



An Exploration of the Essence of Art at the Light of the Contemporary Situation of Art

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An Exploration of the Essence of Art at the Light of the Contemporary Situation of Art

**Une Exploration de l'Essence de l'Art à la Lumière de la
Situation Contemporaine de l'Art**

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Résumé en français

Cette thèse cherche à répondre à une question fondamentale de la philosophie de l'art: qu'est-ce que l'art? Après avoir examiné les réponses apportées à cette question par plusieurs théories de l'art, il propose d'abord que la définition de l'art proposée par le philosophe Arthur Danto soit celle qui se conforme le plus à la réalité de l'art, bien qu'elle souffre de certaines imperfections et insuffisances. Sur la base de cette conclusion critique ainsi que d'une analyse minutieuse de ce qui est considéré actuellement comme un art, il tente de modifier la définition de Danto et de la transformer en une nouvelle définition, capable de mieux se conformer à la réalité des phénomènes artistiques.

Il se compose de cinq chapitres.

Le premier chapitre présente brièvement la situation actuelle de l'art et les théories de l'art existantes qui n'ont pas réussi à rendre suffisamment justice à la totalité de ce qui est considéré comme artistique. Par un regards critique des définitions de l'art proposées par ces théories, il tente de montrer que les conditions suffisantes et nécessaires pour être l'art qu'elles proposent sont soit insuffisantes, soit pas nécessaires. Et par conséquent, le problème de la définition de l'art reste en suspens.

Le deuxième chapitre tente de lever les obstacles à la possibilité de donner une définition de l'art créés par des théoriciens anti-essentialistes qui insistent que l'art ne peut être défini de manière classique, et de montrer en conséquence que la définition de l'art sous la forme de conditions nécessaires et suffisantes est encore possible. L'argument principal des anti-essentialistes repose sur le concept de «ressemblance familiale» proposé par Wittgenstein, selon lequel il n'y a pas de propriété commune à toutes les œuvres d'art mais seulement des similitudes à des degrés divers. Cet argument est réfuté en appliquant l'affirmation de Danto selon laquelle la propriété artistique d'une œuvre réside dans la relation dans laquelle elle est impliquée et ne peut être capturée en observant l'apparence.

Le troisième chapitre est une présentation complète de la définition de Danto de l'art. Danto commence par comparer une paire d'objet ayant les mêmes apparences, alors que l'un est une œuvre d'art et l'autre non. Il conclut que l'œuvre d'art est la représentation d'un sujet

alors que son jumeau non artistique ne l'est pas. Danto compare ensuite une représentation tel qu'un diagramme, à l'œuvre d'art ainsi conçue, et propose que la spécificité de la représentation artistique est d'être une représentation avec une ellipse métaphorique, alors que la représentation schématique n'est pas métaphorique. Il affirme aussi que l'œuvre d'art est une représentation dotée de style. Il introduit également le concept de «style matrix», qui consiste en un ensemble de prédicats sur l'art. L'idée de Danto est que chaque oeuvre représente l'histoire de l'art en manifestant ou en rejetant consciemment ces prédicats, ou même en ajoutant de nouveaux, afin de se situer dans l'évolution historique de l'art.

Le quatrième chapitre présente les critiques principales formulées à ce jour contre la définition de l'art de Danto. Certaines de ces critiques sont jugées injustes et par conséquent rejetées pour permettre de défendre la validité de plusieurs aspects essentiels de la théorie de Danto; d'autres sont considérés corrects. En outre, le chapitre confronte la théorie de Danto à la réalité de la scène artistique actuelle et formule des critiques supplémentaires qui n'ont pas été proposées jusqu'à présent. La plus importante est que son concept de style révèle des incohérences à travers les différentes présentations de sa théorie. En plus, bien que d'importance moindre substantielle, un autre est que représenter l'histoire de l'art n'est ni nécessaire ni suffisant pour être une œuvre d'art, car de nombreuses œuvres acquièrent la signification historique pas en représentant consciemment l'histoire de l'art.

Le cinquième chapitre, qui est le plus important de cette thèse, s'attache à élaborer les éléments essentiels d'une nouvelle définition de l'art basée sur les parties acceptables de la définition de Danto: c'est-à-dire l'affirmation selon laquelle l'œuvre d'art est une représentation métaphorique. La définition proposée par cette thèse considère l'œuvre d'art comme le résultat d'un type d'action artistique, étant parfois le produit transitif de ces actions, parfois ces actions elles-mêmes. Une action artistique est elle-même analysée comme une action tentant à représenter métaphoriquement quelque chose. L'étude de différents exemples montre que les œuvres d'art sont artistiques à des degrés divers: certaines sont plus artistiques que d'autres. Ce phénomène de gradation résulte de la possibilité que l'intention spécifique d'une action artistique est gênée par d'autres intentions non artistiques, ainsi que des conditions contextuelles supplémentaires, par exemple, le manque d'habileté à réaliser pleinement son intention artistique. Cette définition de l'art basée sur l'action fournit une

nouvelle perspective sur l'ensemble du domaine de la recherche artistique en transformant les problèmes de l'art en types spécifiques de problèmes de l'action. C'est la raison pour laquelle il lie des éléments de la définition de Danto avec des éléments de la théorie de l'action de Searle, bien qu'il reconnaisse explicitement que son affinement ultérieur demande une base complète sur une théorie de l'action plus détaillée. Enfin, bien que fortement en accord avec Danto, cette définition l'interrompt en défendant l'idée que la définition n'est pas insurmontable, car une théorie de l'art devrait toujours suivre l'évolution de la réalité de l'art et que cette évolution n'est pas terminée, même si elle arrive à une période assez stable.

Résumé en anglais

This thesis seeks to answer a basic question of the philosophy of art: What is art? After examining the answers provided to this question by several art theories, it firstly proposes that the definition of art offered by the philosopher Arthur Danto is the one that most conforms to the reality of art, although it suffers from certain imperfections and insufficiencies. On the basis of this critical conclusion and through a careful analysis of what is categorized as art in the present time, it attempts to modify Danto's definition and to transfigure it into a new one, capable of better conforming to the reality of art phenomena.

It firstly briefly introduces the contemporary situation of art and the existing art theories which didn't successfully do sufficient justice to the totality of what is considered as artistic. Through a critical examination of these theories, it tries to show that the sufficient and necessary conditions for being art that they propose are either not sufficient or not necessary. Consequently, the problem of defining art remains unsolved. It then tries to clear up the obstacles to the possibility to define art that have been put forward by the anti-essentialists, who claim that art cannot be defined in a classical way, and accordingly tries to show that a definition of art in the form of necessary and sufficient conditions is still possible.

The thesis then provides a comprehensive presentation of Danto's definition of art. Through several comparisons, Danto proposes that the specificity of artwork consists in being a representation with a metaphorical ellipsis, while the non-artistic object fails to be representational and the diagrammatic representation fails to be metaphorical. Furthermore, he claims that an artwork is a representation endowed with style. He also introduces the concept of "Artworld" in the form of a "style matrix", which consists of all the existing artistic predicates that for each one of them an artwork can choose to manifest or reject, in order to locate itself in the historical evolution of art. The main criticisms proposed to this day against Danto's definition of art are also examined. Some of these criticisms are judged to be unfair and are consequently rejected, leading to a defense of the validity of several key aspects of Danto's theory; others are considered as reasonable. In addition, the thesis confronts Danto's theory with the reality of the present art scene and formulates additional

criticisms that have not been put forward in the Danto scholarship.

In the last chapter, the thesis endeavors to elaborate on the basic elements of a new definition of art based on the acceptable parts of Danto's definition. The definition proposed by the thesis considers the essence of art as a property which lies in the artistic intention of action. The artwork possesses this property in a derived way, being the outcome of an artistic type of action. This outcome is sometimes the transitive product of these actions, and sometimes is these actions themselves. An artistic action is analyzed as an action intending to metaphorically represent something. Through the study of different examples, it is shown that artworks are artistic in varying degrees : some works are more artistic than others. This gradational phenomenon is the result of the possibility that the specific intention of an artistic action is interfered with by other non-artistic intentions, as well as additional conditions, such as the lack of skill to fully realize one's artistic intention. This action-based definition of art provides a new perspective to the entire field of art research by transforming the art-related problems into specific types of action-related problems. Finally, the thesis breaks away from Danto by claiming that a definition of art should always keep up with the evolution of art which is still not over, even though it has reached a fairly stable phase.

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Chapter I:

The Necessity of Redefining Art

Ever since one was born into this world, apart from the experience of reality, there is another kind of experience that is created by beautiful pictures, splendid music, and fascinating fairy tales; during childhood, most of us have enjoyed trying to draw something or learning to sing a song. These examples show that we can hardly imagine human life without coming across any aspects of art. As an inevitable experience in human society, art more or less influences us in many ways. Thus, art plays a role so important in human civilization that quite a lot of people are interested in the phenomena of art, and are even curious about the essence of art. Surrounded by an immensity of artworks, among which some are very different from others, the more we have seen, the more ignorant we feel. What on earth is art and what's so special about it? These questions have puzzled me throughout the years, and it seems to have become more and more confusing when approaching more artworks and more art theories. I believe that most art fans share with me the same confusion at this moment, in this time of an explosion of art with enormous eye-dazzling new phenomena.

Throughout human intellectual history, thousands of discussions have been dedicated to this question: what is art. This is definitely a meaningful inquiry, firstly because art has always been considered as a very important part of human activities; the second reason is simply that we still have no convincing answer to this question. We don't even clearly know why art is so important to us. Of course, many studies have revealed that art has some specific effects on cultivation, education, social solidarity, emotional expression, entertainment, etc.; however, one can't help but think that there is something more essential, something that makes art irreplaceable and indispensable. At the very least, it is quite obvious that today we have obtained not only sentiments, but also pearls of wisdom, through both admiring and creating artworks. So, if these questions about art are answered, we may further understand the

artworks and we may come to know more about ourselves, about how we see and reflect upon the world around us. We may even come to understand more about what makes human beings so special among all the creatures on this earth.

1. The Context of the Inquiry: the expansion of art today

It is quite usual that the meanings of some ancient concepts change over time, with the concept of art being a famous one among them. For the concept of art, around which more puzzling questions have been provoked in the past 100 years than centuries before since countless new members have come to this family, what matters now is to reveal its real essence in our time, no matter what it meant in the past. That is, to seek a definition of art which conforms to the real usage of the term “art” today, roughly speaking, a definition of the contemporary concept of art.

Art historian Josef Hodin has a moderate view about the inquiry into the definition of art, and this view can be considered as a guideline of our investigation: “To arrive now at a contemporary definition, we must submit the definitions of the past to a critical examination with a view to our special purpose, and combine what is still of use in them with the new elements which enter.”¹ Hodin is referring to the methodology of formulating the definition of art: to keep only the reasonable elements of the existing definitions, then to add new elements so that the new definition will conform to the contemporary reality of art. Thus we need to not only examine the existing theories but we must also clarify what the contemporary situation of art is, with both of which being main objective of this chapter. Since the existing theories should be examined with the reality of art, first it must be clear about which kinds of examples of art should be involved.

Though the object of study looks like what is called “contemporary art”, which seems convenient for the investigation, there are still ambiguities about this concept, which therefore need to be clarified.

¹ Hodin, J. P. “Contemporary Art; Its Definition and Classification.” *College Art Journal*, vol. 10, no. 4, 1951, p.340.

A. two understandings of “contemporary art”

There are two possible meanings of the phrase “contemporary art”. One refers to a specific school or genre of art which originated and developed from avant-garde art movements; while the other refers to all kinds of art produced in the present time which we call contemporary. This distinction is crucial to the inquiry, as the latter meaning embraces a much larger scale of works than the former one, which will definitely lead to two different considerations of the concept.

1) Contemporary art in the narrow sense

Contemporary art as a specific genre includes many branches of art that developed and transformed throughout its history, and it is widely accepted in the study of art history that the tradition of contemporary art originated from the impressionism movement in the 1860s. Most of the schools within this tradition are clearly classified today (although the total number of branches differs according to different summaries): realism, impressionism, neo-impressionism, symbolism, Cézanne, fauvism, expressionism, fantastic art, neo-primitivism, new realism and neo-humanism, cubism, futurism, Dadaism, surrealism, Picasso, and abstract art(classification of J. P. Hodin). The influences of all of these schools continue to hybrid new trends in the art academy until today. The main common feature they inherited from their ancestors, is that they disobeyed more or less the doctrines of classical art. By this rebellion, many contemporary artworks possess many features which had never been presented in the classical ones. Therefore, contemporary artworks have largely enriched the content of the concept of art, and so to some extent they have altered the meaning of the term.

However, although the revolutionary spirit of these works concerning traditional art is the main motivation, which has pushed the arrival of a new concept of art, they still do not represent the entire world of art. Without mentioning other kinds of art which don't belong to this school, several internal characteristics of these revolutionary works can already reveal the fact that they occupy only a part of the world of art: most of these works are produced in the art movements led by professional artists, they are usually academically created, evaluated, exhibited and

studied, which means that their production is limited to the professional art institutions; moreover, although some of them such as impressionism provoked a new trend in music, most of them and their succeeding branches were producing only visual art (or complex forms such as installation art), while contemporary music developed by a relatively independent path. Thus, if our objective is to define art in keeping with reality, it won't be appropriate to take the narrow sense of contemporary art in which many other kinds of art are not included.

2) Contemporary art in the broad sense

Other than the revolutionaries, many artists today are still producing statue and oil paintings; the mass media are still producing enormous movies and cartoons, while the revolutionary artworks have been widely admitted and have occupied many seats in the museums and galleries. Many other existing arts, likely, are still created in the traditional mimetic way, or at least in ways that do not conflict with the traditional aesthetic values. In our time, these are the contemporary arts which do not belong to the schools of "contemporary art" in the narrow sense mentioned above.

Although these works may conform to the traditional artistic values, from other perspectives they are also absolutely distinct from classical works. The distinction makes them also "contemporary" enough that they bear significant meaning to the inquiry of art. There are two main impetus which distinguishes these creations from the classical ones: firstly, new technologies and new materials have been employed; secondly, many of these works seek to represent new subjects in the modern world, although still in the traditional way. As works of art, they have less controversial characteristics than the revolutionary ones, and since they have also brought to the concept of art many new features, new subjects, even new problems, which didn't occur to the classical one, they should therefore not be excluded from contemporary art in our inquiry.

As the objective of this inquiry is to find a definition of art which conforms to the reality of our time, which means that as many different examples as possible should be taken into account, "contemporary art" in this inquiry no doubt refers to the second, the broader sense: all the arts produced in the contemporary time. This restriction of

the concept is necessary and important, not only because it is logical that all kinds of art should be taken into account, but also because many existing definitions have failed to give a convincing answer to the question of art more or less due to focusing too much on the revolutionary examples, i.e. contemporary art in the narrow sense, while neglecting other kinds of art which are also very much alive today.

B. Two understandings of “art in our time”

This distinction explains why the objective of the investigation, the essence of art, should be considered as a definition of the contemporary concept of art, rather than simply a definition of contemporary art. In the former paragraph, though contemporary art has been explained in a broad sense, which seems already all-inclusive, that still is not enough.

To seek the true definition of art in our time, all things presently considered as art should be investigated; therefore, the examples should include not only the works produced today, with such works referring to the broader understanding of contemporary art outlined above, but also all the works which were created in the past (disregarding whether they were created as art or not in their own time) and considered as art today. This totality leads to a contemporary understanding of the concept of art which may differ from the understanding in ancient times, and insofar as the concept of art has been through great revolutions, a definition of the art of our time should be discussed and constructed under a new context.

This extension of the range of examples makes a big difference as it takes two more kinds of cases into account, which had not been included in the broad sense of contemporary art: classical works produced before the impressionists’ revolution and primitive art. Both are admired as artworks today, but some of the classical works and most of the primitive works were not considered as art in their time, nor were they produced as art but mostly for other purposes, since the concept of art hadn’t been completely formed then.

Some theorists don’t consider primitive art, such as narrative cave painting or religious works, as valid samples of art. For instance, Danto in his investigation

doesn't take account of all the works that existed during the time before the concept of art emerged, as they were produced only for practical or religious purposes. Such a view of art focuses only on the motive of creators and neglects the participation of the audience. If people today admire these works in the same way that they appreciate the modern works, such as appreciating the elegance or beauty of ancient statues, or being deeply touched by the hunting scene in a cave painting, the expelling of these works from the world of art becomes at least questionable.

So far, the extent of our examples for this inquiry has been clarified: all the works which are considered as art today, namely, the totality which includes not only the revolutionary works like avant-garde (in the narrow sense of contemporary art), but also other works which are still being produced in classical forms, and works which were not considered as art before but are admired as art now.

Below is a list of the main types of "all the works which are considered as art today" which I will present in this chapter:

- 1) Art developed from the avant-garde, created by professional artists, which are mostly exhibited in the museums or performed on stage
- 2) Art in the classical forms (painting, sculpture, music, movie, theatre, literature, etc.) created by professional artists today.
- 3) Art produced outside of art institutions, created by craftsmen or amateurs (handicraft, online fictions, graffiti, etc.)
- 4) Commercial art, works which bear practical values other than artistic value (graphic designs, posters, furnishings, fashion design, etc.)
- 5) Art from non-western traditions which haven't been investigated by most of the art theories (Chinese and Japanese painting, aboriginal art of America and Australia, etc.)
- 6) Primitive works and classical works which may partly or entirely have been produced for purposes other than artistic purpose in the past, but still are or have begun to be admired as art today (cave painting, religious statues, typical classical oil paintings, etc.)

-
- 7) Works from other domains or social departments outside of the art institution (astronomical photograph, wildlife photograph)

1) Art developed from the avant-garde, created by professional artists, which are mostly exhibited in museums or performed on stage

For centuries, from the birth of first primitive statues until no more than 200 hundred years ago, there was no other way of preserving our visual images with media than by the skillful hands of craftsmen and artists. A beautiful face grows old, a beautiful scene is fleeting, so the only way to preserve their appearances was by carving or painting. However, when the technique of photograph was developed in the 1840s to document what we see, it immediately made a great impact on the world of art. “The most immediate and obvious impact of photography on painting can be seen in the work of artists eager to achieve a special kind of optical veracity... Other artists, however, or even the same ones, took the scrupulous fidelity of the photographic images as a good reason to work imaginatively or conceptually and thus liberate their art from the requirement of pictorial verisimilitude.”²

This means, on the one hand, that photography had helped artists to capture more accurate images, while on the other hand, it started to replace the function of painting as the documentary recording of real things. As a result, artists started to explore new arts which do not faithfully represent the reality. In a short period, the art of painting was retired and at the same time released. In France, after the time of realism art and École de Barbizon, came the art movement of impressionism, which began in 1872 with Monet’s “*Impression, Soleil Levant*”. The impressionists were no longer dedicated to making the lifelike imitation of the real Paysage, but focused instead on the representation of “accurate depiction of light in its changing qualities”.

In less than 50 years after this movement began, the situation seemed to to had gotten out of hand: an enormous amount of new methods, materials, themes, and forms were applied to the creation of art. This progress of revolution had released artistic creation from almost all the limitations and boundaries of classical art. What

² Arnason, H. H. *A History of Modern Art: Painting, Sculpture, Architecture*. Prentice-Hall, 2004, p.17

happened at the frontier of art during the 20th Century was a complete break with the value of beauty and furthermore, a thorough overthrowing of the tradition.

The following picture of the development of contemporary art is then formed: Early Epoch: Realism (in all its forms: the Barbizon School, School of Fontainebleau...), Impressionism, Neo-Impressionism..., Symbolism..., Cézanne, Fauvism, Expressionism, Fantastic art..., Neo-Primitivism, New Realism and Neo-Humanism... Middle Epoch: Cubism, Futurism, The Intermezzo of Dadaism, Surrealism, Picasso, Abstract art (Rayonism, Simultaneism, Orphism, Suprematism.... Late Epoch: Actual tendencies... ³

In 1913 an even more subversive artist, Marcel Duchamp, experimented with putting everyday subjects, the “ready-made”, into art galleries. The urinal, the bottle rack, and the wheel of a bike were turned into artworks. These works, according to André Breton’s splendid description, are “manufactured objects promoted to the dignity of art through the choice of the artist”⁴. It was a heavy attack on the concept of art as these works were not even originally produced by the artist himself, but only chosen by him to be artworks. This is the original point of conceptual art, in which the concept and idea take over the aesthetic and material concerns. Now, in contemporary art museums, we can see many works of this kind, especially installations of the “ready-made”, though they are somehow reconstructed.

The revolution took place not only within the form of visual art, but also within literature and music or other forms of art, at almost the same period. In 1907, the name “atonality” was given to a new kind of music without a central tone, which broke with the traditional worship to the harmony of the chord. Later, similar to the ready-made’s appearance in visual art, daily noise also started to be composed into music, which meant that even melody and rhythm were no longer considered necessary for being music. Similarly, many strange compositions of languages, whether in the form of cracked sentences or the form of a short note, started to be

³ Hodin, J. P. “Contemporary Art; Its Definition and Classification.” *College Art Journal*, vol. 10, no. 4, 1951, p.347

⁴ Arnason, *A History of Modern Art: Painting, Sculpture, Architecture*, p.242

produced as literature.

Until today all of these revolutionary trends of art have been mixed and have further evolved into countless trends, continuing to influence each other. These arts have innovated the traditional concept of art from many aspects: for these works, there is no necessity of imitating reality, there is no necessity of being delightful, and there is no necessity of being made with superior skill, nor of being originally produced by the artists themselves, nor of arousing the aesthetical emotion of the audience. Thus, many properties once considered as essential to being an artwork are now no longer considered necessary. Due to this circumstance, the existing definitions of art which are formed upon traditional artistic values must all be reconsidered.

2) Art in the classical forms (painting, sculpture, music, movie, theatre, literature, etc.), created by professional artists today.

Although revolutionary works are especially powerful in regard to renovating the concept of art, not every artist is the “avant-garde” who sprints to get rid of classical artistic values. Some artists still devote themselves to the excellence of their skills, to the beauty of their works, and to the traditional value of art, through vivid painting, harmonic composing, and narrative writing, whilst they remain as professional artists within the academic system. Furthermore, movies (especially commercial films), pop songs, street dancing, TV series like soap opera, cartoon, comics, and graffiti... are all marginal forms wandering alongside the academic art institutions, even though some of them are never included within the system. These folk arts are also often neglected in the theories of art. But although their forms are relatively traditional, there is still something new in them which makes them different from classical art. In regard to definitions of art, again, I agree with Davies that: “Most of the definitions on offer make no attempt to accommodate”⁵. The theorists tended to look down upon these examples as if they are somehow coarse. This attitude towards folk art results in a reluctance to admit that Justin Bieber’s songs or Japanese CG animation in computer games are also works of art. However, there should be no doubt that they really are

⁵ Davies, Stephen. “Definition of art.” *Routledge Companion to Aesthetics*, p.220.

works of art. Thus, a very large number of examples and artistic phenomena are excluded from the investigation of art, which absolutely does no good for the inquiry of the definition.

Of course, it must be admitted that the forms mentioned above, namely, the works in the traditional forms inside or outside the academic system of art, in the level of appearance, have changed very little from the classical works. But this doesn't mean that they bring nothing new to the concept of art. The most crucial difference between them and classical art is their new materials and methods brought about by scientific inventions and new digital technology. For painting, software and the graphics tablets allow the artists to draw pictures without touching canvas or papers, brushes or pencils, ink or pigments. With basic painting skills, the software can simulate the texture of canvas, the brushwork of different tools, and can even dissolve between pigments if you adjust the water content of the brush. On the basis of this technology, computer graphics, animations and movies can depict any imaginary thing either with extreme life-likeness or in a traditional poetic style like watercolor or oil painting. Likewise, many pieces of pop music no longer record from the real sound of instruments, as the digital editors can simulate any instruments through inserting the music scores and editing the transition and timbre.

Although the digital products of art look (or sound) not so different from the paintings of the 14th century and the movies of the 1930s, the new technologies have facilitated the creativity of artists; also, with the help of these new technologies, more people are now able to draw better or to participate in higher level of artistic creation. Such new methods also split the relation between artists and real materials, which leads to the unique experience of creating totally different works from the classical ones. While an artist can realize a symphony or a digital painting, the artworks seem to escape from any material, which also bothers the concept of artwork.

Other than digital works, some professional artists have also tried something new while still remaining under the frame of classical art, using new technology or new materials. An amazing example is the creation of Japanese artist Riusuke Fukahori. His 3D gold fish are now sold for at least \$200 per piece (the simplest ones), and has

set off a wave of DIY 3D painting. The lifelike gold fish are painted on transparent resin, but on many thin sheet layers inside a container, so that the fish and the water plants look stereoscopic in the water.



Golden fishes, Riusuke Fukahori

3) Art produced outside the art institutions, created by craftsmen or amateurs (handicraft, online fictions, graffiti, etc.)

Just as revolutionary works constitute only one part of existing art today, experts inside the institutions also only constitute one part of the population who produce artworks.

The growing participation of amateurs in activities related to art is also something new for “art at this moment”. Works of art are not always created by artists (if we consider artists as professionals). Many people who are not systemically trained can draw beautiful pictures, can sing beautifully, and can write wonderful fictions. Along with the improvement of the educational level of the whole population, more people outside the “art world” began to participate in artistic activities. Also, with the widespread accessibility of the internet, works created by non-professional creators are more frequently and widely presented, discussed and circulated. Many new departments of art have emerged along with the rise of “folk artists”. Although it would be too arbitrary to classify all of these new types in the family of art, there are

still some examples that can at least prove that these new phenomena should be studied for the inquiry of art.

Handicraft, of course, is not a brand-new form of entertainment, as ladies in the 18th century had also loved stitching work or weaving. However, it was not until the era of the internet that handicraft became very popular among amateurs. It is often called “DIY” (do it yourself), and an enormous amount of types were invented and have now become popular. Some forms not only have non-professional fans, but also somehow possess a position in the professional art realm. The DIY miniature is now very popular among young girls all over the world. In the Museum of Miniature in Lyon, we can see many professional miniature works. Some of them are made for movie scenes and at the same time we can see on the internet many lovely works of amateurs who are making miniature houses, rooms, and gardens, some of which reach a very high level of skill and delicacy yet are made only for self-entertainment. Similarly, on the internet, everyone can publish their own literature and communicate their comments with each other. Under this circumstance, many amateurs are writing fascinating fictions which can be compared to professional works. Nowadays, in China, many of the most welcomed novels are originally published on the internet.



Miniatures of tableware made by plastic packages of pills and other throwaway-materials

Other than these popular genres, some amateur's works are extremely exquisite and the procedure of creation can be very complex and difficult. For example, paper folding such as folding something like a boat or a lily, is a very ordinary way to play, which we more or less have done. Yet, in Japan, there's an artist who can fold a dragon or a cicada with only one piece of paper but with many vivid details. Thinking of this example, intuitively, it seems not very appropriate to classify paper folding as a form of art; but the works of this Japanese artist who uses some skills which are never applied to traditional paper-folding, can be absolutely classified as artworks. This is a paradigm of the works which stand out from other works in the same form. This leads us to wonder what makes the difference between a child's paper boat and the Japanese one-paper dragon when we are thinking about whether they are artworks or not.



Paper folded dragon, Satoshi Kamiya, 2011

Some amateurs even hand-made some things which are difficult to classify into any concrete named form, and can only be roughly considered as formative art. For example, there was a man who collected thousands of millions of ice-cream sticks to make a model of a castle, which occupies almost half the space of his room. Another example, an old man who was once a worker started to carve a desert grotto with

magnificent patterns (see “the heart”). It took him 10 years to complete after his retirement, and the result is breathtaking. We can generally categorize these two examples into visual art or formative art, but the materials and the way of creation itself, essentially possess some new features.



Mechanical warrior made of crab shells by someone who has eaten several steamed crabs



“The heart”, Ra Paulette, 1987

On the one hand, the development of the internet and the process of globalization have provoked the participation of ordinary people who are not trained as professional artists to create works such as online novels, handicraft of miniature or polymer clay,

or any other new creations which haven't got a name in the academic system of art. On the other hand, the development of the internet and the process of globalization have given these forms a wide platform on which to present themselves to the public, whereby they can then be admired and critiqued, and thus enter into the horizon of art theories.

4) Commercial art, works which bear practical values other than the artistic value(graphic designs, posters, furnishings, fashion design, etc.)

Except for the works which are claimed to be "art for art's sake", artworks have served many external purposes. They have been narrative in order to keep memories, have been religious in order to strengthen belief, have been beautiful in order to entertain our sense, and as the capitalist market has almost taken over the world, art now has widely served a commercial purpose for the better promotion of the merchants and for the better experience of the consumers. The promotion of products, not only the appearances of the products themselves which are always elaborately designed, but also the advertisements which are always presented in the form of artwork, has turned into an industry.

Commercial artworks can roughly be divided into two parts: the products and the works made for promoting the products; in short, design and advertising. In the case of products, the works function both practically and aesthetically at the same time. For example, a beautiful vase should be able to hold the flowers. In the case of advertising, they possess not only the aesthetic value but also, more importantly, must be persuasive in order to promote the products. Therefore, these works, especially the products, create another difficulty for the inquiry of art: if they serve mostly for an external purpose but are in the form of existing art, do they all count as artworks? Or can some of them be considered as art while the others can't? If so, then what would be the criterion to differentiate artworks from non-artworks among all the commercial products?



Here is an example of three teapots. They are being sold at dramatically different prices; they can all be used to make tea; their appearances are all somehow purposely designed, although at different levels. If we ask people about whether these are artworks or not, for the first one, apparently people will be inclined to say yes, probably because it looks really avant-garde, or in other words, odd as a teapot; for the second one, I believe that most people will hesitate, as it is elegant and well designed, but still absolutely looks like a normal teapot; for the third one most people, especially the Chinese, would say no, as this kind of mediocre teapot can be found in every ordinary Chinese restaurant, and we know that it's very cheap. What has the third one done wrong to be denied its entry into the realm of art? It seems that the only criterion here must be about the level of their design: the more the design fits the academic, artistic value, the more the product looks like artwork. But obviously, this criterion is not enough for a convictive definition of art. It leaves us with two choices: either the criterion is false, namely, if one of the teapots is artwork, then the three of them are all artworks; or, the possession of the artistic property is a matter of degree.

5) Art from non-Western traditions which haven't been investigated by most of the art theories (Chinese and Japanese painting, aboriginal art of Africa, America, and Australia, etc.)

In 2008, a Chinese scholar He Qing published a book named "The intrigue of art", in which he made the accusation that after world war II, contemporary art (including art creation, critics, markets) was secretly "controlled" by the United States. His books and articles have aroused much opposition among Chinese scholars concerned

with art, as his argument is politically sensitive, and very arbitrary, with a strong touch of conspiracy theory. Nevertheless, it also aroused some reflection for both art critics and art theories about the habitual Western-centered view of art. For the inquiry of the definition, as mentioned before, I share Stephen Davies' view that "Most of the definitions on offer make no attempt to accommodate non-Western and 'low' art"⁶. The existing Western investigation of art seldom analyzed the non-Western traditions of art, which since the beginning of antiquity, were often totally distinct from Western art. Yet, following the process of globalization, the arts from non-Western traditions have been continuously attracting the attention of art fans. Like non-professional arts, non-Western arts profit from this great era of exhibition in two ways: one way is that through coming into the light of the world, they thus attain their deserved status; the other way is to absorb something new from the other traditions (including the Western one), thus enrich their own arts.

In regards to the inquiry, there are many aspects of different non-Western arts that are worth noting. Oriental visual art and music have followed the tradition differently from the occidental ones since the beginning of art history. Chinese paintings have never been devoted to a vivid imitation of reality; Chinese ancient music placed emphasis on concision rather than the harmony of instruments; and in antiquity, the skill of painting(or drawing more likely) was always considered as liberal art for highly educated people, which is different from the occidental traditions. Likewise, African music places more emphasis on the rhythm rather than the melody, which had influenced modern pop music; African sculptures have always been exaggerated and abstract even until today, without attaching much importance to realistic proportion... etc.

As today's arts of non-Western cultures have truly been influenced by the art of the West, new hybrids of style which maintained some aspects of their tradition have continually sprung up. For example, under the influence of the perspective method of occidental painting, Chinese painters and illustrators began to make portraits and landscapes using traditional Chinese wash painting skill with the perspective method.

⁶ Davies, Stephen. "Definition of art.." *Routledge Companion to Aesthetics*, p.220

Another example is that a lot of oriental music maintained the style of melody or the leading instrument, but with the arrangement of occidental instruments, which create the harmony of ethic sentiments with the modern background of our epoch.



“The Long March 1936”, Shi Dawei, 1996



Unnamed, Yichuiwuyue

6) Primitive works and classical works which may have partly or entirely been made for other purposes in the past, but still are or have begun to be admired as art today(cave painting, religious statues, typical classical oil paintings, etc.)

Although cave paintings and prehistoric statues look crude from the modern perspective, and although there are theories about the mediumistic or the narrative motive of our ancestors' creation, it is still widely accepted that these unskillful but lovely pieces are works of art. It is indisputable that the earliest art, the Venus figurine

found in the Schwäbische Alb in Germany, dates to 40,000 years ago, in the Upper Paleolithic. Some evidence even shows that the most ancient pieces of art can be traced back to 50,000 years ago (according to the latest archaeological discovery in 2014). These reveal that art as human activity has appeared since the childhood of human civilization.

However, the concept of art has a relatively short history. In ancient Greece, servile craftsmanship and liberal arts were strictly distinguished.

The conception of the "Seven Liberal Arts" of the Middle Ages was largely an intellectual one...They were instruments for higher studies, especially philosophy. They involved little manual skill or pursuit of sensuous beauty...The "Arts of design" (*Arti di Disegno*) and the visual arts as a whole were looked upon as crafts only... Even in the 14th century, the artist is still considered as an artisan, the architect as a master-mason, and the musician as a minstrel. There was no social distinction between the ordinary craftsman and the artist... ⁷

Until the time when the concept of art in the modern sense was formed, it had become a mixture of several forms of creation originated from different ancient categories, and had recombined and changed its name several times. The relatively stable "members" of art weren't fixed until the time of Louis XIV, who established the academic system of the fine arts. After years of artistic evolution, some of the crafts and some of the liberal arts, at last, came to be settled into one concept: art, which included painting, sculpture, architecture, music, literature, dancing and theatre.

During this period, enormous classical artworks were created, although they had served many different purposes (religious, documentary, purely entertaining, festival, decorative, eulogizing something we treasured, etc.). For a very long time (until the 19th Century), the forms of art hadn't changed too much. It is true, or at least true in the case of visual arts, that for several centuries artists have devoted themselves to making more lifelike mimesis (although this whole discussion about mimesis never

⁷ Hodin, "Contemporary Art; Its Definition and Classification." *College Art Journal*, p.338

includes the art of Asia or other continents, especially Chinese and Japanese paintings). The great generalist of the Renaissance Leonardo Da Vinci, dissected more than 30 corpses with the original motivation of knowing more about the human body so that he could draw more lively figures. Johannes Vermeer's surprisingly accurate portray has been conjectured to have been made with the help of a "camera obscura", a device that works according to the principle of the rectilinear propagation of light. The Albertian paradigm, named after the Renaissance painter Leon Battista Alberti, shows the extreme pursuing of lifelikeness: "There should be no visual difference between looking at a painting or looking out a window at what the painting shows." Likewise, until the 19th Century, lifelike mimesis was still dominant in the art world. Neoclassicism painter Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres once said: "Art is never at such a high degree of perfection than when it looks so much like nature that you could think it is nature itself."

As mentioned before, the objects which should be taken into account for the inquiry, rather than being limited to what is created today, should include the works which were created in the past but are today considered as artworks. Therefore, although there aren't many controversial properties in typical classical artworks, they still form a large part of the entire family of artwork. Furthermore, as the ancients didn't create their works for the artistic purpose, these primitive works which were created at the time when the concept of art hadn't been formed, show the importance of the audience, insofar as the audience may be considered as another key factor of making something into artwork other than the artists.

7) Works from the other domains or social departments other than the art institution (astronomical photograph, wildlife photograph)

There are other kinds of objects that had not been created for artistic purposes, but that are now being somehow admired as artworks by a portion of the audience. These works being discussed are produced via non-artistic skills or equipment by some other social departments or professions with their own original purpose. A typical example is the astronomical photos sent from the Hubble Space Telescope.

Due to people being touched by the beauty of the universe, these photos made a splash after their publication. The photo is admired both by the public and by scientists in an aesthetical way, which brings this scientific photography closer to being considered as artwork. Although it is too early to admit their membership of being artwork, some of the audience have already taken them as artworks, and as marginal examples they put the institutional definition into question: these works are definitely created and admired outside of the art institutions (as are many wildlife photographs which are taken partly for scientific purpose).



Photo of Eagle Nebula, Hubble Space Telescope, 1995

It can be seen that, from this contemporary situation of art, the borders between artists and amateurs, commercial and non-commercial art, academic art and purely entertaining art, artworks and other objects, Eastern and Western origins, and different forms of art categorized in the past, have all become indistinct. Thus, we can learn from these facts that the essence of art lies neither in institutional judgments (made by experts) nor in functional judgments (multi-purpose of creation); the transformation of something into an artwork depends not only upon the motive of creation but may sometimes also depend upon the way of receiving such work. Within this context, seeking a definition of art is definitely a tough task.

2. Traditional definitions (before the explosion of art)

Our core question “what is art” is a time-honored one. Naturally, throughout history, thousands of theorists have offered their answers. Although we can imagine how many theories have been presented to this question, they still can be sorted into several main strains, as there are several main properties of art that have been considered as essential. Definitions of art before the art revolution in the 20th Century can be roughly summarized into three types: 1) representational or mimetic definitions 2) expressive definitions 3) formalist definitions. Many of the theories contain the properties of more than one of these types. The first one, representation theory, which is the most ancient and has since evolved, still has strong explanatory power and is still adopted by many theorists today.

1) Mimetic/representational theories

The earliest important discussions regarding the reflection about art (or what we call art today, as its substance has changed) were documented in ancient Greece, 2500 years ago. It was during this time that philosophy was born, in that it generated general explanations both of nature and of human society, which concretely consisted of asking many questions about the essence or definition of concepts. The earliest theory about art is made by Pythagoras, a philosopher and mathematician who studied music, employing mathematical laws and admired figures with the criterion of geometry. More specifically, for example, he put forth that the beautiful harmony of music is made by perfect mathematical proportions, and he found that the most beautiful shapes always correspond to the golden ratio, etc. Although his theory is more concerned with the essence of beauty, rather the essence of art, his theory still influenced later philosophers. His idea about perfect geometry can be considered as a rudiment of Plato’s idealism.

Then came the most important philosophical discussion about art, made by Socrates as a character in Plato’s dialogues, in which the thinking of these two intertwined, before which the mimesis as human behavior had already been widely discussed by several philosophers like Heraclitus and Democritus.

In the third chapter of Plato's *Republic*, when Socrates discusses poetry and the poets who play a rather important role in the culture and public life of ancient Greece, he points out that some images of gods or mortals described and performed by the poets are actually immoral, contemptible, and give the people of the Polis bad models to follow, as do some of the music and dramas. As the works of art are often appealing and exert a great power of influence, Plato claimed through the mouth of Socrates that these artisans and craftsmen (who are later called artists), should be strictly supervised and controlled, even expelled, in case they caused a bad ethos within the state due to the imitation of negative characters. In this discussion, Plato reveals what in his opinion are two facts related to the essence of art: art is imitation; art has a great impact on people. Although this doctrine seems a little exaggerated for modern cultural life, the idea of a mimetic understanding of art was not only widely admitted in ancient Greece, but also had been dominant above all other art theories during a very long historical period, and still has considerable power today. Yet it has to be noted that at the time of Plato, the substance of the art concept was not the same as today's in some aspects, as was explained in part I, insofar as what Plato discussed and tried to somehow define, was in fact the craftsmanship, theatre, music, poetry, which separately come from different categories (techne and liberal arts). Aristotle, as the successor of this idea, claimed that the desire to imitate (in any form: visual, verbal, vocal) is a part of human nature, though he is not quite in consent with his teacher Plato about the danger of art's bad effects.

This is the origin of the representational theory of art. Representation, the term which means that something stands in for and takes the place of something else, seems quite appropriate for describing artworks which stand-in for something real often (or always, in ancient time) by way of imitation. Thus the mimetic theory of art could be considered as a satisfying answer, as long as the artworks were produced by the intentional imitation of something (though they may not be lifelike).

Centuries later (17th century), the discipline which studies the sentiment was stated to be independent of the other fields of philosophy; philosophers emphasized beauty as the key component of art and of the aesthetic experience, and they

considered art creation as the necessary purpose of beauty. So at that time, on the one hand, the main research object of aesthetics was art; while on the other hand, the study of art was limited to the scale of aesthetics which was concerned mostly with the essence of beauty, rather than the essence of art. The term “aesthetics” which was then closely bound with art, was first coined in 1735 by German philosopher Baumgarten in his master's thesis “Philosophical Reflections on Poetry”. The term originally meant the study of sentiments or the science of the sense experiences. Baumgarten was the first to claim that the field of sentiments or human emotions should be valued as being as important as the rational part of the human mind. Just as truth is the perfection of rational cognition, Baumgarten considered beauty as the perfection of sentiment, or the most perfect kind of knowledge that we can obtain from sense experience.

After Baumgarten, who distinguished the study of sentiment from the study of rational cognition, Immanuel Kant separated the aesthetic experience from moral practice, so that the field of aesthetics obtained an independent position among all the other fields of human activity. The aestheticians propounded several theories about the essence of beauty. For Kant the sense of beauty is a purely spiritual and pleasant experience which is independent of any other interests, a subjective judgment which is not concerned about truth value (rational judgment) nor practical interests (moral judgment); at the same time it cannot be reduced to a basic set of features, thus it is an expression with true freedom. Bound with his aesthetic theory which considered beauty as “satisfaction without any interest”, Kant's definition of art is “a kind of representation that is purposive in itself and, though without an end, nevertheless promotes the cultivation of the mental powers for sociable communication.”⁸ This definition can be considered as both representational and expressional.

Discussable point of mimetic/representational theory

Despite the bold works of the artistic revolutions that emerged since

⁸ Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Translated by Paul Guyer, Cambridge University Press, 2009.

impressionism, during a long time the mimetic theory can indeed explain most of the phenomenon about art. Paintings, line drawing, and sculpture imitate the appearance of real things, drama actors imitate the behavior of real people, and according to Plato, music is also imitation. Here it must be noticed that in ancient Greek the term music carried meanings different from what we call music today. What Plato talked about and considered as mimetic music in *Republic* was the art play by poets or troubadours, which always composed of speaking (lyrics), harmony (melody) and rhythm. Rather than defining art, Plato always focused more on whether a performance would have good or bad effects on the education of people, and placed a particular emphasis on the narration of story and mode of speaking. In other words, Plato focused on the lyrics of songs, rather than the melodies and rhythms. According to his mimetic theory, the lyrics that tell stories or that praise certain virtues are an imitation of the particular behaviors of people, but whether the melodies are an imitation of something, his attitude is not so clear, according to the original text. He only claimed that insofar as certain kinds of melodies and instruments are good and noble, thus are suitable for telling the story of a virtuous person, while insofar as other kinds of melodies and instruments are degrading, those should be prohibited. The people who participated in this discussion seem to have had no objections, thus there was no argument given by Socrates to explain the criterion for judging the different types of melody, rhythm or instrument.

