The pragmatic approach I adopt cannot accept Danto's certainty that such an indemnity is possible. Peircian pragmatism, which underlies my proposal, relies on inference based on *conceivable* objects or actions. It espouses fallibilism in what Peirce identifies as the three normative sciences: logic, ethics and aesthetics; by this view, claims like Danto's are provisional and radically subject to error. The very possibility of indemnity against future counter-examples is denied by fallibilism and the logic of abduction which, as I have already pointed out, Peirce regarded as only capable of providing tentative knowledge. On the Peircian view, the only achievable knowledge is based on abduction tested by induction: it is guesswork. Danto's quest for an indemnity is chimerical.

I move on from my examination of examples to the third argument for the concept of a spectrum of artistic presence; I look at two attempts to define art taxonomically: the first is from Aristotle and the second from Kant. I question the existence of a separate class of 'fine art'; if this classification cannot be sustained, the concept of a spectrum of artistic presence is possible. At this stage in my argument, it should again be noted, I am dealing with the genus part of my proposed definition of art: the wider class to which art belongs. I begin with Aristotle's discussion of the intellectual virtues in book VI of *The Nicomachean Ethics* – art, of course, being one of the virtues. Aristotle begins by making a distinction between what is necessary and what is contingent. The former, theoretical wisdom, includes intuitive

reason and science. The latter includes first, practical wisdom or *phronēsis*, and second, art. Aristotle goes on to make a clear distinction between doing and making. Whereas *phronēsis* "must be a reasoned and true state of capacity to act with regards to human goods" (*1140b*, 1954, p.143), art is "a reasoned state of capacity to make" (*1140a*, 1954, p.141). I agree with Aristotle's distinction between the necessary and the contingent: that art is concerned with the contingent. Art is concerned with what could be otherwise; the questions of *how* and *why* are raised in relation to artistic activity. It will be recalled how prominently these two questions featured in Danto's account of style in art. *Phronēsis* is distinguished from art because it is concerned with deliberative action towards the *summmun bonum*: it is coextensive with political science. Aristotle says: "we credit men with practical wisdom ... when they have calculated well with a view to some good end which is one of those that are not the object of any art" (*1140a*, 1954, p.142).

My problem is with his next stage: Aristotle's distinction between acting and making. It is a distinction which Aristotle regards as so obvious it requires no argument: as the reasoned states for acting and making are different "hence too they are not included one in the other; for neither is acting making nor is making acting" (*1140a*, 1954, p.141). I believe this distinction is unsustainable in relation to art. In many forms of art, particularly contemporary art, we see much that is concerned with action. In fact in a number of contemporary art forms there is nothing more than action: performance art in particular is concerned solely with actions. Broadening the definition of 'making' to include performance art simply side-steps the issue and renders the term useless for philosophical purposes. It may alternatively be argued that performance art is 'making' a record of these performances, but the art would exist, as a pure performance, without any further record. The record is not the same as the performance: the smell of blood in Franco B's performances and the impact on the audience can never be recreated (see illustration 20). It could also be argued that performances like Franco B's are not art at all, but it will be recalled from the discussion in chapter one, section VII, that I

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argued against this view. So I reject Aristotle's second distinction and believe that art can be action, making or, more usually, is a combination of both. I appreciate that allowing performance to be regarded as art could still be compatible with a claim that there is a strict separation between art and non-art, but that art includes performance. However, at this stage my point in relation to Aristotle is simply that art can include both making *and* doing. I move on to consider if other aspects of fine art are similarly too exclusive.

I look at Kant's definition of fine art in *The Critique of Judgment* and compare my own idea of the artistic spectrum with Kant's views. Kant approaches the definition of fine art by providing a taxonomy of art: his discussion on the subject comes relatively late in *The Critique of Judgment*: it begins in sections 43 and continues in 44. Section 51 completes the task with the division of the fine arts, but I shall not be considering this section here. The reason for the late appearance of the subject of fine art in *The Critique of Judgment*, of course, is that Kant has already explained the four moments which relate to all judgements of taste: how such judgements must be disinterested, universal and how they embody necessity and common sense. The bulk of Kant's philosophical work has already been done before he goes on to discuss the question of fine art. I will concentrate on how Kant attempts to define fine art in these two sections of *The Critique of Judgment*, numbers 43 and 44. Kant's approach to a definition of fine art operates by a process of elimination: it is a six-stage taxonomy which identifies, at each stage, what is *not* art; this leaves a narrower field for consideration at the next stage, and eventually we arrive at a definition of fine art itself: fine art is all that is left remaining at the end of the process.

Kant's first stage considers all action whatever, and he moves in the second stage to the first of his distinctions: he separates doing or making, art in general, from natural effects; the first is work (*opus*), and the second, an effect (*effectus*). Now, there are two interesting points here: firstly, Kant's *opus* is very similar to my spectrum across which my artistic presence ranges: it is *all human*

action which Kant distinguishes from natural effects, and secondly, Kant calls it *art*. I shall return to these points later. So far I have no disagreement with Kant's taxonomy of art. Moving on to the third stage, Kant distinguishes skill or practice from theory or knowledge; he is distinguishing art from science. For Kant, science follows set rules: it can be understood completely and taught exactly: art, by contrast, can never be created by following a set of instructions; it involves something more: it involves skill. This is why, for Kant, there can be no 'fine science' only 'fine art'. Kant believes that whereas genius applies to artistic creativity, innovation in science relies on imagination. The difference being that the process of imaginative innovation in science can be demonstrated; in art genius cannot be explained. In other words, we can follow innovation in science step by step: each step developing from the former in a process which can be explained. The emerging artwork, the result of artistic genius, cannot be totally explained by reference to what came before. This for Kant clearly separates science from art. I accept that scientific innovation can be demonstrated but believe that this does not explain *why* the innovation has occurred. There must be some element in scientific innovation which is creative and which cannot be explained by demonstrating how the innovation occurs. It is this element which I believe is similar to artistic genius. I suggest that the distinction which Kant draws between art and science in section 43 is in fact much less polarised: that an element of creativity or genius is present in scientific thought. Innovation in science is based on and uses empirical data but this cannot be used to fully explain it. If this were the case, science would be a matter of a priori principles applied to observation. I refer to an example I have used before: the difference between the Aristotelian explanation of the swinging stone and Galileo's.[5] How did the change take place? Kuhn is adamant: "through Galileo's individual genius, of course. But note that genius does not here manifest itself in more accurate or objective observation of the swinging body. Descriptively, the

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[5]See chapter two, section III, 'Joseph Margolis's Criticism'.

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Aristotelian perception is just as accurate" (1996, p.119). It is this scientific genius which I believe shares creative features with artistic genius and leads us to question Kant's distinction between innovation in art and science. John Dewey points to the similarities between scientific innovation and artistic creativity: "the odd notion that an artist does not think and a scientific inquirer does nothing else is the result of converting a difference of tempo and emphasis into a difference of kind" (1980, p.15).

In the next stage, Kant distinguishes art from craft; what he calls 'free art' from 'mercenary art'. The former is similar to play: it is carried out without any regard to financial reward; the latter is performed for payment, and, he believes, that payment or reward is the only reason why such work is carried out. In this latter category Kant includes labour (*Arbeit*) as well as craft (*Handwerk*). The point I make here is one which Kant is aware of himself: he suggests the distinction at this particular stage in the taxonomy is not precise. He suggests there is some overlap between free and mercenary arts, and we would have to use other means, such as talent, to distinguish them; he explains this saying: "to judge whether, in a ranking of the guilds, watchmakers should be counted as artists but smiths as craftsmen, we would have to take a viewpoint different from the one adopted here: we would have to compare [*Proportion*] the talents that each of these occupations presupposes" (1987, p.171, square brackets are in the original). He goes on to accept that some crafts may be considered as free arts and concedes that some of his seven free arts may well be considered as sciences; he refuses to offer a definitive view on this.

The fifth stage of Kant's taxonomy distinguishes mechanical art from aesthetic art. As Kant gives no examples here, it is difficult to understand the distinction he makes; he says: "if art merely performs the acts that are required to make a possible object actual, adequately to our *cognition* of that object, then it is *mechanical* art; but if what it intends directly is [to arouse] the feeling of pleasure, then it is called *aesthetic* art" (1987, p.172, square brackets are in the original). The difficulty is seeing what the motivation is for mechanical art if it is not pleasure or

payment (from stage three); perhaps Kant had slavish copying in mind, but even this would surely be an attempt to achieve and give some degree of pleasure: to either the artist or viewer. I leave stage five without further comment except to note that aesthetic art, for Kant, is motivated by and provides pleasure.