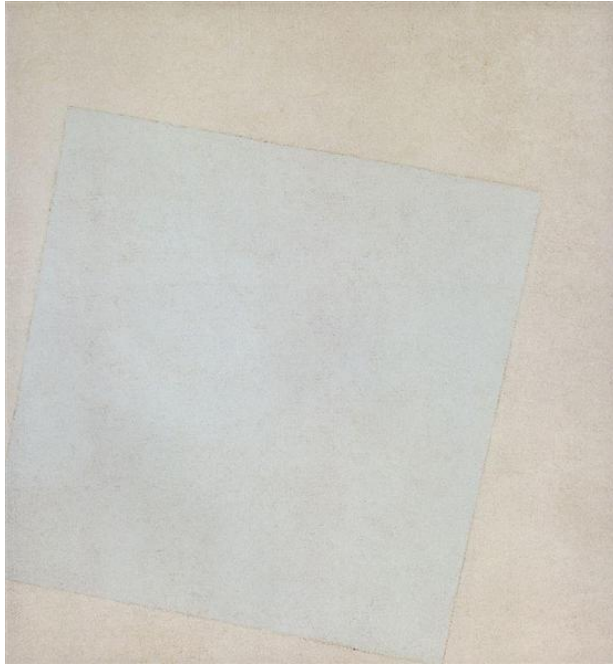
For me, there is something doubtful here. If we consider his discussion of mimesis as an attempt to define art or at least of finding some of its essential character, then in this theory, works of art should always have an object to imitate, which already exists in reality or in nature. However, this is defective in the case of music. There are two possible objects of imitation in music: 1. Comparing imitational music with imitational visual art: if a painting of grapes is an imitation of a bunch of grapes, then a delightful song would possibly be an imitation of the warble of happy birds in a forest. Such a song would express the happy mood of the birds through imitating their form of sound, rather than the emotion itself. Yet, while to some extent a picture of grapes can be considered similar to the actual grapes in appearance, to what extent

can a piece of melody be considered as similar to any sound in nature? The object of imitation in music and the similarity between the work and the object become difficult to identify. 2. The most popular explanation and development of the mimetic theory of art regarding music is that music (in the sense of composition of melody and rhythm) is an imitation of the emotions. If we adopt this point of view, then it becomes really difficult to study this insensible object and to explain how the melodies, which are very distinct from the sounds of nature, have occurred to the composers, or in Plato's time, the troubadours; on the other hand, within the hierarchy of Plato's Ideas, emotion very possibly belongs to a higher rank than the figure of grapes, which means music is imitating something closer to the Idea, and thus music itself should occupy a higher position than other forms of art, making the theory not able to justify itself.

The new phenomena of contemporary art also provide some counterexamples which puts the mimetic definition into difficulty. A typical counterexample would be the performance art that emerged in the 1950s which makes the action (different from the traditional performing art like theatre, dance, etc.) itself into artwork. Since most of these actions are quite unusual it would be far-fetched to say that they are imitations of some behaviors. Let's take an extreme example of performance artist Marina Abramovic who performed a work named "Rhythm 0" in 1974. For the duration of 6 hours she sat in a room with 72 objects such as knives, roses, markers, and even a gun, while the audience were permitted do whatever they wanted to her with those objects. Such a performance cannot be considered as imitation, at least not in the classical way. She was faced with real threats to her life due to the performance itself, which would not happen in the traditional form of performing; also, there was no concrete object of imitation, as this action doesn't exist in the logic of real life. Many works of performance art share this same characteristic.

Another counterexample would be the work of Abstract Expressionism. Among these works, an extreme example would be "white on white", which is the geometric abstract art of Kazimir Malevich. According to the mimetic definition along with the artist's purpose of abstract expressionism, the black square should be imitating the geometric figure: square, which is an abstract concept. In Plato's hierarchy of the Idea

which was inspired by Pythagoras, the concept of an ideal geometric figure is at a relatively higher level than any realistic squares. So, if “white on white” is an imitation of the square, it cannot be considered as a “shadow of the shadow” as Plato has suggested about visual art.



“White on white”, Kazimir Malevich, 1917

Besides the mimetic theory, for the definitions based on the value of beauty, they had already met some examples of the new trend of art even before avant-garde, which makes the presupposed proposition that beauty is the obligatory objective of art questionable. Since the art of the Dutch Golden Age in the 17th Century, many artists began to prefer the theme of everyday life of ordinary people: genre painting of slaves or farmers, still life of dead fish, etc. In light of the traditional value of art which focuses on mythology, Christian belief, noble persons, and heroes... these new themes should be considered vulgar; whereas it turned out that these themes have some special appeal which transcends their tacky appearance. After 200 years, in front of the “Pair of old shoes” of Van Gogh, we are touched in the same way.

As the classical aestheticians bound the value of art with beauty, they tend to explain this kind of aesthetic experience through the internalization of beauty, which is as Hegel suggested, a formalized sensory manifestation of the ideal. But on the

contrary, this externalization again attached the value of beauty to the value of truth or ethics and dispelled the emotion, the sentiment of esthetic experience. This paradoxical explanation of beauty becomes the dilemma of classical esthetics. This dilemma also creates a specific difficulty with regard to art. Although works of art are often dedicated to some good value apart from their appearances, the media which combines the lines, colors, notes, sentences to their meaning is still the appearance itself. Explaining the esthetic experience in terms of internal beauty results in the exclusion of formal beauty, rendering any analysis of the formal beauty of artworks as unnecessary.

2) Expressive theories

At the beginning of 20th Century, following the revolution of art in which artists began to care less about representing reality vividly, philosophers also began to try to find some other property of art beyond the representational one. Tolstoy's definition of art can be considered as an embryonic model of the expressive view of art. Although he didn't use the term "expression", he emphasized the object of expression: "Art is a human activity, consisting in this, that one person consciously, by certain external signs, conveys to others feelings he has experienced, and other people are affected by these feelings and live them over in themselves." ⁹R.G. Collingwood, inspired by Benedetto Croce's expressive aesthetics, extended it to propose a definition of art: art is an imaginative expression. For him, the process of artistic creation is to release the emotion of the artists, the emotions of which the artists themselves wouldn't have to be conscious of, until those very emotions would be fully expressed in artworks. "Expression is a process moves from the hidden, vague to the explicit and clear"¹⁰

This theory is faced with several counter facts dealing with contemporary art: there are enormous artworks, especially the works of conceptual art, which cannot easily be considered as expressions of emotion since they emphasize the presentation of concepts, rather than emotion; also, there are other kinds of human behavior which

⁹ Bailey, David. "Expressive Theory of Art." Expressive Theory of Art, Stuckist, www.stuckismwales.co.uk/theory/tblast/expressive.php.

¹⁰ R.G. Collingwood. *The Principles of Art*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1938, p.129.

fit with “imaginative expression” but are not art (for example if someone has had a dream and after he wakes up, he tells it to others or writes it down). Furthermore, if many artworks are the products of cooperation or interpretation between a number of artists, then how can a piece of art be an expression of the same emotion of different people?

3) Formalist theories

Under the same context of artistic revolution, another new property of art is proposed by Clive Bell in 1914: art is significant form.

There must be some quality without which a work of art cannot exist...What is this quality? ...Only one answer seems possible - significant form. In each, lines and colors combined in a particular way, certain forms and relations of forms, stir our aesthetic emotions. These relations and combinations of lines and colors, these aesthetically moving forms, I call "Significant Form"; and "Significant Form" is the one quality common to all works of visual art.¹¹

Bell's concept of art to some extent is related to Kant's aesthetics. In regards to the transitional period from classical art to modern art, Bell's definition praised the aesthetical emotion aroused by artworks which is independent of other interests; this conforms to the reality of the art of that time. Unfortunately, since that was a time when artists renewed the concept of art by creating new phenomena at an impressive speed, Bell's definition was inevitably soon left behind.

As we can see in the quotation of Bell, it's not appropriate to consider “significant form” as a definition of art, but rather to consider it as a “common quality without which a work of art cannot exist”, and thus as a necessary condition of being art. Although this can be regarded as a necessary condition, it is not a sufficient condition as apparently many other objects which are not artworks can be considered in terms of “significant form”, for example, diagrams in scientific research; or we can see some

¹¹ Bell, Clive. *Art*, New York: Frederick A. Stocks, 1914, p.8

aspects of significant form in most of the objects which have patterns or colors, like a blanket or a colorful butterfly. Also, while Bell considered significant form to be the common character of all visual art, there is difficulty in extending this to the explanation of literature or music. Moreover, some researchers claim that Bell's definition (if it's considered as a definition) is circular, as "form" already implies the feature "significant"; others point out that what is specifically signified through the significant form hasn't been explained clearly in Bell's work.

In addition to the exploration of definition, some other meaningful questions which are related to the property of art, were also put forward during this period. Other than these definitions, aesthetic theories proposed certain properties or functions of art: Schopenhauer(a way for people to temporarily escape the suffering that results from willing, provides essential knowledge of the world's objects in a way that is more profound than science or everyday experience), Nietzsche(metaphysical complement that will enable the transcendence of nature itself, the fundamental metaphysical activity of Man, the highest form of human activity), John Dewey (Art as experience) In Walter Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" published in 1936, he pointed out that we have entered into an epoch of mechanical reproduction, in which artworks can be mechanically copied. His main objective is to bemoan the vanishing of what he called "Aura", the uniqueness of the artwork. In regards to the inquiry into the definition of art, Benjamin's regret revealed the difficulty caused by the replicability of artworks: the CD recording and the original performance, the printed poster and the original painting, the copies and the original work. This phenomenon leads to a kind of dematerialization of artwork and makes the essential participation of physical elements and any true origin of the works questionable.

Since the evolution of art in which the frontier of art has been rapidly extended, all of these traditional definitions have more or less been challenged or refuted: some are refuted by the examples of conceptual art, art of ready-made, etc. (being art but not fitting with the definition); some by scientific diagrams (fitting with the definition

but are not art). Within this context, as new forms of art have continually emerged, these theories, as reflections about the reality of art, are always delayed; in other words, the philosophical proposals of the definition of art are always made after the evolution of art. The outline of this process can be summarized in this way in chronological order:

(1) In antiquity, art was born as the imitation of reality and dedicated to representing the world vividly, although within the content there could be many imaginary elements based on real things. Even though it has gone through the great revolution of the Renaissance, the only change was the emergence of new themes of representation and improved methods devoted to lifelikeness; the aim remained toward vivid mimetic representation until the revolution of impressionism of the 1870s. This art which continues for a very long duration is so-called classical art.

(2) Throughout this long period, the dominant definition of art was proposed by the mimetic theory established by Plato and Aristotle during the 4th Century BC, which lead to an understanding of art as the representation of the reality. On the other hand, later in the 18th Century, Baumgarten created the term “aesthetic”, which refers to the study of sensibility. This discussion of sensory experience formed into a new discipline of philosophy which concentrated mainly upon the essence of beauty. Philosophers like Kant and Hegel proposed their understandings of beauty and considered beauty as the primary purpose of artistic activities, but such understandings were still mainly based on representational theory.

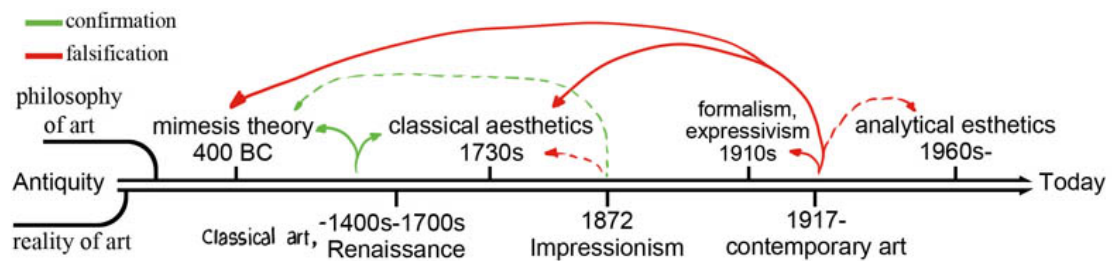
(3) Later in the 19th century, the emergence of impressionism signified a new era of art which was no longer dedicated to the imitation of reality, which thus broke the classical criterion of aesthetic excellence. The movement of impressionism can be considered as the origin of all the later branches of modern art (of the West). Also, soon after the revolution when many new styles emerged which began to illustrate the negative appearance of things, art creation started to become not necessarily connected with beauty.

(4) Faced with this great revolution, philosophers like Collingwood, Bell, and Heidegger began to search for a new essential property of art, to embrace the praise of

personality and the unique artistic motive of the new creations. The expressive and formative definitions are provoked but have been questioned by some counterexamples.

(5) After being astonished by Duchamp's urinal in 1917, the 20th Century began to celebrate an explosion of new arts which broke with almost every artistic doctrine of the past. Until now the creation of art has been released up to the hilt, it seems that anything goes in the realm of art. All of the theories above must be reconsidered under the context of contemporary art today, and insofar as art has twisted itself, the situation asks for new proposals for the definition of art.

Here is a sketch of the whole process of the evolution of both art and the philosophy of art:



3. Plausible new definitions (proposed after the revolutionary art movements)

Faced with the explosion of art throughout the last century, it follows that the traditional definitions fail to explain many new phenomena of contemporary art, thus forcing philosophers to put forward new theories. Some of them have abandoned this task, like the anti-essentialists (whose arguments will be introduced in the next chapter) who claim that there is no definition of art; others are still working hard to propose new definitions which could embrace all of those new members of art. In this section, several of the most representative proposals will be introduced. Most of them belong to the school of analytical aesthetics, but while each of them propose some

plausible properties of art, they are still more or less deficient with regard to the explanation of some specific examples.

To enumerate more clearly and systematically the contemporary definitions of art, the analysis and classification of Stephen Davies offers a beneficial reference. In his work “Definitions of art”, he distinguished two types of definitions of art: functional definitions, and procedural definitions. The functional definitions consider art as obligatorily operating some specific functions; the procedural definitions consider art as products of some specific procedures. According to Davies, there are definitions that swing between these two types, and it turns out that most definitions of art possess more or less the character of both of these types.

1) Definition by Beardsley

Monroe Beardsley’s definition of art is presented in his work “Redefining art” in 1982: “either an arrangement of conditions intended to be capable of affording an experience with a marked aesthetic character or (incidentally) an arrangement belonging to a class or type of arrangements that is typically intended to have this capacity”¹². This definition is normally considered as an aesthetic definition of art, and mostly a functional one. It claims that art has the function of affording the aesthetic experience.

There are two subtle points here: first is that the to be an artwork it is not necessary to succeed in producing such an experience, for it is only necessary to intend to have this capacity. Thus, such a definition avoids the problem of judging works who failed to achieve the aesthetic goal. Second, there are incidental products which may not have been intentionally produced in order to afford an aesthetical experience, yet even though they belong to another type of intentional works, these works, such as the astronomical photographs mentioned before, can also be considered as art. Such a consideration is a very risky step for the inquiry into the definition of art, as it admits works which were not originally intended to have the aesthetic function, their membership of being artworks is still not ensured today.

¹² Beardsley, M. “Redefining Art”, *The Aesthetic Point of View*, 1982, p.299

Also, in Beardsley's formulation, the aesthetic character plays a core role insofar as it is considered as a necessary condition of being art. He preferred the neologism "aesthetic object" than "work of art". In order to define the aesthetic object, he analyzed and tried to define separately the "types of arrangements", which for him included the typical examples of plastic art (painting, sculpture, etc.), music and literature. Although he did find some necessary conditions for each of these types, such as the duration for music, no clear definition of them is uttered. Thus, his concept of the aesthetic object remains unclear, even though his whole definition of art revolves around defining the aesthetic object. Considering astronomical photos as works of art demands some hesitation, nevertheless, beautiful astronomical photos are indeed aesthetic objects.

2) Definition by Munro

Thomas Munro's definition, with which I share much agreement, described separately art and artwork. His definition consists of three levels: in the first, art refers to certain related types of skill; in the second, to a type of product, that is, to a work of art; in the third, to the area of social culture.

The first level (art as a skill) consists of several functions or purposes:

- a. Art is skill in making or doing that which is used or intended as a stimulus toward satisfactory aesthetic experience...beautiful, pleasant, interesting, emotionally moving, or otherwise valuable as objects of direct experience, in addition to any instrumental values they may have.
- b. Art is skill in expressing and communicating past emotional and other experience, individual and social.
- c. Especially that phase in such skill or activity which is concerned with designing, composing, or performing with personal interpretation, as distinguished from routine execution or mechanical reproduction.¹³

The second level (art as artwork) considered artwork as a product of the skill

¹³ Munro, Thomas, *The Arts and Their Interrelations*, New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1951, p.107

outlined above, regardless of whether or not the particular product is considered to be beautiful or otherwise meritorious. The last level considers art in general as “a main division of human cultures and a group of social phenomena, includes all skills, activities, and products covered by the above definition. As such, it is comparable in extent to religion and science; but these divisions overlap in part.”

Munro’s definition can be considered as both functional and procedural according to the framework: his definition of art as skill is functional, and his definition artwork is procedural. The content of the function is giving aesthetical experience and expressing, which means Munro has taken both the function for audience and artist into account. However, the enumeration of typical aesthetical experiences doesn’t make this a satisfactory definition in regards to aesthetic experience or to art, as under the context of contemporary art, it is quite often the case that none of these aesthetical feelings are aroused or are even intended to be aroused.

3) Definition by Dickie

Dickie published in 1984 a substantially revised and “improved” version of the institutional theory, with the following definition: A work of art is an artifact of a kind created to be presented to an artworld public. “A work of art in the classificatory sense is (1) an artifact (2) a set of the aspects of which has had conferred upon it the status of candidate for appreciation by some person or persons acting on behalf of a certain social institution (the artworld).”¹⁴ It must be noted that he used Danto’s term of artworld to refer to the “broad social institution in which works of art have their place”, which is according to Danto a misunderstanding of his original idea. Thus it would be better to consider it as a different concept from Danto’s “Artworld”.

He gave an example of the same object, which is an artwork inside the institution of art and it is not artwork outside the institution: insofar as some paintings of the chimpanzee of Baltimore Zoo are exhibited in the field museum of natural history of Chicago, they cannot be counted as artworks. Yet insofar as the same paintings are

¹⁴ Dickie, George. “What is Art? An Institutional Analysis.” *Aesthetics: A Comprehensive Anthology*, Malden, Wiley-Blackwell, September 2007, p.431

exhibited at Chicago Art Institute, they become artworks. Thus, it is what has been done to an object that decides whether it is an artwork. This is a typical procedural definition of artwork.

Some refutations to Dickie's definition pointed out that the institutional definition is circular, as it sounds like "whether an object is artwork depends on the artworld which can decide which objects are artworks". Confronted with this accusation of circularity, he said that what is of importance is that the Artworld is described independently from art. This answer is reasonable, only when the art institution is defined. Here is a comprehensive description of the art institution that can be found on Wikipedia, which may be a supplement to Dickie's definition:

The functioning of the art world is dependent on art institutions, ranging from major museums to private galleries, non-profit spaces, art schools and publishers, and the practices of individual artists, curators, writers, collectors and philanthropists. A major division in the art world is between the for-profit and non-profit sectors, although in recent years the boundaries between for-profit private and non-profit public institutions have become increasingly blurred. Propaganda and entertainment in some circumstances have been regarded as art genres during the contemporary art period.¹⁵

Other refutations, like Davies, focus on the employment in the definition of an obscure description of the institutional system of art, such as the description above. The reasons for such refutations are, firstly that the art world is not sufficiently institutionalized; secondly that the social practices of art are not separate from other similar cultural activities; thirdly that institutionalism can't explain the artworks outside the ambit of the institution. The third one, is fatal to the institutional definition of art, especially under the context of contemporary art. According to the description of the artworld, people who are included in the so-called artworld are those who participate in the selection of works into art museums, exhibitions, galleries, plus the

¹⁵ "Contemporary Art." Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation, 24 Sept. 2017, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Contemporary_art.

professional artists and students in art schools, plus the art critics who write for the art magazines, plus philosophers and historians of art. Do all of those people just mentioned sum up to 10% of the world's population? It was true that before 100 years ago, most of the ordinary people were not involved in artistic activities, and as such the institutional definition maybe was once true. But today more people are well educated, are interested in art and love to initiate discussions about art even some amateurs are capable of creating great works, I think (or I confirm) that the situation would be no longer in the experts' hands. This problem of institutionalism is resulted from neglecting the art activities performed not in the field of academic art, which really should be reconsidered in our inquiry.

Among the definitions mentioned above, Beardsley's definition is more functional, Dickie's is typically procedural, and Munro's is a hybrid. Other than these typical definitions, there are also influential functional ones like Robert Stecker's: an item is an artwork if and only if it is in one of the central art forms at the time of its creation and is intended to fulfill a function which art has at that time, or it is an artifact that achieves excellence in fulfilling such a function; also there are typical procedural ones like Ayn Rand's: a selective re-creation of reality according to an artist's metaphysical value-judgments.

The general problem of existing definitions

Through his distinction, Davies made a hypothesis that the definitions that fall under the same type might have similar defects. Thus, a new approach between or outside of these two types would probably be needed in order to formulate a true definition of artwork while avoiding the shortcomings of each of them. For the functional definitions, Davies summarized three difficulties: the first is simply that the function of art propounded is not pervasive to all the artworks; the second is the difficulty of such definitions in regard to how they fit with certain revolutionary works; the last is that the existing proposals of functional definitions didn't embrace the social, ritual or didactic functions of art, even though many works of non-Western

tradition and folk art show a great diversity of functions. In short, the existing functional definitions failed to capture the unique functions of art.

Based on this analysis, I would like to make a hypothesis about the root cause of the difficulties of both these two types.

For the functional definitions, the function of art should be distinguished into two levels: the function which the artist (or creators) intended, and the final effects they provoked. These two levels are not always consistent, and moreover, both the artist's intention and the final effects can be multiplied. That is why Beardsley added the aesthetical intention and the incidental production into his definition. I believe that most artists create art not only for the pure artistic purpose but also in order to make a living, not to mention commercial art and industrial design, etc.... which means that artistic activities have many functions. Also, though art has some special effect on individuals and the whole society, of which no other thing can replace; but it forms only a necessary condition but not sufficient to form a definition, it needs to be associated with other conditions, for example, art has some specific function and only art has this function in some specific way.

The main difficulty of procedural definitions is that the procedure of producing art, unlike the procedures of industrial production or house-made cuisine, is not so easily observed, insofar as there are too many aspects involved in various procedures that make it difficult to find some common characteristics.

4) Definition by Danto: the most plausible definition of art

Arthur Danto is an American philosopher of art and at the same time an art critic. This double identity makes his theory of art more realistic, for as his excellent analysis is illustrated through many proper examples, his definition of art relatively accords with the reality of contemporary art. Danto's definition of art is mainly presented in his book *The Transfiguration of Common Place*, and it can be defined as such: art is representation which is expressed with a style in a metaphorical way. Or, according to Davies summary: something is a work of art if and only if (i) it has a subject (ii) about which it projects some attitude or point of view (iii) by means of

rhetorical ellipsis, which engages audience participation in filling in what is missing, and (iv) where the work in question and the interpretations thereof require an art historical context. The representational aspect of art implies a specific relationship between the artwork and its subject; the expressional aspect of art that is explained through the notion of style implies the specific relationship between the artwork and the artist; the metaphorical ellipsis implies the relationship between the artwork and the audience. Also, the historical context is related to his concept “Artworld”, understood as a hypothetical matrix with possible properties of artwork, whereby every work which adds a new property gives a new variable (whether a work possesses this property or not) into the matrix, not only to itself but also to every work in the past, throughout art’s history. The notion of “Artworld” can be understood as the whole of the possibilities of art, which is made possible by the entire cultural background of the artworks. This cultural background includes the art history where the artwork is placed and also both the philosophical and the critical art theories by which it will be analyzed and valued. The possibility of every artwork and every style entering the realm of art, depends only on the Artworld in which it is created and presented. Thus, Danto’s definition is sometimes called a historical one: whether a work can enter into the category of art depends on whether it can give something new to the whole of art history.

Danto’s definition of art has two facets: expressional representation, and occupation in the artworld. According to Davies’s proposition, it is a hybrid definition which is both functional and procedural, corresponding to those two facets. It is procedural insofar as Danto claims that an object becomes artwork only if there is, in consequence of the prior history of art, a place prepared for it inside the Artworld. It is functional insofar as Danto also analyzed the mechanism of how an artwork represents the world: the artwork is an expression which represents both the world and its way of representation (often called style), and it represents them in a metaphorical way. In this sense, art has the function of representation and expression.

Both Davies and Levinson have pointed out that this historical definition has some difficulty in explaining the first arts, or some arts which were not accepted or

that didn't show themselves to the public at the beginning. Davies called it the "artworld relativity problem". The problem relates to how the theory presupposes the continuity of the whole tradition with which the artwork is related, yet while historical theories often narrowly focus on the Western context, there are other distinct cultures producing art at the same time throughout human history.

Nevertheless, although there are some doubtful aspects to Danto's proposition, it is still a very satisfying one. As this definition was forged through Danto's analysis of many revolutionary contemporary works, it can cover most of the existing work, and most of the revolutionary contemporary works, as it places more emphasis on the relationship constructed between artwork and its subject, artwork and artist, artwork and audience, rather than the material facts or the forms of the artworks. As material and form are no longer necessarily the defining aspects of the works under the context of contemporary art, Danto's observation of the non-material and non-formal properties make his definition of art more persuasive and justifiable.

Conclusion

In this chapter, two tangled histories and their interactions, which include the history of art and history of philosophy of art, were briefly introduced. Throughout the history of philosophy many definitions of art have been propounded. Even though each has its merit, they have one by one been rejected by the reality of art. For thousands of years scholars have no doubt directed all of their efforts toward this inquiry. Unfortunately, while many definitions have been proposed, none of them perfectly corresponds the reality of art today. Some definitions are refuted by the artworks that emerged after their epoch, which the philosophers could not have predicted; some are refuted by the artwork that already existed but were not considered at the theorist's time, which resulted in the theorists failing to reach every aspect of art.

There are always several nooks of art which are seldom taken into account. Roughly speaking, throughout the whole history of the inquiry, the reality of the art

world always moves forward faster than the theories of art. As such, the existing definitions have mostly been questioned or defeated when faced with the reality. There are two obstacles: despite the difficulty of the inquiry itself, the changing reality of art which has left all of the definitions far behind adds a further predicament to the inquiry. The definitions are always formulated based on the existing examples of the past, while new creations of art have never stopped challenging (even on purpose) such definitions and made them embarrassed. There are, logically, two kinds of counterexamples that can be given against the definitions: 1. The objects that fit the definition but which are not artworks 2. The admitted artworks which don't fit the definition. The first makes the definition too broad and the second makes the definition too narrow.

An important cause of the failure of these theories to achieve a consideration every type of art today is that most of them have neglected the examples from three fields of art: art created outside the art institutions, art in the classical form but with new techniques, art of the non-Western culture. Therefore, in order for our inquiry to avoid such a failure, all the aspects of art at this moment, and all types of works, should be taken into account.

Among the definitions, the most plausible one is Danto's definition which emphasized the unobservable features of art. Such an emphasis will be included in the details of analysis throughout this thesis; also, the three-level structure of Munro's definition is worthy of consideration. The thesis will propose a definition based on both the development and rejection of different elements of Danto's theory, along with an examination of all aspects of art and all kinds of artworks that are considered as art today.

Chapter II:

The Legitimacy of Defining Art

To formulate a satisfactory definition of art is certainly not light work. Among the many difficulties involved in this task, the most basic and urgent difficulty to be overcome is the legitimation of the inquiry itself., or in other words, that it is possible to prove that a definition of art can be found. Unfortunately, the definition of art has some trouble when faced with this problem, as its legitimacy has been intensively questioned by philosophers throughout the evolution of art during the last hundred years.

Concerning the legitimacy of defining art, the most important discussion was provoked in the 1950s by several philosophers who belong to the school of analytic aesthetics. Among these philosophers, the most influential and powerful arguments are made by Morris Weitz and William Kennick, whose attitudes towards the inquiry are negative; while George Dickie and Joseph Margolis's attitudes are positive. Other scholars concerned with art, such as Arthur Danto himself, have also talked more or less about this issue.

In order to carry out the inquiry into the essence of art, facing up to the critics of the negative side is no doubt an inescapable mission. However, in order to justify the inquiry, it won't be enough to borrow directly from the defense of Dickie or other figures, as some of the powerful arguments of Weitz and Kennick have still not been discussed or fully defeated by the existing rejections. Both sides of this debate have provided some reasonable and remarkable suggestions, but both sides have also shown certain insufficiencies while defending themselves. Nevertheless, some of Weitz's propositions still seem very difficult to ignore, which can from different aspects, create difficulty with regard to the inquiry into the definition of art.

Therefore, by analyzing all their achievements and failures, the legitimacy of the inquiry would be justified through listing and refuting all the arguments of the negative side, with the help of existing refutations from the positive side. Thus, I will

introduce one by one the arguments of Weitz and Kennick, and will then prove with arguments of my own or other relevant theories, that it is possible to find a definition of art.

1. What kind of definition is discussed and expected?

All the arguments of the negative side can be sorted into two types: inductive argument, which were made through listing the existing definitions and pointing out that they are all false; deductive arguments, which attempted to logically prove the impossibility of formulating a definition of art.

The latter arguments presupposed that necessary and sufficient conditions are necessary to form a definition, and following this presupposition they tried to prove the impossibility of formulating a definition of art logically. We can find the proof of this presupposition in both Weitz's and Kennick's writings:

It's (here he refers to aesthetic theory) main contention that "art" is amenable to real or any kind of true definition is false. Its attempt to discover the necessary and sufficient properties of art is logically misbegotten for the very simple reason that such a set and, consequently, such a formula about it, is never forthcoming.¹⁶

The assumption that, despite their differences, all works of art must possess some common nature, some distinctive set of characteristics which serves to separate Art from everything else, a set of necessary and sufficient conditions for their being works of art at all, is both natural and disquieting...¹⁷

In order to refute their arguments, either it must be proved that a definition of art in the form of necessary and sufficient conditions can still be formulated; or to set forth the claim that this form is not the only form of definition and that there are other possible forms of definition. I would like to argue that these two solutions are both

¹⁶ Weitz, M. The role of theory in aesthetics, 1956, p. 28

¹⁷ Kennick, W. Does traditional aesthetics rest on a mistake, 1958, p. 319

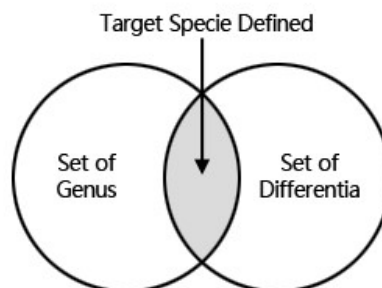
feasible: in this chapter, sections 1 to 4 will be dedicated to justifying the possibility of definition in the form of necessary and sufficient conditions; sections 5 to 7 will refute some other ideas of Weitz and Kennick; section 8 will introduce some other feasible forms of definition for art or other aesthetic concepts such as artwork.

As the necessary-sufficient form is a key issue of the debate, a brief introduction and analysis should be made before we move further.

As the clarification of concepts is an important philosophical task, theories of definition have been developed since the beginning of the history of philosophy. According to Aristotle, the definition is “an account which signifies what it is to be for something”. Here “the what-it-is-to-be” has been transformed by modern terminology based on the same etyma: essence. Therefore, in the classical sense, the essence of art would be presented as a definition of art.

The classical form of definition in Aristotelian logic is that of genus and species (differentia). Genus and species are two relative concepts, which both signify a set of entities: if set A is a part of set B which possess certain specific properties, then set A is a species of genus B. To formulate a genus-differentia definition of A, a genus B must first be found, then to find the properties which are possessed and only possessed by all individuals of A. Here “being B and at the same time possessing such and such characters”, is a necessary and sufficient condition of being A.

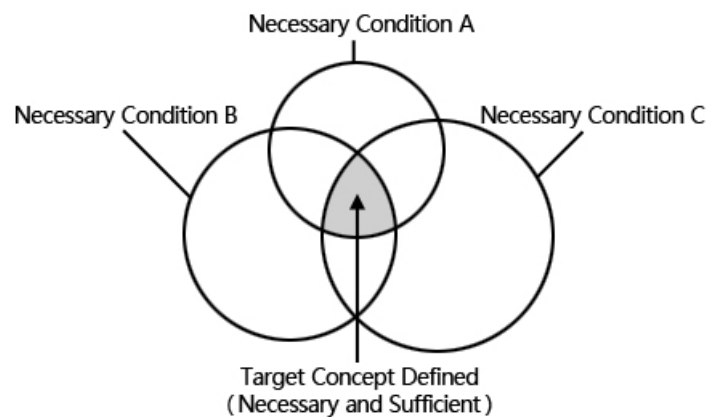
A genus-differentia definition works toward identifying an object in this way: if the object meets the condition of being in a set of the genus and meets the condition of possessing the properties as the differentia, then this object fits the definition. Being in the set also implies possessing certain properties, so the definition is formulated by several overlapping properties as necessary conditions, and “meeting



all these necessary conditions at the same time together” makes a sufficient condition. All the individuals that simultaneously meet all of these conditions correspond to the defined term.

From this we can see that the form of genus-differentia is a standard form of necessary and sufficient conditions. Even if there is no strict genus for the target concept, still, other properties can replace its function in the definition to narrow down the set.

The necessary conditions of being something must involve shared properties possessed by all its individuals, or in other words, common properties. While each property corresponds to a set of objects, the common part of all these sets according to the definition must not be either too broad (necessary but not sufficient) nor too narrow (sufficient but not necessary) than the real set of entities of the target concept, otherwise, the definition would be incorrect.



Through this form of definition, a very clear boundary of the concept is drawn. It's very explicit and efficient in distinguishing logically whether an object can be classified under a certain concept. Like many of the Aristotelian logic theories, this form of definition became dominant and still has great power, although it has been called into question by later philosophers such as Locke and Wittgenstein.

As the objective of this dissertation is to reveal the essence of art in order to clear away the confusion about the concept of art, a clear definition of art is called for. A definition in the form of necessary and sufficient conditions seems to perfectly meet this requirement; once a hypothetical definition is formulated, it should be verified by

judging whether it fulfills the necessary and sufficient conditions of being art. As such, in this dissertation I would like to propose a definition in the form of sufficient and necessary conditions. Although the definition discussed in the debate and the definition expected in the dissertation are both of the necessary and sufficient kind of definitions, as we will come to see, there is an irreconcilable contradiction between the negative side and my proposition. Nevertheless, I will try to defend that a definition of art in the form of necessary and sufficient conditions is still possible.

2. Definition of art doesn't equal definition of artwork

It has been more or less accepted by related research that a definition of art equals a definition of artwork. Yet insofar as these two concepts are undoubtedly different, then their definitions should therefore be different too, although there must be some internal relationship between them.

1) “Artwork” is one of the usages of “art”

The term “art” is used in many different ways, including being formed into words like artwork or work of art, artist, artistic, etc. We use the word artwork to indicate things such as a painting, a piece of music, a novel, or an installation, etc. People whom we call artists present something in certain ways, and what the audience perceives is what we call artwork, no matter whether such artworks are watched, heard, or read. In other words, artworks are the “products” of art creations. It's reasonable to search for some feature among these artworks in order to find the nature of art, but that is not enough.

If we consider art as something mysterious which transforms an action into an artistic creation, transforms a person into artist or audience, transforms certain objects into artwork, and so on, then it won't be sufficient to look for the essence of art only through studying artworks. A definition of art should be formulated by studying all these related concepts and their relationship to each other, in order to understand the essence of art.



It looks easy to distinguish between the definition of art and definition of artwork and the necessity for such a distinction is also obvious, for they possess different characters, refer to different connotations and play different linguistic roles. Yet it is also very important to study the relationship between art and artwork, and other concepts related to art, in order to reveal the essence of art.

2) Artists, audience and their actions are neglected in related researches

However, in many studies concerning the definition of art, it is taken for granted that the definition of art equals the definition of artwork, as the authors neglect the other usages of art. When they try to find (or claim that they have found) a definition of art, they are looking only at artworks, while all aspects in the field of art should be also be studied in order to formulate a definition of art. Within the debate discussed earlier, the negative side also shared the same view as the positive side in many aspects (which will be introduced in the later parts).

With art theories, this mistake appears on two levels: on the one hand the aestheticians are giving definitions which actually describe artworks while they claim that they are giving a definition of art; on the other hand, the aestheticians, whether they give definitions or not, mix the two terms together within the same argument as if they were identical. Above all, in *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace: A Philosophy of Art*, what Danto mainly discusses and investigates is artwork, so what he has offered is a definition of artwork. Nor did he use these terms prudently, such as in this phrase where he states: "...that we proposed to subtract from the work of art, in order to see what the remainder might be, supposing that the essence of art might lie here."¹⁸ Also in Morris Weitz's and William Kennick's articles, which doubt the legitimacy of inquiring into the definition of art, what they accuse of being

¹⁸ Danto, Arthur C. *The transfiguration of the commonplace*, 1981, p. 101

illegitimate is the definition of artwork, rather than the definition of art. In Weitz's article, he always uses "the definition of art" when he means "the definition of artwork", for the formalist definitions he listed defined art as significant form, while some other definitions he refuted are actually definitions of artwork. For example, he generally considers the concept of art as "a name for some specifiable class of objects"¹⁹, while it is artwork rather than art that is a name for those objects. Similarly, Kennick's whole discussion uses the terms "art", or "essence of art", or the phrase "What is art?", even though his whole discussion and all the examples he gives, are about artwork. We can even see these two concepts used interchangeably within in a single phrase: "The assumption that, despite their differences, all works of art must possess some common nature, some distinctive set of characteristics which serves to separate Art from everything else, a set of necessary and sufficient conditions for their being works of art at all, is both natural and disquieting..."²⁰ Of course, there exists many more similar phrases, in the work of Weitz, Kennick, and other philosophers of art.

This confusion appears more often with modern and contemporary aesthetics rather than with ancient ones such as the theory of mimesis which looks closer to the definition of art as it indicates an action or concerns the teleology, and is not just considering the artworks. It is also curious that the definitions given in dictionaries and encyclopedias tend to avoid those mistakes that have been made by aesthetician. Although dictionary definitions can seem closer to descriptions than definitions, and can sometimes seem tedious or even quite obviously obsolete, some of them do describe art rather than the artwork. For example, some consider art as a species of activity, which sounds quite reasonable: "Art is a diverse range of human activities in creating visual, auditory or performing artifacts – artworks, expressing the author's imaginative or technical skill, intended to be appreciated for their beauty or emotional power."²¹ Also, another example is art considered as an ideology: "Art is an ideology which reflects the reality in sensible forms, which it is more representative than the

¹⁹ Weitz, M. The role of theory in aesthetics, 1956, p. 30

²⁰ Kennick, W. Does traditional aesthetics rest on a mistake, 1958, p. 319

²¹ Art, Wikipedia, Web.

reality itself, including literature, painting, sculpture, architecture, music, dancing, drama, movie, opera, etc.”²², or “Any of various creative forms of expression”²³.

Before giving a further analysis, the necessity of distinguishing clearly the definition of art and the definition of artwork must be clarified, as some of the arguments made by Weitz and Kennick, which I will introduce in the latter parts of this chapter, are related to it. Some of their arguments will be rejected by pointing out their misuse of these two concepts, or at least some of what they allege will be weakened. In order to avoid explaining every time it occurs, it would better to wipe their eyes before they strike.

3. Logical accusing: Family resemblance

1) Family resemblance, the strong backing of Weitz and Kennick

Wittgenstein presented the important idea of family resemblance in his “Philosophical Investigations”, which was first published in 1953. In §64 of Part I, after introducing his idea of the language-game and providing many diverse examples of it, he asked the question “what is essential to a language-game, and so to language: what is common to all these activities, and makes them into language or parts of language.”²⁴. As he considered language as something formed by the process of the language-game in the former part, here he is actually asking: What is the essence of language, or as he explained himself, what is the “general form of the proposition and language”?

His answer is the following: “Instead of pointing out something common to all that we call language, I’m saying that these phenomena have no one thing in common in virtue of which we use the same word for all -- but there are many different kinds of affinity between them. And on account of this affinity, or these affinities, we call them all ‘languages.’”²⁵

To explain this proposition, his important example “game” comes to the stage in

²² Art, Baidu Encyclopedia, Web.

²³ Art, Cambridge dictionary online, Web.

²⁴ Wittgenstein, L. Philosophical Investigations, §65, p. 35

²⁵ Ibid, p. 35

no.66. He asks the reader not to think, but look at all the activities that we call “games”. By “look”, he means to observe the games to find out anything that is common to all of them. He emphasizes “to look” because according to him, people take it for granted that if these games are united by one name then there must be something in common. He provides a list of examples of games: card-games, athletic games, chess, noughts and crosses, a child throws his ball at the wall and catches it again, tennis, singing and dancing games. He then provides a list of features which may be proposed as “common feature”: entertaining, the result of winning and losing, competition between players, playing by skill and luck. Each feature may be possessed by certain games, but not by all of them. So according to Wittgenstein, these are only similarities, rather than common features, as he said: “if you look at them, you won’t see something that is common to all, but similarities, affinities, and a whole series of them at that.”

Wittgenstein gave a name to these similarities: family resemblance, “for the various resemblances between members of a family -- build, features, color of eyes, gait, temperament, and so on and so forth -- overlap and criss-cross in the same way.”

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In the “Philosophical Investigation”, concepts other than “game” are mentioned as concepts which have family resemblance, such as number, art, etc.

In §69, he suggested a way to identify something as a game: “I think that we’d describe games to him, and we might add to the description: “This and similar things are called ‘games.’”

2) Weitz’s argument using “family resemblance”

Weitz’s article, “The Role of Theory in Aesthetics”, was published in 1956. This article drew great attention and provoked the whole discussion. His standpoint on aesthetics is inherited from Wittgenstein’s linguistic theory in “Philosophical Investigations”, and especially from his idea of “family resemblance”.