Stage six, the last in Kant's taxonomy, distinguishes agreeable art from fine art. The former links pleasure to sensations, the latter links the pleasure of art to some cognitive element; Kant says: "it is fine art if its purpose is that the pleasure should accompany presentations that are *ways of cognising*" (1987, p.172). This takes us back to the earlier parts of *The Critique of Judgment* where Kant discusses the nature of an aesthetic judgement or, what is the same for Kant, a judgement of taste. Agreeable art produces pleasure solely by means of sensation, fine art relies on taste. If the pleasure of art is universal, which Kant believes it must be, he thinks that it must rely on reflection rather than mere sensation. Towards the end of section 44 of *The Critique of Judgment* Kant says: "fine art, on the other hand, is a way of presenting that is purposive on its own and that furthers, even though without purpose, the culture of our mental powers to [facilitate] social communication" (1987, p.173, square brackets are in the original).

However, the distinction between agreeable art and fine art is imprecise in the examples he gives. The examples he gives of agreeable art, for instance, are story telling, conversation at the dinner table and what he calls table-music: what we would call background music or lift music. These examples highlight the problem: why is story telling at the dinner table agreeable art when story telling in a theatre, say one of Becket's monologues, is fine art? The difference for Kant seems to lie in the concept of genius which he goes on to discuss in subsequent sections. However, I leave *The Critique of Judgment* here: my purpose has been to examine Kant's taxonomy of art in sections 43 and 44 and to show that the distinction between what Kant calls art which, as we saw at the beginning of this discussion, includes all human action and his concept of fine art is far from precise. Kant's attempt to define fine art by a process of elimination is questionable because

of the imprecision of the boundaries he proposes at each stage of his taxonomy. The interesting point for me is that his account of all human action, which he calls 'art', admits the range of activities and artefacts which I am suggesting form the spectrum to which artistic presence applies. At this stage I should stress that my aim has been to identify a genus for our definition of art; I shall consider the differentiae in the next section. I address the issue of how to identify artistic presence from the wider range of human activities and artefacts which form the genus.

I believe Danto's insistence on a separate category of art is a result of his inability to shake off the historical and cultural implications of the acceptance of a category of fine art. He accepts the existence of fine art as a category in a tacit, but unstated, reliance on a taxonomical approach to art such as the one we have examined in Kant's *Critique of Judgment*. By insisting on the existence of some essential feature of fine art which marks it off from other human artefacts or actions, Danto becomes, perhaps unwittingly, wedded to a form of essentialism which I believe is unwarranted, and, as I shall explain later, limits the applicability of his concepts of intentionality and intensionality to a narrow and exclusive field: that is to fine art. The historical development of the concept of fine art as a separate and privileged category has been well documented. Paul Oskar Kristeller in 'The Modern System of the Arts' (1997) explains that the rise of the concept of fine art, the five 'major' arts of painting, sculpture, architecture, music and poetry, is a relatively late development in western thought. He traces the transformation of the Greek concept of *techne* or craft (which would have included much of what we would now call the sciences) into the idea of fine art in the eighteenth-century. Kristeller sees this primarily being driven by changes in the structure of society and the new audiences for art together with the rise in importance of the art collector. The system of fine art, he points out, is a reflection of cultural norms and expectations of a specific historical period and thus inevitably changes over time. He says: "our familiar system of the five fine arts did not merely originate in the eighteenth century, but it also reflects the particular cultural and social conditions of that time. If we consider other

times and places, the status of the various arts, their associations and subdivisions appear very different" (1997, p.101). If a precise boundary between the five fine arts, or Kant's seven 'free arts' is subject to change, it is surprising that the distinction between fine art and 'other' art remains so prevalent in the artworld and in debates on the history of art and the philosophy of art.

There are a number of theories attempting to explain this; however, I do not intend to discuss them here in any detail: they are clearly outside the remit of this dissertation. However, I will mention one in passing which gives an indication of the range of the historical and sociological factors which account for the rise of fine art. John Dewey in *Art as Experience* relates the rise of fine art to the growth of 'museum art': he sees the rise of the museum being partly accounted for by the rise in nationalism and imperialism where each country and city must have its own temple to the arts. He also explains the emergence of the nouveau riche, as part of the capitalist system, being responsible for the commercialisation and compartmentalisation of art: conspicuous displays of ownership and refined taste become the mark of the successful industrialist and entrepreneurial classes. Dewey's task is not so much to provide a history or a sociology of art; it is more, as he says: "to indicate that *theories* which isolate art and its appreciation by placing them in a realm of their own, disconnected from other modes of experiencing, are not inherent in the subject-matter but arise because of specifiable extraneous conditions" (1980, p.10). I leave this subject now; my next task is to look at this artistic element which I believe is present in all human activity and to see how it can be distinguished from other aspects of human endeavour.

Before I do so, I should mention that the criticism of Danto which I have outlined has been promoted elsewhere, notably by Richard Shusterman. He accuses Danto of putting 'Art into a Box', the title of his paper in the collection *Danto and his Critics* (Rollins, 1993). He believes that Danto, who has written at length on the disenfranchisement of art, seems unaware of the disenfranchising thrust of the separation of fine art into a distinct category. Shusterman believes that this

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categorisation is a by-product of philosophies which insist on essentialist definitions; he says that Danto "despite his noble liberational impulse ... instinctively remains too faithful to philosophy's hegemonic habit of categorising definition, even while deploring its original motives and unfortunate results" (1993, p.164).

We have Danto's response to Shusterman in the same book in Chapter 12 'Responses and Replies'. Danto accepts that he is putting art into a box; he says quite bluntly: "my job is that of boxmaker" (1993, p.215). He defends the task of philosophy as involvement with the type of analytic categorisation and the search for definitions which he employs. He accuses Shusterman of losing sight of the fact that the type of pragmatism Shusterman espouses is just another box: "it may be a box of a different shape because it structures the universe in a very different way from the system I believe in" (1993, p.215). Danto also adds a warning that pragmatism, say as outlined in the writings of John Dewey, is not the absence of any system, a view which Danto sees represented in the writings of Richard Rorty. but the emphasis on a more organic approach relying on internal rather than external relationships. Danto ends by saying that the philosopher is in truth always faced with a decision about the choice of system, not between system and no system. It is this which he believes was the great insight of pragmatism: "this was [William] James's deep insight, how one must function when a choice has to be made and there is no philosophical basis for making it, which is always the case in choosing between total philosophical systems: you choose the system in which you feel best, there being no other criteria – for if there were one, the choice would be of a different kind" (1993, p.216). The first part of my definition of art, that there is an element of artistic presence in all human products and activity, provides a genus: a wider class to which art belongs; my task in the next section is to identify differentiae or distinguishing features within that class. At this stage, however, I still have no way of distinguishing the artistic presence from, say, the religious element of human endeavour; I address this issue in the next section.

III Intentionality and Intensionality

In the last section I considered the concept of a spectrum of artistic presence and argued that there is an artistic presence in all human activity and in the products of all human endeavour. My next task is to provide the second stage of the definition of art: the differentiae; how can I distinguish this artistic element or presence from other aspects of human activity? My approach to the differentiae refers back to the six principles of Danto's theory of art I identified earlier which in a new context, I believe, provide the differentiae I am seeking. I shall argue that when the principles are considered in the light of the concept of the spectrum of artistic presence, the major criticism that the principles are over-inclusive no longer applies. So, the second part of my definition of art, the attempt to provide differentiae, proposes that art, or artistic presence, is the result of human endeavour intended for human appreciation and that its artefacts and actions allow inexhaustible interpretations. This is summed up in the terms intentionality (with a *t*) and intensionality (with an *s*). The issues underlying both the terms have been discussed in detail in earlier chapters; my purpose here is to see how they are affected when applied to the spectrum of artistic presence rather than to a concept of art based on an art/non-art duality. I discuss intentionality and intensionality in turn.

Referring back to the six principles I identified in Danto's theory of art, numbers (1), (2), (3), (5), and (6) relate to intentionality; number (4), which I shall discuss later, relates to intensionality, although all the principles are interrelated. Intentionality covers a broad range of concepts which encompass the artistic process. Art, or artistic presence, is the result of human endeavour for human appreciation; it concerns a subject, about which meaning is embodied: in other words, it is concerned with expression. The production of art (artistic presence on my view) and its interpretation occurs within a historical context: these artistic products or actions acquire a provenance and a history. The point I made in my earlier discussion was that many other human activities can be identified as having

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these features; I will look shortly at how relating both these intentional and intensional features to the spectrum of artistic presence affects their use in a definition of art. Before I do so I return to summarise the key features of intensionality.