Weitz’s makes it very clear that he thinks “Art has no definition”. “It’s (aesthetic theory) main contention that “art” is amenable to real or any kind of true definition is

²⁶ Wittgenstein, L. Philosophical Investigations, §67, p. 36.

false...As the logic of the concept shows, has no set of necessary and sufficient properties, hence a theory of it is logically impossible and not merely factually difficult.”²⁷We can see that for Weitz, a true definition is supposed to contain a set of necessary and sufficient properties. If a common property of all art can never be found, as the idea of family resemblance suggests, then there won't be any necessary condition of being art, thus there can be no possible definition of art in terms of necessary and sufficient properties. This is why Weitz found family resemblance to be so helpful and important to his argument.

In order to apply family resemblance to the concept of art, Weitz first restates Wittgenstein's example of “game”, and then concludes: “What we find are no necessary and sufficient properties only a complicated network of similarities over-lapping and crisscrossing,”²⁸. He also gives a name to the concepts which correspond to this description: open concept.

Weitz then claims that the concept of art is just like the concept of game:

The problem of the nature of art is like that of the nature of games, at least in these respects: 1) If we actually look and see what it is that we call "art," we will also find no common properties -- only strands of similarities. 2) Knowing “what art is” is not apprehending some manifest or latent essence but being able to recognize, describe, and explain those things we call "art" in virtue of these similarities.²⁹

In order to argue the first point, like Wittgenstein, Weitz also provides concrete examples. But the difference is that he does not choose them from different forms of art, but rather limits them in one of the sub-concepts of art: the novel. Similar to the way in which Wittgenstein investigated the concept of game, Weitz lists several novels and several features, and claims that there are no common properties to cover all such novels. Therefore, according to Weitz, “novel” is an open concept, and he makes the further claim that “What is true of the novel is, I think, true of every sub-concept of art: "tragedy," "comedy," "painting," "opera," etc., of "art" itself.”

²⁷ Weitz, M. The role of theory in aesthetics, 1956, p. 28

²⁸ Ibid, p31

²⁹ Ibid, p31

Although there isn't a single phrase dedicated to explaining why what is true of the novel is true of art, Weitz still affirms that art is an open concept.

The second point is Weitz's own understanding and development of what Wittgenstein had said about the game. On the one hand, a new object can be recognized by someone who knows the feature of some existing artworks. On the other hand, as art is faced with many more debatable examples, with some of these examples being recognized as artworks while others are not, it seems as though some criterion is working well behind it. Weitz explains that the decision "does not rest on any set of necessary and sufficient properties of painting but on whether we decide -- as we did! -- to extend "painting" to cover this case."³⁰ Here, he probably means that what we did was to let some experts make the decision, which looks like an institutional view, or else he means that everyone can decide as they wish whether something is artwork. No matter which of them is what he truly means, a definition in terms of necessary and sufficient properties doesn't exist for recognizing artworks; and at the same time, something else is doing the job and is working well enough.

3) Kennick's argument in terms of family resemblance

Two years after Weitz's article was published, William Kennick wrote an article named "Does traditional aesthetics rest on a mistake", which can be considered as supportive of and supplementary to Weitz's proposition. Similarly, family resemblance is also utilized in his arguments through which he claims that it's impossible to form a definition of art. However, he does not give as much of an analysis as to how family resemblance can be applied to art as Weitz did. Kennick also denies the existence of a common feature of all works of art:

The assumption that, despite their differences, all works of art must possess some common nature, some distinctive set of characteristics which serves to separate Art from everything else, a set of necessary and sufficient conditions for their being works of art at all, is both natural and disquieting, and constitutes what I consider to be the first mistake

³⁰ Weitz, M. The role of theory in aesthetics, 1956, P. 32

on which traditional aesthetics rests.³¹

Regarding the definition in Kennick's discussion, we can see that, similar to Weitz, he also refers to the definition in the form of necessary and sufficient conditions and provides a lot of examples to prove that no common feature can be found. Unlike Weitz however, he lists a wider range of artworks including poems, novels, plays, music, pictures, etc. While Kennick does not directly relate his argument with "family resemblance", it seems quite certain that he shares with Wittgenstein what he had said about the game and his way of analysis, and as such he applies this to the concept of art.

4) Discussion on family resemblance

Although Weitz and Kennick argued that art is a "family resemblance" concept and therefore that a definition in terms of the necessary and sufficient conditions of art is impossible, there are several ways to refute such an argument: either through proving that the idea of family resemblance itself is problematic; or through proving that family resemblance can not be applied to the concept of art; or through proving that there are other forms of definition other than those which try to find common properties, which will be considered in the latter part.

A. Family resemblance doesn't help the understanding of a concept

The idea of family resemblance has been discussed and questioned by numerous philosophers. Most significantly, many of the philosophers who have questioned family resemblance have pointed out that it broadens the concepts too much. If to recognize a new member is to find its resemblance with a few or most of the existing family members, then we can throw a huge amount of names into a family of the concept. For example, Alec Julien's experiment reveals the result of recognizing new members of the family of game: "...as are assassins. So now we have a group of overlapping resemblances that bridges games to assassins. And if you want to detail the conditions under which this bridge should not take us from one group of things (games) to the other (assassins), you are back to specifying necessary and sufficient

³¹ Kennick, W. Does traditional aesthetics rest on a mistake, 1958, p.319

conditions.”³² Likewise, if we apply the same experiment to the work of art, the result will be something like the following: the urinal in any toilet is work of art because it’s not only similar but almost identical to the Fountain of Duchamp; a quarrel between a couple is a work of art because it’s very similar to certain part of drama. If the idea of family resemblance is applied, not only art but many more concepts, more than can be imagined, would be worthless to work on. While such a result might be true for Wittgenstein, it can nevertheless confuse or be disagreed about by many people who would prefer to have a clear understanding of concepts in order to use them correctly. Family resemblance, even if logically tenable, does not help us to understand and use concepts correctly.

B. Family resemblance is empirical inductive

Wittgenstein’s argument is based on his observation of games, numbers, chairs, etc., whereby there is no other way to identify a family-resemblance concept, other than to observe and try to find a common feature of this concept. In brief, he tried to look for something but failed to find it, then he claimed that this thing doesn’t exist. It’s very reasonable to consider the possibility that the common feature may exist, but that Wittgenstein didn’t find it, and that if someone else were to find it, then Wittgenstein’s claim would become meaningless. In 1967, Bernard Suits published an article named “What is game?”, which has been welcomed and quoted by many philosophers who try to refute family resemblance. In this article, Suits gave a convincing definition of game: “...activity directed toward bringing about specific state of affairs, using only means permitted by specific rules, where the means permitted by the rules are more limited in scope than they would be in the absence of the rules, and where the sole reason for accepting such limitation is to make possible such activity.”³³ Although this definition is also problematic, at least it pointed out a common feature as a necessary condition of the game, which Colin McGinn’s rephrased in his article “Definition and Family Resemblance”, the feature of “choosing inefficient means of achieving goals”. According to McGinn, “He has

³² Julien, A. On Definitions in Philosophy, 2012. Web

³³ Suits, B. What Is a Game?. 1967, p.156

taught us that the concept game can be defined in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions, without circularity. So, Wittgenstein was quite wrong to declare games indefinable and to deny that they had necessary conditions.”³⁴ In his article “Family Resemblance and Generalization Concerning the Arts”, Maurice Mandelbaum also gave a plausible common feature of games stating that games are “to be of absorbing non-practical interest to either participants or spectators”³⁵. Wittgenstein himself also had already presupposed something common to all games when he said “Consider, for example, the activities that we call ‘games’”, from which we can see that he considered games as activities

Joseph Margolis also pointed out this limitation of family resemblance in his article “Mr. Weitz and the Definition of Art”:

The notion of "family resemblances" is at best an empirical compromise having failed to arrive at a satisfactory definition...But this is to transform an empirical finding (and that a negative one) into the strongest logical objection. The use of "family resemblances" is inevitably a makeshift; it is never logically impossible that we may agree on a suitable definition at a later date.³⁶

If some common feature can be found in the notion of the game, then this may also be the case with the notion of art. If someone were to find a common feature of art (to which many people are still trying and have even succeeded), then it can also be proved that art is not a family resemblance concept.

Some philosophers have even pointed out that the name “family resemblance” is not adequate to the overlapping similarities. A family member is not identified by similarities, but by something genetic. If a girl looks almost identical to me, she won’t be considered as family unless we have a blood relationship, and vice versa, if a girl’s appearance is very different from mine, she will be considered as family as long as we have a blood relationship. Therefore, there are objects that may fall under one concept

³⁴ McGinn, C. Truth by Analysis: Games, Names and Philosophy. 2012, Web. §2, p. 18

³⁵ Mandelbaum, M. Family Resemblances and Generalization Concerning the Arts. 1965, p. 221

³⁶ Margolis, J. Mr. Weitz and the Definition of Art. 1958, p. 92

through a genetic relation, and such a relation is not to be observed from the appearance. In the case of artwork, its essence may also lie deep within the kind of activity that makes it an artwork, or its essence may lie in the reason people create artwork, rather than the surface characters of the objects themselves.

C. Weitz's jump from Novel to Artwork

Weitz's deduction, in which he didn't offer any argument, was already introduced earlier: "What is true of the novel is, I think, true of every sub-concept of art: "tragedy," "comedy," "painting," "opera," etc., of "art" itself."(Weitz, 32).

George Dickie, from whom I get much support, attempted a rejection of Weitz's arguments with considerable success in his article "What is art". He refined Weitz's argument into two parts and refuted them one after the other: the first part is about the open texture of concept; the second part is about artifactuality as a necessary condition of being an artwork, which will be presented in the latter part of this chapter. He named Weitz's first argument "Generalization argument", by which he refers to Weitz's application of "family resemblance" to the concept of art. According to Dickie, Weitz has only proved that "novel" is an open concept, insofar as all of the novels share no common property. In this process Weitz jumped to conclusions twice: 1) Proving that "novel" is an open concept doesn't imply that all the other sub-concepts of artwork are open concepts; 2) "It is possible that all or some of the sub-concepts of art...may lack necessary and sufficient conditions and at the same time that 'work of art' which is the genus of all the sub-concepts can be defined in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions." ³⁷

I would like to give a further analysis of Weitz's claim. For Weitz, in order to prove that what is true of the novel is true of any form of art and of art itself, he must explain such a claim, either by saying that 1) all forms of art share the same properties: they are all family-resemblance concepts, which on the contrary suggests a common feature of art; or 2) by pointing out that these forms are somehow connected or united by a concept in order to prove that what is true for novels should be true for the others, which would then mean that they do have something in common, thereby also

³⁷ Dickie, G. What is Art? An Institutional Analysis, p. 427

contradicting Weitz himself; or 3) by claiming that they are all recognized through similarities just as Wittgenstein had suggested. However, if the novel possesses the feature of family resemblance and another feature B, and if tragedy also possesses the feature B and be recognized as a new member, then it is not obligatory that tragedy possesses the feature of family resemblance, which would mean that tragedy is not necessarily an open concept. Therefore, Weitz's claim is incorrect.

D. Weitz and Kennick jump from artwork to art

Dickie has already touched upon this standing point of Weitz and Kennick, but I still would like to dig further to the root of their mistake here. Dickie is right about the difference between the concept of artwork and its sub-concepts by which he means art forms, but what he considered is still the definition of artwork.

Here occurs the consequence of considering the definition of art as the definition of artwork. The whole chain of categories hidden behind the example of the novel is as following: 1) Novels, the concrete examples of which are "Les misérables" or "The Great Gatsby"; 2) Species of artwork, the paratactic concepts of novel, such as paintings, statues, films; 3) individual artworks, as the products of artistic creation; 4) art, the concept by which we create words like artwork, artist, artistic.

If a non-common property of novels can be found, is it necessarily true also of its paratactic concept and artwork or art? For Dickie, it does not follow, either from novel to statues nor from novel to artwork; for me, it's even more obvious that it's not true from artwork to art.

Supposing all the novels indeed share no common feature but only family resemblance, which means that for the novel there can be no sufficient and necessary definition, and supposing then that it's also true that all the species of artwork share only family resemblance, which would also mean that no sufficient and necessary definitions exist for artwork (according to Weitz, to Kennick's argument is different) -- in such a case, it still can't be derived that there is no definition for art, as artwork is not the only example of art.

Wittgenstein's famous example of Game, compared with Art, is more logically conceivable as a concept with family resemblance (Although I still think a common

character of games is undeniable, in that they are never serious.). The objects that Wittgenstein studied were concrete games: ball games, chess, cards, video games, etc., which are the extensions, or objects denotative of game. However, artworks are not art but are the products of art, neither are artists, nor the artworks and artists together. Another possible way that family resemblance may triumph is to say that different forms of art, like painting, movies, songs, and installations, possess no common character as an essence. But again, forms of art are not art's examples. So, the relationship between Art and artworks, art forms, and artists, is not the same relationship as that between game and tennis game, video game, hide and seek, etc.

Wittgenstein himself never claimed that family resemblance can be applied to all concepts. He didn't offer any methodologies to ensure that a concept is a family resemblance, other than the pure empirical observation that was mentioned above. This is understandable because it seems that there is nothing common between all these examples he gave: game, number, chair, proposition, most philosophical concepts and aesthetic concepts. (Although they share the common feature of family resemblance, it doesn't help to identify them in this way, which would be like identifying red things by saying "All red things are red"). Many studies have been focusing on this very issue and have tried to delimit its scope of application, focusing on what he means by "particularities of a particular class of concepts". In the case of art, with regard to the formulation of a definition in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions, it must be maintained that such a definition can not be derived from artwork to art.

There are two possible ways of explaining why the impossibility of definition can't be derived from artwork to art.

1) Considering that artworks are products of certain specific activities. Although they appear to have no common characteristics, those activities, which haven't been studied too much by philosophers, do have something in common. It is very possible that the essence of art doesn't hide in artworks but rather hides in creative activities. (Imagine that art is a magical box (or boxes), from which anything may jump out. We call these things from this box (or boxes) artworks, and these things appear with great

diversity. Although they seem to have nothing in common, the box is always the same box. No matter what comes out of this box, we call them artworks.) So, while artworks may have nothing in common, creative activities may have some common properties which can help with the discovery of a definition of art.

2) The theory of family resemblance is built on a kind of relationship, insofar as one thing resembles another. If the concept analyzed in this way, then there should be more than one object as its extension. The sun or the moon are not family resemblance concepts as they are unique.

Art may be property of certain objects. Yet, not all kinds of property can simply be judged by “Does this object possess it or not”, but rather by “Does this object have more of XX (this property)” For example, in considering “softness”, does it exist as “this softness” or as “that softness”? We can compare the degree of softness between objects, but only through using a unique criterion that is “easily penetrated, divided, or changed in shape”, in which there is the only one “softness” in the world. Weight, height, and hardness, are all similar. These are unique properties that appear in different things with different degrees, and so the idea of family resemblance cannot be applied to these kinds of concepts. If art can be considered as a property like softness, it means that with anything that is considered as artwork, some will be considered as being more artistic than the others. This comparison is led by a concept which forms a unique standard, and thus it is not suitable for being a family resemblance concept.

The idea of family resemblance has inspired many studies about the concept For example, the prototype theory suggests a graded view of categorization, claiming that some members of a category are more central than others. “Family resemblance is a theory of conceptual distance: more central members of a category are ‘between’ the peripheral members.”³⁸ A famous example is that penguins are much less prototypical birds compared with other species of bird such as robins. Although there are controversial ideas about whether the prototype theory supports the legitimacy of the definition or not, its main original idea describes the phenomenon that the

³⁸ This description is from the entry of the prototype theory of Wikipedia.

examples of certain concepts show different degrees of having the important features of those concepts. This idea is similar to my hypothesis of art as a property of artworks and other art-related concepts (which I will develop in the conclusion). In my opinion, although a penguin doesn't fly, it is still definitely a bird, and these two facts show that being able to fly is not necessary for being a bird. All birds have something genetic, such as a specific structure of some parts of their skeleton, which determines that they necessarily and sufficiently belong to one genus, while at the same time they may lack of some specific organs of other categories of animal. Similarly, although some objects are more typical of artwork than others, a necessary and sufficient definition is still possible.

4. The methodological difficulty of verification and falsification

Another powerful strike made by Weitz concerns the difficulty of verifying the definitions.

This is a big problem for all definitions of art. However, Weitz himself didn't realize its importance as he only mentioned it in short, and so he didn't place much emphasis on this point. The only paragraph related to this problem is the following:

Then there is a different sort of difficulty. As real definitions, these theories are supposed to be factual reports on art. If they are, may we not ask, Are they empirical and open to verification or falsification? For example, what would confirm or disconfirm the theory that art is significant form or embodiment of emotion or creative synthesis of images? There does not even seem to be a hint of the kind of evidence which might be forthcoming to test these theories; and indeed one wonders if they are perhaps honorific definitions of "art," that is, proposed re-definitions in terms of some chosen conditions for applying the concept of art, and not true or false reports on the essential properties of art at all. ³⁹

³⁹ Weitz, M. The role of theory in aesthetics, 1956, p. 30

This paragraph implies something fatal to all attempts to give a definition of art which can stand the test. But since Weitz himself didn't notice its power, he didn't provide further explanations. There are several places which need to be further clarified:

1) In the sentence "As real definitions, their theories are supposed to be factual reports on art." "These theories" refers to the theories that he mentioned in the former paragraphs. These theories such as formalism, emotionalism, or organicism, give definitions in the classical sense, which means that they identify certain properties as necessary and sufficient conditions of being art.

2) Within the same sentence, what he means by "factual reports on art" is not explained. By connecting this phrase with the last sentence of this paragraph "... and not true or false reports on the essential properties of art..", it is most likely that what he means is that these definitions are supposed to be true definitions, which fit with the reality of art.

3) By asking "Are they empirical and open to verification or falsification?" he suggested two kinds of results that can be derived from testing a definition. Both kinds of results (what would confirm or disconfirm the theory...) can be understood from the sentence as follows: verification requires that the result of the test confirms that the definition is "factual reports on art", and is thereby a true definition; falsification means that the result disconfirms the definition, thereby proving that it's a false definition.

4) "There does not even seem to be a hint of the kind of evidence which might be forthcoming to test these theories." Here he claims that evidence is needed to test these definitions, but he doesn't find such evidence. In other words, he doesn't see how to test these definitions. I think he maybe means that "evidence is needed to be shown as a result of testing the definition in a certain way to make the judgment that whether this definition is true or false." (what type of data, what kind of things to look for)

5) (...one wonders if they are perhaps honorific definitions of "art," that is, proposed re-definitions in terms of some chosen conditions for applying the concept

of art, and not true or false reports on the essential properties of art at all.) Following the claim explained above, he considered the existing definitions which are not properly tested as being true or false, as the decisions made by aestheticians which have no truth-value.

In conclusion, Weitz's claim in that paragraph can be expressed briefly in this way: there seems no possible way to test the given definitions, in order to judge whether they are true or false.

This claim is not only problematic with regard to verification or falsification, but is also problematic with regard to the process of discovery of the definition of art, since both verification and falsification play important roles in the process of (discovery) investigation. Although Weitz explained as a further criticism that the definitions he listed can never be proved to be true, he didn't realize the importance of this criticism, and therefore, did not propose that this also creates difficulty for forming a true definition, which could have supported his proposition that a definition of art is impossible.

How this claim creates difficulty for the investigation of the definition is as follows:

The process involved in seeking a classical definition of art is to collect as many of the artworks as possible which are generally admitted or recognized as artworks, and then to pick out the common properties, or as Weitz said, the "necessary and sufficient properties" among all their characteristics. Since it's very difficult to compare all the potential examples at the same time, the investigator always begins from observing a relatively smaller group of examples. After finding a plausible common property, the investigator then tests whether it is really a common property or not. He will then include other examples which were not originally in his former collection, to see whether these new examples share this property or not. If they all share this property, then the property is verified as a necessary condition; if not, it is falsified. (He may be also try to pick up some examples which are not considered as artwork in order to see whether they share this property or not. If one of them does,

then the property is a necessary but not sufficient condition; if none of them do then maybe it is both a necessary and sufficient condition.)

Similarly, rejections of the definitions are often made through falsification using examples which are also generally admitted as artworks but do not possess the characteristics within the given definitions.

So far, it seems that there is a way of testing a definition, which proves that Weitz's claim is wrong. However, whether this way (or strategy) is valid is debatable. If it's not valid, then Weitz's proposition is still reasonable.

The problem appears when the investigator chooses examples among which he is supposed to abstract some defining properties of art. He would start by gathering many examples which are very typical and considered as artwork by almost everyone. But later, he still has to consider the examples about which people have a different opinion. What's even worse, and worst only to the investigation of art, is that the artists themselves consciously create those examples which won't fit with any existing theories (which is called "suicide of art") in order to challenge the definitions and to embarrass the attempt to give a true definition. This phenomenon creates many examples which people have conflicting opinions about, thus making it more difficult for the investigators of art to select their examples. This unfortunate accident has never happened to the process of seeking the essence or definition of game, society, science, nature, philosophy, etc.

Suppose the investigator is faced with an object, which some people say is an artwork and other people say it is not, with neither opinion being overwhelming. Should he take this object into consideration to test his former proposal of definition? How would he make this decision? There are two possible reactions: 1) to insist on the original definition, and by applying this definition a judgment is made about whether this specific example is artwork or not. 2) to further investigate the examples with which there is disagreement in order to find out whether they should be included, and if they are generally considered as artwork then he will modify the definition to give a factual report of art.

The investigator who has the first attitude is trying to give a normative definition.

Faced with examples wherein there are a lot of disagreements, he uses his definition to test them, and uses the results of such testing to confirm or disconfirm his definition. This seems like a vicious circle. For the investigator himself, this test is not valid, as Weitz had implied. However, it is still valid for other people who try to reject this definition.

The investigator who has the second attitude is trying to give a descriptive definition. As such, the testing of debatable examples works very well for him in getting closer and closer to the factual report of art. (But the further investigation, which is to decide whether certain examples are generally considered as art or not, requires some sociological research, which is difficult to achieve and requires cooperation between disciplines.)

Thus, no matter what the personal attitude of the investigator is, this way of testing a definition which can verify or falsify it, leads to more success in the investigation as descriptive research.

Here the difficulty is to find a criterion of “generally admitted artworks”. It is to answer why the crucial steps of defining and verifying all depend on the “generally admitted” criterion, or in other words, why they depend on existing judgments which have already been made by the linguistic community; and until now it seems that there is no other way to achieve the same goal. If no other satisfactory approach can be found, then it is plausible that a definition will depend on the reality of how people in this linguistic community use it and understand it. That is to say, the meaning or definition will be decided by the whole society which is using this language, which is the only existing and valid way to agree upon a definition. Thus, it seems that being “generally admitted” is an important necessary characteristic of being a true “definition” of a concept. The only problem is that when faced with conflicting judgments upon the same example, how should we decide whether it should be included. Although it does not sound very practical, a possible way would be to send questionnaires to more people and then to take the side more often agreed upon, which would maybe need cooperation between philosophy and sociology.

This hypothesis may find great support from Ferdinand de Saussure, who talked

much about the invariability and variability of language signs in “Cours de linguistique générale”⁴⁰. Proposing these two properties of language, which was controversial, his theory shows one way to solve two problems that lie on our path toward the definition of art: invariability, which serves as an explanation of “generally considered”; variability, which helps to solve another problem which will be explained in the latter part.

The first one, invariability, explains to some extent how a definition of art or any other concept is possible, and where to find such definitions. According to Saussure, every single corner of one language is an inheritance from the past, establishing a contrast between concepts and sound patterns. It’s very difficult to entirely change the meanings of its vocabularies, and almost impossible to change its grammar, as languages are taught and passed down from generation to generation. According to Saussure, generations are not vertical like the drawers of a cabinet, but rather they are overriding and overlapping. This is true on account of all the efforts we made from childhood to learn our mother tongue, or for learning foreign languages in order to communicate with people from other linguistic communities. We are never free to choose whatever we want to express, nor can we point at a cat insisting on calling it a dog. To Saussure, language is similar to a contract, but not simply as a contract that can be established, revised or overturned at any time. Language, including its grammar and vocabulary, cannot be decided or changed by any individual or linguistic community. Although Saussure mentioned that the creation of new words is much easier than changing the grammar, he also indicated that as long as new terms or new ways of application are invented, spread, and accepted, the original meaning will have been twisted, and as such there’s no way to control or withdraw it.

So, if any concept has been used all over the world for many years, its meaning or definition must be relatively stable as no one can simply decide to change it with self-assertion; and its meaning is supposed to be found in the common usage which is decided and generally admitted by its users as a whole. This theory corresponds to the fact that a definition is dependent not on the investigator alone, but rather on the

⁴⁰ These two concepts are mainly introduced in part one, chapter 2 of “Course in general linguistics”.

decision that is somehow made by the linguistic community as a whole.

5. The inductive conclusion from historical failures

In addition to the theory of family resemblance, both Weitz and Kennick place great emphasis on the defeated definitions of art in history. Weitz presents six art theories from the past that had once offered definitions of art: formalism, emotionalism, intuitionism, organicism, voluntarism, intellectualism. He then indicates that none of these definitions had considered correctly the property of artworks, with some of them being too broad (necessary but not sufficient definition), and some of them being too narrow.

All diagrams such as charts and maps can be included in artworks according to the Formalism definition, thus the definition is too broad; Emotionalism's definition includes pure emotional expression in daily life like crying and laughing; Intuitionist's definition made good progress with art being identified as creative cognitive and spiritual acts, but this is also too broad in that it includes philosophy and even scientific invention; Organicist's definition has the same problem as formalism definition; Voluntarist's definition claims that art is the provision of satisfaction through the imagination, social significance and harmony, which according to Weitz rest on dubious principles, for if harmony and social significance are not necessary properties of artwork, then the definition is too narrow.

It is true that these definitions which had been rejected one after another throughout the history of aesthetics are not so convincing; and throughout this history, there have been more failed definitions of art than those that Weitz has listed. But from these failures, Weitz derived the conclusion that a satisfactory definition of art will never come to us in the future. Kennick arrived at a similar conclusion by using other examples of defeated definitions.

Can this list of failures in the past be proof of their prediction? Here, they simply committed a mistake of inductive reasoning. The inductive conclusions are always only provisionally true, in that they will be refuted once any counterexample appears.

Human history has witnessed numerous great inventions and discoveries, which were once considered impossible. Seeking the definition of a certain concept is a philosophical task; if someone claims that it's impossible, this impossibility should be logically deduced, but not empirically inducted. Presenting its failures can only show the difficulty of this task, not the impossibility.

Faced with so many defeated definitions, what we should not do is to give up and claim that it's impossible. Instead, what we should do is find the reason why they have been defeated and to then overcome the difficulty.

The reason behind all the failures and imperfections of the existing definitions is unraveled by Saussure with another important characteristic of language: variability. (Which was mentioned together with invariability in the former part.)

I found nothing surprising about this proposition, as we all have more or less learned or have been through the evolution of certain words, especially within this era where new utterance and words are created that expand rapidly through the internet. Throughout history, the meanings of many words have changed, and art is well known as one of them, insofar as thousands of years ago it had meant the technique and skill of a craftsman or artisan, who did creative artwork from the perspective of our time.

The failed examples of the definition of art appeared mostly within the last two centuries, an era in which art that has had great revolutions. Many things which had not been called artwork previously, had become artworks. This means that how people were using this term had changed, and thus the definition of art also changed. As this process happened too fast and with an enormous number of new examples of artwork, it was very difficult for philosophers to catch up with such an explosion of new art phenomenon. That is why these definitions are relatively inadequate and easily refuted. On the other hand, with regard to the theory of mimesis which had been dominant for a long time, it's possible that this definition of art is true for its own time. Nevertheless, it no longer fits the reality of art, which has been changed along with the revolution of artists and of people's way of seeing the world, and so it is no longer valid.

Admitting that the definition of art has changed, and so that it can be changed, I would also like to admit that maybe it will change again in the future. Contrary to this, according to Danto in the “The end of art”, the revolution of art is actually reaching its limit, as he speculated that artists have already tried every possible way to produce their works, and that everything can be artwork now. Thus, for Danto, the definition of art won’t change in the future as there will be no new types of examples to consider. It seems to me too early to make this conclusion. For example, the art of olfactory sensation hasn’t been well explored; since folk handicraft is in the process of becoming less satisfied with weaving or embroidery, it’s becoming more and more artistic and at the same time is moving further away from its practical value. It won’t be enough to study only the artworks exhibited in the museum and the artists who take up artistic creation as a profession. In the field of art new phenomenon is still emerging, although the progress is slowing down. But the changing process has indeed reached a relatively stable period, and accordingly, it is now time to formulate a satisfactory definition of art by studying as much of the reality of the existing art world as is possible.

6. Weitz’s critics about the definitions as valuations

Other than the inadequacy of existing definitions, Weitz also proposed another problem. He claimed that most of the existing definitions of art are more or less deceitful, as the definitions that they offer as criteria to recognize an artwork (What he called real definition), are actually criteria to evaluate artwork, or to judge whether an artwork is good (What he called honorific definition).

He makes this argument by presenting two ordinary usages of the term “art”: (1) descriptive and (2) evaluative, which means that sometimes we use this term when we recognize something as a “work of art”; sometimes we call something a “work of art” to praise its excellence from some aspect. He tried to prove that neither these two usages functions in a way that depends on some definition in the form of necessary and sufficient conditions, as the theorists had supposed. In terms of the first usage (1),

as always, he repeated that there are no common properties but rather that there are strands of similarities. (It is strange that here he admitted that artworks can be recognized by some properties which he called “criteria of recognition”, such as artifactuality and ingenuity; while other properties are adventitious like the satisfaction of wishes and the expression of motion. It is difficult to understand why some properties are more important than others without statistical data, unless he considered some properties as being more essential than others, which contradicts his anti-essentialism.) For the second usage (2), he refers to the honorific definitions which are formulated in terms of some evaluative properties, for example, “successful harmonization”. “On such a view, to say “X is a work of art” is (1) to say something which is taken to mean “X is a successful harmonization” (e.g., “Art is significant form”) or (2) to say something praiseworthy on the basis of its successful harmonization. Theorists are never clear whether it is (1) or (2) which is being put forward.”⁴¹ He claimed that for those definitions “the criterion of evaluation is converted into a criterion of recognition”, which leads to the insignificance of aesthetical judgments like “This is an artwork is not in harmony”. Using the properties of praise as definition, stops the attempt of any evaluation in terms of those properties, which according to him is paradoxical. Therefore, he confirmed that these honorific definitions serve better as the criterion of evaluation, rather than as true definitions based on necessary and sufficient conditions.

Moreover, in these paragraphs about the two usages of “work of art”, Weitz claims that even artificiality is not a necessary condition, by introducing his example “This piece of driftwood is a lovely piece of sculpture.”. According to him, as sculpture is not an evaluative term, this phrase is not an evaluation but is instead a recognition. Although the piece of driftwood is not artificial, if someone recognizes it as artwork, then it still should be considered as an artwork, which leads to the conclusion that artificiality is not a necessary condition of being an artwork.

According to Dickie, this is Weitz’s second mistake, which he called the “Classification argument”. He also admits that there are two usages of the term “work

⁴¹ Weitz, M. The role of theory in aesthetics, 1956, p. 34

of art”, as Weitz had claimed. “I thought it sufficient to point out that there are two senses of ‘work of art’, an evaluative sense and a classificatory one; Weitz himself distinguishes these in his article as the evaluative and the descriptive senses of art.”⁴² However, he points out that this distinction won’t lead to the conclusion that artificiality is not a necessary condition, because he considers the statement “This piece of driftwood is a lovely piece of sculpture.” as still an evaluative use of artwork rather than a recognition of artwork. “Weitz would have to show that ‘sculpture’ is being used in the sentence in question in the classificatory sense, and this he makes no attempt to. My argument assumed that once the distinction is made, it is obvious that ‘sculpture’ is here being used in the evaluative sense.”⁴³

Intuitively, I agree with Dickie, but he could only prove that it’s difficult to say whether the usage is evaluative or descriptive. Dickie was also aware of this problem so he introduced the argument of another philosopher, Richard Sclafani, who developed for the driftwood example a third usage of “work of art” which was different from both the classificatory and evaluative usages. Being named “derivative sense”, it implies the reasoned conclusion that the driftwood truly shares many common properties with a sculpture. Sclafani claims that in the driftwood case, “it is a sculpture” indicates two of the three directions of meaning: the derivative one and the evaluative one. It means, on the one hand, that the driftwood resembles some paradigm artwork, which is the derivation of the person who is speaking as he finds some properties common between the driftwood and paradigm artworks; on the other hand, those properties appear to be valuable in his eyes, which leads to an evaluative judgment. Then, of course, according to the traditional definition of necessary and sufficient conditions, sharing some of the common properties of artwork is necessary but not sufficient condition of being artwork, thus these two usages of “artwork” do not imply a definition. From this Dickie criticized that it would be wrong to think that artifactuality isn’t a necessary condition of being artwork just because we use the term to praise something non-artificial.

⁴² Dickie, G. *What is Art? An Institutional Analysis*, p. 428

⁴³ *Ibid*, p. 428

I also don't agree that we identify something as artwork when we praise it by calling it a "work of art" or a "piece of art". Furthermore, I want to add that it's more likely we are praising something by using "work of art" in a metaphorical way. For example, in the phrase "it's a great work of art by mother nature", "work of art" is a metaphor in reference to something such as a divine landscape, just as "mother" as a metaphor is a reference to its creator. When the two usages suggested by Sclafani in this kind of phrase work together, it is very possible to show the effects of emphasizing those valuable properties which these two things share, even though they fall into different categories. In the example of a landscape, it's obvious that mountains or rivers are not paintings, but they are just as beautiful or perfect as paintings are; here the beauty and perfectness of the landscape are emphasized. That's exactly how metaphor works to emphasize something.

So, although Weitz is right about the fact of the multiple usages of terms like "work of art" or "sculpture", they still don't count for the true inquiry of the definition of artwork, let alone of art.

7. Kennick's consideration that a definition of art is not necessary

In Kennick's article, he was not only satisfied with proving that a definition of art is impossible, but also wished to prove that a definition of art is not necessary. As he placed much emphasis on this argument, he began with claiming that since people know how to use the word "art", even though they are not able to form a definition, they know what art is. Other than applying the theory of family resemblance, he also tried to stop us from seeking the definition of art by presenting his two thought experiments.

1) A definition of art is not necessary because people know it well

Through the thought experiment that asks "What is helium", he divides two kinds of inquiry into definitions corresponding to two kinds of concepts. By looking the word up in a dictionary or by asking some experts, one can surely figure out "What is

helium”; but a dictionary won’t help if someone asks “What is space” or “What is art”. Kennick calls the latter species “philosophical questions”, for these inquiries seek the nature of the concept, or namely, it’s essence. The form of essence is definition; the purpose of forming a definition or of seeking the essence of a noun, is to differentiate and recognize it from all the other things; in the case of art, aestheticians have always expected to find a definition of art, by which we could pick out all the works of art from all other objects. In contrast to this, Kennick’s opinion is that we can recognize artworks from other things without the help of a definition.

Next comes Kennick’s famous thought experiment of “Warehouse”. This experiment is used to explain his idea that although people are capable of recognizing artworks, they are not able to form a statement to explain their way of recognition, and so since one can’t answer “what is art”, then there is no need to form a definition of it. It is somehow a strange claim, and his argument is not very logical. He imagined that in a warehouse which is full of thousands of objects, a man can pick out all the artworks: “He will be able to do this with reasonable success.”⁴⁴ But let’s imagine such a scenario in a detailed way. As a teaser I won’t put something like the Fountain of Duchamp into the warehouse; but instead will include such things as a film post or sheet with wonderful design, a model of a palace with moderate skills, a piece of CD, ancient accessories of aboriginal people, and an unromantic photo of the Mona Lisa hanging on the wall... all of these ordinary objects would be terribly puzzling for this unlucky man in the warehouse. Similarly, we can create another game, which is to give this man several bottles filled up with different transparent gas. It’s difficult for ordinary people to recognize which bottle contains helium; if he knows the way to test them in order to make his judgment, that would mean that he knows “what is helium”, or in other words, it would mean he must have learned the definition of helium. Without an acquirement of the definition of artworks or of helium, he can neither answer the question, nor can he pick the right objects and bottles to win this game. Unfortunately, those who conduct aesthetic research or think of this issue are all stuck in the warehouse; our real world is a warehouse. This detailed thought experiment

⁴⁴ Kennick, W. Does traditional aesthetics rest on a mistake, 1958, p. 321

reverses Kennick's conclusion: the ability to recognize something is dependent on the knowledge of its definition.

It also seems to me that the difference between art and helium isn't explained properly; nor is his example of "helium" a good reference. Ignoring the mess made by not distinguishing art and work of art, looking up the two words "art"(or work of art) and "helium" in the dictionary can have the same results: although it's written strictly scientifically "a chemical element with symbol He and atomic number 2...etc.", it's highly possible that the reader will still have no idea about what helium is. This person could only accept the explanation without understanding it if he is not well acquainted with chemistry. In this aspect, helium is very similar to art. Of course, helium and art are no doubt two very different concepts, but they are not different in terms of it being possible for them to be defined. Both of them can have a definition in the form of language, and neither of them can be correctly recognized without these definitions.

Thus, it can be seen that those two experiments do not help Kennick very much, nor did he give more complete arguments to justify his proposition.

2) A definition of art is not necessary to make art critics

For Kennick, in addition to the goose chase of a non-existing definition, another mistake made by aesthetic theories in the past is about art critics. He claimed that aestheticians presuppose the existence of definition mostly to form the criterion of art critics, and that this effort also is doomed to fail.

He cited Harold Osborne's proposition as a typical view of considering art critics as being dependent on the definition or essence of art: "A theory of the nature of artistic excellence is implicit in every critical assertion..."⁴⁵ However, this is not an appropriate example. Osborne used the term "nature of artistic excellence", not the nature of art or artwork. Artistic excellence here strictly means the good value of artworks which is the target of evaluation or critics, and so there's nothing of what Kennick had suggested in Osborne's statement.

⁴⁵ Kennick W. (p. 326) cites Osborn, H. *Aesthetics and Criticism*. 1955, p. 3

In related paragraphs, Kennick also claimed that the criterion of the evaluation of art is not constant. He took Osborne's example of "verisimilitude" which Osborne considered as a characteristic that is neither necessary to the definition of work of art, nor to the criterion of being a good work of art in modern art. According to Osborne, as this property occurs only in some artworks, it cannot be used as a universal criterion of the judgment of either recognition or evaluation. Kennick doesn't agree with this point of view, for according to him the criterion of art critics varies from occasion to occasion, thus "verisimilitude" on some occasions is a criterion of art evaluation. A good quality that appears in this work of art doesn't have to be possessed by another excellent work of art, and vice versa. So, people can admire different works from different aspects, no matter whether the characteristics that are praised are universal to all works of art or not.

However, although he is right that the criterion of art evaluation is not dependent on the definition, this only proves that the criterion of art critics is not universal to all artworks, and is related to neither the necessity nor the possibility of seeking the definition of art. Likewise, although judging whether a person is good or bad is difficult, judging whether a creature is human or not is still possible and necessary.

Concerning this issue of the criterion of evaluation, he also pointed out another difficulty of art evaluation: art has no specific function or purpose. He analyzed the relationship between the function of an object and the criterion of evaluation which is in accordance with its function, and then concluded that different objects have a relevant structure of purpose by which we evaluate them; if there are kinds of objects that are not made for a specific purpose, it's difficult to evaluate them through a constant criterion.

He gives four examples: knife, apple, mathematician, and artwork. People judge a knife with several characteristics in relation to its function of cutting things; therefore, the criterion of judging a knife is sharpness, sturdiness, durability, etc. He calls this kind of word functional. For Kennick, the term "apple" or "mathematician" is not functional. It is understandable that a mathematician has no constant purpose as he is a man; but it seems to me very strange that Kennick considers the word apple as

non-functional, as Kennick himself mentioned that there are at least two functions of an apple: we use them as decorations, and we eat them. Why would a knife and an apple, in this sense, be different? He also claimed that artworks have no purpose, or no function, and thus that it's difficult to evaluate artworks according to their function.

I would say that from this perspective, the four examples are not so different. Firstly, claiming that art has no purpose is as wrong as claiming that art has no definition, insofar as it's empirically derived rather than logically deduced. Art has its specific function, although there are different ideas about what the function or functions are. There are many possible candidates of its function such as entertainment, cultivation, documentation, expression of ideas, etc. Secondly, it is possible that the function of one object is always multiple. For instance, a very beautiful silver knife with elegant patterns may have more than one function: to cut things, to make our dinner table more beautiful, to make us eat more delightfully, or to display the wealth and nobleness of the family. It's the same with an apple: when we want to eat an apple, we want it to taste sweet; when we use it to decorate the Christmas tree we want it to be red and round. It is very indicative that Kennick suggests that the criterion of evaluation depends on the function, but in contrast to his further suggestion, this kind of evaluation is also suitable for art.

Moreover, even if it is true that the criterion of art evaluation does not depend on the definition of art, the evaluation itself still needs the premise that the object evaluated is an artwork, thus the evaluation is still somehow dependent on the definition. Without knowing what is evaluated, the critics or the evaluation means nothing. If someone says "this is excellent, beautiful" and at the same time claims that he is making an evaluation, it is inevitable that he presupposes the object he evaluated is an artwork. So it is certain that the classification implies a definition, or at least implies a definition that helps to ensure that we are evaluating artwork, rather than evaluating a man, or wine, or a playground.

8. Think outside the box: other forms of definition

Throughout all of these arguments up until now, a standard definition is considered always to be in the form of sufficient and necessary definitions. With that being the case, what Weitz stands for, is that no sufficient and necessary conditions of being artwork has been found, and therefore that no definition of artwork can be found.

This classical form of definition is often described as the definition of genus and differential. The definition is formulated through finding a category as genus, plus the difference which distinguishes this concept as a species from all of the other things that are under the same genus. Although I already tried to prove that this kind of definition is logically possible, it is also true that it's difficult, in the case of both art and artwork. The genus and differentia definition suits better the concepts upon which the genus is easily identified. For example, to define "tea" we can easily think of "tea is a kind of drink". But for art, its genus is not clear, and it's debatable whether art is an ideology, a discipline or a domain; nor is it clear for artwork, for artwork is not a species of art, but rather is a related concept of art. The same is true for an artist. The concrete individuals of art are not settled; the relationship between artwork and art is different from that between book and every concrete book, or between a cat and all the cats including my fluffy pet.

It would seem that to find the definition of art and artwork, maybe a genus and differentia definition is not the right choice. The solution may appear in two ways: to find another form of necessary and sufficient conditions that is not of genus and differentia, or to find a brand-new form of definition which is not dependent on necessary and sufficient conditions. Fortunately, after all these years of development in theories about the definition, there seems to exist more possibilities for forms of definition.

Definitions are made in order to understand the meaning of a term so that people can use such terms correctly to thereby engage in dialogues without misunderstanding. There are many possible ways to achieve this goal.