In discussing intensionality I shall be referring to the concepts Danto identified in the final chapter of *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*. In my examination of metaphor, expression and style in the last chapter I identified four claims by Danto. First, artworks embody rhetorical ellipsis; second, artworks embody similar features to metaphors: they are intensional in structure and therefore cannot be paraphrased. Third, works of art are expressive in the *way* they depict their subjects, and fourth, artworks, in being expressive, embody style. I shall be arguing that these four claims provide the final identification of the differentiae I am seeking. How far they provide a 'real' definition in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions I will consider after this discussion. It will be recalled in the last chapter that I explained how these four claims developed from one of the principles which I identified in Danto's theory of art: principle (4) – that meaning requires a subject about which the artist projects a point of view by means of rhetorical ellipsis.

I went on to test principle (4) by asking two questions. Firstly, are there any works of art that do not embody the principle? If all artworks embody the principle, it will be a *necessary* condition. Secondly, are there any non-artworks that also embody the principle? If there are non-artworks that embody the principle it cannot be a *sufficient* condition. In addressing the first question I examined three areas where it was debatable whether rhetorical ellipsis and style was present in art: the last scene from Hogarth's *A Harlot's Progress*, absolute music and geometrical ornamentation. In each case I argued that rhetorical ellipsis was present. I concluded there was a case, via an inductive argument (to which I later added abduction), that art does include rhetorical ellipsis and embodies the four claims I identified above. The answer to the second question however was affirmative: there are many non-artworks, to stay with Danto's view of art, which also include these elements.

Expression using rhetorical ellipsis and style is, by this view, a necessary but not a sufficient feature of art.

The problem with Danto's theory, as I have explained before, is that by restricting art to certain taxonomical categories his definition becomes over-inclusive: it includes many other objects and activities which Danto cannot regard as being art – that is within his own delimitation of art. It is this over-inclusiveness which moves Danto to draw back from his essentialist position to one where he accepts that he is providing some necessary conditions of art rather than a definition. The problem of over-inclusiveness is also raised by Stephen Davies: he raises it in relation to what he calls the artworld relativity problem (2001, pp.173-5 and 177-8). Davies explains the problem as the requirement, in historically reflexive accounts of art, such as Danto's, for the existence of a continuing tradition to which the work of art is related in its production and interpretation. As Davies puts it: "theories of this kind make art relative to an Artworld" (2001, p.174) and "when treated as non-parochial, the theories are incomplete because they do not spell out criteria for distinguishing Artworlds from other social arrangements displaying similar general structures of relations" (2001, p.175).

However, I believe, the difficulty of over-inclusiveness is overcome if Danto's six principles are applied to the whole of human activity and human endeavour. The concept of the spectrum of artistic presence includes an artistic element in all human activity or products, whether they are commonly regarded as fine art, craft, or any other activity not normally regarded as artistic. The principles in this case cannot be over-inclusive because they apply, to a greater or lesser degree, to all human products and activity. Intensionality, which I am using to develop the differentiae I am seeking, is concerned with *how* activities are carried out or *how* objects are produced: it is concerned with that element of human endeavour which cannot be paraphrased or replaced. Art, or artistic presence on this view, has an element of ineffability which means that it cannot be fully described in other words or presented in any other way: it embodies an element of rhetorical

ellipsis and shares this feature with metaphor. It may initially seem strange to suggest that all human activity embodies rhetorical ellipsis but the point to bear in mind, as I explained in my discussion of book VI of *The Nicomachean Ethics*, is that human action and products are contingent: they could be otherwise. So we can always ask why they were done or why something was produced in *a particular way*; in other words we are questioning how they were carried out. In this questioning there is always an element of rhetorical ellipsis present. I am also, it must be remembered, talking about a spectrum: towards one end there will be a very small, barely perceptible, rhetorical element which may be easily overlooked, as some of my examples have highlighted.

Returning to the taxonomy of art and completing my discussion of differentiae I have one final area to consider; one which has not been touched on in my discussion so far: I need to explain how my definition of artistic presence distinguishes it from religious actions or impulses. I believe the second part of my definition of artistic presence – that it is the result of human endeavour intended for human interpretation – achieves this: the religious impulse is not primarily intended for human appreciation. For the believer, religious doctrines confront her with the divine presence: either attempting to explain the presence or, in the case of prayer, to address the presence. The religious doctrine may be seen by the atheist as merely a product of human activity offered up to human interpretation, but she is still aware, even if she does not accept it, that it is an *attempt* on the part of the believer to confront a non-human or divine presence. In the case of art, by contrast, both the artist and the audience accept that they are dealing with *human* creation which of course can be used for religious purposes. This point must, however, be viewed in relation to the concept of a spectrum of artistic presence: there will be an artistic element, to a greater or lesser degree, in all religious activity. There is no 'pure' religious activity as there is no 'pure' artistic activity. Although the two impulses are separated for identification and discussion, they are intertwined by the complex interaction of the two spectra: artistic and religious.

IV Art as an Inflected Concept

I refer back to my previous discussion of metaphor in the last chapter; I believe there is a parallel with my concept of artistic presence. In my discussion I agreed with the belief that the basis of all language is metaphorical and that no literal reading is possible. I did, in passing, make the point that another view of language, the extensionalist view, accepts that purely literal linguistic usage is possible. To support my view of language as metaphor I quoted Ricoeur: "that discourse on metaphor is itself infected by the universal metaphoricity of philosophical discourse" (2003, p.338). I believe there can be no non-circular account of metaphor because the language of that account would be metaphoric. I believe that similarly there can be no non-circular description of artistic activity because human endeavour is infected with artistic presence which shares an important feature with metaphor: that is that they both embody intensionality. Derrida highlights what he calls the 'tropic' nature of all human discourse in 'White Mythology': he views metaphor as the unavoidable basis of all discourse; there is no way of moving beyond the rubric of metaphor. He believes that the only way to overlook this, in philosophical discourse for example, is to assume that "the sense aimed at through these figures is an essence rigorously independent of that which transports it, which is an already philosophical *thesis*, one might even say philosophy's *unique thesis*, the thesis which constitutes the concept of metaphor" (1982, p.229).

If there can be no non-circular account of metaphor and therefore of art, I must account for this in my definition or accept that it makes the search for a definition untenable. I shall address this issue by returning to two points raised in my previous discussion of George Dickie's writings. Firstly. I mentioned earlier that Dickie makes a distinction between 'natural-kind' activities and 'cultural-kind' activities (2000, p.107). Animals display natural-kind activities such as seeking food, shelter and the urge to procreate. Humans. and arguably some other species (the division may not be strictly between human and non-human). display both

natural-kind and cultural-kind activities. For example, referring back to the three natural-kind activities mentioned above – seeking food, shelter and procreation – cultural-kind activities relating to them would be: (1) rituals and taboos surrounding how we gather, prepare and eat food, (2) the way we design, site and construct shelter and (3) social institutions concerned with procreation, such as courtship and marriage. Dickie makes the point that cultural-kind activities may be directly concerned with how we go about doing natural-kind activities or may be related indirectly to them by way of the context of their creation. The latter are more usually seen as 'cultural' activities but the former still have an element of cultural presence. The important point is that in the human realm there is no clear distinction between these two types of activity, and, given the link between art and culture, this is another way of explaining my concept of the spectrum of artistic presence. The artistic element is inherent in all human activity: it is an ineliminable feature of the human condition. I now move on to our second point in relation to Dickie: if art is apparent throughout human activity as a culturally embedded condition, what does this enable me to say about the nature of art?

In the second chapter I mentioned George Dickie's reference to 'inflected' concepts; he identified art as an example. In passing, I should point out that Dickie's term is quite distinct from Danto's much later use of the term 'inflectors' which is concerned with how we interpret artworks as representational entities.[6] As I pointed out earlier, Dickie's idea of 'inflected' concepts involves a turning back of the concepts on themselves in a circular manner; this is because the concepts themselves are, as I explained in the last paragraph, situated in a cultural context which is itself partly responsible for defining them. Dickie accepts the circularity required in defining inflected concepts as an unavoidable, in fact as a necessary, part of their constitution. He believes that in creating, appreciating and thinking about works of art we start from a position of knowledge through our

[6] See Danto, 2003a, pp.121-2.

cultural embeddedness: "the task of defining 'work of art' is a matter of organising and systematizing what we already know and have known from early childhood. Many other cultural concepts will involve the same kind of circularity: for example, the concepts of *statute law* and *legislature*" (1992, p.113). As the third and final part of my definition of art, I accept Dickie's view of art as an inflected concept and that some level of circularity is inevitable in any definition of art.