For example, I believe I know the definition of the rabbit, but not in the form of language, as I can distinguish a rabbit from other things according to some distinct characteristics of its appearance. These characteristics are working as defining characteristics, but it is difficult to formulate them into statements. Yet we are all familiar with the appearance of rabbits, for as we are told over and over during our childhood when we see the pictures or toy of rabbit or a real rabbit that it is a rabbit, we come to learn what rabbits look like. There is no other creature that looks like a rabbit from the perspective of the appearance. Although its characteristics can be described by saying “Its ears are as long as its head and its foot length is from...”, we don’t have to learn it in this way; we learn it by seeing. Thus, a definition is given without being formulated into a statement. Another example, I used to explain the concept of “first-line cities” in China to a French sociologist. There is no necessity to explain its characteristics, but just to give a list: “Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou”, as it is agreed all over China for the moment that first-line cities include only these three cities. Moreover, according to the meaning of “definition” in the dictionary and encyclopedia, other than the forms of definition mentioned above, there are also contextual definitions, theoretical definitions, inductive definitions, prescriptive definitions, etc., which can all help people to find out and understand a term in different ways.

Analytical Philosopher Arthur Pap drafted a very brief introduction of his taxonomy of the existing forms of definition, in which he absorbed a certain classification made by Irving Copi. According to Pap, definitions can be classified into two perspectives: epistemological definition and formal definition. From the former, definitions can be classified into stipulative ones and propositional ones. From the latter, definitions can be classified into “definition by examples” which is denotative (the example of rabbit), and “general definition” which consists of several sub-species, including contextual definitions, disjunctive definitions, synonym definitions (the example of the first-line cities) other than the “genus and differentia” definitions.

Among all these forms, contextual definitions, which can be operational or not, is

very referential to the definition of artwork. A concept has no explicit meaning until it is put into a phrase or a context, for example, “all” and “or” are concepts that can only be defined with context; some concepts can be (but not necessarily have to be) explained or defined in the form of conceptual definition. An operational definition defines something with a certain operation in which the target concept participates (here the operation is working as the context). Nowadays, the operational definition has been accepted and widely used in science research and in sociology. For example, bread is the product after operation A, B, C...using the material a, b, c...as long as the operation is certain, the result is certain, which means that it is a relatively stable definition. No matter how ugly the bread looks, how bad it tastes, or if it turns out so hard that you use it to break somebody’s head, or you used it as stepping-stone as did the “The Girl Who Trod on the Loaf”, or if you put it in the museum and claim that it is art... Nothing would change the fact that: according to this definition this object is always bread. As we can see, a contextual definition always contains a certain relationship between the target concept and concepts which the context consists of, in the case of an operational definition, the target concept participates in the operation.

It is very appropriate to consider the possibility of defining artworks as a result of some specific operations, so-called art activities or art practice. It explains the most disputable artworks and the huge variety of objects which are all considered as artworks because the defining element of being artwork is not some presented property, but a certain kind of action previously operated. The operation decides nothing fixed of the product, except for the name of its products. It corresponds to exactly some conceptual artworks: the artist just chose something and decided to exhibit it to the public as artwork; this operation itself makes these objects artworks. This definition of artwork depends on the definition of artistic activities, so it is important to define artistic activities and to reveal their procedure-product relationship with artwork; then to study whether the essence of art lies in art activities. It can be supposed that only if the operation or the action is artistic then the products (whatever the product is, like the ready-made of Duchamp and Warhol, or a painting of my 11 years old niece) can all be reasonably considered as artwork. Once the essence of art

and art activities are clarified, the definition of artworks will also become very clear using as the reference to art.

There are conflicting ideas about whether the operational definition involve necessary and sufficient conditions. For me, if the only way or ways of getting the product is described, then this form of definition still involves necessary and sufficient conditions. If the only way of producing artwork is by some specific kind of operation (art creation), and at the same time any product of this kind of operation can be called artwork, then the operational definition of artwork is still in the form of necessary and sufficient conditions.

Conclusion

From the debate above, the following arguments of the negative side have been rejected: 1) A definition of art is impossible because art is an open concept and shares only “family resemblance” in between. 2) A definition of art is impossible because there is no way to test whether it is true or false. 3) A definition of art will never be found because all the definitions that were given are not good. 4) Some existing definitions are not definitions of artwork but are instead a criterion of good artwork. 5) Even artifactuality is not a necessary condition of being an artwork. 6) There’s no need to form a definition because everyone knows well enough how to recognize artworks from other objects. 7) There’s no need to form a definition of art in order to make art critics.

On the other hand, in addition to the refutation of the arguments above, three arguments of the positive side have been established: 1) A satisfactory definition of art hasn’t come about because most of the investigators look only into artworks and neglect artists and art activities. 2) Many other conflicts and difficulties (including family resemblance) in the inquiry are also caused by this misunderstanding of the relationship between artwork and art. 3) Even if a definition in the form of sufficient and necessary conditions cannot be proposed, there are other possible ways to give a definition.

Also, four tasks for the later investigation have been pointed out: 1) In order to elaborate the definition of art, all the employments of the concept must be observed and analyzed, including artwork, artist, and art activities. 2) In order to find the definition of art, the function of art should be investigated. 3) As the meaning of one concept is changeable but relatively stable for a period of history, the investigation must be limited within contemporary art (Not “contemporary art” as artworks expressed in a modern or avant-garde way, but as including all the art which exist and are admitted and performed today). 4) Having suggested a definition, some sociological strategies might be needed in order to test it.

After all, even though most of the challenges of the negative side are untenable, we have to admit that to define art is extraordinarily difficult. But how can we say that to define any concept is easy? Like Saussure suggested, a “balance between the tradition handed down and the society’s freedom of action” must be found, and it requires not only playing the game of concepts in the philosophers’ armchair, but also requires deeper experience and closer observation of the “art world”. More importantly, it also requires great concern with what other people are thinking and doing, and how they are confused about it, which makes this “mission impossible” most worth trying.

Chapter III:

Arthur Danto's Definition of Art

“But even if we know who she was, we don't know who she was, do we?”

-Miss Marple, 4h50 from Paddington

Arthur Danto, the famous American art critic and philosopher of art who was very active in both these two fields in the later 20th Century, had been keeping his eye on the problems of contemporary art for his whole life, and had been concerned with the definition of art, the interpretation of artwork, the future development of art, etc. His works about art have continually drawn the attention of aestheticians and have had a great impact on many related studies until today. He corresponded with many other aestheticians, like George Dickie, Joseph Margolis, and David Carrier on discussing, developing, and clarifying his theory of art.

Besides being a scholar of philosophy, he had also been working as the president of the American Philosophical Association and the president of the American Society for Aesthetics, was also a member of American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and was a long-time art critic for the Nation magazine. He even used to be a successful artist of woodcut himself in his early years. This cross-over, on the one hand, has made his theory more widely introduced and spread in the art circle; on the other hand, more importantly, it has made his theory more picturesquely formulated, and more accorded with the reality of art. He was extremely good at giving appropriate examples, which are often taken from the American pop artists such as Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, Robert Rauschenberg, or other representative figures in the history of contemporary art, in order to illustrate his arguments with exquisite art analysis. But at the same time, this background also has made his philosophical arguments become tangled with his art critics, with the result that the reading of his writings and the understanding of his theory require more acquaintance of art history. But of course, how could one understand art and philosophy of art, without knowing the history of

this most human activity on earth?

Danto's art theory was inspired by the emergence of several iconic revolutionary works which he witnessed in the history of contemporary art (including the artistic events, the discussions, and disputations aroused by them). The consequence of the following trend led by these marvelous works is that many of the classical concepts of art were discarded. As mentioned in the last two chapters, philosophers have been putting great effort to save this situation, either to propose new definitions of art to fit in with the new phenomena of art, or to prove that art is a concept which cannot be defined. Being a part of this polemics, Danto stands his ground: he insists that art can be defined and has made his great attribute, his definition of art.

The core question of Danto's concern, is how to identify an artwork from an object while they have the same appearance (or sound, or movement), what makes an object, a composition of materials into an artwork while it wasn't artwork before? Under the context of contemporary art, these are the concrete formulations of the question "what is art", as it seems that anything could be art today, which was not the case in the classical period of art. Danto was fully aware of this peculiarity, that the art and non-art are sometimes indistinguishable, thus his definition is designated on resolving this problem.

According to a very accurate and comprehensive summary of Noël Carroll, Danto's suggestion is that:

Something is a work of art if and only if it has a subject about which it projects some attitude or point of view (has a style) by means of rhetorical ellipsis (generally metaphorical), which ellipsis, in turn, engages audience participation in filling in what is missing(interpretation).⁴⁶

In my interpretation of Danto's theory, I would like to adopt this structure, to which I will add and emphasize some crucial concepts of this definition, which Danto elaborated most carefully in his theory: representation, style, expression, rhetorical ellipsis, metaphor, style matrix, and artworld:

⁴⁶ Carroll, N. "Essence, Expression, and History: Arthur Danto's Philosophy of Art," in M. Rollins (ed.), *Danto and His Critics*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1993, p80.

Something is a work of art if and only if (i) it has a subject, which means it is **about** or is of something –i.e., is a **representation**; (ii) about this subject, it projects some attitude or point of view as the artist's **style** of **expression**, (iii) by means of **rhetorical ellipsis** (usually **metaphorical**), which engages audience's participation in filling in what is missing to interpret the work, and (iv) where the work in question and the interpretations thereof require an art historical context, which is presented as the so-called "**artworld**" composed in the form of a "**style matrix**".

The complements to Carroll's summary are to show how Danto's key concepts explained in his works are one to one correspond to every part of his definition of art. I will introduce them one by one then to see how they progressively formed a relatively accurate definition of art.

1. Works of art and mere real things

1) The defining property of art can not be captured by mere observation

The book in which Danto presents his definition of art, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*, is named after an imaginary book written by the heroine in the fiction *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* by Muriel Spark in 1961. The book's name itself implies a neat metaphor for contemporary art: like the sudden transfiguration of Jesus from the appearance of an ordinary man to the glorious son of God in front of his disciples, ordinary objects, from many different origins, can nowadays be transfigured into artworks through some mysterious power, without changing their appearances. Though I'm not a Christian, I can still imagine the attractive, magical moment of this transfiguration: "His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light." (Matthew 17:2), and yet he still remains the same person, his face looks the same and his clothes are white as before. It is only that something had happened that made him glow and look divine. This is exactly what's happening when we notice that something is a piece of art and start to (or try to) admire it, while before its identity is revealed, it looks no more than a bunch of junk, or a urinal, or soapboxes. Something behind this transfiguration must be the key to the definition of art, by which we can

tell artworks from other things (what Danto called “mere real things”). This differentiation must be clarified in order to form a definition of art: what’s the essential difference between works of art and mere real things? In other words, how do mere real things become works of art?

On this issue, Danto was very specialized in conducting extremely helpful mind experiments. The book *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* begins with an important one of them. Nine paintings (none of them truly exists) which look exactly the same as one another: a square of red on canvas, in the same color, same size, same shape, and same material. However, they are painted as totally different objects: 1. *The Israelites crossing the Red Sea*, a fictional painting described by Kierkegaard, of which the spiritual content he found fits the tragic part of his life; 2. *Kierkegaard’s Mood*, by a penetrating Danish artist who knows Kierkegaard’s life story 3. *Red Square* of Moscow (as landscape) 4. *Red Square* of Moscow (as minimalist geometrical art) 5. *Nirvana*, a metaphysical work by an artist who has studied the history of Buddhism 6. *Red Tablecloth*, a still-life of a red tablecloth by a disciple of Matisse 7. Giorgione’s unfinished work “*Conversazione Sacra*”, on which he only had the time to paint the ground color of red on the canvas 8. Artificially painted red canvas 9. A painting by a young cynical art student, named “*Untitled*”, which is a candidate for an art exhibition.

Among these, there are artworks, unfinished artwork, immature artwork, and non-artworks. Although their appearances are entirely identical, some of them are artworks while some are not; the artworks among them also have different topics, bare different meanings. This is what happens in the reality of the contemporary art: it is difficult to tell the difference between some artwork and real (or commonplace) things because they are identical in appearance. The extreme example would be one of the iconic works: *Fountain* by Marcel Duchamp. In the contemporary art museum, we can see a lot of works of this kind, especially installations composed of ready-made objects or industrial wastes. They wouldn’t be recognized as artworks if they didn’t appear in the museum or if the artists didn’t claim their identities.

To define art, the crucial difference between art and non-art must be found as

necessary properties to the definition. The reason why many of the existing definitions have failed in this with the contemporary art is that they stubbornly stick to the perceptual properties, as Danto had accused of Goodman: "it is striking as a concealed bias on Goodman's part that he should spontaneously have assumed that all aesthetic differences are perceptual differences."⁴⁷ While from the example of the nine red squares above, or genuine artworks which look(or sound) just like ordinary objects, it can be deduced that in this era under the context of contemporary art, the defining properties of being art can not be perceptual ones. "The logical point, while it guarantees that if a is not identical with b, then there must be a property F such that a is F and b is not F, does not require that F be a perceptual property, and we have had enough practice with indiscernibilia to be able to offer actual instances where the differences are not such as may be registered by the senses."⁴⁸

It should be noted that although art's defining property cannot be captured by mere observation, this doesn't mean that artworks are unperceivable, nor that they have no observable properties. All works of art certainly must be perceived in some way, no matter whether it can be seen, heard, touched, or even smelled. According to a definition of art which is constructed with some necessary conditions that cannot be directly observed in any sensory sense, an unobservable defining property means that one cannot tell whether an object(or sound, or smell, or any composition of material facts) is artwork or not only by observing the object itself. Instead, one would need to know more (to have access to more information) about its unobservable properties: its position in time and space, its process of production, its creator...all of which are unobservable from the object's material composition. "Objects do not wear their histories on their surfaces."⁴⁹

Now the scale of the plausible necessary properties of art has been somehow narrowed down. As some aestheticians have already noticed this possibility, there have been several suggestions regarding the unobservable features of an object, for

⁴⁷ Danto, Arthur C. *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace: A Philosophy of Art*. Harvard University Press, 2006, p43.

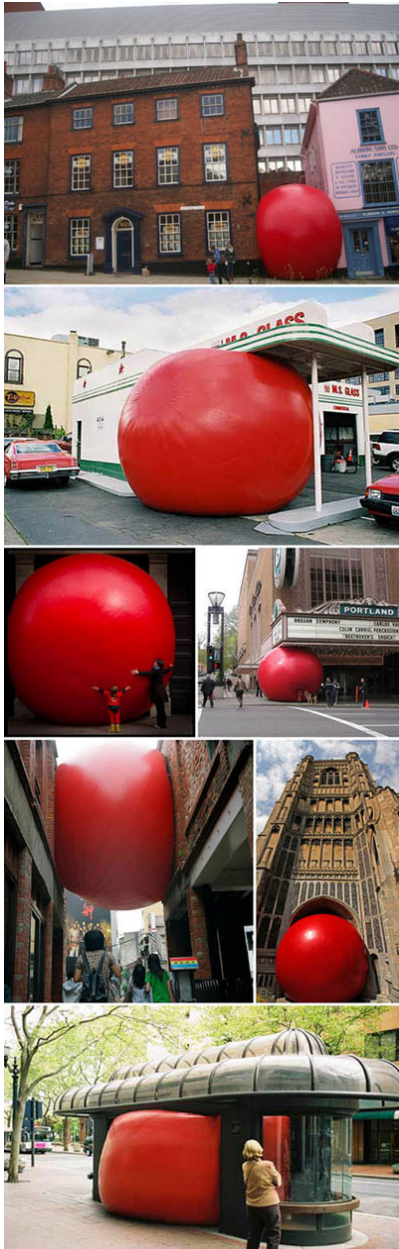
⁴⁸ Ibid, p 43.

⁴⁹ Ibid, p44.

example, some specific way in which the works are produced (procedural definition, such as institutional definition). In his book, Danto made his proposal of unobservable properties and finally attained some delightful achievements.

Similar but more delicate than the group of “red canvas”, Danto lays out another group of four imagined pieces whose material compositions are identical. Suppose Picasso decided to create a piece to catch up with the trend of representing gentlemen’s ties in the art circle in the 1970s, and that he chose one of his old ties and painted it with blue pigment, carefully and smoothly, then named it “*Le Cravat*”(The Tie). Some years ago, a child who wanted to practice his painting technique or just wanted to have fun with decorating something, picked one of his father’s old ties which happened to be of the same model of the same brand in same tissue with Picasso’s tie. He painted it carefully and smoothly just like Picasso did, using the same blue pigment of the same brand. Later, a speculator who discovered that Picasso’s “*Le Cravat*” is a work which can so easily be forged, bought a tie of the same model and painted it into a perfect fake of Picasso’s tie. Also, many years ago, when Cézanne was painting one of his masterpieces, he accidentally knocked over his blue pigment, so he grabbed something near to his hand - his rag which incredibly happened to be in the shape of a tie (of course, in the same tissue with “*Le Cravat*”) – to wipe the blue pigment, and somehow, magically, the pigment went smoothly all over the tie which made it look entirely the same as Picasso’s and the child’s tie. To emphasize how their appearances are indistinguishable, Danto even imagined some situations where the child’s tie happened to get mixed up with Picasso’s tie and the manager of the museum took the wrong one, or where the speculator’s tie easily fooled an acquisition company. These suppositions are entirely reasonable, as the appearances of these ties are identical, just like in the case of many non-imaginary contemporary artworks.

Among these four identical objects, Danto insists that only the tie of Picasso is an artwork. As such, comparing its unobservable properties with the other three would then give some clue to the defining property of being an artwork. Picasso’s tie has a title (while the child’s and Cézanne’s have not), is created by an artist (while the



child's and the speculator's are not) intentionally (while the Cézanne's is not), originally (while the speculator's is not), in a certain period of art history (while everyone is different from the others). Thus, we can see here that the variables are the title, the creator, intentionality, originality, and the time of creation. These variables would be the candidates of unobservable defining properties of artwork. In Danto's theory, the title, which is a way of indicating the work's subject, suggests a relationship with something intrinsic in which artworks are involved; the creator and originality, suggest something specific about the creator; the time of creation, suggests the work's reference within the art history. These correspond to the representational, expressional, and historical property as defining properties for artwork, which Danto has one by one elaborated.

Other than the indiscernibility between an artwork and the object which is materially the same but non-art, the boundary between the material part of the work and the environment has become vague

as well. The best example would be this one: *Red Ball*(Kurt Perschke, multiple years). The existence of the work is dependent on the environment which is originally not artistic.

2) Relationship: a kind of unobservable property

In Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigation*, the notion of "family resemblance" is used as a metaphor to refer to the relationship between individuals under a concept like "art", for there are similarities among family members but they have nothing

essentially in common. Danto, on the contrary, takes up the family relationship as an example and found that the discernible similarities cannot always be found, neither is it necessary that they be found in order to recognize family members; but the specific relationship, not the similarity, between an individual and the others, could help us to find out its identity.

Danto gives a vivid imaginary scene to make his point: “Consider a child who may learn by simple enumeration who his uncles are...Let us imagine that his uncles are all middle-aged Caucasians, but that his grandmother decides just now to marry a Chinese by whom she then has a child and his oriental-looking infant is presented to our child as his uncle.”⁵⁰ The child would be perplexed as this infant looks very different from the other uncles. He cannot really have the concept of uncle by observing their appearances unless he finally figured out that “uncle” means the brother of his father or mother, which entails a relationship by which the concept is defined.

For Danto, “art” is the same kind of concept like “uncle”, which he called a relational concept. To identify an individual under this kind of concept is to confirm its specific relationship with something else. This kind of concept is always difficult to define because the definition must involve the other terms of a relation, thus not only the relationship but also those related objects must be described, in order for it to be defined. Being a relational concept doesn’t mean the absence of necessary conditions. In the case of the concept of uncle, as “brother” is necessarily a male, “uncle” then is also necessarily a male. This definition simply consists of two elements: brotherhood and parents. One is the specific relationship, the other is the objects which are involved in this relationship with the definiendum. And if the relationship entails some necessary properties for the definiendum (for example, brother is necessarily a male, then uncle must also be a male), then the necessary properties will be passed to the definiendum.

In the case of art, in order to define it as a relational concept, these two elements: specific relationship and the objects involved, must be clarified.

⁵⁰ Danto, Arthur C. *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace: A Philosophy of Art*, p 63

3) **Aboutness: a kind of relationship in which artwork denotes other things**

There are many possible relationships and related objects in and with which artworks are involved. For a very long time (until the modern art revolutions), the resemblance, or in other word, the likeness, is the most conspicuous relationship between art and the other objects. Along with the resemblance concerning art and reality, came the overwhelming mimetic theory of art. It must be noted that the resemblance between object alone is not sufficient to form a mimetic work, as some works can incidentally happen to resemble some unrelated objects, which are not even noticed by the artist; or two works happen to be alike, but neither of them is imitating the other. The resemblance is a relationship whose objects are implied in the resemblance itself, without necessarily being intended, like the star on the flag of Vietnam or any yellow pentagram pattern that resembles a slice of the fruit carambola, for there is no way in which we can say that the designer of the flag is imitating the fruit; imitation is a relationship in which the objects that are involved are intentionally fixed by the imitator, though while they often can be easily guessed, they are not necessarily implied in the action or the product of imitation itself. Also, as Danto has revealed, some properties of an object are unobservable; therefore imitation is not necessarily made or recognized by the resemblance of appearance, but may also be recognized by some similarities which are unobservable from the appearance.

The imitational relationship can be very easily observed in most of the works before non-mimetic art arose. It is a relationship between art and reality: art imitates reality. Some elements of this relationship may still be essential to the investigation of the real defining relationship, while some other elements are not. Danto noticed that, though imitation theory may not be the final answer to our investigation — the subjects and objects of imitation: art and reality, or namely, artwork and the mere real thing, are the right direction to look in. That's why Danto profoundly deliberated the mimetic theory of art, found its valuable point and caught its fatal problem, and then proposed a new relationship between art and reality instead of imitation.

That something is similar to another thing, definitely doesn't mean that they are

identical. This is at the very heart of the imitation as a relationship: similar but not identical. According to Aristotle, “‘That it is not real’ must evidently contribute to the pleasure men derive.”⁵¹ Furthermore, it doesn’t only require the difference between the imitation and its object, but also requires the consciousness of the audience that something is an imitation. Without this consciousness, if the imitation is so lifelike that the audience considers it as reality—like the leaf in the novel *The last leaf* of O. Henry— the leaf painted on the wall remains to the audience as a real leaf forever. Likely, without the theatre, without the sight of the stage and the tickets in our hand, an excellent performance, for example, a scene of squabbling couple, would be mistaken with a real squabbling couple. Knowing, or being aware that something is an imitation, is the magical moment when the transfiguration of the commonplace happens. This awareness would immediately build a gap between the work and some other things (meaning this is not real), implying that there is a specific relationship between them.

How does this happen, how do we know that something is supposed to be art? For mimetic works, this is often easily figured out, as the resemblance from the work to its object is often obvious, and it’s not so perfectly lifelike that they cannot be mistaken. However, since the imitational definition of art has been questioned since the non-mimetic works emerged, the resemblance or the likeness to the reality is no longer necessary for being art. As such, it is time to think about what has been left, in the relationship between art and reality, other than resemblance.

Now consider the works which are not mimetic, how do we know that they are supposed to be art? Even if one is ignorant of the definition of art (the situation of most of the people on earth), while without a definition one cannot make an ensured judgment. There are at least some signs which remind the audience that they are facing objects which are supposed to be artworks. The objects’ position, whether they are at some certain places in the art museum, in the art exhibition, or in the auditorium, is one kind of sign; the frame of painting, the labels, is another kind of sign; if we pay for a ticket to a concert or the cinema then what we see must be artworks. This

⁵¹ Danto, Arthur C. *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace: A Philosophy of Art*, p 13.

judgment, that something is supposed to be artworks, relies on traditions and institutions, by which a gap between art and reality is carved while the works are not necessarily mimetic. Danto pointed out that there are many more ways to put something into a relationship with other objects, while it is different from the objects but related, other than being an imitation. The simplest way would be to directly claim that “this is a work of art”. Danto also gives other examples in addition to art whose identity can be realized directly by hearing a claim: “...the object in question happens to be an imitation, almost as if it had not occurred to Plato that there are other ways than being imitations through which things might be disqualified as unreal. Consider the role of such an expression as ‘I did not mean it’... ‘It was only a joke’ or ‘It was just a game’ or ‘It was only in play’ or, finally, ‘It is an artwork.’”⁵² We can yet find more similar concepts the individuals under which can be cut off from the reality as soon as its identity is claimed: “it is only a dream”, “it is your illusion”, “it is just a reflection of the mirror”...

As the contemporary art is no longer necessarily mimetic, in contrast to the character of the resemblance of imitation mentioned above (similar but not identical), the contemporary works break this old relationship with reality: it becomes possible that a work doesn’t resemble the represented subject with which it builds a relation, and it also becomes possible that a work can look the same with a mere real object which is not necessarily the subject the work represents. An artwork can be physically identical with a bed, such as Robert Rauschenberg’s *Bed* (1955): it is indeed a real bed, and at the same time it is an artwork, but neither is the “*Bed*” imitating a real bed, nor it is representing a real bed as its subject, but is representing something else.

To find the defining property of artwork, it is natural to think about starting with the difference between two identical objects of which one is artwork, and the other is not. Danto has compared the study of this pair to another pair: the action and the mere bodily movement (according to Wittgenstein there’s no difference between these two). Many disputations against Wittgenstein pointed out that there must be something more in action than in bodily movement, that action is bodily movement + x, though

⁵² Danto, Arthur C. *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace: A Philosophy of Art*, p 18

this x is yet to be confirmed. Similarly, in the case of art, the work of art is mere material composition + x. As the defining properties, as Danto suggested, lies in the difference between the mere material composition as non-art and the identical things as art, then this x is crucial to the definition of art. Danto's suggestion for "what is x" is that artworks have topics or objects, that they are always about something: an artwork is its mere material composition + aboutness.

If the concept of art should be treated as a relational concept, aboutness, is a new proposal of relationship in which artworks are involved. An artwork is always about something extrinsic to itself, or in other words, artwork denotes or represents something other than itself. In the philosophy of language and semiotics, the concepts of aboutness, denotation, and representation are often discussed together, in the way of mutual interpretation.

To understand the relationship of aboutness between an artwork and its object, it must be noticed that there are more than one kind of relationship suggested by using the term "about" in conventional languages. It is always used as such: A is about B. A and B both can be either proposition or noun. Nelson Goodman's article "*About*"⁵³ has shown that not every kind of aboutness refers to the relationship of representation, though in this article he does not often talk about art. There are other kinds of aboutness, in the form of "proposition A is about noun B", proposition A is about proposition B", "noun A is about noun B" or "noun A is about proposition B". The aboutness Goodman analyzed in "*About*" is describing some fact with mentioning some individual or single event related to the fact. Likewise, the aboutness which Frege discussed is the relationship between sentences, propositions. Also, the aboutness in art must not be confused with the concept of the same term in the philosophy of mind, which means intentionality, a mental state.

Meanwhile, in our inquiry of art, the aboutness certainly is in the "noun A is about noun/proposition B" form, as we always say, "This work is about...". But there are also other non-art things can have a relationship of aboutness in this form: for example, this book is about the history of ancient Greece, so being included in the

⁵³ Goodman, Nelson. "About." *Mind*, vol. 70, no. 277, 1961, pp. 1–24.

“aboutness” relation is a necessary but not sufficient condition to be art. About, a term which entails several kinds of relationship, more often only suggests the existence of some relationship or connection between things without specifying the detail of this relationship. The relationship between art and its object is only one of them. To be specific with the relationship started with artworks, the concept of representation is necessary to narrow down the scope.

4) Representation: the essential difference between artworks and mere real things

Representation is a very widely used philosophical concept, explored in many domains with regard to different issues. For Danto, it is a concept which is taken as a crucial step in differentiating artworks from mere real things. The source of Danto’s idea of aboutness and representation is the art theory of Nelson Goodman, in which Goodman explained the notion of representation with the notion of denotation. “Denotation is the core of representation and is independent of resemblance.”⁵⁴ We can also have a glance at his view of mere resemblance which confirms what was argued in the previous part about imitation: “The plain fact is that a picture, to represent an object, must be a symbol for it, refer to it; and that no degree of resemblance is sufficient to establish the requisite relationship of reference.”⁵⁵ But it is regretful that Goodman in his *Languages of Art* offered no further clarification for the notion of denotation, which is a concept explained with nuance in different disciplines. It seems that denotation is not very helpful here to understand art as representation.

Goodman also warned about the two different usages of the verb “represent” in common language. One is the representation which is concerned with the real object of art which it denotes, like how some painting represents Churchill. The other is about what kind of work it is, like how saying that the painting represents a man, is

⁵⁴ Goodman, Nelson. *Languages of Art an Approach to a Theory of Symbols*. Hackett, 2009, p5.

⁵⁵ Ibid, p5.

just the same as saying this painting is a man's portrait.

A piece of art can be involved in many other kinds of relationship with other objects too, such as being related to its creator, its audience, its material, its collector, etc., but these are not the relationship of representation. Only if the work is about something, then it is the representation of this thing. This "something" for art is its subject, an artwork is about its subject, is denoting this subject. This "aboutness-denotation" relation is necessary for representation, as the artwork denotes the mere real things, but the mere real things don't denote each other (even if they are similar or identical); moreover, the artwork only represents its subject, it doesn't represent its creator nor its audience. Danto picks the term "aboutness" because we use "about" to describe the content of something representational, to indicate what it represents: this story is about...; this book is about...; this photo is about...we can not imagine saying what something that is non-representational is about, we can never say "this desk is about..." "this mountain is about..." "this person is about..."

Every representation should have an object; for artworks, the objects are often told or implied by their titles; but still, often the audience needs to figure out the real objects of work by themselves, (or by using instructions of the exhibition). In the case of contemporary art, some works seem to be or claim to be representing themselves, but in these cases, there are still two roles of the same material facts of the work: artwork and its objects of representation. Like what Lichtenstein said about some of the abstractive artworks, that these works are representing the brushstroke while the works themselves purely materially consist of brushstrokes without any other meaningful form: the brushwork is representing brushwork.

Danto particularly highlighted that in the processes of the semantic evolution of the term "representation", there are two meanings of representation: 1. re-presentation of the thing itself; 2. something stands in the place of something else. The first one is more ancient, and means that something shows up again, as in the religious societies where people believed that the gods will really present their images to them. This representation is a realistic one. The second meaning is the one still in use today: a representation is something that stands in the place of something else. This meaning

also comes from the religious rites, in which people will put on some costumes, masks or makeup, pretending that the gods are there at the festival. But unlike the re-presentation, in the second case, the participants clearly know that the person who is in costume is not the god, but is just provisionally considered as the god: the actor is representing god, standing in the place of god. This representation instantly claims for itself: I'm not real. Thus, the first meaning of representation is realistic; while the second one, the one that seems to refer to art, is symbolic.

Art in the contemporary sense is the latter kind of representation: art stands in the place of its object, the object is what the artwork represents. The representation keeps the reality in distance from the audience and thus requires the awareness of the gap between art and reality. The reality is the object of the representation; the representation is about or of the object, in terms of the second expression of Danto, it "means something".

Through the inquiry of the original meaning of re-presentation, Danto found it interesting to compare representation (in the contemporary sense) with appearance. Both of these two terms have double meanings. Associated with the realistic meaning of representation, the representation is the appearance; it is what actually appears and shows itself; with the second symbolic meaning of representation, the appearance is only the "facade", which is just pretending, acting, standing in the place of its subject, thus it is not real. So, the actor in the rite is not the real god, he only has the appearance of god while representing the god.

To be more specific, Danto further differentiates two kinds of understanding of the meaning of representation in the symbolic sense. "So we may then distinguish an internal sense of representation, having to do with the content of an imitation or a picture or an action; and an external sense, having to do with what an imitation or a picture or an action denotes."⁵⁶ This distinction is somehow similar to the one made by Goodman. Take the example of the painting *The Death of Mara* by Jacques-Louis David, in the first sense the painting is representing its content, a dead body in a bathtub holding a paper; in the second sense, it is representing its real object, the

⁵⁶ Danto, Arthur C. *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace: A Philosophy of Art*, p 72

sudden death of a French revolutionist assassinated. In the first sense, representation is not a relational concept, as we see what we see, all the represented are already in presence, there is no relationship between the work and something other than the work; in the second sense the representation is a relational concept, as it refers to something else, something not of the work itself. Back to Danto's imaginary mass of nine red canvases, in the first sense they are representing the same thing: a red square of pigment on canvas, which neither helps the audience to understand, nor helps with the investigation of the definition of art we wanted; but in the second sense they are representing different objects, building relationships with different things. Thus, obviously, we should take the second one, the relational understanding of representation to formulate a definition of art.

2. Work of art and mere representation

After the art's identity of representation had been recognized, Danto moved on to the second crucial differentiation, which is made between artworks and other representations. It is obvious that being representational is not the privilege of art, since diagrams, languages, documentary photographs, and symbols are all involved in certain representational relationships, and all denote something intrinsic of themselves. Thus, the definition of art requires the differentiation between artworks and mere representations. As Danto insists that the defining property of art is unobservable, again here he says: "If we have two mere things that differ though then look in every outward particular the same, I suppose the difference must be looked for in their infrastructures."⁵⁷ By infrastructure, he means the structure beneath the surface, which is a metaphor for the symbolic structure, composed of meanings; therefore, it is not about the appearance since the appearance of art and mere representation can be identical. The best way of look for the difference is to take the example of two identical pieces, one of them is a piece of art while the other is just a mere representation.

⁵⁷ Danto, Arthur C. *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace: A Philosophy of Art*, p139.

This time Danto chooses two pairs of examples which are not all of them fictional. The first pair is originally mentioned by Nelson Goodman in *Languages of art*: some curve of the Mount Fujiyama in the drawing of Utagawa Hiroshige may coincidentally be identical in terms of angles and gradients of someone's electrocardiogram. According to the clarification of representation above, both of them are representations, but only one of them is art: the curve of the Japanese master Hiroshige. The electrocardiogram represents the sets of numbers through sets of points which are recorded by the medical equipment; the curve of Hiroshige represents the skyline of Fujiyama. Why do these two representations fall into two different types — one is an artistic representation and the other is not? If this question is answered, the essential property of art may be revealed, and may thus inspire a true definition of art as representation.

The other pair reveals a real event, which is even more realistic and more dramatic: the respectable art critic Erle Loran published a book *Cézanne's Composition* in 1943, in which he worked out the formal structures of some of Cézanne's masterpieces and illustrated them with helpful diagrams. Later in 1962, the pop artist Roy Lichtenstein produced a canvas *Portrait of Madame Cézanne*, which looks almost the same as Loran's diagram that illustrates Cézanne's painting *Portrait de Madame Cézanne* in his book, though Lichtenstein's work is much bigger and was oil painted, while Loran's diagram was scanned and printed into million copies of the book. Thus, Loran accused of Lichtenstein that the artwork is a plagiarism of his diagram. For Danto, the moral concern about whether Lichtenstein should accept the responsibility of plagiarism is much less interesting than the philosophical concern of the difference between a diagram of an artwork and an artwork which is composed of what looks like a diagram. Loran's diagram is representing the structure of a specific painting, what's important is the volume and victor of the painting. Lichtenstein's painting is representing (according to Danto's interpretation) the way that Cézanne painted his wife.



Portrait de Madame Cézanne
Paul Cézanne, 1885-1887

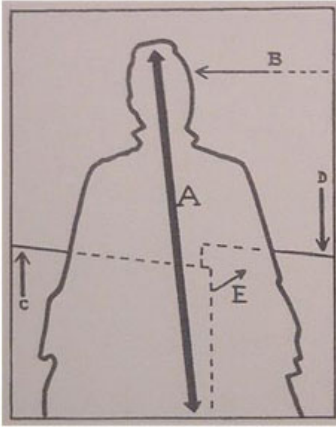
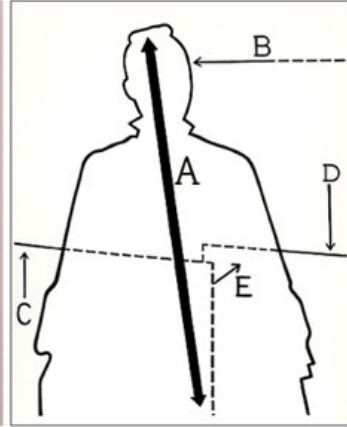


Diagram
Erle Loran, 1943



Portrait of Madame Cézane
Roy Lichtenstein, 1962

In both of these two pairs, each of them represents different objects, their denotations are different while their appearances are very alike. Such a case confirms the differentiation Danto makes between two senses of the object of representation. In the sense of re-representation of the thing itself, these two pieces share the same object: a silhouette of a sitting figure (we can't even tell from it whether the silhouette illustrated a male or a female), some arrows and dotted lines; but in the sense of standing in the place of something else, these two have two different objects. It is not the subtle difference of the background color or the font of indications, but something else that makes them fall into a different category. If we find this crucial difference, we may be approaching the definition of art.

1) Metaphor: art plays tricks by rhetorical ellipsis

Comparing art with scientific diagrams, we will notice that their differences can provide some clues to the essence of art. The function of a diagram is to apprise the audience of certain facts: the diagram may be true or false in terms of these facts. Danto puts the diagram into the family of scientific discourse, whose only focus is to represent the fact itself. The speaker for the targeted audiences expects that they accept the fact. Under the ideal circumstance, if the fact is true and well presented, there's no need for other methods to make the audience take the attitude of acceptance. The doctor makes the patient accept the authenticity of electrocardiogram not by any

trick or embellishment or by looking good, but by the reliability of the equipment and the credibility of his profession. However, in the case of art, if an artist wants the audience to take a certain attitude, his purpose is scarcely directly uttered by making a little speech or by boasting about their artistic authority (it must be noted that here we are still talking about guiding the audience to take a certain attitude, rather than giving information about the objects, so the instruction or introduction of artwork in the exhibitions or on the program brochure of a concert doesn't count). The artwork itself will imply some expectation for the audience, according to Goodman and Danto, by playing a rhetoric trick (which is often a metaphor). "...and it may just be one of the main offices of art less to represent the world than to represent it in special vision."⁵⁸

To explain the mechanism of the rhetoric trick, Danto carried out again a hypothetical example: a statue of Napoleon dressed as a Roman emperor. When our sculptor produces a statue of Napoleon in a Roman emperor's dress, he is neither producing a statue of Napoleon who suddenly wants to put on the costume of a Roman emperor, nor is he producing a statue of a Roman emperor using Napoleon as a model. Again, this confirms that in the sense of re-representation of things, the three suppositions above would be representing the same object: a man with the appearance of Napoleon in a Roman emperor's dress, while in the sense of symbolic artistic representation they are not: they have three different subjects. The artist is implying that Napoleon is as great and glorious as a Roman emperor, and is expecting the audience to take the same attitude.

Danto finds the explanation of how this trick of persuasion works in Aristotle's *Logic*: enthymeme and metaphor play the trick by a rhetoric ellipsis. Enthymeme, which Aristotle considered as a pathetic syllogism, is a syllogism which lacks one of the three statements, either the premises or the conclusion. Aristotle took it for the most effective above all the other forms of rhetoric. The lost statement must be something of common sense, or an obvious truth, something the audience can easily figure out. This ellipsis seduces the audience to find the hidden part by themselves,

⁵⁸ Danto, Arthur C. *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace: A Philosophy of Art*, p167.

forces the audience to participate in the process of reasoning, then make them feel like they are speaking out the statement. With this rhetoric trick, it would be much more persuasive to make the audience take the attitude as expected than simply put forward your opinion directly.

Metaphor, as one of the most familiar forms of rhetoric, also benefits from this ellipsis. Aristotle explained the metaphor as rhetoric ellipsis like such: if “a” is a metaphor for “b”, then the audience needs to find at least one middle term “t” which makes “a is to t what t is to b”⁵⁹. The missing middle term is the rhetoric ellipsis, which makes the audience convince themselves. In the case of Napoleon’s statue, the missing part would be the grandness, the mightiness, glory, and all the common characteristics of a Roman emperor, which the artist wants the audience to see in Napoleon. Danto also mentions another common rhetoric—quotation, claiming that quotation as rhetoric is also metaphorical. The rhetoric ellipsis here is the context of the quotation, of which the similarity of the contexts (one is the context of the original quoted text, the other is the context of the quoting text) need to be discovered by the audiences or readers themselves.

Danto proposes that artwork, or at least most of the artworks, is employing the rhetoric of metaphor: art represents metaphorically the world. The relationship between an artwork and its object is that the work is a metaphor for the object. The rhetoric ellipsis is something common between the work and the object which the audience need to find out, to fill in. This rhetoric ellipsis is not limited to some properties or characteristics, but any possible common aspects of an object, like context, history, way of being treated, the feelings it arouses...as Danto said, “sub-structure”. In short, it asks the audience to take the same attitude or perspective, to see “a” as “b” on the part of “t”. Once the audience discovers the missing jigsaw piece, it is naturally emphasized by the psychological effect of a proactive participant of the audience, which then convinces the audience to take the attitude as the artist wished.

Still, just as the defining property of art can be unobservable, this hidden ellipsis

⁵⁹ Danto, Arthur C. *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace: A Philosophy of Art*, p171.

may also be unobservable, which may not be detected by mere observation. This is why the admiration of art always requires more or less the possession of certain information or knowledge. In the case of Napoleon's statue, if someone knows nothing about the western history of clothing, or has no impression of the characteristics of a Roman emperor, or knows nothing about Napoleon or even can't recognize the appearance of Napoleon; then unless the label in the museum has offered the information, this person will never figure out what this statue is truly representing. He may think: Oh, it's the statue of an ancient man, who looks kingly. Here, in this case, the information such as "the dress is a Roman emperor's dress" or "a Roman emperor is always considered mighty" is unobservable, which would need to be obtained in some way other than mere observation. Back to *Portrait of Madame Cézanne* of Lichtenstein, in order to understand that Lichtenstein is representing the way that Cézanne saw his wife in a diagrammatic way as showed by Loran, the audience must have certain knowledge of Loran's analysis, must have seen the original portrait of Cézanne, and have learned more or less about the impressionism movement and Cézanne's personal style, to thus really capture the subject of Lichtenstein's painting.

2) Expression: metaphorical exemplification

Though the concept of expression plays an important part in Danto's definition of art, he spends much less time on illustrating it, as this concept in Danto's theories should be illustrated by rhetoric and style on which he elaborately developed. For Danto, the expression is "between the rhetoric and style": "It might be possible to work our way concentrically outward from the concept of rhetoric, through the concept of expression, to the comprehensive concept of style."⁶⁰ On this issue he follows the definition made by Nelson Goodman in "Languages of Art": expression is metaphorical exemplification. Since Goodman here is using semantics, this statement seems abstract and thus needs to be carefully explained.

Exemplification is a sample for a certain class, it possesses any of the property of

⁶⁰ Danto, Arthur C. *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace: A Philosophy of Art*, p189.

the class, which makes it a perfect standard sample. (There must be more than one individual in this class, otherwise, it rather makes no sense to talk about sample and exemplification) The class discussed here in art is often classified by certain predicates, so it is more like the class of “what makes one feel sad” rather than the class of concept like “chair”, “mammal”, “color”. But this does not exclude that there are exemplifications of the second kind: for instance, Lichtenstein claims that his painting with terribly thick and unsmooth pigment is representing the brushwork, thus it is an exemplification of brushwork. The importance is if a and b instantiate (exemplifies) the same predicate, and a denotes b (a is representing b), then we can say that an exemplification represents b—a is an expression for b.

As it can be seen here, if applied as a definition of art, in this sense the expression is art only when it is a representation. There are many other expressions which are not representations, therefore they have no way to get into the realm of art. Danto jokingly offered a case that an artist mows the lawn for his friend, the lawn mowed is an expression of his friendship with the friend—this won’t make the lawn be transfigured into artwork even if an artist mows it. Coincidentally, the artist can also express his friendship by painting a portrait for his friend, but it is not because of an expression of friendship that the painting is art, but because the product of his expression, the painting, happened to be a representation; and concerning its representation, it is not expressing the friendship but the friend as the object. From this, we can see that being an expression is a supplementary necessary condition of being art in addition to being a representation.

As there are expressions such as facial expression which are not art, to explain the expression in art, Goodman introduced the concept of metaphor, which has been borrowed and developed by Danto to form his definition (see the last part). Goodman’s definition of art is: an artwork is a metaphorical exemplification; it metaphorically exemplifies certain predicates. Danto interprets Goodman’s proposition in a more intelligible way: “I have transformed insidiously the suggestion of metaphorical exemplification into the thought that what a work expresses is what it

is a metaphor for.”⁶¹

Integrating with the concept of metaphor explained before, Danto analyses three examples: *Portrait de Madame Cézanne* by Cézanne himself, and *Portrait of Madame Cézanne* by Lichtenstein, with which we are already very familiar; *Bathsheba at Her Bath*, a portrait of Hendrijke Stoeffel by Rembrandt. Danto believes that the subject of Rembrandt's portrait is Rembrandt's lover Stoeffel as Bathsheba, rather than the historical, narrative scene of Bathsheba in a bath. What Rembrandt expresses in this work, is what he felt about his lover: he admires her beautiful body even if there are signs of aging, he bemoans her misfortune brought about by the relationship between them, just like he bemoans the relationship between King David and Bathsheba which caused her to suffer from their sin. Hence, queen Bathsheba is a metaphor for Stoeffel, the story of Bathsheba is a metaphor for the story of Stoeffel and Rembrandt. What a work expresses, is what it is a metaphor for. Cézanne's portrait of his wife is very different, and is much less sensitive. Danto once humorously described Cézanne's style saying that the characters in his paintings are like dressed eggplants with hats. So, Cézanne expressed his wife, the painting is a metaphor of his wife, in positive trait for painting as pure: he painted his wife just like painting the still-life, the mountains, the houses. He loves his wife, feels passionate about her just like how he feels about every object he loves to paint. Meanwhile, *Portrait of Madame Cézanne* by Lichtenstein expressed this way of painting, the way that Cézanne sees his wife, the painting which looks like a diagram, is a metaphor for Cézanne's way of seeing things. Comparing Rembrandt's work and Cézanne's work, we can see that although they both painted their beloved ones, their way of seeing their lovers are very different. Thus, we need to explore why it is so by investigating the notion of style.

3) Style: artist's personalized way of representation

Another proposition of art's unique character we can think of, which does not appear in mere representation, is that artworks seem to have their styles while mere representations do not.

⁶¹ Danto, Arthur C. *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace: A Philosophy of Art*, p194.

Again starting from the two pairs of diagrams and artworks, in these examples, by comparing the way that their content is conveyed from the producer to the audience or reader, it can be noticed that “some features that are constitutive in the pictorial scheme are dismissed as contingent in the diagrammatic scheme.”⁶² That the diagrams can be understood straight forward or in reverse, means that some features are crucial in artworks while they are indifferent in diagrams; and vice versa, some features are crucial in diagrams while they are indifferent in artworks. In the electrocardiogram, every precise point and angle mathematically matter to its content, while the thickness of the line, the color, the texture of the paper, are much less important or irrelevant to its content (as long as they are not interfering with the representation of the crucial facts). In contrast, in Hiroshige’s work, the thickness of the line, the color he used, the ink, the texture of the paper, they all matter to the work, are all crucial to the way of representation which construct the uniqueness of the work, while the accurate gradients, the coordinate are less important. Likely, to the diagram of *Portrait de Madame Cézanne* by Loran, the pigment, the scale, the texture of paper are less important, while the vectors and the shape of outline matters to the analysis of the structure of the masterpiece, that’s why it can have millions of copies in the books and every one of these copies contains the same content as the original one; in the painting of Lichtenstein, the color, the thickness of the line, the canvas, the scale (which is especially significant as Lichtenstein uses the canvas in the same scale of the original work of Cézanne), are all carefully treated, while the vectors need not necessarily be accurate (or accurate in a different way than Loran’s), which is why if it is scanned and printed out, or forged, its copies won’t bear the same content as the original one. Again, this differentiation has illustrated that the defining property of art is unobservable.

From this contrast, Danto points out that the features which are constitutive of artwork and contingent to the diagram, seem to be what we call the “style of the artwork”. The interesting thing is, that the lexical origin of the term “style” is the

⁶² Goodman, Nelson. *Languages of Art an Approach to a Theory of Symbols*, p141.

Latin word “stilus”, meaning “pointed instrument for writing” which can leave traces when it streaks on some surface. There are many kinds of “stilus”: pen, pencil, ball-point pen, dip pen, or the quill in antiquity, and all leave different traces; furthermore, different productions of the same kind of stilus, different forces of hands and angle, all leave different traces too. That is to say, stilus as an instrument, not only leaves the trace of its own but also somehow leaves the trace of the hand holding it. This term itself shows a metaphor which turned into a new extended meaning: the style is just like the stilus, which is the unique, personalized way that an artist represents the world. “...then we are led naturally to Buffon’s profound observation that style is the man himself: it is the way he represents the world...but now we have broadened the concept, making a metonymy of the stilus.”⁶³

With this analysis, Danto asserts that artwork does not only represent the subject(reality) but also always represents how the artist sees the world. “We may thus reserve the term style for this how, as what remains of a representation when we subtract its content...”⁶⁴ To be understood as combined with the concept of aboutness, every artwork is not only about its subject, but also is about the artist. Art is not only about something, but also represent its way of aboutness. “...it will have sufficed to have shown that metaphors embody some of the structures I have supposed artworks to have: they do not merely represent subjects, but properties of mode of representation itself must be a constituent in understanding them. 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.”⁶⁵ With style, artist has planted himself into a relationship between himself and the subject. “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.”⁶⁶

⁶³ Danto, Arthur C. *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace: A Philosophy of Art*, p198.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p197.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p189.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p207.

The artist's way of seeing the world accomplishes his style, so for him the style is transparent, as he sees the world through it. Take the example of my own experience: I am an amateur of drawing fan-art for cartoons, and thanks to the SNS I got to know many amateurs like myself and have seen many fan-art works. Although the subject and characters of our works are similar, and our techniques are all gained from imitating the other comics, I can always recognize the style of certain a fan-artist if I've seen enough of this person's works. But for a long time, I worried about my works because it seems to me that they don't have any style, any personality, until someone familiar with my works told me that it's not true, my style can also be easily recognized in the same way that I recognized others' works. This phenomenon illustrates that the style of representation is something internal to the artist, and it takes time even for the artists themselves to discover. Thus, if a style needs to be shown, be seen, be represented, it must make a cat's paw of something else, something external—through the works which are ostensibly produced by knowledge and skill.

Danto separates the style of art from the manner of art, as he separates the way of seeing the world from knowledge and skill. Here he explained himself regarding his theory of action in the article "Basic Actions". He differentiated two kinds of actions: basic actions and non-basic ones. The basic actions must be accomplished not through any other cognition or intermediary actions; if an action is accomplished by doing something else, then it is a non-basic action. Applying this to art, Danto's supposition is that: artworks are produced by basic actions, while the other representations are produced not by basic actions but often by cognition, knowledge, norms, and pure techniques. And this does not mean that art can be produced without any knowledge and skill (even the clumsiest skill), but that the production of art needs more than these. That's why according to this differentiation, the style is separated from the manner: the manner of art can be learned by training because it is the result of knowledge and skill, whereas the style cannot be obtained in this way but in Danto's word, is gifted.

Danto's concept of style makes it possible to explain the pairs of works which

look similar or identical, but one of which is art while the other is not. Though they have the same appearance, non-art is produced by non-basic actions, while art is the product of both basic and non-basic actions. This is the exclusion not only of mere representation such as the diagram from the realm of art, but also of the copies of artwork. The mechanical copies are not-art: the painting scanned and printed on the books, the CD record of music, they merely have the appearance of style but do not retain it. The case of fake or imitational works are different. They are artworks while they don't have the same style as the original work, but the style that comes from the imitator. If it is possible that someone perfectly forged a masterpiece, he would have turned himself into some simple copy machine and his work would be just like the mechanical copies, which rather than having any style, has only the manner.

Danto furthermore made a hypothesis following the statement of Buffon: "The style is the man himself". Danto considered the "man himself" as such: "What, really, is 'the man himself'? I have argued a theory to the effect that we are systems of representations, ways of seeing the world, representation incarnate."⁶⁷ The style shows some of the essential characteristics of the man, thus to recognize a style is more like to recognize someone's personality. That's why the paintings of the same subject by different people turn out to have great diversity. Even in the same school of art, for example among the impressionists, every artist has their own style, since they are different individuals, and because they see the world in different ways. An art fan who is familiar with impressionist's works can easily recognize Van Gogh from Degas, Monet from Renoir, as they all have styles with distinctive personalities.

4) Style matrix: locate a work in the art history

As always, Danto's concern is focused on the contemporary revolutionary works, especially the works of which the appearances are identical with everyday objects, or even "ready-mades" directly taken from everyday objects (Andy Warhol's *Brillo Box* is of the former kind as the boxes are painted and made of wood, not the real cartons

⁶⁷ Danto, Arthur C. *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace: A Philosophy of Art*, p204.

of soap pads; *Fountain* of Marcel Duchamp is of the latter kind, as it was not Duchamp who fabricated the urinal). According to the clarification of style above, in the broad sense it is acceptable that Marcel Duchamp or Andy Warhol certainly have their styles, as they are people with distinctive personalities; but encountering specific works, especially the works that consist of ready-mades, it is hard to see how the style is represented. The other two of Danto's examples, two works about bed, are also faced with the query of being just some commonplace, even though they already look more unusual than the soapbox and urinal: Robert Rauschenberg's *Bed* hangs on a wall with a real pillow and sheet, the surface is broken and streaked with some desultory paint, just like abandoned furniture; Oldenburg's *Bedroom Ensemble* is a decorated room with a set of real furniture, among which there is a trapezoidal bed. The difficulty still ultimately comes with the differentiation between artworks and their indistinguishable twins, thus Danto asks this question in this way: "What, after all, prevents Oldenburg's creation from being a misshapen bed? This is equivalent to asking what makes it art, and with this query we enter a domain of conceptual inquiry where native speakers are poor guides: they are lost themselves."

Danto's concept "style matrix" is first introduced in his article "The Artworld" published in 1964. This concept is formed to explain how many revolutionary works of art have made their way into the realm of art by referencing the whole of art history, and why their content is as rich as their ancestors, even though many of them do not have exquisite appearances. Unfortunately for Danto (but somehow beneficial for the whole philosophy of art), the term "Artworld" has been misinterpreted by his great supporter George Dickie, and has been twisted into an institutional definition of art. So the theories of Danto and Dickie must be considered independently, regarding Dickie's institutional theory as his own creation.

If a style should be described, there are many predicates which can be used or can only be used to describe artworks, which Danto called artistically relevant predicates. Supposing there is certain property F, an artistically relevant predicate, and it has an opposite property non-F. Danto emphasized here that the "opposite" pair is not "contradictories", for contradictories under some circumstances may both be false,

while between the opposites it is necessary that one true and the other is false. An artwork can be either F or non-F, it cannot be F and non-F at the same time. It is possible to add as many as predicates, like G, H, J...in the line of abscissa. Danto then schematized the style of artwork in the form of a matrix:

	<i>F</i>	<i>G</i>
Style 1:	+	+	
Style 2:	+	—	
Style 3:	—	+	
Style 4:	—	—	
.....			

The abscissa shows the artistically relevant predicates, and the ordinate shows the possible styles of art. With two predicates, there are four possible styles; if a third predicate is added then there are eight...if there are N predicates, then there are the Nth power of 2 possible styles. Of course, as we can imagine, there are enormous pairs of predicates, thus there are infinite possibilities of style. The expansion of this matrix is a dynamic persistent process: along with every new predicate established in a certain work, the amount of possibility is increasing in geometric progression, with great variety and with unpredictable future development. But moreover, it is not only the progress towards the future, for the emergence of every new predicate also enriches the content of the works in the past with an opposition of the predicate in regards to the understanding of art history, and thus the understanding of every work.

If a particular property was always present or absent in all the works in the past (for example, the predicate “being imitational” had been always present for a long time; or “being consists of ready-mades” had been absent because it was never considered by artists for a long time.), in many of these cases people wouldn’t have noticed it until an artist added its opposite into his work. If some property which was always present has been found and confirmed, it will be considered by the theorists as a right candidate of an essential property to formulate a definition of art, such as when “being imitational” is formulated into the mimetic definition of art. But once an artist decides to produce a work with a new predicate H, which has never appeared in any

artworks before the new work comes out; or he decides to produce a work without the property J which had always been present in the other works—it is noteworthy that with this work, the pair of predicates, both the property itself and its opposite (H and non-H, J and non-J) at the same time become artistically relevant predicates. This brings out two results: on the one hand, every work since then, can be chosen to be H or non-H, J or non-J: thus, the amount of possibilities of style is doubled; on the other hand, every work in the past, can be understood as non-H, which is not the case before H becomes an artistically relevant predicate. Also, it must be noted that even though some predicates are used to describe many things including art and non-art, only at the moment when it is intentionally chosen and presented by the artist does it becomes an artistically relevant predicate. Again, considering the example of Loran's diagram and Lichtenstein's painting, they share the predicate: diagrammatic, but for Loran's work, this predicate only literally means diagrammatic, it is only a descriptive fact; for Lichtenstein's work, it is artistically relevant as he applies it as a metaphor for Cézanne's painting.

So, when every new predicate is added, every artwork's structure of content becomes more complex, and a new possible world is opened for all the successors. The more the audience know about the history of art (unusually the case is the audience know more about the styles of classical art), the understanding of contemporary works is more complete and more enriched. Many of the contemporary works that occupy the rows in the matrix consist of more negative predicates “—” than the positive ones “+”, but though these “—”s can't easily be perceived as they are negatives, they still have appeared in the artists' intention and acknowledgers' mind as its absence. If someone is not familiar with art history he won't notice these properties; on the other hand, if someone is familiar with art history, the more he knows, the more the hidden properties would be seen and he would thus understand the work better. “The greater the variety of artistically relevant predicates, the more complex the individual members of the artworld become; and the more one knows of the entire population of the artworld, the richer one's experience with any of its

members.”⁶⁸

We can speculate that in the style matrix, there are many lines of style with a lot of “—” much more than”+”. Many contemporary works are of this kind, as they abandoned or struggled against many traditional artistic features. That’s why they seem to be much more concise in content than the classical works, but this is only from the surface. Through the style matrix, they show the same richness in content, just like the classical ones. Danto wittily described the character of this type of contemporary work as “less is more”: “Strictly speaking, a black square by Reinhardt is artistically as rich as Titian's Sacred and Profane Love. This explains how less is more.”⁶⁹

For this kind of work, their motives, productions, their entrance into the realm of art, their existence as artwork, their subject, their understanding, are all dependent on art history. Their birth can be considered as the achievement of a theory, an artist’s understanding and reflection of art history. To Danto, what makes the difference between a work of art and the ordinary object which is perceptually the same, 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 that of artistic identification).”⁷⁰ By “theory” here, he rather means a point of view of art of the artist. If we imagine these “theories” of art in the form of subtext of the works, it would be: “I think art can be like this”, “I insist on adding this new property to my work, which didn’t occur in the past”, or “I don’t want this property in my work, which has often appeared to the works in the past”, etc. So, this kind of proclaiming requires a high acknowledgment of art history, so that the style matrix of the work is truly enriched.

So, it seems another unobservable property of artwork other than those involving a representational relationship and being expressive with style, has been found out: the location in time, meaning the position of the creation concerning art history. As

⁶⁸ Danto, Arthur. “The Artworld.” *The Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 61, no. 19, 1964, p583.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p584.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p581.

mentioned before, “Objects do not wear their histories on their surfaces”. If there are two identical compositions of material, one of them is an artwork and the other is not, their different “birthday” could also be a good proposal of an unobservable defining property, as we don’t wear our birthday on our faces. Much more important than “what” is “when”.

Something may not be considered as artwork in a certain period of history, but is admitted as artwork in another, because of the course of art history, “...it would have been possible historically for such an object to be an artwork at one time and not at another.”⁷¹ Typically, with many modern art pieces, especially the ready-mades, it seems that any ordinary person can manufacture them, so their material composition may have appeared before, but at their time the works or events that came after had not occurred to art history, so the process of history as a reference with which it can be considered as art, is not complete. For James Harvey, the commercial artist who designed the Brillo package, it was impossible to turn his box into artwork in his time, as the concept of art hadn’t yet been capable of accepting something like this into the museum. Danto also imagined another example of an artist living in ancient Greece in the period of Praxiteles. If he decided to create an archaic torso of Apollo in the outdated style of the 5th century BC, it wouldn’t be admitted as a piece of art, since the Artworld at that time had become too evolved for the nostalgic sculptures (Here I disagree with Danto since I don’t understand why an outdated artwork must be denied as an artwork). “In part, the answer to the question has to be historical. Not everything is possible at every time, as Heinrich Wölfflin has written, meaning that certain artworks simply could not be inserted as artworks into certain periods of art history, though it is possible that objects identical to artworks could have been made at that period.”⁷²

Conclusion

Now let’s again take a look at the summary of Danto’s definition of art with the

⁷¹ Danto, Arthur C. *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace: A Philosophy of Art*, p47.

⁷² *Ibid*, p44.

illustration of its crucial concepts:

Something is a work of art if and only if (i) it has a subject, which means it is **about** or is of something –i.e., is a **representation**; (ii) about this subject, it projects some attitude or point of view as the artist's **style** of **expression**, (iii) by means of **rhetorical ellipsis** (usually **metaphorical**), which engages the audience's participation in filling in what is missing to interpret the work, and (iv) where the work in question and the interpretations thereof require an art historical context, which is presented as so-called "**Artworld**" composed in the form of "**style matrix**".

After all these analyses, it can be concluded that in this definition, logically there are only two necessary conditions:

-Being an artwork is necessarily **(1) being a representation** and **(2) being an expression** at the same time. Each of them is described with the other important concepts.

-The necessary condition "being a representation" distinguishes artworks from mere real things; the other necessary condition "being an expression" distinguishes artworks from mere representations.

-The concept of **representation** is interpreted by the notion of **aboutness**; aboutness is a kind of **unobservable** property, which builds a **relationship** between art and its object in which art is about the object, or in other words, art denotes the object.

-The concept of **expression** is interpreted by the notions of **metaphor** and **style**. Metaphor implies the relationship between the work and the audience: the **rhetoric ellipsis** of the common feature of the work's content and its object persuades the audience to take the attitude as the artist expected; style implies the relationship between the work and the artist: style is the way how an artist represents the world, corresponding with how the artist sees the world, therefore the style shows the artist's artistic personality.

- On the other hand, the work needs to have a place in art history, where every new style enriches the contents of works in the past while at the same time the new work get its position on referencing positively or negatively the old ones, the

mechanism of reference is called “**artworld**” presented in the form of “**style matrix**”, which is composed of binary variables reporting the possession of every existing and possible properties of every artwork.

Since Danto’s art theory is quite influential in the philosophy of art, many other aestheticians have given their analysis and comments on his definition of art. Among the comments to this theory, there are two main interpretations that are most worth noting. One is proposed by many philosophers, such as Davies, that Danto’s definition of art is a historical one. It is obvious that in order to solve the problem of interpretation of the artworks, Danto had found the art history as the source of meaning for artists to represent their styles in addition to represent the objects. The other is proposed by Crispin Sartwell in his article “Aesthetic Dualism and the Transfiguration of the Commonplace”. He considered Danto’s theory of art as an aesthetic dualism, which can be compared with the mind-body dualism of human beings since Danto differentiates the material composition of a work and its conceptual existence (the representation of object, the meaning and concept it proposes). In this aspect, some other philosophers also shared the same opinion that Danto’s theory is an intellectualism of art. Along with these comments, some defects of Danto’s definition of art have been discovered and will be introduced in the next chapter.

Under the context of contemporary art, for the theorist and audience facing the confusing actuality of art, Danto’s definition of art is relatively reassuring. This definition has considered most of the elements surrounding artistic activities, including the process of the creation of artists and understanding of audience; and has been illustrated by the most annoying examples one can think of. Therefore, Danto’s definition, as a result of careful consideration, is probably the most plausible definition of art of our time, thus it is worthwhile to be well examined and to see whether it can be improved into a “true definition of art”.

Chapter IV

The Imperfections of Danto's Definition

Among Danto's most influential publications concerning art, the article "The Artworld" was published in 1964, "The Transfiguration of Commonplace" was first published in 1981, then "The End of Art: A Philosophical Defense" in 1998. These articles remain the most important contributions made by Danto to the philosophy of art: the concept of Artworld, the definition of art, the idea about the end of art, which have been widely analyzed and discussed among philosophers and artists from 1970s until now. There are several figures, mostly active between 70s~90s, who continually dealt with Danto's art theory from different perspectives, and made many noteworthy remarks: George Dickie, David Carrier, Noël Carroll, Richard Wollheim, etc. These philosophers were born around the 1930s and 40s and have witnessed the shift of modern art to contemporary art like Danto did, thus they have shared Danto's passion about the mystery of art's fate, and felt strongly about taking part in the inquiry. A book of essays "Danto and his critics" was published in 1993, which not only takes care of Danto's art theory but also every aspect of Danto's philosophical reflections, such as the history and meta-philosophy theory, for as David Carrier said in this book: Danto is a philosopher with a system (which according to Carrier is rare among analytical philosophers). The book gives us a hint about the weight of Danto's theory in the philosophical circle, and also its lasting vitality in our time. Until today, Danto's art theory still catches the eyes of the young generation of philosophers, and has been widely explored (it's a pity that there is more research about the issue of the end of art rather than the definition of art), because many of the questions Danto concerns himself about hit upon the crucial point in contemporary art and its studies.

In this chapter, I would like to pick several of the most important critics of Danto's art theory. I will try to respond to the unreasonable ones on behalf of Danto and at the same time will summarize the reasonable ones among them, and will then propose some shortcomings of Danto's theory myself. The objective is to gather all

the imperfections of his theory in order to know what must be modified or eliminated in Danto's definition of art presented in the last chapter, as a preparation for the next chapter to propose a good definition of art.

1. The existing criticisms of Danto's art theory

1) David Carrier

David Carrier, one of the most important of Danto's reviewers and also a philosopher of art, was born in 1944 and worked as a professor of art history in Case Western Reserve University, and was once a student of Danto. He dedicated several important essays to him, including one in the book of "Danto and his critics". Compared with other reviewers of Danto, he is more like a follower, although he doubts Danto's methodology of seeking the truth of art. He dedicated an article to the book "Danto and his critics" titled "Danto as a systematic philosopher".

Carrier's critique primarily concentrates on Danto's methodology of comparing pairs of objects to get their essential differences, which I had introduced in the last chapter. As these pairs that are chosen "look entirely the same", thus the essential differences must be unobservable differences. Carrier summarized this methodology as such:

"In every case, the analysis has this same four-stage structure:

1 Danto contrasts two states of affairs or things which seem identical.

(He contrasts seeming actions and knowledge with the real thing.)

2 Danto shows that those seemingly indiscernible states of affairs or things are very different. Believing that an event has been caused or that the plumbing fixture is Duchamp's artwork is only possible when we confuse two very different things.

3 The dilemma is resolved by showing that what in stage 1 seemed to be unobservables are very different.

4 A theory of knowledge, action, or art explains why different states of affairs or things seem indiscernible. We now have come full circle,

resolving in step 4 the dilemma of step 1. ”⁷³

Carrier’s understanding of this comparative methodology is that the presupposition of Danto’s comparison is to consider these two objects as identical, while actually, they are not the same from the beginning. He considered this argument as being in a reversed order of recognition, since in the standard narrative order of giving an argument the real situation is revealed first, which is not the order of Danto’s argument. Carrier accuses Danto of using this rhetorical methodology to mislead the reader into taking the steps as Danto conducted in order to reach the conclusion expected. “But the statement of identity/non-identity, and the claim that such indiscernibles exist, depends upon his narrative. It is only in his text that we find first apparent identity and then that there really is identity. It seems odd to conclude that these differences are a feature of the world, not of the particular way in which Danto describes it.”⁷⁴

Danto is undoubtedly a stylish philosopher, whose writing is equipped with humor and metaphors. According to Carrier, this tricky presupposition is unnecessary. He claimed that there is no need to be so dramatic and literary in philosophical discussions. Carrier observed one of the differences between a philosophical text and a literary text, which is what he called “form content distinction”, that the target of philosophical writing is to present the content of its text, (the opinion, the argument, the critics), while the literature focuses more on presenting the form of its text (rhetoric, style). Though of course, while philosophers can have a stylish way of writing and can use some literary skills, these should be independent of the content of their arguments. With a different style telling the same story, the literature differs; but with a different style arguing the same point of view, there is still only one theory presented. Carrier took the example of the French version of Danto’s “The Transfiguration of the Commonplace”, in which some terms of the original text had lost their exact meaning when translated from English to French, since no equivalents could be found in the other language. In many of these cases, only the style of the

⁷³ Carrier, David. “Danto as Systematic philosopher or comment on lit Danto en français” *Danto and His Critics*. Wiley-Blackwell, 1993, p20.

⁷⁴ Ibid, p21.

English writing is lost, but not the argument itself, as the content of arguments can not be changed by these stylish details.

Danto's "dramatic" argument about the indiscernibles, with splendid details and stage-like setting, from Carrier's point of view, is an overused rhetoric, which according to him is not appropriate for philosophical writing. As we can already see from the last chapter, the argument that Danto made by comparing indiscernible counterparts for seeking the essence of art is very persuasive. However, this persuasive power for Carrier comes from the rhetorical technique of presupposing something which is not really the case, then refuting it to emphasize the righteousness of his real proposition. "He is not identifying indiscernible things in the world, but describing the world in a way which gives the illusion that there are such things."⁷⁵

He tried to tell Danto's story in another order. Danto's examples of the indiscernibles include objects that look the same while in actuality they are not identical. Carrier picked something which we already know as different but looks entirely the same: a surface of a one-inch square in blue on a Brice Marden painting may look exactly the same as the surface of a one-inch square on the cover of a book which is also in the same color. "Danto's argument shows that the individual artwork is not the right unit for the aesthetician to handle when providing a conceptual analysis. The right unit is that individual work in its setting in the museum."⁷⁶

Carrier points out the rhetoric trick of employing the more convictive order of presenting a theory and the presupposition in Danto's thought experiment. But it seems that Carrier himself is also presupposing something in this very case: Danto never presupposed that those examples are entirely identical. On the contrary, we know from the beginning that they are not identical, that's the whole point of this thought experiment about "indiscernibles". It is Carrier who has presupposed that Danto used the rhetoric trick. I presume that his conclusion comes from the misunderstanding of the term "indiscernibles". Danto used "indiscernible" to describe the pair of counterparts in which one of them is art and the other is non-art: as art and

⁷⁵ Carrier, David. "Danto as Systematic philosopher or comment on lit Danto en français" *Danto and His Critics*. Wiley-Blackwell, 1993, p22.

⁷⁶ Ibid, p22.

non-art may share the same appearance, the essential difference must be some properties which cannot be told from a mere observation in the sensory sense. So here it is very clear that unobservable means “sensuously indistinguishable”, which already implies, that the examples may not be the same thing, not identical. Furthermore, the circumstances in which art and non-art are unobservable, are not only limited to different objects with the same appearance but also includes the case that the same object at different locations in time and space can be art and non-art.

Carrier also has published several other articles talking about Danto’s theory. The third and fourth chapter of “The Era of Post-Historical Art” focused on Danto’s theory of “the end of art”. This article is more like a presentation and interpretation of Danto’s theory, with not too much criticism. Carrier considered Danto as a post-historicist, as Danto described the era of our time as the post-historical period for art, which means there won’t be any breakthrough or a revolution for art history in the future. It doesn’t imply that no more new artworks will be produced, but rather that nothing revolutionary can be achieved since anything can be art.

In another article “Gombrich and Danto on Defining Art.”, Carrier compared Danto’s theory with an art historian, E. H. Gombrich’s theory of art. Gombrich’s view of art is presented in his book “The Story of Art”, where he says: "There really is no such thing as Art. There are only artists." “If there are not artists, or artworks, at least there is this skill, artmaking”⁷⁷ So Carrier considered Gombrich as anti-essentialist, while Danto is obviously an essentialist. He found that from these two authors’ methodologies, Danto is very concerned about works like Warhol’s, the works which puzzled the essence of art; Gombrich scarcely talked about these types of artwork, since he has turned his attention from the artwork and artist to the skill or the activity of art creation. Gombrich’s diversion is somehow trying to respond to Danto’s theory of “the end of art” insofar as the skill or artmaking will always last even though art may come to meet the end. This response implies a common misunderstanding of what Danto means by “the end of art” since this concept is always a metaphor which

⁷⁷ Carrier, David. “Gombrich and Danto on Defining Art.” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 54, no. 3, 1996, pp.279.

doesn't mean art has ended, and Danto would certainly agree that after the end of art there would still be art creations. But from artwork and artist to the artmaking, this is an interesting direction to look at. Whatever art has meant in the past, whatever the artwork looks like today, even if certain philosophers have abandoned the concepts of art and artwork, and if the identity of artist and audience are tangled, the fact is that there was, and will always be, the reality of artistic activities. For Gombrich, "What we are rather concerned with are the activities associated with artmaking"⁷⁸, and insofar as he is using the concept of action and agent to study artistic activity, his attempt is quite reasonable and plausible. Carrier highly commended Gombrich's approach, for his emphasis on giving up the inquiry of art turned toward an investigation of artmaking, as for him once the existence of artistic activity is confirmed and elaborated, then the concept of art, artwork, and artist are no longer necessary, which means we can even abandon the usage of these terms as if they never existed. This point of view seems unrealistic. To study artmaking or art skill, is inevitably to explore the essence of art, only from another perspective. It is impossible to talk about artist and artmaking without touching upon the concept of art, otherwise, there would be no difference between analyzing art creation and analyzing the skill of skating.

2) Noël Carroll

Noël Carroll, born in 1947, is now still working as a distinguished professor at City University of New York. Considered as one of the leading figures of the philosophy of art in American, he is very sensitive to the new trends of contemporary art and is especially interested in the philosophy of film and literature. Naturally, Danto's art theory becomes one of his concerns.

His article "Danto, Style, and Intention" discussed the self-conflict of the intention, and he wanted to reconcile this conflict.

"The purpose of this paper is to explore certain tensions with respect to

⁷⁸ Carrier, David. "Gombrich and Danto on Defining Art." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 54, no. 3, 1996, pp.280.

the notion of artistic intention that appear to beset Danto's philosophy of art. Specifically, this tension seems to arise because in Danto's scheme intention is relevant to fixing the artistic status and identity of artworks, but it is denied a role by Danto in making certain stylistic attributions to artworks. The issue is whether Danto can consistently endorse a role for intention in the first instance while denying it in the case of certain stylistic attribution”⁷⁹

Carroll considered that the artist's intention is of great importance to Danto's art theory. This importance is presented in Danto's famous essay “The Artworld”, where in Danto's view there is only one right interpretation of each work: the one that conforms with what the artist intended to represent.

Carroll's understanding of the Artworld is as such: ”Danto's famous answer is an artworld-an atmosphere of ideas and theories and a backdrop of historical development that provide the conceptual resources that enable not only an audience to recognize something as art, but which provide the artist with the mutual understandings that permit her to presume that there will be an audience out there prepared to recognize what she intends to communicate.”⁸⁰ Just like Carroll's excellent summary of Danto's representational definition of art that I consulted in the last chapter, his interpretation and summary of Danto's concept of Artworld is also accurate and comprehensive. He described the function that the Artworld has for the works, as that which provides for the works an “art status”: from the artist's perspective the art status means that the work has got a passport, an identification of “being artwork”, from the perspective of the audience the art status means a way to identify artwork and which therefore leads to a way of interpretation with this identity. “The identity of the work and its interpretation are logically interrelated, and both are a function of the art historical location of the artwork in question.”⁸¹

Carroll's criticism, compared with his interpretation, is a little blurry. The

⁷⁹ Carroll, Noël. “Danto, Style, and Intention.” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 53, no. 3, 1995, p251

⁸⁰ Ibid, p251.

⁸¹ Ibid, p252.

problem occurs between the necessary conditions of being art in Danto's definition, in both of its facets, the representational theory and the Artworld; and the conflict is between two concepts: intention and style. As we already saw, to enter into the "Artworld", the artist's intention of inserting his work into art history in order for it to attain an "art status" is a necessary condition for the work to be an artwork. On the other hand, in Danto's representational-expressional definition, the necessary condition of being art is being an expression with a style, so having a style is also necessary for being an artwork. But Danto himself never connected these two parts of his art theory, so he never elaborated the relationship between the artist's intention and style. For Carroll, the tension here is that "...though Danto seems committed to the ineliminability of intention in identifying a candidate as an artwork, he nevertheless seems equally committed to the view that artistic intentions are irrelevant in certain discussions about the stylistic properties of artworks."⁸² Carroll discussed two senses of style in Danto's texts. The first is from Danto's essay "Narrative and Style", the other is from the essay "The Artworld". Carroll found that in "Narrative and style", Danto admitted that there are certain stylistic features of art that have nothing to do with the intention, which means that some aspects in the style can be easily conveyed without knowledge of the artist's intention. For example, if in the early works of an artist there was no distinct style, then the identity of these works as artworks is not dependent on the concept of style, as the artist's style was not yet revealed to the audience at that time. But in "The Artworld", Danto defined style as a work's artistic related predicates. Carroll considered that the first sense of style in "Narrative and style" can be reconciled with the artist's intention, while he considered the latter sense of style in "The Artworld" as irreconcilable with intention, and claimed that "this mixed view of artistic intention seems to court inconsistency."⁸³ That there is tension in regard to the latter sense of style is no doubt reasonable, but the tension is more intense between two concepts of style than between style and intention, which I will elaborate on in the later parts. Moreover, for the first sense, the conflict between style

⁸² Carroll, Noël. "Danto, Style, and Intention." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 53, no. 3, 1995, p253.

⁸³ Ibid, p252.

and intention in Danto's theory and elaborated by Carroll can be understood by such questioning as follows: Is artistic style intended? Or to what extent it is intended? Is an artist conscious of his or her style? An example offered by Carroll is the style of Charlie Chaplin. Today we all know about the style of Chaplin's performance with distinct make up, clothing, facial expression, and body language. However, at the beginning of Chaplin's career, when he first played a tramp in his earliest films, was he aware of his style and had he intentionally chosen the character and outfit? Or was there really a style at that time? In the later years did he intentionally pick a certain style among all the possibilities? These questions are challenging even for the artist himself. Nevertheless, for me, this problem of style and intention seems more obscure than tension or conflict. To sum up, the intention Danto holds for the theory of Artworld does not refer directly to the intention to create artwork in certain form, but to the content of creation: intentionally reflecting art history using the form.

3) Richard Wollheim

The art philosopher, Richard Wollheim, was born in 1923. As a contemporary of Danto, they had many interactions with each other, yet Wollheim did not set forth too many criticisms. His article "Danto's Gallery of Indiscernibles" in the book "Danto and His Critics", mainly concentrates on the thought experiments of Danto. He listed several important thought experiments most of which I have presented in the last chapter: 1. nine red square canvas; 2. two beds; 3. can opener and a condition humaine; 4. Polish rider of Rembrandt and some random splashed canvas; 5. three ties (Picasso's, the child's and the fraud's); 6. two ropes; 7. two sleds.

Wollheim claims that these are not true thought experiments. He insists that a thought experiment must firstly have a hypothesis which is then tested, but Danto had never made a hypothesis; instead he had decided his proposal from the beginning. The strategy is first to give an opinion rather than to offer examples to explain it. "My claim is that, even if Danto is not wrong in the result that he thinks that the experiment gives, he is wrong, and profoundly so, in that he supposes that the experiment gives a more conclusive result than, in the nature of things, it ever

could.”⁸⁴ However, this accusation is really out of thin air, for although the analysis of Danto often refer to these examples as “thought experiments”, Danto himself had never said anything like “now I want to present to you a thought experiment” before he gave these examples.

At any rate, Wollheim analyzed two kinds of thought experiment, each of which corresponds to a kind of concept: one is the concept “whose condition of application is determinate”, such as color, taste, and geometrical figure. For these concepts, the conclusive results can be applied to all the examples under the same concept, just like the result of a scientific experiment. Whereas for another kind of concept, thought experiments won’t be able to offer a general conclusion. According to Wollheim, the concept of art belongs to the second type; therefore, the conclusion of Danto cannot be applied to all kind of art. This analysis is somewhat tautological since it won’t be necessary to set the experiment for a concept which already entails a decisive conclusion about its properties. As for the second kind of concept, the only way to find whether it is a concept with defining characteristics, is to propose some hypothesis, then to test it through employing experiments.

I suppose that the conclusion of Wollheim is plausible, in the sense that there is something wrong with Danto’s examples, even if his claim is based upon a false accusation of Danto. Wollheim’s argument is a kind of belated shot after knowing art is a concept with no positive definition until now. Indeed, the examples Danto chose, are mostly the artworks in the narrow sense of contemporary art, and it certainly has caused some problems for Danto’s theory (however whether it is a thought experiment or not is irrelevant).

However, this accusation is really out of thin air, for although the analysis of Danto often refers to these examples as “thought experiments”, Danto himself had never said anything like “now I want to present you a thought experiment” before he gave these examples.

4) George Dickie

⁸⁴ Wollheim, Richard. “Danto’s Gallery of Indiscernibles” *Danto and His Critics*. Wiley-Blackwell, 1993, p31.

George Dickie is probably the most famous art philosopher who reviewed Danto insofar as he developed his institutional art theory from Danto's concept of "Artworld". His critique of Danto, or rather his response to Danto regarding his institutional theory, has been accused by Danto of being based on a misunderstanding, which is also collected in "Danto and His Critics", in the article "A Tale of Two Artworlds".

Dickie was polite enough to admit that he did misunderstand Danto. That there was such a misunderstanding is true, since Danto's Artworld refers to the historical context of art, while Dickie understood it as referring to the art institutions. In this article, Dickie confirmed that his institutional theory is a different and independent one from Danto's "Artworld", so that there are "two Artworlds". However, for Danto, the institutional art theory essentially reveals elitism, since if art institutions deliver the identity of artwork, then the aesthetic value of art is entirely at the hands of a group of experts. In response to Danto's critique, Dickie argued that art institutions do not merely consist of experts, but correspond to the system of aesthetic values of the whole society.

Dickie doubted that "being involved in a relationship of aboutness" is a necessary condition of being art. He proposed that there is non-objective art which is about nothing (here what Dickie means by non-objective painting is unclear, as there is a trend of abstract art known as non-objective art, but many of them are evidently representative, just like any other abstract paintings). He also considered the artworks named "untitled" as a counterexample of aboutness, since he thought the work named "untitled" isn't about anything. This is a huge mistake, to mix the real untitled work with work whose title is "untitled": the latter one is exactly about "untitled" as a subject. He concludes that he won't take 1) aboutness as a necessary condition of being art; 2) instead, the necessary condition is that of belonging to the category which is the type of thing about something else. I didn't achieve to comprehend this proposition, for me these two are apparently the same thing: the type of thing about something else, means that one of the essential properties of this type is aboutness; belonging to a particular means possessing the property of aboutness, so if 2) is true

then the 1) is true as well. If 2) is a necessary condition of being art, then so is 1).

A very interesting insight of Dickie about Danto's theory of Artworld, is that "Certainly in many of his remarks Danto is not concerned with what is required for something to be a work of art, but rather just with what required for someone to realize that a certain kind of thing can be a work of art."⁸⁵ I share this concern, first of all because it raises the question of whether a criterion to recognize the identity of something is a constitutive part of a definition, and secondly because Danto placed too much emphasis on the qualification of the art candidate (to reference art history) and the qualification of art creation and interpretation (the familiarity with art history) and so his standard may be too demanding or even wrong. An interesting comparison between Danto and Dickie in this regard, is that: Danto said in his article "Artwork and Real Thing" that the painting created by an intelligent chimpanzee or a child is not art, as neither a chimpanzee nor a child are qualified to provide the identity of art to their works since they are not familiar with art history, just as in the case that not everyone who has a tongue and is thus able to say "You are now married" is qualified to preside a marriage in the way that a priest is. Dickie, knowing about this example of Danto, deliberately sang a different tune: he mentioned that there are certain children, the evangelists, who are qualified to preside marriages. He disagreed with Danto by arguing that it is possible for children's works to be art as long as they are admitted by the art institution, and for him, the necessary condition for being an artwork has nothing to do with art critics and interpretations.

It will do no harm to mention another criticism of Dickie's theory of Artworld since there are similar ones of Danto's too. Professor Ted Cohen from the University of Chicago pointed out a conflict in Dickie's theory. Dickie called the artworks which are qualified by art institutions "candidates of appreciation" which means they are worthy to appreciate. For Cohen, many commonplaces such as urinals, cups, or boxes, cannot be appreciated; meanwhile, the institution accepted things like the Fountain as art, so a work of art is not necessarily a candidate of appreciation. It is a very biased argument, I don't even understand why urinals or boxes cannot be appreciated even if

⁸⁵ Dickie, George. "A Tale of Two Artworlds" *Danto and His Critics*. Wiley-Blackwell, 1993, p75.

they are not art. Danto responded to Cohen, pointing out that it is a misunderstanding and misinterpretation of appreciation. He explained that when people do appreciate the Fountain and do not appreciate a urinal, it means that they do not appreciate the property of a common urinal. What is worth appreciating is the property of art added upon the urinal which transfigured it into the Fountain.