I now summarise my attempted definition of art. I have three claims: (1) an element of art is present to a greater or lesser degree in all human activity and the products of human activity – this is what I have termed the spectrum of artistic presence. (2) This element of artistic presence is the production or presentation of artefacts or performances by humans for human interpretation. It is characterised by its intentionality (with a *t*) and its intensionality (with an *s*). It is intentional because it embodies meaning, and in doing so expresses a point of view. Artistic presence is or could be, at some time in the future, subject to interpretation which takes place within a historical context. It is also intensional: its structure embodies representation, rhetorical ellipsis and style, and its results or products cannot be replaced or paraphrased without altering their meaning. Finally, (3) art is an inflected concept: there can be no wholly non-circular account of art.

I started the conclusion with three criticisms of Danto's theory of art, and I now briefly summarise my responses to these criticisms which I have addressed in my own definition of art. Firstly, Danto's methodology: I criticised the *is* of artistic identification as being logically inconsistent and that Danto's definition of the special *is* results in artworks, in Margolis's sense, losing their reality. Also his reliance on the technique of comparing indiscernible counterparts fails to recognise that the 'art' object or objects must be identified perceptually as art before his thought experiments can begin. I have addressed these criticisms by showing that neither of these concepts is necessary for his theory of art: they are philosophically redundant and are not required to justify a contextual philosophy of art. Secondly, the criticism that his theory is over-inclusive: that its conditions apply to many

non-artworks as well as artworks. I have addressed this by my proposal for a spectrum of artistic presence. If art is present in all human activity, my definition cannot be over-inclusive: it will apply to a greater or lesser extent to every human action or artefact. Finally, the third criticism that Danto's theory of art relies on circular arguments: it requires some reference back to 'art' or 'culture' to distinguish art from non-art. I have accepted that art is an inflected concept and that there can be no wholly non-circular account of art.

I end with a final comment on this last point of my response to the criticism of Danto's theory (which is also my own third claim about art) – that art is an inflected concept and there can be no non-circular account of art. Does this render the search for a definition of art untenable or futile? I believe not; I take a pragmatic view of definitions. They serve to help us understand and appreciate art; there is no reason why a 'real' definition couched only in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions should apply to art. The first two claims in my definition, although they explain and help us to understand art, must always be considered in the light of the third: that art is an inflected concept and, as such, is a cultural construct. The late Oswald Hanfling put this into perspective very well saying:

> It may be that sooner or later, and perhaps due to the innovatory pressures of today's art and the institutional forces behind it, the conceptual geography will have changed to such an extent that the word 'art' will no longer mean what it means now. Such a change would not, of course, be 'merely verbal'. It would include fundamental changes in the practice and appreciation of art, which in turn would entail a different conception of human culture and civilisation.
>
> (1992, p.39)

This view implies criticism of Danto's philosophy of the history of art: his theory of the end of art. Whilst a discussion of this is outside the scope of this dissertation I mention that I disagree with Danto's historical thesis. I accept the end of the Vasarian and Greenbergian narratives, but I agree with Hanfling's view that there

could be fundamental changes in our conception of art in the future. I conjecture that perhaps these changes could relate to new non-manifest aims or properties that lie beyond Danto's theory. I have previously commented that my pragmatic approach, based on the logic of abduction, denies the possibility of an end to the history of art in the manner envisaged by Danto.

The choice of my window-box gardener whether to grow geraniums, coriander or marijuana, which, as I have explained earlier, I regard as, in part, an artistic decision, must be explained in terms of human culture: in other words with a degree of circularity. This does not, however, imply that seeking a definition of art is futile. Danto's definition of art, despite its deficiencies, has an important place in the development of the philosophy of art. It has widened our understanding of what art is and what can be art; it has explained much contemporary art including many new art forms that under earlier definitions would not have been regarded as art. His advocacy of a new pluralism in art has emerged directly from his reflections on defining art. I believe that Danto's concepts of intentionality and intensionality, divested of their context of an art/non-art duality, provide powerful arguments for this pluralistic view of art and an opportunity to re-define artistic presence as an essential element in all human endeavour: an ineluctable part of the human condition.

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