5) Crispin Sartwell

Born in 1958, Crispin Sartwell, belonging to the relatively younger generation of philosophers of art, is raising more fundamental questions in relation to Danto's theory. His article "Aesthetic Dualism and the Transfiguration of the Commonplace" accuses Danto's art theory of aesthetic dualism, which splits the physical existence of artwork and the conceptual existence of the work apart.

Sartwell described the feature of contemporary art that he is concerned with: "The view that works of art are physical objects has been challenged in various familiar ways."⁸⁶ This proposition can be understood in several ways from a different perspective. During the evolution of contemporary art, it is indeed a noticeable trend that art creation becomes less and less dependent on physical elements such as the technique for dealing with the material; yet there are trends like conceptual art whose form is almost only a single idea. However, "non-physical art" can also be understood as art with detachment from touchable material, and does not necessarily relate only to contemporary art, but relates also to art such as music and drama which are from the beginning without a form of "physical object". Here Sartwell quoted Nelson Goodman's concept and also that of Danto's for these arts: Goodman considered literature, drama, music as "allographic art", which are all composed in notations, in other words, composed in the form of systematic symbols. Danto also has proposed a similar concept to describe the feature of this kind of art with again a humorous metaphor: logically incombustible. It means that you can burn thousands of music score of Ninth Symphony, millions of collections of poems of Shelley, but the works

⁸⁶ Sartwell, Crispin. "Aesthetic Dualism and the Transfiguration of the Commonplace." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 46, no. 4, 1988, p461.

themselves still exist. For Sartwell, this kind of artwork is not identical to the physical object. The question of whether or not artworks are with or without physical object has been the subject of many related discussions. Sartwell recaptured the opinions of other art philosophers: Wollheim claimed that some of the artworks are physical objects, as well as Goodman and Danto; There is also the more radical view of Croce and Collingwood who suggest that all artworks are imaginary entities in the mind of the artist, which is a total dualistic view of art. Sartwell claimed that Danto's dualism is, of course, different from Croce's, in that it is describing a different relationship of physical being and conceptual being of art. Danto's aesthetic dualism is similar to the dualism of body and soul, however both the body and soul refer to the artwork, not to the mental states of artists or audience. According to Sartwell, they "become so radically other than they were that there is no identity through the change."⁸⁷ He quoted Danto's original text in which Danto clearly expressed this dualistic view of artwork:

"My claim throughout is that an artwork cannot be flattened onto its base and identified just with it, for then it would be what the mere thing itself is-a square of red canvas ... or whatever. It would be whatever the real thing itself consisted in that we proposed to subtract from the work of art, in order to see what the remainder might be, supposing that the essence of art might lie here. It was as though the artwork in every instance was a complex entity with the red square, for example, as a proper and indeed an easily interchangeable part: our arrayed examples were almost as though several souls shared the self-same body."⁸⁸

Sartwell understands Danto's concept of artwork as follows "They undergo an apotheosis to a new ontological realm. If Danto is correct in this, then a sculpture (for example, Michelangelo's *Rebellious Slave*) does not consist of, or at least is not identical to, the marble out of which it was carved. Rather, in it, the marble is

⁸⁷ Sartwell, Crispin. "Aesthetic Dualism and the Transfiguration of the Commonplace." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 46, no. 4, 1988, p461.

⁸⁸ Danto, Arthur C. *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace: A Philosophy of Art*, p101.

transfigured and transported into the "world" of art."⁸⁹ I must point out that if here Sartwell meant to use the term "transfiguration" in Danto's sense, then he may have misunderstood the concept of transfiguration in Danto's theory. The transfiguration in Danto's sense refers to something being transfigured into artwork without changing its appearance; in Sartwell's example, it is not the marble that is transfigured into artwork, but the carved figure of the material as marble, has been transfigured into artwork.

Sartwell named the relationship in this dualism between conceptual being and physical being of the same work as "inhabitation". Like the soul inhabits the body, the conceptual being of the work inhabits the physical object. He made this argument by quoting Danto's original text about Duchamp's Fountain: "Certainly the work has properties that urinals themselves lack: it is daring, impudent, irreverent, witty, and, clever. ..."⁹⁰; Danto also has suggested that the urinal is the material counterpart (substratum) of the work Fountain. (It is worth noticing that the predicates Danto offered to describe the work, seem more like the predicates customarily used to describe the artist. It is impossible to call an artwork clever because this adjective is usually associated with humans and animals. In short, when we say that an artwork is clever, it should actually mean that the artist is clever to create it. The true property of Fountain, which the urinals lack, according to Danto's definition, is that of being involved in a relationship of aboutness.) So the existence of Fountain and the existence of a urinal, are essentially two things. When people look (rightly, Danto may add) at the artwork in the museum, they are not looking at a urinal, but from the beginning they are looking at an entirely different thing: the Fountain's being as artwork. "That [Fountain] is a work of art, means that it has qualities to attend to which its un-transfigured counterpart lacks. . . . Moreover, this is not institutional, it is ontological. We are dealing with an altogether different order of things"⁹¹ (Sartwell takes this as the proof of Danto's anti-institutionalism).

Sartwell's critique is focused on the deep gap between an artwork and a mere real

⁸⁹ Sartwell, Crispin. "Aesthetic Dualism and the Transfiguration of the Commonplace.", p461.

⁹⁰ Danto, Arthur C. *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace: A Philosophy of Art*, pp. 93-94.

⁹¹ *Ibid*, p99.

thing which is created by this dualism. He prefers using the terms “artwork” and “its material counterpart”, instead of “artwork” and “mere real thing”, or “conceptual being” and “physical being”. Since Danto’s theory requires locating the artworks in the art historical context, the counterparts of the works, their identity, and predicates have been suspended; meanwhile, the “Artworld” as an overlapping context that consists of ideas, reflections and knowledge somehow becomes ontological. Danto made himself very clear that: “It is essential to our study that we understand the nature of an art theory, which is so powerful a thing as to detach objects from the real world and make them part of a different world, an art world, a world of interpreted things”⁹² – Sartwell is firmly opposed to this view of art.

Sartwell thinks that “Danto is evidently appealing to the principle that things with divergent properties cannot be identical.”⁹³ It is a common preconception that one thing cannot be A (certain predicate) and non-A at the same time; thus if two objects have conflicting features, they cannot be the same object. In the case of typical contemporary art, an object cannot be commonplace and be revolutionary at the same time or be impudent and elegant at the same time. The urinal is vulgar, the Fountain is exquisite, so they cannot be the same thing. Sartwell called this principle “the discernibility of the distinct (DD)”, that is, “if two things do not display all and only the same properties, they are not identical to each other.”⁹⁴ Sartwell also has noticed that upon this DD, there is another possible counterexample that the property of the object can change through time. There is nothing wrong with the fact that an object often loses some properties and attains some new properties while continuing as the same object (Sartwell claimed that this is not the case for Fountain, as Fountain is at the same time beneath notice and revolutionary, and so it is not losing any property). For instance, the property of artwork “revolutionary”, always occurs to the material (physical object) at a certain time. Sartwell presented a thought experiment to explain this kind of relationship between the property and the object: if a soldier picked up a stone on the earth and threw it to the enemy, which became the winning

⁹² Danto, Arthur C. *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace: A Philosophy of Art*, p135.

⁹³ Sartwell, Crispin. “Aesthetic Dualism and the Transfiguration of the Commonplace.”, p463.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, p463.

moment of ending the war, then the soldier became a hero and the stone he used became memorable. Does this stone become another object? Sartwell's answer is no. Although this winning moment added some new property to this stone, such as being memorable, symbolic, or glorious, adding these properties won't change the stone's identity —otherwise, every single operation towards the objects in daily life could give a new identity to the objects— that's impossible. This opinion sounds a little overly generalized, and one may say that these changes of identity do happen in daily life, such as how having a child makes you a father; but Sartwell insists that it is only a question of degree, otherwise “everything enters into an indefinite number of new relations all the time” which would result in us being unable to identify anything.

After he eliminated the problem of changing through time, Sartwell modified his principle of DD: only when the divergent properties appear in the two objects (with same physical being) all the time, then these two objects are not identical (which implies that even though two objects have divergent properties through time, still these two objects can be the same thing.), therefore, the mere real thing(commonplace) and the artwork(with the physical being of the commonplace) are the same thing, with the same identity. Thus, Sartwell thought that he had overcome the gap between an artwork and its material counterpart created by Danto's aesthetic dualism.

I would say that Sartwell has over-interpreted Danto's distinction between artwork and its material counter; to some extent, it seems to me that the so-called gap was nevertheless the product of his imagination. Although Danto did describe the artwork's physical being and conceptual being, which looks like the analogy of the dualism of body and soul, he had never said that they are not the same thing. The core of the whole discussion here is about the concept of identity. I think that here Sartwell has mistaken the change of identity, especially the part where he talked about adding identity, for “not being the same thing”. Just as in the example mentioned above, a man becomes a father after he has had a child, which does not involve changing identity nor does it involve becoming another man. This man, of course, remains the same person, and he doesn't lose any aspects of the identity that he had before the child was born, he will still be the husband of his wife, the employee of his company,

he will still be passionate, humorous, hard-working...whatever he was before. The real change is that a new identity has been given to this man. The identity of art and the original material counterpart is quite similar: the identity of art is added upon the commonplace; the commonplace is not losing any property.

The problem also occurs in the concept of “divergent property”. It always happens that we describe something using divergent predicates, only because people see things differently, and that doesn’t mean anything to the identity of an object. Furthermore, Sartwell’s concern that “everything enters into an indefinite number of new relations all the time” is also unnecessary, he exaggerated the frequency of something to “enter into new relations”. For instance, today from morning to evening, I didn’t enter into any new relationship with anything except for my relationship with Sartwell’s theory. I used my pan to cook, the pan is always a cooking instrument to me; this relationship will end only if it is broken one day, whereby it will become rubbish rather than a pan to me. The same is true of anything that surrounds me in my room, and of anyone I keep the same relation with. The change of identity only happens in such circumstances as: I am married, I am employed, or I use my pan to create installation art. It does not happen as often as Sartwell imagined, that something enters into a new relationship and is given a new identity.

Sartwell also seems over “guilty” when some pair of objects are considered different while they have the same physical composition. This view is neglecting almost all the symbolic feeling for the physical object, which is actually quite common. Imagining a fan has obtained the T-shirt which his idol took off on the live performance and threw it to the audience, and this fan has the same T-shirt in the same size because it is specially printed and distributed to every audience member at the live show. These two T-shirts, from the perspective of material composition, are entirely the same, just as the Fountain and the urinal (in the same shape). It is natural and understandable that they are absolutely two different things to this fan, if he incautiously mixes them up and can’t then tell them apart, he will definitely feel anxious. Therefore, we can see it is quite normal that besides contemporary art, there are many pairs of indiscernible with a different identity.

To sum up, Sartwell's criticism of Danto's art theory is based on his indiscriminate application of dualism to the artwork-material counterpart relation. Even if we take the understanding in the model of body and soul, it still doesn't mean that we can simply discuss the relation in terms of "whether they are identical" or "whether they are the same thing". The soul is dependent on the body, just like artistic being is dependent on the physical being, but the physical being of the work can exist without the identity of art, so there is no reason to say the contents of these concepts are identical.

6) Michael Kelly

Another American philosopher Michael Kelly is also concerned about the self-contradiction of Danto's theory. In his essay "Essentialism and Historicism in Danto's Philosophy of Art.", he pointed out that there is a conflict between Danto's essentialism and his historicism. Danto is widely considered in academic circles as an essentialist because he insists that art does have an essence, and that the definition of art can be found. So, Danto has tried to offer a definition which won't be interfered with by the process of history, and he even proposed the theory of "the end of art" which suggests that the status of art has reached a stable stage whereby the meaning of art won't change any more. For Kelly, Danto's approach to the essence of art is, like Danto himself suggested, the philosophical disenfranchisement of art.

Kelly analyzed the contradiction about interpretation in Danto's theory. His understanding of the theory of Artworld is that the interpretation is constitutive of art, and since the interpretation changes along with the history, therefore, art should also be changeable. Essentialism looks toward a universal and unchanging definition, but art changes throughout history. Hence, Danto's essentialism and historicism are self-contradictory.

There are several possible errors in this argument. First, the interpretation which is constitutive of art is the interpretation of concrete artworks. If the interpretation of a certain work changes, it can only be deduced that this specific artwork changes; this single change is irrelevant to the concept of art. So, the historicism of Danto doesn't

mean that the concept of art changes along with the history (even though it is true that the concept of art has changed but not because of the change of interpretation). Just like historicism in other disciplines which means that to understand the reality of the research object, it is necessary to explore the history in which it is brewed, Danto's historicism only means that to understand any one artwork you will have to learn about art history. Second, essentialism doesn't necessarily mean to hold the idea of an ultimate essence throughout history. Although essentialism's claim is that there is essence for a certain concept or object, it does not deny the fact that things change through time. It is common sense to all art philosophers, art historians, and essentialists (who fight against the anti-essentialism mentioned in the second chapter), that the essence of art, or in other words the meaning of the term "art", has changed throughout history.

So basically, there is no conflict as Kelly suggested. If there is some inconsistency, Kelly may mean that on the one hand, Danto is searching for a stable, unchangeable essence of art, which could cover the reality of art in all periods of art history; but meanwhile we can see from art history, that there are some objects that may be artwork in one time and not artwork in another. This is not an inconsistency but has revealed exactly the character of a relational concept. Take the example of father again. It is quite certain that the meaning, the essence of the concept of father, has never changed throughout history. However, countless men have been a father at one time and not a father at another time. The group of people who bear the name of father are changeable, since one can get the identity and can lose it as well, but it doesn't interfere with the essence of father. Broadly speaking, this characteristic doesn't only appear to the relational concept: for instance, the meaning of the term "book" is also very stable, but the material, the physical being of concrete book, has changed many times since antiquity. In a certain period of history books were clay slabs; in another, books were tough silks; in the third books were parchment; normally books are papers, and nowadays books are often digital data. So obviously, there's no conflict within some kinds of concept between their essence and the change of entities, for example, relational concepts and instrumental concepts.

Kelly also emphasized that this conflict (or I'd rather say, the difficulty of finding art's essence created by the subversive revolutions in art history) is consciously created by artists themselves since their very purpose was to overturn the tradition of the art in the past. Therefore, if it is the art historian who is fighting against itself, then how can we find an unchangeable essence in such a history? For me, it sounds over worrying. First, what the revolutionary artists are against, as far as we know, are specific properties of the artworks of their predecessors; whereas, what we do not know is whether these properties are essential ones or not. If they are not essential, then even though there are works which do not possess these properties, we cannot say that the essence of art is overturned. For essentialists, this fact of art revolution gives the clue needed to find the essence of art: if some properties have been absent in the new works, the good news is that we can rule these properties out from the essence of art. Secondly, it is very natural and acceptable that there are contradictories in different aspects within one domain throughout history. We should allow our society to have the right to evolve. The same thing happened in the history of scientific research as what happened in art history, though not in the same way: the earth was once flat, and now it is spherical; the light was once particle, and now it is wave-particle. Meanwhile, the essential property of scientific research has not changed: its objective is to find out the truth. Now let's look at Kelly's accusation of Danto's "philosophical disenfranchisement of art". Kelly's view about Danto's theory of "the end of art", is that Danto is trying to use philosophy to intervene the labile essence of art, thus intermediate the conflict between essentialism and historicism. Kelly's opinion about this attempt is that Danto's strategy does not intermediate these two, but has given up historicism in order to maintain essentialism. In Kelly's original text, he seems to have misunderstood the end of art: "In the meantime, art itself has been stripped of the two moments that conflicted, since art's essentialism ends along with its history." It's hard to tell what precisely this sentence means, but based on the context we could tell that Kelly considers Danto's "end of art" as "end of art history", while Danto absolutely doesn't mean that; what Danto really means by "end of art" is the end of drastic revolutionary art creation. Art history will certainly continue; this

objective process is out of anyone's hands.

Kelly also blamed art (strictly speaking: artists) for having intensified the tension between essentialism and historicism, by turning itself into something philosophical and historical. Contemporary art itself has become the protagonist of defining art. Kelly summarized the history of the definition of art: modern art is consciously standing out against the definitions of art in the past, among which the most powerful two are the imitational definition that made artists pursue the verisimilitude, and the expressional definition that made artists concentrate on expressing their feelings. Modern art doesn't want to obey either of these doctrines, and thus decided to redefine itself: "From this moment forward, art has been truly historical because it was aware of its history". I've always been doubtful toward this view of personated art. In reality, there is no such thing as the "self-conscious art", but only the self-conscious artist. I do believe that many revolutionary artists were thinking about bringing something new to art and doing something entirely different from the classical artworks. But does this mean that they were intentionally aiming at twisting the definition of art? I'd rather say no. This view considered art as an ideology, while art is not a conscious being but only a concept which evolved along with the artists' activities. To define this complex concept remains the job of the philosopher. Kelly quoted Danto to prove his idea: "(After the invention of photography) ...painting and sculpture realized that they had to define their nature if they were to continue". Here actually, either Danto has been imprudent, or he also holds the idea of a personated art with self-consciousness. What artists did firstly in the 1840s, was not to redefine art, but tried to do something different from being imitational as photograph had taken the job. So even constrainedly speaking, painting and sculpture may realize that he had to CHANGE their nature, but not DEFINE their nature.

Kelly claimed that the consequence of art's redefining itself, is that it is turning itself into philosophy. I would say that the real consequence is that it is turning to the expression of philosophical ideas, rather than turning itself into philosophy: the novel remains as novel even it starts to tell new stories. Philosophy and an artistically expressed philosophical idea are not the same, otherwise, why did Warhol decide to

physically make the Brillo boxes rather than to publish an article to present his reflection about art history and society? Because what he wants to do is art, not philosophy nor sociology. Furthermore, not every artist is thinking about expressing philosophical ideas; most artists are still doing traditional art, which doesn't have much to do with philosophy. As such, while maybe some of the artworks were turned into philosophical work, not all of them were, so it is inappropriate to say that art (as a whole) has become philosophy. That would be a misunderstanding of both art and philosophy.

To conclude, the accusation of Kelly towards Danto's essentialism and historicism is not tenable, due to his misunderstanding of historicism. On the contrary, some points of view that he shared with Danto, for example, the personated view of art, are problematic.

7) Tiernan Morgan, Lauren Purje

The online published essay, "An illustrated Guide to Arthur Danto's 'The End of Art'", is a collaboration between an art critic and an artist, both of whom are very young. As its title shows, it is mainly an introduction of Danto's theory "the end of art", but they do discover some omission of Danto which I highly approved of.

Their introduction and interpretation of "the end of art" is also very clear and delightful: "Danto believed that any subsequent movements were nonessential in that they would no longer contribute to the pursuit of art's self-definition."⁹⁵ They compared Danto's historical view of art with Hegel's historical theory, in that they both emphasized the tendency of self-realization and self-understanding of humans in and toward their history. "When art internalizes its own history, when it becomes self-conscious of its history as it has come to be in our time, so that its consciousness of its history forms part of its nature, it is perhaps unavoidable that it should turn into philosophy at last. And when it does so, well, in an important sense, art comes to an

⁹⁵ Morgan, Tiernan, and Lauren Purje. "An Illustrated Guide to Arthur Danto's 'The End of Art.'" Hyperallergic, 31 Mar. 2015. Hyperallergic.com.

end. “⁹⁶. Morgan and Purje also introduced a very interesting work of art which may serve as an illustration to the theory of “the end of art”:

“Sara Fanelli’s 40-meter-long timeline of 20th-century art (which was formerly displayed on the Tate Modern’s second floor). The timeline pinpoints the historical inception of particular movements, while also naming key historic artists.....These timelines often implicitly support certain ideas about what art is, what it was, and where it’s headed.”⁹⁷

It can be seen quite clearly from this timeline that after the middle of 20th century, there are less and less “-ism”, or trends, or schools; there are only concrete artists and artworks, especially after the 2000s. Therefore, this work in the form of a timeline appears to somehow prove that Danto’s conclusion about art history is right about the fact that there won’t be too many revolutionary moments for art history anymore.

Morgan and Purje’s criticism of Danto is simple but also crucial in that Danto’s historicism does not cope with the whole of art history, but only with the art history of the West. It is quite true that Danto never paid attention to much of the non-western art history, although he did mention Japanese prints in order to explain the concept of style. They pursued the critique, saying that “Danto also conveniently excludes work which challenges his art historical thesis, namely non-Western art.”⁹⁸ It would be difficult to say that the Dantonian concept of artwork is extracted from the whole of art history, for it is actually extracted mostly from western art history; and he didn’t explore the other traditions in which it would be very possible that the artists rarely took their art history as subjects. Furthermore, from my opinion, the accusation that Danto’s ignores certain corners of art, is not only valid to the western-art-based argument, but also to the view of primitive art, to the child’s and to the amateur’s work...whatever these objects are really like, how artistic they seem, as long as they don’t fit the historical view, Danto simply won’t admit that they are artworks.

⁹⁶ Danto, Arthur C. “The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art.” *Grand Street*, vol. 4, no. 3, 1985, p185.

⁹⁷ Morgan, Tiernan, and Lauren Purje. “An Illustrated Guide to Arthur Danto’s ‘The End of Art.’”. <https://hyperallergic.com/191329/an-illustrated-guide-to-arthur-dantos-the-end-of-art/>

⁹⁸ Ibid.

Conclusion of part 1

Now we can see that, some of these critics have good interpretations of Danto's theory, and some of them have grave misunderstandings; some of the accusations are reasonable, some of the accusations can be refuted, and some of them though not quite logical or expressed in a good way, are pointing in the right direction to Danto's shortcomings.

Let's now look again at all the important criticisms of Danto's theory:

1) David Carrier

Unreasonable accusation 1: Danto's analysis with "indiscernible" examples is a trick of converting the narrative order.

Response: This is caused by his misunderstanding of the concept "indiscernible", while actually indiscernible never means identical.

Unreasonable accusation 2: The study of art should be focusing on artmaking, by this, we can discard the concept of art

Response: It is an excellent idea to focus more on artmaking, but there is no study of artmaking without the study of art.

Credit: Danto doesn't pay much attention to artistic activity and focuses too much on the artwork.

2) Noël Carroll

Reasonable accusation (wrongly expressed and modified by me): There is contradiction between Danto's representational theory and artworld theory, which is concretely speaking the inconsistency of the concept of style.

3) Richard Wollheim

Unreasonable accusation: Danto's thought experiment is not truly thought experiment, he took his conclusion for granted without any hypothesis.

Response: Danto never said that he was conducting thought experiments; furthermore, it is not obligatory for a thought experiment to strictly take the form of scientific experiment.

Credit: The real problem here with which Danto's conclusion from these

examples may be wrong, is that most of Danto's examples are typically contemporary or modern art in the narrow sense, which leads him to neglect some classical properties that may be still alive.

4) George Dickie

Unreasonable accusation: "Aboutness" is not a necessary condition of being art, since there are untitled works and non-objective art. An artwork is not really about something but belongs to the type of things which has the property of "aboutness".

Response: If the work is titled "untitled" or even if it is really untitled, that doesn't mean they are not about anything; and the two concepts with "aboutness" he said is the same thing.

Reasonable accusation (not fully expressed and modified): Danto's "Artworld" is not only concerned with the identity of artwork, but also the qualification of someone to be able to identify artwork, and his standard may be too demanding or even wrong.

5) Crispin Sartwell

Unreasonable accusation: Danto's art definition is an aesthetic dualism which makes the concept of art purely ontological

Response: this is a delusion caused by his mistaking something having multiple identities for it being not the same thing.

6) Michael Kelly

Unreasonable accusation: there is a contradiction between Danto's essentialism and historicism, as essentialism asks for an unchangeable definition but art itself is self-conscious of its own history and is overturning itself.

Response: This is based on a misunderstanding of historicism; historicism means seeing something with reference to the history. Furthermore, it is inappropriate and unrealistic to talk about art as a person

Credit: Danto does think that the real essence of art should be unchangeable, which is impossible: the essence of art has changed and may change in the future.

7) Tiernan Morgan, Lauren Purje

Reasonable accusation: Danto also always denied that the works which challenge his art historical thesis are art, for example, non-western art, primitive art, amateur's

art.

2. Other shortcomings and doubts of Danto's theory

As we can see, many of the accusations to Danto's art theory, are, to different extents, caused by the misunderstanding of certain concepts or over-interpretation of the theory, thus the theory can be well defended within the structure of Danto's argumentation. But still, as I emphasized in the first chapter, there is no perfect definition of art until now that has been proposed: Danto's theory and his definition of art are not perfect either. In addition to the shortcomings pointed out by the existing criticisms, there are more hidden weaknesses that have remained unnoticed by researchers, especially some of the omissions which are caused by the neglects committed more or less by the current aesthetics. To search every suspicious corner of ambiguity and imperfection in Danto's definition of art, with my clarification of the context of contemporary art in the first chapter, I'll verify whether Danto's definition fits this context, thus to find where to put some reparative effort to form a better definition. The hints given by existing criticisms inspire some of the following accusations, the others to my knowledge have never been proposed.

1) The obscure of the concept of style in "style matrix"

As introduced in chapter III, Danto's theory of artworld is explained using his concept of style matrix; also, in "The Transfiguration of the Commonplace", he placed much emphasis on the style to explain the concept of expression. Many critics admit of Danto's aesthetics that his definition of art has two facets: the representational one which corresponds his definition of art presented in "The Transfiguration of the Commonplace", and the historical one which corresponds his theory of Artworld, style matrix, the end of art, etc. In both of these two facets, he has used and explored the notion of "style", but it looks like there is not much continuity within these two elaborations of style, and this discontinuity has brought some difficulty to the self-justification of the "artworld" theory.

In his definition of art, style is a concept that refers to the way the artist presents the world. Danto's metaphor for it, as mentioned before, is that the style is like "stilus", the drawing instrument of which the trace is affected by the person's hand using it. The trace is affected by many variables like the angle between the point and the surface, the pressure from the hand, the fluency of the hand's movement, the character of the ink, etc. Likewise, an artist's style is affected by his whole life experience and point of view seeing the world, and his skill as well, thus it is a complicated process forming a result as a style, which is unique. This concept of style conforms very well the common understanding of style in daily language.

However, in Danto's theory of "Artworld", as we can see in his introduction to the "style matrix", here this style somehow looks different from what we get from Danto's representational theory, and also seems different from what we commonly understand as style. Here "style" is reduced to a composition of related artistic properties of the work, as if it can be linguistically analyzed and described. It is true that some of the styles which are widely influential or extremely distinct, can be clearly described in the form of language, for instance we can summarize that one of the distinct characteristics of art nouveau is that the profile line of the figures or the objects is drawn much thicker than the line of the inner details. But only some of the properties of a style can be properly described. Furthermore, the composition of properties may sketch out the main character of the style of certain school or trend, but not the subtle character of each specific artist. In "The artworld", Danto's examples given here as art-related predicates are simply "being representational", "being expressional". It degrades Danto's level of offering examples, also shows that it would be so difficult, to think about a certain art style in the form of predicates with "+" and "—". How can we describe the style of Monet and Renoir, in this form while still indicating their differences? As they belong to the same trend as "impressionists", most of the predicates for them both should be shared in common; but for the rest, do we have any idea how to make an accurate description? Maybe we can say that Renoir's style is softer, and then adding "being soft" in Renoir's line in the style matrix, but then comes the problem of dealing with Monet: in order to show the

difference we should put a “—being soft”, but can we really say that Monet’s style is not soft? Apparently, his style is softer than Cézanne’s, not to mention that it is much softer than Bacon or Mondrian. It is impossible to get a clearly uttered version which reflects the truth within the style matrix. It is interesting that this “style matrix” somehow reminds me of a theme in the movie “Matrix”, the scene where the film characters are chatting about the breakfast’s taste in the matrix, in a virtual world constructed by computer programs, where they are all brains in the vat, where everything is eventually “0” and “1”, just like our style matrix filled with “+” and “—”. One man says “How do the machines really know what Tasty Wheat tasted like?” It reveals the truth that there are on earth always some things which can not be translated into language or data.

The point here is to show that there is a contradiction between Danto’s concept of style in his two parts of art theory. If the style in the representational theory is adopted, then the whole idea of the style matrix becomes inappropriate. It would be sufficient to put the artist’s name, or the title of the work in front of every line in the style matrix, because “style is the man himself”. Every artist’s, even every work’s style is unique; thus the predicates are not necessary to describe the style. In this case, the so-called matrix therefore no longer exists, as it is not necessary nor appropriate to add predicates. So, this discontinuity of the concept of style is blocking us from understanding what the role of “style” is in the reality of art. One of these two interpretations of style must be discarded, and my suggestion is to keep the one in the metaphorical representational definition.

2) Is the “Artworld” really necessary for being art?

After the discontinuity of the concept of style has been revealed, it seems to me that the concept of style in “style matrix” is more problematic; thus, the whole theory of Artworld which is based on this analysis of style reflecting art history becomes debatable. Let’s look again at the Artworld theory: the Artworld is the whole context of art history which is offered to every artwork in it and can be expressed with the style matrix. “To see something as art requires something the eye cannot decry, an

atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of the history of art: an artworld.”⁹⁹ It means two things: every artwork is indicating its position in art history through its style, which is composed of many artistic related predicates; and the interpretation of artworks, the understanding of artworks, should all depend on the knowledge of art history behind or supporting the existence of the work.

In the article “Artworld”, it seems that Danto placed more emphasis on the interpretation, or in other words, the understanding of artwork. The question being dealt with here is more like “how to identify artwork and to know why it can be called artistic” rather than “what is the definition of art”, though these two topics are closely related. The definition of art, for the audience, may be expressed in the form mentioned above: “how to identify an artwork”; for the artist, it would be “how to make my work to be considered as artwork”. As Danto took the dependence of “Artworld” to be universal to all art, this concept is supposed to serve both the audience and the artist, though Danto placed more emphasis on the interpretational side in his article. Nevertheless, is this knowledge of art history really necessary to all art creation and interpretation?

The concepts of style matrix and Artworld are no doubt necessary and helpful to understand a huge amount of art, especially contemporary works. As these works more or less are trying to do something which had never been done before, thus they are adding new artistic related predicates (no matter whether adding “+” or “—”) to the style matrix, bringing something new from art history and also to art history. However, it would be shortsighted to claim that all art creations and admirations are dependent on the knowledge of art history. On the one hand, it would be, concerning the concept of contemporary art in the broad sense, a neglect of the existence of artworks which is in the traditional narrative form. On the other hand, it would be an elitist view of the interpretation and understanding of art, which neglects not only the merely sensational and experiential way of seeing something as art but also the spontaneous and aesthetical way of art creation. Moreover, it is also worth noticing that even for many classical artworks, the knowledge of art history is not only

⁹⁹ Danto, Arthur. “The Artworld.” *The Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 61, no. 19, 1964, p580.

unnecessary but also insufficient to fully understand the work. For example, with the knowledge of art history and without the knowledge of Christianity, how can one say that he fully understands and can properly interpret the “Last supper”, or “Sistine Madonna”, or any of the religious masterpieces? He may be able to discuss the technique of Raphael but won’t be able to really understand the faces of Madonna and Christ, and for this kind of work, we won’t call the mere analysis of style and its status in art history a proper interpretation.

Furthermore, it becomes doubtful too whether the concept of style is really necessary to define artwork while the concept remains unclarified. As I have held, the concept of style in the representational theory is as follows: “artist’s way of seeing the world and representing the world”. It looks quite reasonable to say that everyone, not necessarily just a professional artist, potentially has a style because, of course, everyone has one’s own way of seeing the world. And once a man creates art, does that mean he is representing his style? According to Danto’s representational definition of art, if anyone, amateur or child, produced something in the form of representation with expression, for example, a painting. Though this painting may very possibly not be mature, with clumsy skill, has nothing intended to do with art history, it certainly still has a style in Danto’s expressional sense, because no matter how far this work is from the expert’s field, the work is produced with a personality. Thus, here we have a representation and expression with style, voila! An artwork. But apparently, Danto will not admit that such kind of unprofessional creation without demonstrating some point of view to the art history is a piece of art, it has no permission to enter into the Artworld. From another point of view, the work which we already know as possessing a style, also can be considered as having access to the entry of the style matrix. Supposing the style of this amateur’s painting can be described as predicates A, B and C...it in any way must have brought some predicate new to the style matrix and art history, as the style of a person is unique and it is impossible to find another person who has the entirely same way of seeing the world. There will always be a new predicate: being in the style of somebody, adding to the style matrix and buying any work a ticket for the entrance to the Artworld. Hence,

from both the representational definition and historical definition of Danto, the extension of artwork should include non-professional works, yet Danto himself denies it while insisting on the importance of art historical context.

These discontinuities are all proving that the theory of artworld and style matrix faces great difficulty when applied to real, concrete artworks, even when explaining the typical contemporary ones. As Danto suggested, many of the revolutionary works in contemporary art can only be considered as art with the whole art history as its reference, as they are adding new predicates which had never appeared in the past or reducing predicates which can often be found in the past. It is true that the most revolutionary ones like Fountain and Brillo Box, can be understood in this way. But if we describe the new predicate which Fountain brought to the style matrix as “being a ready-made”, and Brillo Box’s as “looks like ready-made but actually is made by the artist on purpose as a vivid imitation of the ready-made”, then any work produced later in these two forms should be ruled out from the realm of art, as they are not really bringing new predicate to the style matrix. However, in the reality of art, we still can see many proper works which are in the form of ready-made, though the read-made might have been disposed or recomposed, are basically repeating each other from the perspective of bringing new predicates to art history. Meanwhile, these works have their artistic value, which gives them the membership of art, but not their special reflection of art history. Also, many artworks in the classical forms are still being produced, without bringing anything new to the Artworld but indeed offering their dedications to the audience. I highly doubt that for fully understanding a movie the knowledge of the history of the film industry is indispensable, apparently here the knowledge of art history is less necessary; and you cannot deny that a movie is absolutely art.

Now it is clear that at least, Danto’s theory of artworld is problematic and somehow conflicts with his representational definition, and with a little redundancy, also seems to conflict with common sense about identifying artworks. The theory of Artworld is definitely a genius idea, it serves very well to understand and interpret certain types of artwork. Whereas, it seems that it’s only appropriate for a small part

of members in the real world of art. If for the true definition of art, there is still something valuable in this part of Danto's theory, then the concept of style and artworld must be revised and reorganized.

3) Danto's attitude towards audience: over-demanding and under-estimate

Compared with many other definitions of art in the past, Danto's definition is already placing much more emphasis on the audience's side than the former theories. The artworld theory, which is constructed more for helping the audience to identify the artworks and to understand the regime of art creation, is more applicative for the receiver of the artworks rather than the artists. But still, Danto's art theory as a whole, is an artist-oriented view of art, as every property he mentioned of the artwork, is brought by some operation of the creator: offering a representation, giving titles, choosing an object, reflecting art history, expressing the way of seeing the world, etc. In this whole process of art creation and admiration according to Danto's description, the artist is always initiative, and the audience is always passive. The Artworld theory is eventually offering a doctrine for the audience, claiming the only way to understand and interpret artwork correctly is to learn its art-historical status. So, it implies a value saddled on the audience, that the best and right and only way to understand art is to learn art history, and that the good artworks can always be found representing their reflection and attitude towards art history. That is the main reason why Danto's theory is accused of being too intellectual or knowledge centric.

Firstly, as I have explained in the former parts, the familiarity of art history isn't the only approach to either art creation or appreciation, and it is neither necessary nor sufficient. This way of creation and understanding is neglecting the sensory ability of humans, and the tradition of narrative art which is still ALIVE. Even among the works of contemporary art (in the narrow sense), there are many excellent works which can be clearly understood and can arouse the sympathy of the audience without any art historical knowledge; and also, these artists' intention, is neither reflecting art history but to represent their subject in a metaphorical way. Danto, as well as many other art philosophers, have concentrated too much on the revolutionary works which brought

about a breakthrough to art history (or in Danto's words, brought new artistic related predicates), as if this were the only value of contemporary art. But in fact, these kinds of works only constitute a very small population in the realm of art, even though the main trend is following the revolutionary ones. From the perspective of donation to art history, the installations today have no difference from one another, the revolutionary form in the last century has somehow turned into a tradition. But it would be stupid to say that these works who only followed the new tradition on the level of form are not valuable, as their great value is not dependent on their reflection to art history. I came across the work in the Biennale Lyon in 2017, an installation, with printed monochrome figures (in the size of a real man) being packaged in transparent capsules, attached to transparent frames (it is such a pity that I can't recall the name of the artist). I deeply remember its high understandability, as the figures photographed appear to be drug users, aged immigrants, all sorts of the marginalized population which people can see but never want to get in touch with, or even get close to: there are transparent walls between them and society. The whole installation is a well-set scene: the size of the work, the distance the audience can get are all counted to push the audience to feel as the artist expected. This kind of work is typical installation art, thus is typical contemporary art created under the new tradition originated from the avant-garde. They are telling new stories, presenting new subjects, not with some brand-new form and breathtaking weirdness, but with sensitivity and the will of representing a neat metaphor to the audience. It is made with a very little reference to art history, and the audience can well understand, interpret, appreciate, and get consensus, without any background knowledge of art history.

Secondly, as I mentioned in chapter I, that today there are some works which were originally non-art, but possibly have become art because of people's appreciation. The photograph of the nebula is an extreme example. I once read a fiction in which there is a small fragment of the story: in a primary school, in a class on fine-art, a boy painted an absolute scrabble using a green crayon. Then he casually named this painting "green" because the teacher told them to name their pieces. Once the painting was handed over to the fine-art teacher, it astonished him by its sensitive taste and

highly abstract expressionist form or whatever, therefore he helped the boy to publish this painting and recommended him into the art institution, years after the boy becomes an artist and the “green” becomes the master’s early piece. In this case, it is terribly confusing, for the isolated work “green”: in Danto’s sense, this work may have a perfect interpretation which is reflecting art history, but the author does not offer this interpretation. Who on earth is the artist? Who is the audience? What is the essential difference between what the teacher did here and what Duchamp did to the urinal? In the context of contemporary art, in some circumstances, the boundary between artist and audience is progressively becoming indistinct. The audience, or strictly speaking the receiver, has become more and more powerful, and the artist or art creator is also starting to leave more undetermined space for the receiver to interpret the work, or even directly to invite the audience to participate in the creation of the work. Danto’s study of indiscernibles and ready-mades has touched to some extent this problem of artist’s and audience’s identity, but still, he took the dualistic view of artist and audience, and the monism value of the only right interpretation imposed to the audience. This point of view won’t be able to explain and justify the identity of art in such cases as the scientific photographs which become something similar with art, or the mediocre nonsense (in another word: commonplace) turned into (transfigured) rich and valuable art by excellent interpretation.

4) Incapable of identifying the commercial designs

Under the context of contemporary art today, as mentioned in chapter I, many forms of art have been tossed aside by aestheticians. Therefore, no theory or definition of art takes them into account. Commercial art is a rough term, what I want to discuss here are all the objects or instruments that were designed with taste, but that also, of course, served a purpose other than art itself. Our daily life and every living space in the human world are filled with this kind of object. I can say that the pattern of the tissue of my quilt cover with little elegant pink and light blue flowers is so well designed and makes me feel so comfortable on my bed, my teapot is so beautiful that it makes me want to make tea for myself every afternoon...But of course, Danto

won't let these objects enter into the sacred realm of art, the reason may be that they are "without any art historical reference", that they have "no title to indicate the subject", etc. To some extent, I agree with him in certain cases, though I do like my quilt cover and teapot very much, some other instruments with outstanding aesthetic value will not so easily yield to this authority.

The problem here is like I suggested in chapter I with the example of three teapots: it is hard to draw a line between the art and non-art among the commercial art (or in Danto's expression between an artwork and a mere instrument). Considering the two facets of definition of art: being representational — an expression with a style and with a metaphorical core; being referenced with its status in the art history, for the commercial design, it is often the case that the object (work?) conforms to the representational definition, and is irrelevant to the art history. Furthermore, in the objects that are multi-purpose, there are always some parts more artistic than other parts which may be purely instrumental. For example, a porcelain plate with unromantic, highly instrumental shape and extremely artistic pattern glazed on it, the pattern can be considered as "representation and expression with style and a metaphoric core", but the shape is rather not. If we say that the pattern is an artwork and the shape is not or if we consider this instrument directly as painting, then both of these solutions won't sound quite right as the pattern and the shape are attached to the same object.

The relationship between commercial designs and their material counterpart is also confusing. Most of the commercial designs are made for instrumental use, which means they are not like music, but closer to visual art. A possible difference between well-designed instruments nowadays and their resembled art form is that painting or sculpture always has the original piece, while commercial designs are industrially produced thus either all of them are original or all of them are copies. But actually, from this perspective, the commercial design is more like music or literature since they are, in Danto's words, incombustible.

In a word, with Danto's definition of art, we still can not tell whether a certain designed commercial instrument is artwork or not.

5) Neglecting primitive art

Danto's art theory has exerted great advantages in explaining typical contemporary art in the narrow sense (mentioned in chapter I), but has also shown shortages in not facing many other types of artworks. It is known to many of Danto's reviewers that Danto denied primitive art, such as cave paintings and pottery figurines. Nevertheless, this rejection causes a problem for his theory concerning art history. As Danto's theory of Artworld is closely connected to art history in which every new work created will always be either a succession of or rebellion against the tradition or the former works, this system of reference will in the end inevitably trace back to the period of the origin of art. Either Danto's theory must fail to explain why primitive art is not historically self-conscious while at the same time being art, or we must choose to deny the identity of primitive work as artwork as Danto did, which causes the problem of transitivity to the later works' reference.

6) Still is a definition of artwork

It is again an error committed more or less by many aestheticians, as I presented in chapter I. The usage of the terms "art" and "artwork" are often mixed up, for in many texts where aestheticians say art, they actually mean artwork according to the context. In Danto's case, due to this mixed usage of those terms, it turns out that the definition or the standard of identification of art, in both the representational theory and the Artworld theory, is a definition of artwork. Different from many other aestheticians, Danto used "work of art" more often than using "art", and when he makes a comparison between work of art and mere real thing and mere representation, it is quite clear that he is talking about artwork, not art, as we can not compare art with mere real thing or representation. Danto himself is therefore clear about his objective to define artwork, only that he didn't emphasize and clarify the distinction between art and artwork, and sometimes used "art" in terms of "artwork".

My objective of this thesis is to propose a definition of art, not a definition of artwork. But of course, these two are logically connected, so Danto's definition is

something absolutely worth learning from, as it seems to be the most plausible among the existing definitions of artwork.

7) Is he mixing up the concepts of artwork and good artwork?

This issue will also lead us back to the problem of style again. As I've introduced, Danto doesn't consider children's paintings or any amateurs' unskillful art historically irrelevant works as works of art, as he maintains that entering the context of art history is a necessary condition of being an artwork. In addition to the expert's work that is not art historically relevant which proved this view as being problematic from the perspective of the theory of artworld, the children's and laymen's works have one more distinction from the standard "Dantonian" work: they are not good, or namely, not professional. Since it sounds intuitively weird to deny that a child's painting (which is a standard form of art) is not artwork, there comes the question: what's the difference between a child's painting and a master's painting? Like Danto always did, we can think of how a pair of indiscernible works: one is created by a child, the other is created by Picasso or Joan Miro, as these two masters often painted like a child. This pair of paintings can look exactly the same. But according to Danto's representational definition, the child's painting 1), is a representation (of a monstrous figure like Miro painted) and 2), an expression with a style (because Danto claimed the style is the man himself). It seems that there is no reason to exile the child's painting from the realm of art. But Danto has clearly expressed his attitude towards the child's work in his examples of the two painted blue ties, that the child's work is not artwork, because it has no style.

Other than the self-contradiction of the concept "style" mentioned before, another possible explanation here is that what Danto proposed as a necessary condition for being artwork is actually the criterion of good artwork: having style and being concerning with art history. The idea that "The style is the man himself" is reasonable and probable, therefore if we apply this concept of style, then a child's painting of course has a certain style indeed, the style of his own. The work is artwork but not good artwork, because the style of the child is not stable (naturally because a child's

way of seeing the world is changing), and also because of the immature painting technique, a child is prevented from representing something exactly as he sees or imagines, thus the style is not fully presented.

Another doctrine implied in Danto's theory is that artwork must have a title. Here the title refers to the artist's intention referring to a subject. Danto's understanding of the concept of title and concept of subject (in the relationship of aboutness) is not clearly presented in his work, but through his analysis of examples, it is obvious that Danto attached the subject strongly to the title. The title of the work is the only thing offered by the artist except for the work itself (unless the artist accepts an interview and dissects his own work), thus indeed is an important piece of information for giving a right interpretation in Danto's sense, in which the only right interpretation is to conjecture the artist's original subject. But again, this point of view leads to the neglect of many proper artworks, for example, the amateur's unnamed works, or professional artist's practicing pieces without a title, or commercial art in which the title is always absent.

8) Over-exaggerate the opinion expressed and historical interpretation into a theory

There are so many aspects of Danto's theory that may be blamed to be too intellectual. But among them, we'll have to distinguish the elements which are derived from the trend in the modern art reality since it is true that artworks are getting much more intellectual than the old ages and as such, elements are over-exaggerated. Danto's abuse of the term "theory" in his texts, is one of the latter kind. He considered having a certain theory as an illustration of his art historical dependent art's property: "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 that of artistic identification)"¹⁰⁰. The term theory here (in other instances Danto's texts are talking about art's historical identity

¹⁰⁰ Danto, Arthur. "The Artworld." *The Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 61, no. 19, 1964, p581.

as well, but not the theory when he really means theory like “imitation theory”), according to the context, still means the subject represented by the artist by acknowledging art history and trying to refer with his own work to it. But my intuition about this is that what he refers to is not really a theory, but rather an opinion. A theory must be some kind of proposal which is intended be applied to generally explain a certain type of thing or phenomena, so art theory is intended to be generally applied to art, and imitation art theory is proposing that art is imitation in general. But in Danto’s description, his “theory” here is more like artists’ opinion towards art history, or towards a certain existing art trend, or their intention to do something with art history. The artists are not thinking about generalizing anything, and even among their opinions expressed in their works, some of them are rather raising questions than giving answers. Not any composition of proposal or thinking can be called a theory, so we can hardly say that here the term theory is properly used.

9) Is every single metaphor an artwork?

Although the facet of the representational definition is more clearly elaborated than the artworld theory, it will still create some vagueness in terms of the degree of possessing the relatively confirmed property of art. As mentioned in former parts, the problem of commercial design is a vagueness about the different aspects of the same object which may show different possession of the artistic property; the problem of mere metaphor is about the degree of possession of the artistic property. According to Danto’s representational definition of art, a mere metaphor, such as “time flies”, “he’s got stars in his eyes”, is no doubt representation, and also absolutely with metaphorical core since itself is a metaphor; but can we say that these little phrases have style? Intuition responses: no, they are not a work of art. Danto, whose decision about this I really can’t tell whether it is serious or not, said: “It is, after all, a commonplace that every metaphor is a little poem.”¹⁰¹ It is not very convincing since Danto’s reputation of ignoring some commonsense to confirm his definition has been exposed by what he has done with amateur’s works and primitive art.

¹⁰¹ Danto, Arthur C. *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace: A Philosophy of Art*, p189.

Conclusion

Combined with the conclusion of part 1, a list of the imperfections of Danto's art theory comes to hand. We'd better reorganize them, since some of my accusations and doubts are related to the existing reasonable accusations, and also there are several shortcomings that are all about neglecting certain types of art which I enumerated in chapter I.

1. Though Danto's definition of art is already a very sound one, unfortunately among the 7 types of art under the context of contemporary art, only 2 of them can be well explained and confirmed by Danto's theory. Almost all of his examples are typical contemporary art (in the narrow sense), and some are classical art. The result of neglecting other existing art is that Danto's definition may fail to explain their identities.

1) Danto denied primitive art as being art, since they don't fit his historicism theory.

2) The same with the works created by someone who is not familiar with art history.

3) Danto didn't discuss very much about non-western art.

4) The same with commercial designs and it is highly possible that he won't consider them as art.

5) Danto didn't talk about the examples which are created with the participation of the audience.

2. There is contradiction between Danto's representational theory and artworld theory, which is concretely speaking the inconsistency of the concept of style. The concept of style in the "style matrix" is unrealistic and obscure.

3. Danto considered the familiarity of art history as a necessary condition of art creation, understanding and interpretation, thus he considered the referencing of art history as a necessary condition of being an artwork. But actually, they are not necessary conditions of being art. So being in Danto's "Artworld" is not necessary for being art.

4. Danto thinks the essence of art is unchangeable through time, but the fact is that the essence of art has changed and may change in the future.

5. Some of the essential properties he proposed (such as entering “Artworld”, or having a stable style) are actually not necessary conditions of being artwork but rather are a criterion of good artwork.

6. What Danto proposed is not a definition of art, but a definition of artwork.

7. His idea that every artwork has got to have a theory is over-exaggerated, what the artists expressed are often opinions or questions, these can scarcely be called theory.

8. According to Danto’s representational definition, every single mere metaphor is an artwork. This is contradicting commonsense.

In the next chapter, consulting this list of shortcomings, a new modified version of art definition will be proposed based on Danto’s definition of artwork, by keeping the good parts in Danto’s definition while discarding the unnecessary and wrong parts, clarifying again the crucial concepts, and examining the art types which Danto neglected.

Chapter V:

A Hypothetical Definition of Art

1. A retrospect of unsolved problems in the former chapters

So far we have achieved a complete survey of the question of defining art, and have gone into the details of a very persuasive answer to this question: Danto's definition. Before I intend to give an alternative definition, it is necessary to review all the questions discussed in the former chapters, to get a list of those among them which are still unclear, and a list of the important points which for proposing the new definition should be taken into account.

In chapter I, we have described the contemporary situation of art as one that is characterized not only by the art in the revolutionary avant-garde tradition and the art contemporarily created, but also by all the works considered as art and admired as art today. The consequence of this broader understanding of the concept of art is that many fields of art which have been neglected more or less by the existing art theories will be paid more attention to construct a correct definition of art. Specifically speaking, the definition should be able to apply to not only classical art and revolutionary avant-garde art, but also to: unprofessional artistic activities such as handicraft and online fictions, commercial designs or any artistic creation which has non-artistic functions, art under non-western traditions, primitive works which may not have been created for artistic purpose in the modern sense but are admired as artistic creations today, or anything which is not originally created for artistic purpose but is admired as art such as wildlife photography.

In chapter II, by presenting the debate between essentialism and anti-essentialism about art, the legitimacy of defining art has been justified. Though the anti-essentialist's point of view has been refuted in chapter II, the truth is that so far no sufficient definition of art has been offered. An important reason is that most of the existing theories of art concentrated too much on the concept of artwork while neglecting other art-related concepts such as artist, artistic activities, audience; some

of the theories don't even distinguish the definition of art from the definition of artwork. So in order to propose a better definition, all the art-related concepts and their interrelations must be carefully investigated. Furthermore, through my criticism of the presupposition on which anti-essentialism is based, that the only form of definition is a set of necessary and sufficient conditions, I have considered the possibility that there are other forms of definition. But I also claimed that it is still possible to offer a definition of art in the form of necessary and sufficient conditions, and I also intend to provide a definition of this kind in this last chapter.

Chapter III is a presentation as objective as possible of Danto's definition of artwork, and its shortcomings have been analyzed in chapter IV. I have summarized Danto's definition of the artwork into two parts: first, the artwork is a representation, and as such it is about or of something other than itself and projects the artist's style of expression by means of rhetorical ellipsis (usually metaphorical); at the same time, in order to become an artwork, a piece needs to get its position in an 'Artworld' in the form of a 'style matrix' composed with existing artistic predicates in art history by contributing some new predicate in its "style matrix". Thus it can be seen that Danto's definition of art is dependent on several crucial concepts: representation, expression, metaphorical ellipsis, style, Artworld, and style matrix.

Some of the argumentations displayed by Danto in favor of his definition are reasonable and strong, as I have shown in Chapter III. The two most important claims among them are that the defining property of artwork is one that has to do with its sub-structure, and is a relational property, which means that the artwork is not defined by some characteristics in itself, but by its relationship with something else. This relationship is not something that is demonstrated directly in the material existence of the artwork, so it is one of the work's sub-structure. This has made his concept of representational and metaphorical ellipsis well justified: being the representation of a subject is the relationship in which an artwork is involved, and the way the work is related to the subject is that they have something in common which is left untold to the audience, i.e., a metaphorical ellipsis which the audience needs to find out and fill in by herself.

On the other hand, the concept of style and all the other concepts related to style in Danto's arguments, including expression, Artworld and style matrix, as I have suggested in Chapter IV, are still questionable and conflicting, and thus need to be reconsidered. So, the task is to decide whether to continue to use these concepts under a different form for constructing a new definition of art. However, if they do not correspond to any necessary aspect of art, they should be removed from this definition. Nevertheless, though they may not be necessary for defining art, they may still be necessary for other issues about art. I will show that the concept of style is not necessary for defining art, but is still an important concept about art, and I will analyze it and examine its relationship with art as well as other art-related concepts of the same kind as style.

So, the alternative definition that I intend to propose in this chapter will take as a starting point the two elements of Danto's definition that I considered valid: representation and metaphorical ellipsis. As I have suggested before, Danto has provided the first approach of what makes all the aspects of the art process artistic, though he has investigated only one of these aspects, namely, the artwork. Now I should try to extend Danto's proposal about representation and metaphorical ellipsis to all other aspects of the art process since I have emphasized several times that to form a sufficient definition of art, all the aspects of art should be taken into account and investigated very carefully. It is also necessary to reexamine Danto's analysis of the artwork aspect of the art process, because, for as well oriented as the analysis is, it is without insufficiencies.

This new definition of art that I will try to offer in this chapter is based on some of the main claims that I have already introduced in the previous chapters, to varying extents, that can be usefully summarized in the following way:

First, the definition that I intend to provide still has the form of a classical definition based on necessary and sufficient conditions;

Second, this definition intends to capture the contemporary concept of art, in the sense of contemporary art previously explained and therefore intends to apply to not only the art contemporarily created, but rather to everything contemporarily

apprehended as art;

Third, as I have emphasized several times, the concept of art doesn't equal the concept of artwork. My proposal is that art is the property which makes something artistic. There are several elements that can be attributed to this artistic property: the artwork, the creator of the artwork, the audience, and the artistic creation. I would like to propose that among them only the artistic creation directly possesses the artistic property, while the others are only attributed this property in a derived way since they interact with the artistic property as the result, the creator, and the receiver. What Danto has revealed in my opinion is that what makes an object an artwork is a property in its sub-structure. However, in Danto's theory, the artistic property is still a property of the artwork itself, while my proposal is that this property is something that the artwork inherits from the action of creating it, and therefore that it is the action of creation which directly and fundamentally possesses the art property. So in the four artistic aspects which are involved in the process of art, the action of creation is the only element which properly speaking, in a non-derived way, has the art property. Therefore an object becomes an artwork by being the result of artistic actions, a person becomes an artistic creator because he realizes artistic action, an audience becomes an audience because she apprehends the product of such actions of creation.

Fourth, is to transform Danto's concept of representation and metaphorical ellipsis by making representation and metaphor the content of the property of being artistic. Indeed, as I propose that the artistic property is only directly possessed by the creative action, my hypothesis is also that this property is a property of the intention of this action. That is to say, an artistic action is an action realized with the intention of representing a subject by means of metaphorical ellipsis.

In order to show that the essence of art lies directly in the action of artistic creation, the derived ways that the artistic property is attributed to the artwork, the creator, the audience should also be analyzed. So I will one by one investigate all these artistic aspects involved in the art process: the artwork, the creator of the artwork, the audience, and artistic creation, by examining as comprehensively as possible all types of examples, especially the atypical ones, so as to ensure that the

property of art is truly attributed to every artistic creation, and therefore is inherited by every artwork.

2. Capturing the artistic essence of all aspects of the art process

1) Artwork

When people talk about artworks, they often mix the concept of artwork with the concept of art. But it is true that on many occasions, especially when we talk about artistic styles, trends, schools, forms, our description of a certain kind of art comes from the description of the artworks that belong to this kind of art. When somebody says “It is an art of immediacy and movement, of candid poses and compositions, of the play of light expressed in a bright and varied use of color”¹⁰² about impressionism, he certainly doesn’t mean that the artist Monet, a middle-aged man, is in bright colors. He means that the artworks, i.e. the impressionism paintings, possess such properties. Thus we can see that though I have emphasized many times that art doesn’t equal artwork, still, the relation between these two concepts is somehow a privileged one rather than the relations between art and artist or art and audience, and therefore the investigation of artwork is still crucial to the investigation of the concept of art. This privilege may come from the fact that on many occasions, especially in performing art and performance art, the artwork is the action of artistic creation itself, therefore, naturally, the property of the artistic action is the property of the work itself. But no matter if the work exists as the product of creative action or as the creative action itself, the artistic property which makes the work artistic originates from the intention of the creative action. This intention is: to represent a subject with the metaphorical ellipsis. If this intention is successfully realized and demonstrated in the action or its product, naturally the artwork would be considered as a metaphorical representation, namely, an artwork. In the following part, I will show in details how various objects in different forms can be considered as artistic by virtue of the definition illustrated by the concept of artistic action and artistic intention.

¹⁰² This description of impressionism art is from the entry of “impressionism” of Wikipedia.

Though it was already presented in the former chapters that Danto mainly formed his definition of art through investigating a wide range of artworks, there are still many efforts that can be made in this aspect to obtain a more persuasive version of the definition of art based on metaphorical representation. Accordingly, it should be realized that Danto's investigation about art not only focused too much on the limited aspect of the art process, namely, the artwork; but also on the limited kinds of artwork, that is to say, contemporary visual art, while actually his definition of art should be examined in the light of all other kinds of artwork. Furthermore, though Danto has already implied that creative activity and artistic intention is behind every artwork, especially in his analysis of the concept of style, he didn't manage to connect his definition of art, the metaphorical representation, with creative action. So in the following paragraphs, I will go further starting from the investigation of artworks, to prove that metaphorical representation conforms to every kind of artwork, and can be extended to the creator's intention in the artistic action when producing artworks, by analyzing all the typical and atypical types of artwork.

Artworks are often classified into many categories based on several dimensions of the artworks themselves. The most common dimension of classification is based on the medium applied in the creation: painting, music, theater, literature, architecture, etc. These categories of artwork are called art forms since the medium as a dimension of classification is independent of the subject, the feeling, and the thought which the work may provoke. In each form, according to the characteristic of the medium, there are more different dimensions according to which the works under a form can be further categorized, such as the material of the painting, the instrument of music, or the style and trend. Other than the form of the art, there are also other dimensions of classification such as the function of the work. The function of the artwork, for instance, entertaining, advertising, being instrumental, is a dimension according to which we differentiate commercial designs, entertainment artworks from the others. Another important dimension is the period in history in which the work is created, according to which we sort primitive, classical and modern works. We also classify the works according to the geographical origin by which we sort European art,

American art, occidental art and so on. Though these classifications have facilitated the observation and analysis of artworks for research purpose, the truth is that there are many works which resist categorization of any kind, especially in the contemporary situation of art which I have described in chapter I.

Still, the investigation should start with the concept of artwork, since firstly in the world of art what we perceive and preserve are eventually the artworks while the artists and the procedures of creation are relatively less easy to access. Secondly, because the classification of artworks is already quite systematic, and therefore facilitates the investigation in terms of collecting examples and analysis under the existing systems of classification; thirdly and more importantly, is that the artwork, different from other artistic aspects, inherits the artistic property directly from the action of artistic creation. In each category of artwork, in order to allow no omission during the investigation, the best way is to take care of both the typical and atypical examples. Also, the examples which are generally admitted as artworks and the ones whose artistic identities are still debatable (not atypical artwork but rather more possibly non-art) should all be taken into account.

To avoid the omission of any type of artwork, I would like to employ a new classification based on the dimension of human sense. This classification may leave no omission because the human sense can be exhausted, while relatively, the medium, the function, the time of creation, and the geographical origin cannot easily be classified and exhausted. Therefore, in my investigation, the artworks will be classified according to the sense or senses related to the way of perceiving the work.

The basic five senses of the human body are vision, audition, tactile sense, taste sense, and olfactory sense. The latter three senses are much less employed in artistic activities than the first two. Some contemporary installation artworks involve smell, but seldom do they involve degustation (most artworks are not to be licked or eaten, though there are some eatable installations). Most of the artworks exhibited in the art institutions are forbidden from being touched except for some installation works (the situation is different for many other kinds of work outside the institutions, such as handicraft, which is always allowed to be touched, even meant to be touched). So in

the end, since most of the artworks are mainly perceived by the senses of vision and audition, less works provide tactile, gustative and olfactory experiences, I would like to investigate artworks that fall into the following basic categories: i) mere visual art; ii) mere aural art; iii) visual + aural art; iv) mere tactile/gustative/olfactory (or any composition limited within these three) art; v) visual/aural (or both) + tactile/gustative/olfactory art (any composition).

In order to investigate each one of them, both typical and atypical examples will be analyzed. The distinction of the typical and atypical artworks is that the typical works are widely consensually admitted as artworks, whose identities as artworks are without doubt. The atypical artworks are the works whose identities as artworks are not very clear, or with many disputations. This distinction is made mainly by my intuitions and the impression of the society, which is to a strict categorization. I will try to explain later that the distinction between typicality and atypicality can sometimes be resolved by the real definition of a concept.

i) mere visual art – typical examples: painting (or any form of flat creation of image), literature (except for audiobook), sculpture (or any form of tridimensional figurative creation), installations (if there is no sound nor smell involved); atypical examples: photograph, graphic design.

ii) mere aural art – typical examples: music, literature (audiobook, storytelling); atypical examples: experimental music (lacks melody or rhythm in the classical sense)

iii) visual + aural art – typical examples: most of the performing art (theatre, dancing, storytelling, crosstalk, music in live or concert), movie, installations that involve sound; atypical examples: video, performance art

iv) mere tactile/gustative/olfactory art - atypical examples: perfume creating, cooking, installation (if the audience are not allowed to see anything and there is no sound)

v) visual/aural (or both) + tactile/gustative/olfactory art (any composition) – typical examples: installations that involve smell or allowing the audience to touch or enter in, handicraft (such as knitting); atypical examples: toy design, fondant cakes, sugar painting

Most of the typical examples of art in the list above (except for mere non-lyric music) already conformed to Danto's definition of artwork as representational metaphorical expression. Take the example of the famous classical painting, Da Vinci's "Mona Lisa", it is obvious in the light of Danto's definition that the painting is representing a woman, and to understand better who this woman is, the audience needs to look for more information which is not directly demonstrated in the appearance of the work, that is to say, there is a metaphorical ellipsis between the subject and the painting which needs to be filled by the audience itself. Similarly, the classical paintings which tell Christian stories or Greek mythologies are representing the scenes of the stories, and in order to understand what the painting is about, the audience needs to find out the information about the story and the identities of the figures to thus fully understand what the image of the painting is a metaphor for. In the case of contemporary revolutionary works such as abstract paintings, though they look very different from the classical ones, if understood in the sense of Danto's definition, they are not so different in terms of metaphorical representation. These works are not representing the existing objects or stories but rather the objections and refutations to the existing styles in art history, and how the appearance of the work is negatively referencing art history is to be found out by the audience as the metaphorical ellipsis.

However, of course, there is much more to be discovered by studying the atypical examples. The first thing one can immediately notice about these atypical examples is that they are atypical in different ways. One way for artwork to be atypical is to be in the forms which are entirely uncommon forms of art, such as being mere cooking and mere perfuming. The other way is to enjoy a common or uncommon art form but not being artistic enough so that may not be immediately recognized as artworks. One possible reason of not being artistic enough is that the work also obeys non-artistic intentions, such as to be documentary or to serve commercial benefit; the other possible reason is that the work is created by an unskillful creator such as a child, and that Danto cannot admit such work as being artwork.

For the first way of being atypical artworks, the form they take is anyhow not

generally considered as art, at least in our “contemporary” era. However, regarding cooking, there is an established notion of culinary art. The culinary art, as it is defined, is considered as a minor form of art admitted by only a small group of people. The works of culinary art, though they are related to cooking and named as art, are not all of them artworks in Danto’s sense, therefore the culinary art is not equivalent to artistic cooking.

There are different ways for cooking to be artistic, as its product can be admired as visual, gustative or olfactory art. As the Chinese proverb goes: “Good cuisine is color, flavor, and taste.” and the French expression goes: “la cuisine française de qualité, aux délicieuses saveurs, et d'apparence magnifique”, cooking has various dimensions. Of course, in the high level of culinary art, there are creations which can be considered as metaphorical representation, with exquisite appearance and that are extremely delicious, but more importantly, given with a title as the subject. A restaurant in Spain named “Sublimotion” is serving dishes with exquisite appearances designed together with the multimedia effects of the dining room, which will make your soufflé look like a growing mushroom, surrounded by animations of gold cirrus. In Japan, there is a restaurant decorated like a prison and serves dishes with creepy names and appearances, such as a colorful drink served in test tubes named “New medicine monitor” or “Waking nightmare”. The “Set of mushroom” is representing autumn, the “Waking nightmare” is representing an experimental drug, but these representations are dependent on the visual experience of the customer; if the customer consumes the dishes with eyes covered, he won’t be able to understand how the dish is representing the subject, in this case, he is only tasting soufflé and drinking cocktail.

These works, if they have certain subjects, can only be considered as metaphorically representative in regard to their appearance, and in this sense, they are not so different from installations and sculptures. Their artistic existence depends on their appearances, not on their taste, which means that if the audience tastes the dish with eyes covered, she won’t be able to fill the metaphorical ellipsis to understand the representation even with the help of the title, since seeing the appearance is necessary

in order to discover the metaphorical ellipsis. If we take all the aspects of the work into account, these works more likely belong to the visual + gustative type of artwork rather than mere gustative work. It is very hard for a product of cooking to be metaphorically representative at the level of the taste but not the appearance. Generally speaking, at least in our time, except for the appearance, the main elements of cooking, that is to say, taste and nutrition, are hardly created representatively: the beef cannot be “about” the tomato, the apple cannot be “about” chicken. So even though some dishes with good titles are truly artworks in Danto’s sense, they become representations mostly because of their appearance.

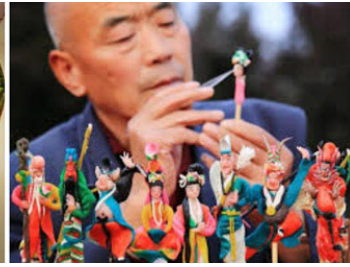
The top-level of culinary works is not the only “visual + gustative” type of work in this contemporary era. It’s not news that more and more contemporary works are applying gustative or olfactory elements, especially in the installation works. For example, in 1969, Dieter Roth made a chocolate statue named as “Small garden gnome as squirrel food sculpture”, and placed it in a garden so that the birds or other animals will gradually consume it. Though this work is an installation in the avant-garde tradition which means that its subject is revolutionary, with modernity, its form in regard to its material is actually not that revolutionary at all. As I suggested in chapter I, if we expand our horizon of art to the whole world, neither just focusing on art in the occidental tradition (whether contemporary or not), nor focusing too much on the professional, academic art, then one can easily find out that in other domains and other cultures, there are already, since a long time, works which are using eatable material and have even given rise to a part of traditions or commercial industries as forms of art. These works, together with most of the artistic cooking and installations using eatable material, are after all visual art, their artistic identity depends on the visual experience, not the gustative experience of the audience.



Sugar Painting



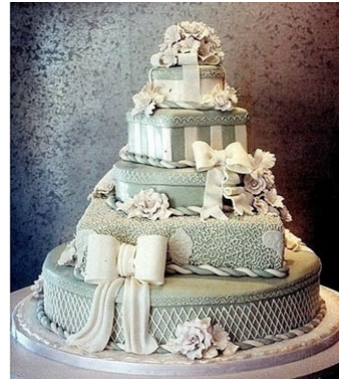
Melon Carving



Dough figurines



Jack-O'-Lantern



Fondant Cake

There is a standard example in the realm of cuisine which is legitimately representational because of its taste: in China, we have certain products of soybean produced through certain procedures to imitate the taste of meat or beef. Soybean is rich in protein, after several processes including crushing, stirring, and sometimes lacing with gluten, it can be transformed into something which has the fibrous texture of meat. These products can replace different types of meat in the cooking of many dishes, especially those with savory sauces which will cover up better the difference with real meat. The invention of this technology is an intentional one, it is originally invented to replace the real meat which is more expensive than the soybean products. But this imitation, though it is a good one, has still never been exercised for artistic purpose, but rather mostly for vegetarian needs. Moreover, since there is no metaphorical ellipsis between the food and the beef as the product is directly representing the subject, so it is not metaphorical but representative, and therefore still is not an artwork.



Product of soybean imitating meat

However, it is still possible, for the taste of the food to be metaphorically representative. In the Disney cartoon movie “Ratatouille”, the excellent cooking of ratatouille by the mouse Remy touches the critic’s heart, as the taste reminds him of his childhood when his mother often made ratatouille for him. Though in the movie, the dish remains a dish but not an artwork as the creator doesn’t mean to represent any subject, that is to say, Remy didn’t have the intention to create an artwork; but if someone created it and named the dish “Home” with the artistic intention to metaphorically represent home with the taste of this dish, it is transfigured into an artwork, not for having the appearance but for its taste. This is possible only if the creator has the intention to metaphorically represent a certain subject, and achieves to realize it by his cooking.

Though there is the possibility for the product of cooking to be artwork, this art form is still not widely applied in our time. It is technically difficult to make the taste of food to represent clearly a subject, since the symbolic system of taste is not well established in our culture today, because the human gustative ability is somehow less accurate to tell every nuance of the taste, and also the gustative experience is relatively personal without common standard for judgment. So it is most likely that cooking remains a minor part in the realm of art, which means that among all the cooked foods the only artworks are the extremely excellent ones with titles and representational appearances and some marginal examples such as sugar painting or

fondant cake which are not strictly speaking cooking.

Compared with cooking, perfume has more potential to become a candidate for the status of artwork. In the industry of perfume, the smell is often representative since most of them are given with a title. For example, if a certain perfume is named “Asian botanic garden”(this product is fictional), it is absolutely a metaphorical representation: it is about the botanic garden, and therefore a representation of it; but the smell of the perfume is strictly speaking of certain plants, not an existing garden, so there is metaphorical ellipsis. And different perfumers will have their own way to represent this subject as well, with their own understandings, memories, techniques, and thus the perfume has style. Some professional artists are doing experiments in that direction: they are trying to develop an art of smell. Klara Ravat, an artist who has established a “smell lab” in Berlin, has been trying to capture many kinds of smell (not only the fragrant ones). Though her works are being metaphorically representational by the scent, she is not a perfumer, but an “olfactory artist”. In her project “Smell walk”, she has created certain works which represent the impressions of several regions. The creation concerns the techniques of distilling not only the usual aromatic materials but also unusual materials such as leaves and soil. More importantly, the odor is trying to represent the impression of urban spaces, which is according to Ravat, “an urban landscape”, such as one of the products of the project: the scent of Amsterdam.

There are more and more artists exploring the field of olfactory creations. However, at this moment, similar to cooking, olfactory art is still not a very common art form mostly for two reasons. Firstly, some of the smell is technically not very easy to preserve and exhibit (though the volatile substance in plants is relatively easy to extract). Although artificial fragrances have been widely used, there are still many smells which cannot be imitated, preserved or analyzed today. There are several brands of perfume which have attempted to produce some fragrances that imitate some smells which are impossible to extract from the original entities, such as rain, soil, and dust. But since the final products are chemical synthetics, according to my experiences in the perfume shops, they are hardly successful imitations (though, if

provided with other titles, they may be transfigured into good representations). This technical problem does not interfere with the products' possibility of being metaphorical representations, but interferes with the creators' attempt to represent whatever subjects they want to represent, which means that the artistic intention of the creator is difficult to be successfully fulfilled due to undeveloped technology. Secondly, the creators are not able to represent complex subject for olfactory representation, because the human sense of smell is relatively poor compared with our vision and audition, and is still not able to fully distinguish millions of smells in nature, which means that the artistic intention in olfactory art is constrained by the insensitive sense, while the audience is not able to comprehend complex olfactory works for the same reason. Human beings are visual creatures, our way of knowing the world is more dependent on vision and audition.

Olfactory art still has the potential to make more progress. According to certain research in biology and psychology, the olfactory sense is a powerful trigger for our memories. "The smell or taste of a long-forgotten sweet can stimulate a rich emotional response connected to our childhood." "The scent of our mother's soap that takes us back to the familiar bathroom in the house where we grew up"¹⁰³ This phenomenon was named after the French novelist Marcel Proust as the "Proust effect" since Proust dedicated vivid descriptions to these magical moments in his novel "In Search of Lost Time". Scientific research reveals that this ability to recall certain deep memories by the stimulation of certain smells is based on the relation between our olfactory sense and the hippocampus in our brain which controls the retrospective memory and cognitive map.¹⁰⁴ In the experiment of Donald Laird¹⁰⁵, many of the participants described their memories aroused by the smells as emotional, fresh and alive, and as being mostly the forgotten ones. Though the memory is aroused only by olfactory sense, the memory represented in the participant mind is a multi-sensory

¹ Cretien Van Campen, Julian Ross, *The Proust Effect: the Senses as Doorways to Lost Memories*, Oxford University Press, 2014, p1.

² Yeshurun Y, Lapid H, Dudai Y, Sobel N. The privileged brain representation of first olfactory associations. *Curr Biol.* 2009 Nov 17;19(21):1869-74. doi: 10.1016/j.cub.2009.09.066. Epub 2009 Nov 5.

¹⁰⁵ Laird, Donald A. "What Can You Do With Your Nose?" *The Scientific Monthly*, vol. 41, no. 2, 1935, pp. 126-130.

scene, involving vision, audition, tactile, and even gustative experience as well. It seems that our olfactory sense is also able to construct representations: a relationship between a smell and a subject, a scene, a story, though until now it is not fully under control and without any symbolic system. I believe that if our olfactory sensation were as developed as it is in many other animals, or if our vomeronasal organ¹⁰⁶ were not degraded, we would have already developed the art of smell: artists could use smells to represent many things, especially the scenery, the environment, the interaction between different elements. Due to the technical difficulty of preserving smell and human beings' weakened sense of smell, at least in the near future, there won't be many leaps forward the art of smell. But still, it is a very considerable perspective of representing the world.

In addition to mere gustative and mere olfactory art, mere tactile art is quite possible as well. A friend of mine once introduced to me a new technology that one of her colleagues works on developing. It is a device which can imitate the texture of different materials. The device is designed as a box the size of fruit box with a hole in the front, through which you can stretch your hand into this box and touch the surface inside it, getting the feeling of a texture set up by the experimenter. The surface will stimulate the skin, imitating the feeling of antennal nerve with pressure, temperature, and friction corresponding to the given texture. It is already able to imitate the texture of flat surfaces of such materials like iron or wood. Consider if in the future it can imitate the touch of grass, of a cat, of marshmallow...why not a mere tactile art representing subjects without image, sound, smell, and taste? If an artwork is created with this device, the audience will be able to apprehend the work without seeing or hearing anything, which means that the receiving of the work is dependent only on the audience's tactile experience of the work. For example, a mere tactile work can metaphorically represent the subject "Truth", by imitating the texture of marble of the "Bocca della verità", which will probably transform to the texture of a lion's tongue according to what the audience says when stretching the hand. The metaphorical

³ The vomeronasal organ(VNO) was discovered by Frederik Ruysch in 1732 and later by Ludwig Lewin Jacobson in 1813. It is found in many animals, such as snakes and lizards, but has been considered degraded or as having disappeared in human beings. This organ is mainly used to detect chemical messengers that carry information.

ellipsis is to be filled with the knowledge of the audience about the “Bocca della verità”, and though this work represents the subject through an uncommon tactile form, it is still a standard artwork in Danto’s sense.

The second way of being atypical artwork means a great deal to my investigation. It manifests that artworks are artistic in varying degrees: some artworks are more (or less) artistic than others. It can be understood as a gradation phenomenon of the artistic property in the artwork.

One important cause of the varying degrees of being artistic is that in certain art forms, the artistic intention of the creator may easily be interfered with by other intentions. The most representative forms of art of this kind are photography including a static image (photo) or a dynamic image (video), commercial (instrumental) design, and literature (more precisely speaking all the artworks composed of language). In each of these forms, there are very artistic works, works which are not that artistic but still artistic, and entirely non-artistic works, the difference between which can be intuitively told by many art fans.



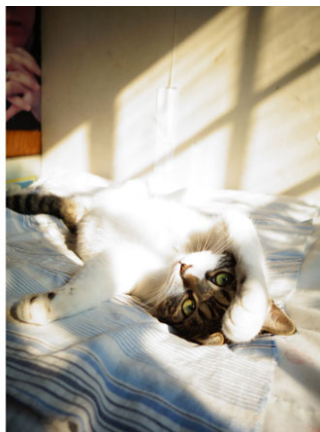
“Feng Qiao Ye Bo”, Lang Jingshan, 1960s



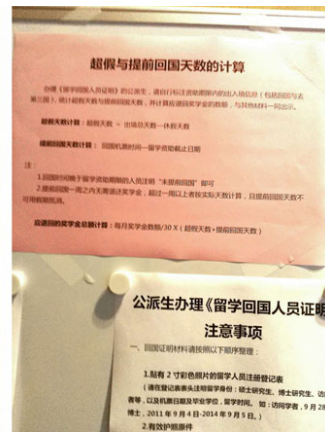
Untitled, William Eggleston, 1965-1974



Wildlife, Matthew Smith



A photo of my cat, me



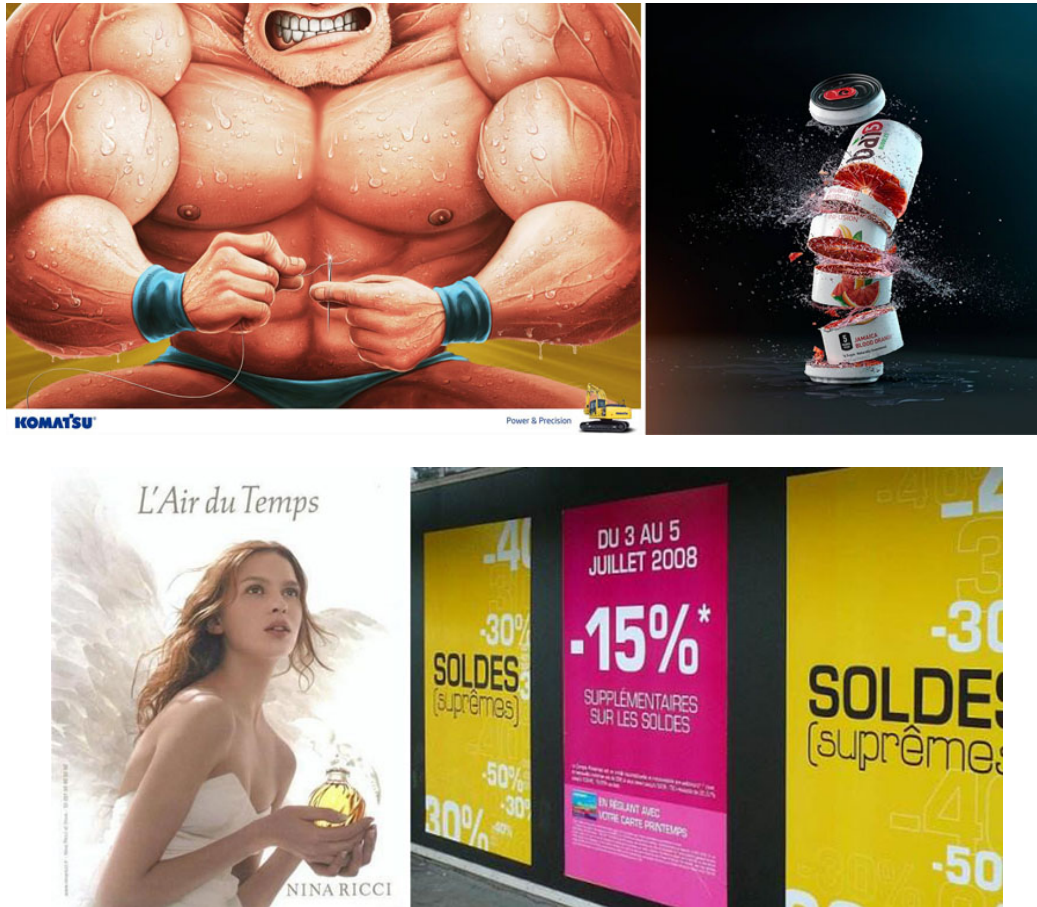
Announcement, Yuanfan Huang

From the examples above, we can roughly say that from left to right, from above down, the first one is the most artistic with superb technique and very unique style. Lang Jingshan, the first press photographer in China, gained his reputation in the 1940s by having more than 1000 photographs exhibited in international salons. His photography applies the technique of composite picture, which needs to be accomplished by shooting different elements or scenes and compositing them together on the same plate in the darkroom. By this technique, the photograph represents an imaginary scene with a poetic style which is similar to Chinese painting, in the time when the software such as Photoshop was still far from being born. The second example is also a very artistic one which is rather bold for its time. William Eggleston is an American photographer who was active in the 1960s. According to the critics, the subject of his photography is most of the time not the objects presented in the scene, but the color of the scene. In the example I pick, it seems that the photograph looks like a portrait, but since the photograph of the person was taken from the back, the audience has been given a clue that it's not really a portrait. The person in this photograph has nothing special, nothing different from the cars, the desks, the lamps in Eggleston's other photographs, that is why he calls the style of himself "democracy". The significance of the objects and people is dismissed by the significance of colors and their compositions.

These are two pieces taken by famous professional photographers in art history, in which the artistic intention of the photographer to metaphorically represent the subject seems very strong and clear. The third one is less artistic but still an excellent photograph and serves as wildlife documentary as well, which is taken by Australian wildlife photographer Mathew Smith. He is obsessed with taking the underwater views together with overwater views to represent the beauty of nature, but of course as wildlife photographs the pictures have high documentary value as well, therefore we can not clearly tell whether he chose the scene and creatures only because they suit his subject or also because they have scientific significance. The fourth one is too ordinary just like many of the pictures we take in daily life, but let's say among all the unprofessional daily life photos, it is a little bit artistic, representing vividly the

human-like behavior of a cat enjoying its leisurely afternoon sunshine. The fifth one is not artistic at all but documentary, using the photograph just for taking notes. According to the information above, these photographs show different degrees of possessing artistic features: the first two are typical artworks, the third one is an atypical artwork, the fourth one is hard to say whether it is artwork or not, and the last one surely can be considered as non-art. So, it seems that although the art of photograph does exist as an art form, not every photograph is an artwork.

Similarly, in the field of commercial design, there are works which show different degrees of being artistic. There are generally speaking two kinds of commercial design: industrial design and advertising. They both serve practical purposes other than the purpose of being artistic. For industrial design, the creator must not only consider how to make the product beautiful, representative or amusing, but also needs to consider the practical use of the product so that the design can fulfill the instrumental needs of the product. For advertising, the creator must represent mostly the aspects of the product which are supposed to be advertised, such as the quality, the efficiency, the appearance, the durability, etc.; also he must consider the audience's perspective of the product thus to choose the most suitable way of representing the product. In Chapter I, I have already provided the examples of industrial design which show different degrees of being artistic: an avant-garde teapot which can be considered as an artwork, a beautifully designed traditional teapot which is less artistic, and an ordinary restaurant teapot which is entirely instrumental and scarcely artistic. Here is another set of examples of advertising which shows a similar hierarchy:



The first one is in the form of painting, so this advertising takes an existing art form as its media in the first place. It is an advertisement of excavator with the slogan, the brand and the image of the product indicated in the corner, leaving maximum space for the painting itself. The slogan “power and precision”, though it is put in small, is a very clear hint for the audience, demonstrating the subject of this painting. In the advertising that is to say the subject is what the producer wanted to emphasize: this excavator can do the work with great power and high precision, just like a muscle man can do the needlework. This advertisement is highly representative and metaphorical, therefore, it is very artistic. The second one, though less interesting, is still an artistic advertisement, combining the can of fruit juice and the section of real fruit, representing the freshness and authenticity of the juice. The third one is an ordinary advertisement of a fragrance using a feminine image, giving a blurred image of the kind of temperament that would be brought out by this fragrance. The link between the product and the feminine image is not very clearly represented, it can be

comprehended that either this kind of woman suits this fragrance, or those who use this fragrance will be like this woman in some way, or the woman is a metaphor for some aspect of the fragrance. So this advertisement is less artistic. The last one is mere advertising with arresting color and font, without any metaphorical elements, so it can be considered as non-art.

Works in the form of literature also show varying degrees of being artistic. It may be inappropriate to use the term “literature” because using this term to describe composition of language already implies the possession of the artistic property of this composition. But still, among those that can be considered as standard literature, there are some works which are very artistic and others which are less artistic. For example, novels are definitely artistic because since they are mostly fictional, thus they are metaphorical and representational. The documentary literature such as biographies and travel notes are less artistic since these works are also concerned with the facticity of the narration. Furthermore, there are other compositions of language which can also be artistic to some extent, such as some paragraphs in Danto’s philosophical writing which include many jokes and metaphors. So the compositions of language, just like photographs and commercial designs, possess the artistic property to different degrees.

Another important cause of the varying degrees of being artistic is that the artistic intention is not successfully fulfilled because the creator to some extent lacks the required skill. The works which are less artistic in this way are mainly most of the children’s works and amateur’s works, and it is possible only in the common forms of art that an artistic intention is not successfully brought out but that the product is still artistic, although in a lower degree. The common forms of art such as painting, sculpture, and singing have a well-developed system of standards, which are widely accepted by people including many children; and in these forms, there are enormous typical cases that people can learn from. A child may not know what is art, but when he is drawing a cat and someone asks him: “What are you doing?”, he will answer: “I’m drawing a cat.” which means he intends to represent the appearance of a cat using regular tools for drawing such as a crayon and paper. In this intention, the

subject of representation is very clear: a cat, and since the form of drawing is a metaphorical representational form which is widely accepted as an art form, this intention is an artistic intention. But if compared with the painting of cat created by a skillful artist, the child's cat is apparently less artistic, not because his intention is less artistic, but because he didn't succeed in fully fulfilling his intention: he wanted to draw a lifelike cat just as the artist did, but what he achieved to draw was not that lifelike. This doesn't mean that every drawing that is not lifelike has a lower artistic degree. For just as Danto suggests in his analysis of the boy's painting and Picasso's painting, considering they both draw a cat which has the same clumsy appearance, Picasso's cat is still more artistic than the boy's cat, because Picasso's artistic intention is fully fulfilled while the boy's artistic intention is not.

The gradation phenomenon of being artistic calls for an explanation. It has been mentioned in chapter II that among the theories of concepts, prototype theory focuses on explaining the phenomenon that in the extension of the same concept there are typical and atypical individuals. The supporters of prototype theory have also found that the extension of artwork fits this description, therefore they have been working on this issue to apply the prototype theory to the concept of artwork, where they then to try to prove that artwork can not be defined. But after elaborate analysis, we will find out that this suggestion is problematic because the gradation of artistic degree and the gradation of typicality in artworks are two different things.

Prototype theory was first proposed by the psychologist Eleanor Rosch, who was inspired by Wittgenstein's idea of family resemblance. She proposes that "Concepts, on the prototype theory, are (roughly) complex mental representations of categories, membership in which is a matter of being similar enough to having enough of the properties of prototypical members of the class."¹⁰⁷ That is to say, firstly the concept is the mental representation of a category; secondly, "being similar enough to the prototypical member" here refers to having enough common properties with the prototypical member. With these propositions, the gradational phenomena of the

¹⁰⁷ Adajian, Thomas. "On the Prototype Theory of Concepts and the Definition of Art." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 63, no. 3, 2005, p231.

concept can be understood as such: some members are more typical than others because they have more common properties with the prototypical member. It's not clear how many common properties constitutes "having enough", but we can roughly say that if a member only has one common property with the prototypical member, it is genuinely an atypical one.

Just like what has been done to the concept of artwork with the theory of family resemblance, some philosophers tried to apply the prototype theory to the concept of artwork, since it can be observed from all the examples mentioned above that there are some works which are typical artworks while others are not that typical. However, in regards to whether the gradational phenomenon of the concept of artwork proves that a definition of artwork is impossible, the essentialists and anti-essentialists again disagree. In addition to representing the essentialists' argument against the anti-essentialists, I will try to prove that the gradational phenomenon of the artistic degree does not conflict with the existence of an essential artistic property in the form of necessary and sufficient conditions, as the prototype theory demonstrates only the gradation of typicality, not the gradation of artistic degree. A higher typicality doesn't necessarily correspond to a higher artistic degree, and vice versa.

In regard to the prototype theory and the concept of art, Thomas Adajian's article "On the prototype theory of concepts and definition of art" addressed the valid scope of prototype theory being applied to concepts, which was mainly discussed in terms of Jefferey Dean's employment of prototype theory to art in "Anti-definitionism and historical narrativism". According to Adajian, the proposal of prototype theory is a shift that turns the theory of concept from the classical theory (necessary and sufficient conditions) to the probabilistic theory. He summarized four propositions of prototype theory by quoting Dean's description:

"First, concepts are "organized around prototypes"; prototypes, for Dean, are 'the internal representations that result from abstracting the statistically predominant features of numerous ['concrete'] instances of a kind.' Second, 'not every member is equally central to our understanding of a given category': some members are 'cognitively more central in our understanding of the category' than others...Third,

some categories have a ‘radial structure’: their non central cases are ‘conventionalized variations...based [on the central case(s)] which are not generated from, and cannot be predicted by, general rules’... Fourth, membership in categories is not, contrary to the classical theory, an all-or-nothing matter.”¹⁰⁸ Adajian then replaces the term “concept” in Dean’s description with “artwork”, and so we have a description of the concept of artwork from Dean’s perspective: “1. The concept ARTWORK does not have individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions, but is instead organized around prototypes. 2. Not all artworks are equally ‘central to our understanding of the category’ of artworks: the category of artworks has ‘central’ and ‘noncentral’ cases. 3. The category of artworks has a radial structure; it has a central subcategory, along with other noncentral subcategories not ‘related to central cases in virtue of having certain shared features, plus or minus additional features’ but also not arbitrarily related thereto. 4. Membership in the category of artworks is not an all-or-nothing matter.”¹⁰⁹

Since anti-essentialism will intend to make use of prototype theory to prove that the concept of art can never be defined, Adajian, who stands for essentialism, argued that prototype theory is of no help to anti-definitionsism. His main point of view is that prototype theory is strictly speaking still a psychological theory. In the case of art, what is described by the prototype theory is actually the “mental representation of the concept of artwork”, not the concept of artwork itself, nor the property of being artwork, nor the essence or definition of artwork. As a theory of the mental representation of concepts, it is not necessary to consider the real situation of concrete examples of concepts, since the mental representation reflects only what’s in people’s mind, rather than the real situation of the concept. Whether the scope of validity of the theory can be extended to other fields, such as philosophical discussion, is questionable. “...the crucial point is that to the extent that a theory of concepts is a psychological theory, it is a theory about the features by means of which people

¹⁰⁸ Adajian, Thomas. “On the Prototype Theory of Concepts and the Definition of Art.”, p232.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, p232.

decide, correctly or incorrectly, whether or not things are ϕ s.”¹¹⁰ Adajian emphasized “correctly or incorrectly”, because obviously what people have in mind about a concept is not necessarily unified and correct. People sometimes have disagreements when deciding the identity of a certain object, and when there are opposite opinions, at least one of them must be incorrect according to the true situation of the concept. This possibility of contradiction and incorrectness of people’s mental image of a concept is already implied in prototype theory’s description of its core example chosen, “penguin”. Prototype theory describes “penguin” as a kind of bird which is very far from the center of people’s mental representation of the concept of bird (which I already presented in chapter II), while in reality, it is common knowledge without any ambiguity that a penguin is a kind of bird, though some people may not have that knowledge and do not sort penguin as bird in their minds. So even though the mental representation of the concept “bird” shows that some individuals are more typical than others, and thus that the concept seems to have a radial structure, the concept of “bird” in the biological sense is still a well-defined concept.

In order to argue against Dean’s application of prototype theory to the concept of artwork, Adajian introduced the analysis of another philosopher George Rey, who distinguished the following two representations of cognition in the article “Concept and Conceptions: A Reply to Smith, Medin and Rips”¹¹¹: 1. the description of recognizing and categorizing in prototype theory is made from a psychological perspective, what he calls epistemologically taxonomic; 2. and scientific categorization which is considered as a standard of common knowledge, is what he calls metaphysically taxonomic. In Rey’s words, “Epistemological issues (how we know what’s what) are one thing; metaphysical ones (what is what) quite another”.¹¹² These two cognitions correspond to two functions of the concepts and cannot be mixed. This means that there could be two different ways of understanding a concept,

¹¹⁰ Adajian, Thomas. “On the Prototype Theory of Concepts and the Definition of Art.”, p232.

¹¹¹ Georges Rey "Concepts and Conceptions: A Reply to Smith, Medin and Rips," *Cognition* 19 (1985): 297-303, reprinted in Laurence and Margolis, *Concepts: Core Readings*.

¹¹² Ibid, p297.

the first way is an unreliable, superficial one; the second way is a rigorous one, in which a clear definition of the concept is apprehended. So the truth is not that there are two kinds of concept each of which can only be understood in one way, but there are two ways of understanding the same concept. This distinction is similar with the difference between people's mental representation of "bird" and the concept of bird in the biological sense: how people know what is bird is one thing, the true definition of bird is quite another. Similarly, how people know what is artwork is one thing, the definition of artwork (what is artwork) is quite another. Therefore, even if someone considers artwork as a concept that can only be apprehended with the prototypical description, this only means that the person himself didn't succeed in attaining to the second cognition of this concept, but not that the second cognition of the concept doesn't exist. With the true definition of artwork, one can clearly identify an artwork by judging whether the work satisfies certain necessary and sufficient conditions; without the true definition, one can only roughly identify an artwork by other probable conditions, such as whether it has enough common properties with the prototype of artwork (as the prototype theory suggests), or whether it has similarity with known members of the concept (as the theory of family resemblance suggests), which will probably lead to an incorrect judgment about a work.

Adajian's conclusion is that prototype theory cannot be applied to philosophical discussions of concepts, thus nor to the concept of the artwork. He also listed several standard objections towards this "abuse" of the prototype theory. The existence of prototypes of a certain concept doesn't mean that this concept has prototypical structures (for example, for the concept of bird, there are typical and atypical bird-like impressions only in some people's mental representation, while in fact, every kind of bird can be scientifically well-identified and categorized). Furthermore, for the concept with prototypical structure (probably the concept of artwork), prototype theory is not able to cover some atypical cases, and also may bring in wrong cases (just like what the theory of family resemblance will do), because its way of recognizing individuals relies only on similarities and common properties: "PT lacks

an adequate account of ignorance and error.”¹¹³ Also, whether an individual under a concept is typical or atypical, is sometimes only a personal point of view: “typicality judgments vary interpersonally, and across time intrapersonally. If concepts are organized around prototypes, accordingly, it is hard to see how different people can have the same concept or even how one person can have the same concept over time.”¹¹⁴

These rejections against anti-essentialism have my full consent. But I also realized that some descriptions of the concept of artwork made by prototype theory do tell the truth: the concept of artwork does have a blurred boundary, and being artwork is not an all-or-nothing matter. From the example of photographs and advertisements shown above, and from the example of “decreasing artistic teapots” I presented in chapter I, it does seem that the concept of artwork fits some of the descriptions offered by prototype theory. Adajian and Rey’s reason against applying prototype theory to the philosophical study of concept is that someone will intend to use it to prove that artwork cannot be defined, because both the essentialists and the anti-essentialists believe that the gradational phenomenon and the existence of definition are incompatible, and also because this application will sometimes cause wrong identification of the member of a concept. That is to say, in their opinion, if a concept shows a gradational structure, it cannot be defined in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions.

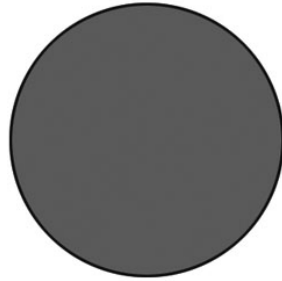
This conclusion must be reconsidered, since on the one hand, I found that some of the prototypical descriptions are rather subsistent, which means there truly is a gradation in the concept of artwork; on the other hand, I still believe that the concept of art and artwork can be defined with necessary and sufficient conditions. Therefore, I need to find a necessary and sufficient definition of artwork though the concept of artwork has a gradational structure.

The prototypical description of the concept of artwork can be summarized as such: first, under the concept of artwork there are some very typical individuals and some

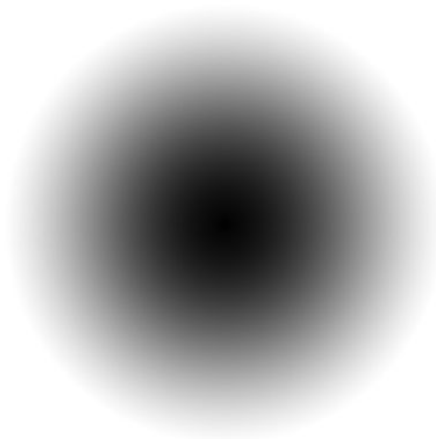
¹¹³ Adajian, Thomas. “On the Prototype Theory of Concepts and the Definition of Art.”, p234.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, p234.

less typical ones; second, the structure of its extension has a radial structure, with the typical artworks in the central area; third, being an artwork, contrary to the description in the classical theory, is not an all-or-nothing matter. So according to this description, the image of classical and prototypical representation appears in my mind is as such:



Classical representation of a concept



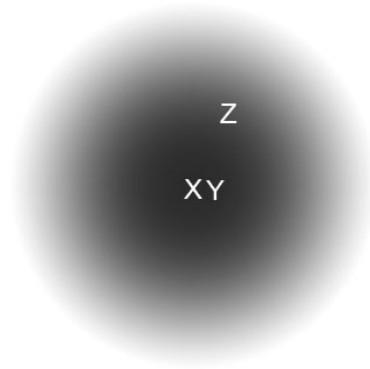
Gradational representation of a concept

Now it is important to notice that, although the prototypical description is true for the concept of art, the gradation of the so-called “radial structure” by prototype theory, is not the same as what I presented as a gradation of the artistic degree. These two representations of the concept of artwork, though both are represented with gradation, have different structures in terms of the member artworks. Some works are very artistic with an artistic intention fully fulfilled, but are still atypical in many people’s mind, such as experimental music; some are very typical artworks, but by judging the situation of the intention behind them they are not considered very artistic, such as immature paintings or sculptures. These facts clearly show that the prototypical gradation depends on how people know about artwork, the artistic gradation depends on a definition that captures what truly is artwork. The concept of artwork has the gradational structure, not because of the difference between its members in terms of typicality, but rather because of the varying artistic degree, and this gradation is not in contradiction with the existence of a necessary and sufficient condition of being art.

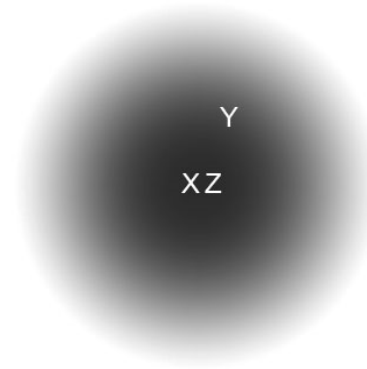
X: typical and very artistic work

Z: atypical but very artistic work

Y: typical but less artistic work



The radial representation of typicality
described by the prototype theory



The gradational representation of
artistic degree

The image of the extension of a concept in the classical theory is well closed, a clear boundary can be demarcated between individuals of this concept and those which are not. For example, the extension of the concept of bird, as a scientific categorization (not the mental representation), shows the image of the left one on the picture. Though the species such as penguin, ostrich, and kiwi do not correspond to the ordinary image of the bird, they are still one hundred percent birds. To my knowledge, there is no animal which a biologist would be equivocal about whether it is a bird or not, except for archaeopteryx which no longer exists. But in the case of artwork, obviously, there are many individuals which seem to have a half-membership or doubtful membership of the realm of art. However, does this mean that there is no necessary and sufficient condition for being artwork?

Remember what Danto said about the concept of art: art is a relational concept. Since I have clarified in chapter II that he somehow mixed up the concept of art and artwork, especially when the relation he discussed is actually the relation between artwork and its subject of representation, then precisely speaking he was saying: artwork is a relational concept. By relational concept, he means the concepts under which the individuals are identified by whether they are in a specific relation with something else.

To Danto, the relation here refers to the relation between artwork and its subject,

but this is not the only relation in which artworks are involved. In addition to the subject, artwork is also related to its creator and receiver (in other words, artwork is also related to people). The way that a work is connected to people is through action: people do things with artworks. This relation reminds me of one form of definition which is not the classical “genus-differentia” form, which I have introduced in chapter II: procedural definition (or operational definition). In a procedural definition, a concept is defined in a specific operational procedure. Being produced by a certain procedure is certainly also a kind of relation. For example, if we suppose: artwork is whatever presented to the audience by a procedure A, since its identity as artwork is dependent on this procedure, the artistic property of the work, therefore, is dependent on the specific property of the procedure, which is, precisely speaking in the case of artwork: what people do with them. It doesn't mean that this definition wouldn't be a necessary and sufficient definition. The necessary and sufficient condition here is possibly “being created by certain specific procedure/operation”; in Danto's theory, it is “being created as a representation in a metaphorical way”.

Since the procedure/operation here in the case of artwork is what people do with them, therefore the definition of the artwork depends on the definition of art-related human activities. The essence of art thus does not lie in the property of artwork, but rather in the property of these activities; artworks as the products of these activities or sometimes the activities themselves (in the case of performing art and performance art), in this way they inherit the property of these activities.

Then comes the next question: how to explain why the concept of artwork can be defined in the form of necessary and sufficient conditions while admitting that it shows a gradational structure?

It is not that horrible to admit that a concept with a traditional necessary and sufficient definition can also have gradational structure. Some properties of object have long been accepted with varying degrees in the classical theory of category. It is easy to understand that the properties such as length, weight have varying degrees; it becomes a little bit complicated to understand that some immeasurable properties also have varying degrees, but after defining artwork as the outcome of actions with

artistic intention, the artistic property can be understood as somehow measurable as the formulation and fulfillment of intention can be interfered with by many factors, only it is not measurable with quantity value.

Here in order to illustrate this kind of property, I would like to pick a property as an example which I have briefly mentioned in chapter II: softness, to prove the existence of this kind of property, the possession of which is not an “all-or-nothing” matter but a matter of degree, then to propose that the artwork’s defining property is of the same kind, so that the concept of art and artwork can be clearly defined without conflicting with its gradational structure.

Softness, the noun for the adjective “soft”, is a property which is often used to describe things in daily life. Its literal meaning (not the metaphorical ones such as its other meanings in “soft water” or “soft personality”) is: easy to be deformed by an external force. We can roughly say that leather is soft, but compared with cotton, leather is hard since cotton is softer; likewise, we can say that wood is not soft, but compared with iron, wood is soft since iron is harder. So actually, “can be deformed” is a property more or less possessed by every object but in different degrees, saying, the degree varying from being the easiest to being the most difficult to be deformed. There are objects which can be definitely be described as soft, such as cotton and pudding; also, there are objects which are quite hard, such as iron and rock. But more information depending on the context (such as under the circumstance of choosing a material for building) is needed in order to compare them, to describe how soft this object is. If different materials are located in the visualized schema of the gradational structure of the concept of softness, cotton would be in the central black area, iron would be in the white area, leather would be in the gray area, wood would be in the almost white margin. Since I found the property of softness as highly similar to the artistic property of artworks, therefore maybe the artistic property is of the same kind with softness: the possession of this kind of property is not an all-or-nothing matter but a matter of degree. What’s more important is that this doesn’t mean that “soft” and “artistic” cannot be clearly defined. In the case of soft, “easy to be deformed” is a very clear description of this property, even physically measurable. Though for many

of the objects in the grey area of the gradational structure, it is difficult to say whether it is soft or not, nevertheless they can always be compared with each other with a very clear standard. So, if the artistic property is of the same kind, there is no reason to say that the artistic property cannot be defined with the gradational structure as some anti-essentialists would suggest.

Until now I think it is quite plausible that the concept of artwork can be defined as the outcome of actions with artistic intention, meanwhile being artistic is a matter of degree. According to my proposition that the definition of artwork is dependent on the character of the artwork-making procedure, i.e. artistic action, it naturally leads to the conclusion that the possession of artistic property by human action is also a matter of degree, thus in the same way, artistic activity is also a concept with gradational structure and can be clearly defined as well.

2) Artist and audience

Since I have proposed that artwork is the product of the artistic action of the human being or sometimes is this action itself, then the artistic property must come from this kind of action. There are two aspects which must be investigated to make clear whether each of them is the origin of this property: the action, and the actor. In other words, it must be figured out in the art-making process whether the creator of artwork is specific or the action of artistic creation itself is specific. My answer is that the action is the only element which directly possesses the artistic property in the whole process of art-making, and there is almost nothing specific of either the creator nor the audience of the artwork, except for one necessary condition: they must be agent, which means that the creator of art must be able to act.

Compared with the concepts of art and artwork, the concepts of artist and audience are relatively difficult to define, therefore I would rather say that these two concepts are institutional ones, under which the individuals are identified with respect to many social and institutional elements which have fewer things to do with art's defining property. "Artist" in daily language, in most cases refers to the person who undertakes artistic activities as their career; but whether a person, as a creator of a

certain work or as a participant of artistic activity, chooses this career, has nothing to do with the defining property of artwork or artistic activity. As I have demonstrated in chapter I, amateurs are also able to create fantastic artworks. Furthermore, the works created by professional artists are not always artworks. For example, there is a cleaner in Nanjing University, whose excellent chalk paintings on the blackboards had been discovered by students and had then been put on the internet. This is an example of artworks created by people who are not professional artists. On the other hand, artists also make creations other than artworks, for example, Su Shi, the famous Chinese poet of the Song dynasty, was very fond of cooking and often invited his friends to dinner to enjoy his cuisines; the great writer Lu Xun was once a medical student who studied in Japan, so although unwillingly, he must have written many medical assignments. These facts show that whether something is artwork or not does not depend on the social identity of the creator. Rather, it depends on the creator's ability to properly form an artistic intention and the ability to bring out this intention by her actions.

As for the "audience" of the artwork, this is a term corresponding to a concept which is a little bit narrower than the person who plays the role of perceiving the artwork in the art process. Being the audience already implies that you are perceiving the artworks which are presented by art intuitions, such as the audience of a performance, the reader of a book, the admirer in an art museum. But in the case of seeing an artistic advertisement, being the player of a certain game while admiring the CG, eating something with artistic appearance such as fondant cake, it is not that proper to call the one who is involved an audience. By audience here I mean all the people who not only perceive the artwork but also know that it is an artwork.

It is obvious that a person becomes an audience of certain artwork only after the creator started his creation, though in some cases such as interactive installations the audience is necessary for representing the subject of the work. Therefore, it is also impossible that the audience is the source of the artistic property of the work. Furthermore, like the artist, there is nothing specific of the audience since anyone can be the audience of at least some kinds of artwork (for example, though a blind person

may not be able to see paintings, he is still capable of listening to music.)

In the art process, what is often called the artist is actually the actor, what is called the audience is someone who perceives the outcome of the actions of the actor. These are two roles in the art process, not professions or social identities. So, instead of artist and audience, it is more precise to call the people involved in the art process the creator and the receiver. The creator of an artwork is the person who engages in artistic actions, the receiver is the person who perceives the outcome of these actions as artwork. Since it has been proved that the artistic property does not come from these two elements of the art-making process, then the element left, the action of art-making, should be the crucial element to the investigation of the essence of art. Although I will continue to use the term “artist” and “audience” sometimes for convenience in the latter parts, as in many cases the artwork is created by the professional artist and in many forms of art the receiver can be called audience, they still should be understood as the creator and receiver. These two are only the roles people take when participating in artistic activities, not any specific identity nor profession, which means that a person can sometimes be a creator and sometimes a receiver, or even be creator and receiver of the same work at the same time. Since these roles can not be discussed alone without discussing their actions because they are identified by their actions, they will be elaborated further in the latter parts about artistic actions.

3) Artistic actions

Resulting from the application of Danto’s methodology in his investigation, which is to eliminate all the unessential elements of the artwork in order to see what is left, Danto found that there’s nothing left in the physical existence of the artwork, and thus his conclusion is that the essential defining property of artwork must not be a property which can be directly detected by observing its appearance. This conclusion is a very sound one, as I explained in chapter II. But still, with the same methodology, we can probably say that there is still one thing left, one thing that is common to all the artworks, which is already implied in the appearance of artwork or can be directly

derived from the appearance: the works are always created by action. In many forms of art, the action is the artwork itself; in others, the works must be created by certain actions. For every candidate or honored member of the realm of artwork, in whatever form, no matter how weird it is, there must be some action dedicated to the creation which has been performed or is performing. There is no work made without any action: artworks don't just appear out of thin air. If the artistic action truly is the bearer of the artistic property, there is no wonder that most of the definitions in the past have failed, since philosophers were looking in the wrong place: they always kept looking at the artworks in searching for the essence of art.

In some of the modern artworks, it seems that there is no action involved in art making. The extreme examples would be some of the conceptual artworks, in the case of which it even seems that there is no artwork (which of course is not the truth). The Chisenhale Gallery in London was closed from 23rd April to 29 May 2016, while exhibiting an artwork of Maria Eichhorn "5 weeks, 25days, 175 hours". How does the Gallery exhibit an artwork while it is closed? An announcement is placed on the front door indicating the title of the work and some explanations. The absence of the work and the absence of action is only a false appearance, the closure itself is the work, the drafting of the announcement, the coordination with the gallery, the printing and hanging of the announcement, are all artistic actions performed intending to metaphorically represent the subject which concerns the contemporary labor conditions.

All the actions realized concerning artworks can be generally called artistic activities. Artistic activities are composed of many actions of individuals, such as adding one more touch on the canvas, singing one single sentence in the chorus, taking the bus to the art museum, paying for the movie tickets. There are many ways of participation in artistic activities. Generally speaking, the concept of artistic activity is broader than artistic action, because artistic activity is not necessarily an action. The classical understanding of action is that the action necessarily involves bodily movement; but one can participate in artistic activity without moving any part of her body, for example in the case of listening to music. But this is only possible for

the receiver of the work, not for the creator of the work, since no work can be produced without any action of the creator. The action of the creator, is the bearer of the artistic property; the action or activity of the receiver can be considered as an artistic activity only in a derived way, that she is perceiving the outcome of artistic actions and trying to fill the metaphorical ellipsis between the work and the subject.

According to the role of individuals in the art process, I sort intuitively all the art-related activities as such: creation (individually or collectively), interpretational-creation, receiving and passively participating in the creation, mere receiving.

i. the creation of artwork (individually or collectively)

This is the most common way of participating in artistic creation. The creation of an artwork is composed of the actions of the person who decides the subject (or some part of the subject) and how to represent this subject, but does not necessarily include the actions of the person who physically produces the work (though in many cases, especially the classical works, these two are the same person). To be specific, here the collective creator doesn't include the person who is only helping the artist to finish the work by just obeying instructions. For example, many installation arts need to be installed in the museum, occupying grand space or need to be fixed somehow on the floor and walls, or there are materials which are difficult to manipulate by one person. For these works, the artist cannot finish all the installations alone, so there are other people who offer technical support to the artist to finish the work. These people's role doesn't count as the collective creator, their role in this process is neither creator nor receiver, so namely, their role is not to participate in any artistic activity. Usually these people are just obeying the artist's instructions, so their role is more like instruments or tools of the artist (again I must emphasize here that what I proposed is only the description for the role of these people, not the people themselves, because it is very possible that they are also admiring the work while helping to produce it, which means that there are artistic actions as receiving. In these cases they are playing two roles at the same time: the instrumental assistant of the artist, and the audience). This phenomenon does not only occur in contemporary art: in antiquity, one of the standard

“beaux-arts”, architecture, is realized by many workers, but the creator of the building as the creator of an artwork is only the architect, not the workers. The real collective creation is not of this kind. In collective works, although generally speaking there are one or two artists who give more ideas than the others of what should be represented and in what form it should be represented, still the participation of the other artists, is not like that of the workers or assistants, if these artists do contribute to some of the plan or key procedure of representing the work. For example, in the ateliers in Tibet working for Thangka¹¹⁵, one piece is often created by many artists because the Thangkas are sometimes huge. The master would make a general design for it, drawing a sketch, while each apprentice designs the details of their own part. Although the master is the one who takes charge of the whole pattern and is supervising the design of the apprentices, the apprentices still have a scale of liberty with their own creation, which means that they can decide the subjects and how to represent them in their own parts, for example which pattern of plants to choose, which cloth to put on the figure. In this case, one artist is deciding the general idea of how to represent the subject, and many artists together are deciding the concrete way of how to represent this subject, and so the creation of this work is a collective one.

ii. the interpretational-creation of artwork

This mainly refers to the role of artists in performance art, of which the typical examples are dancing, singing, acting in theatre or film, playing music instruments, etc. In the creation of these artworks, there are two kinds of creators, the original creator and the interpretational creators. For instance, most of the classical music is composed by a certain musician, an individual; meanwhile, the live concert, especially the symphony, must be performed by a whole orchestra because the composer can not play his own work himself alone. The members of the orchestra are necessary for the presentation of the work, but inevitably they present it with their own styles. The Piano Concerto No. 1 of Tchaikovsky conducted by Lorin Maazel and Claudio Abbado are different, the “The Butterfly Lovers” played by Lina Yu and

¹¹⁵ Religious painting of Tibetan Buddhism, the most common subject is Buddha surrounded by other figures and religious patterns, painted with very bright colors and subtle technique.

Takako Nishizaki are different, “Torna a Surriento” sung by Pavarotti and by Bocelli are also different. And of course, one person can play these two roles for the same work, the original creator and the interpretational creator. For instance, if Liszt is playing his own etude (as he often did, I guess), he is the original creator while composing the work, and is the interpretational-creator while playing his work. In the process of many artistic creations, the structure of the “crew” might be even more complex. For example, in most of the productions of pop songs, there is the composer, the lyricist, the orchestrator, the singer, the players of instrument; in the film industry there are the playwright, the director, the actor and actress, the special effect artist, etc... this complexity can be detected when we are looking at the screen in the last few minutes of the film. In the production of this kind of artwork, there is both interpretational creation and collective creation. The scenarist is interpreting the writer, the director is interpreting the scenarist, the actors and actresses are interpreting both the scenarist and the director; they collectively created the film because each one decided some parts of the whole representation according to their own understanding of the story. Just like the possession of the artistic property in different works, in the production of the same work which is created collectively, different participations of creation also show different degrees of possessing the artistic feature: apparently, in the production of a film, the gaffer’s action is generally speaking less artistic than the director’s, since the director makes more decisions on how to represent the subject while the gaffer only decides the light effect of the scenes.

The role of the interpretational-creation (such as non-composer-musicians) is not the same as the role of the worker or assistant in architecture or installation art. According to Danto’s theory about style, we can say that the assistants only offer technical support for the artist, they are roughly speaking used as instruments, it is not necessary nor appropriate for them to present their style when participating in the art creation, though they are sometimes capable of doing so. However, for musicians, dancers, actors, it is inevitable to present the original work with their own styles. The reason maybe is that in these works it is impossible for the person who initially creates the work to decide all the details of how to represent his subject. For example,

although the composer of a symphony can make certain notifications on the score, such as “pp” for pianissimo, “f” for forte, “<” for crescendo, he is not able to precisely show the continuing change of the volume, because he physically cannot play the whole orchestra. Therefore, the conductor and the musicians are forced to fill in the blanks of these untold details with their own interpretation. But in the creation of installations, the original artist can often make clear instructions for the assistants, such as for the Warhol’s Brillo boxes painted by many assistants, the instruction is very clear and simple: paint all the boxes the same as the original one.

iii. the receiving-participating creation of artwork

This kind of participation is “creating” and receiving the work at the same time, normally proceeded by the audience in modern installation art. The participating-creative activity is more similar to offering technical support in the installations, but at the same time being audience: roughly speaking, the artist is using the audience as instruments but at the same time representing to the audience the actions of themselves, while the actions of the technical assistants are not part of the representation. This form of participation less frequently occurs with classical works, the only similar situation in classical art which I can think of is the rhythmized applause of the audience for some exciting music (for example for the Radetzky-Marsch at Vienna New Year’s concert people often do that), but in this case, the existence of the work does not depend on the audiences’ applause, therefore the audience’s action of applauding is still not a part of the representation. The receive-participate creation occurs much more often in contemporary art, especially in installation art. In most of them, the participation of the audience is deliberately designed by the artist as a part of the work, and the effect of the work is dependent on the effect of the audiences’ actions. A typical excellent example here is Yayoi Kusama’s *“The Obliteration Room”*:



Yayoi Kusama, "*The Obliteration Room*", version 2002, before and after



Audience in "*The Obliteration Room*"

"*The Obliteration Room*" in its every exhibition is always originally a room painted white and equipped with items of furniture which are all painted white as well. For every audience, the stuff prepared is several brightly colored stickers in dots in different sizes. The audience can stick them wherever they want in this room, so as the exhibition goes on, the pure white room will be gradually covered by colors, thus the shape of furniture emerges from pure white and vanishes in colors during this whole process.

Another typical example is Ann Hamilton's gigantic installation "*The Event of a Thread*", it is installed in an old armory, composed of many swings and silky white cloth. When the audience members are swinging, their movements affect each other and also affect the shape and dynamic of the floating white cloth. In "*The Obliteration Room*", the effect of the audience's actions gradually emerges, and these actions mainly have an effect on the physical composition of the work; in "*The Event of a Thread*", the effect of the audience's activity is immediate, and not only on the material of the work but also on the audience themselves.



Ann Hamilton, *"The Event of a Thread"*, 2013

iv. The mere receiving of artwork

Before getting into details, I would like to explain why I emphasized “mere receiving” meanwhile not using the term “mere creation”: there is no mere creation. The action of creation implies the action of receiving, which means that the creator of the work is always at the same time receiving the work; but the action of receiving doesn’t necessarily include creation. How can somebody create something without any sense of it? I assume that everyone who is creating certain artwork at least has the general idea of what he is creating, and modifying it within the process of creating while he is receiving his own work. Even for composers, though the partition he wrote is symbolic, not the vivid phonic music itself, but since he can imagine the melody with his symbolic note, he is also receiving, admiring his own work (not to mention that usually composers finish their works with the help of a piano); so do dancers while imaging their own figure, or rehearsing in front of mirror so that they can present their best posture on the stage. So every artist is somehow at the same time audience, only from a different, dynamic perspective, which furthermore proves that being the creator or receiver of art is not about getting a certain job position or identity, but only about playing a role, therefore one individual can play several roles at the same time. This means that just as being artwork is not an all-or-nothing matter, being either the creator or audience of artwork not an all-or-nothing matter.

Different from “mere creating”, mere receiving does exist, and it is the main way of the audience to participate in artistic activities. The audience at a concert or in an art exhibition would be a typical example.

The reception of art is closely related to the concept of understanding and interpretation of art, sometimes the reception of art is called admiring as well. But I won't use these three concepts because what I want to analyze here is the action of the audience that to accept something as artwork while perceiving it. To accept something as an artwork does not imply that the person is admiring because he may dislike the work, neither is it implying that the person achieved to understand the work because he may not be able to understand it, and without understanding, there won't be any interpretation. Under the representational metaphorical definition of art, to understand an artwork is to find out the subject and how the work represents this subject, concretely speaking, it is to find out the common characteristic between the subject and what the work represents, which exists as the metaphorical ellipsis in the work.

In contemporary art, it is quite common that the audience feels that they are not able to understand the work. Sometimes this makes people feel that they are not intelligent or erudite enough to understand art (blaming themselves), or that the works are fiddle-faddle or deliberately mystifying (blaming the artist). For Danto, neither of these two is the true reason for the mismatch between audience and artist. According to the “Artworld” theory of Danto which I've presented in chapter III, the understanding of an artwork is based on the knowledge of the “Artworld” behind the target work, which refers to the historical position of this work in art history, namely the art-historical context. So the audience needs to be erudite of art history so as to understand art (which means that Danto blames the audience for the mismatch, not the artist).

Here I would like to develop and modify Danto's consideration, with some of his crucial concepts, to clarify the action of the audience (the reception of artwork). According to Danto's definition, artwork is the representation of a subject by means of rhetorical ellipsis which is usually metaphorical, and with a style of expression. The relation between what is the representation (the artwork) and what is represented

(the subject), roughly speaking, is in Danto's word, aboutness; but more specifically speaking, with his analysis of rhetorical ellipsis, here the relation is that the artwork is a metaphor for its subject, so A's being a metaphor for B is a kind of way in which A is about B (since there are other kinds of aboutness), just as when he says: "...what a work expresses is what it is a metaphor for."¹¹⁶ and "It is, after all, a commonplace that every metaphor is a little poem."¹¹⁷

As I've analyzed in chapter III, the mechanism of a metaphor is to let the audiences themselves find out the similarity between the representation (the artwork) and what is represented (the subject), therefore to take the perspective as the artist expected while receiving the work. In this process, some information is definitely necessary if the audience wants to capture exactly what the artist wanted to express. In the art institutions, such as museum, gallery, theatre, auditorium, cinema...the professional works are often presented with the title, which often gives a clear hint to the subject, to what the work represents (what the work is a metaphor for), except for certain music (such as the symphony titled with numbers, or simply a little serenade without name). But there are other kinds of artwork outside the institutions corresponding to some part of the gradational structure of the concept of artwork, the examples which are not in the central area, which are not equipped with titles. For these works, the audience not only needs to find out the metaphorical ellipsis but also needs to figure out the subject themselves first. So the understanding of artwork (on any level) includes at least two steps: trying to figure out the subject, and trying to find out the similarity between the work and the subject—which are not always in such order. Sometimes we figure out the subject by finding out the obvious similarities, especially for classical narrative visual artworks and works which are not equipped with titles. If the audience fails to achieve any of these two, he should be considered as not succeeding to understand the work; but the action as the reception still exists, as long as he achieved to perceive the work and accept it as an artwork.

It seems that to accomplish these two steps, some qualities of the audience are

¹¹⁶ Danto, Arthur C. *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace: A Philosophy of Art*, p189.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, p189.

required: knowing the work (not only the appearance but also the information about it) and knowing the subject represented (not only the terms but also the information about it). What I called information here, in Danto's word is the "sub-structure", which is not accessible by mere observation (such as how it is produced). The common part of the information of both the work and the subject should be filled by the audience in the metaphorical ellipsis. In the example of Napoleon's statue as a Roman emperor which I analyzed in chapter III, there is not too much sub-structure of the work to explore (because one can easily tell from the appearance that it is a statue of a Caucasian male, in dignified posture, in luxuriant royal costume), but much more information to be acquired of the subject: the appearance of Napoleon, the style of a Roman emperor's dress. This is often the case in classical visual art. The audience's understanding of the work depends on their ability of recognizing the pattern of the work and the knowledge of what it represents (for example, knowledge of history, of nature, of mythology). In the case of contemporary art, the information of the work itself is often difficult to access, the similarity between the work and the subject becomes so obscure that it cannot be told by mere observation. So the admiration of contemporary art is far more dependent on the supplement of information, which is usually offered by notes and brochures in the exhibition or further exploration on the internet.

Note that in Danto's definition, the artist is not only representing the subject but also is representing his personal way of representing (which refers to Danto's concept of style), so in order to fully understand the work as an expression (representation with style), the audience also needs to be able to recognize the style, that's why Danto insists that the knowledge of art history is necessary for admiring art. But meanwhile, Danto places too much emphasis on the art historical part of the "sub-structure" of the work, for there are many other kinds of information, or roughly speaking, knowledge, that are necessary for understanding a certain artwork, which is not related to the style and the art history. Here I said "roughly" because what is required here is not only information or knowledge, but rather the whole of life experience: all the things the audience know, memorized, sensed, experienced. Thus, all the emotional, sensational

parts of our lives are also included. If we take a person as an “art understanding machine”, these life experiences would be its “database”. This supposition explained why faced with the same work, with the same level of knowledge, given with the same information offered by the art institution, different people will still have different feeling, understanding, and preference. For example, for the works which are expressing something about death, a person who has faced death, who has lost some of his loved ones, will understand more than a person who hasn’t had such kind of experience. Here the understanding doesn’t only mean to understand the literal meaning of death, otherwise, everyone will have the same feeling about this work; here the understanding means to know the feeling of losing someone, which can not be expressed by mere literal explanation. The process of the reception of artwork, in which the audience accepts something as artwork and tries to understand it, is somehow a match between the work and the audience’s life experience (including both the intelligent part and sensational part). If a person is equipped with all the knowledge or sensation of the appearance and “sub-structure” of both the work and its subject in his “database”, theoretically he would be able to fully understand this work (this situation could be described in the Chinese proverb of “Zhi Yin”, originated from the legend about a musician and a woodcutter who can fully understand his music without being told the subject. Though they belonged to different social classes and met by chance, they still became friend soul to soul).

This somehow explains the phenomenon that certain works may not be able to receive admiration in its own time. Danto has argued that not anything can be art at any time, his point here is to emphasize the importance of contributing some new artistic predicates to art history thus to gain a proper position in art history, therefore it is possible for a certain work to gain its significance only in a certain period of art history when the previous artworks have given it the context composed of existing artistic predicates as the “sub-structure” of the subject so that it can be understood. This is the explanation of the phenomenon in respect to art history, and also implies Danto’s view that the identity of artwork is decided by the audience who have been academically trained and have a global understanding of art history. In regards to the

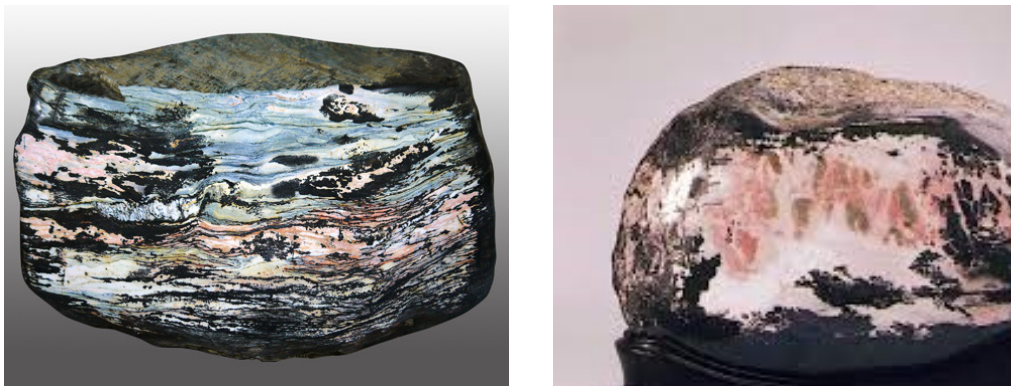
factor of the audience, something can't be art in any time because in the wrong period of time it may mismatch most of the audience's "database", so most people in that time won't be able to understand this kind of work. Since no one can figure out the subject and the relation between the work and the subject, therefore it even won't be considered as art. Carroll in his criticism of Danto, has explained a similar idea with this concept of audience's database: "...historically situated art theories, ideas, and conceptions of art history form the likeliest source of the stock of beliefs which account for the formation of the artist's intentions and for their subsequent recognition and up-take by audiences."¹¹⁸ It means that not only the formation of artistic intention but also the understanding of the content of the artistic intention depends on the stock of beliefs which consists of the conceptions of art history and art theories. Here what he called "the stock of beliefs" refers to something similar with "the database", but in my opinion, what really accounts for the formation of artistic intention and the understanding the content of this intention should be much more than the beliefs about art history and theories, also including emotions, illusions, desires, sensations, memories, while some of them may not belong to the category of belief. In a word, it is the whole of life experiences which make the formation of artistic intention and the understanding of the content of this intention possible.

This process, the match between the "sub-structure" of the work and the audience's "database", is triggered by one condition: the person takes such an object (or sound, and action, in case of performance art), to whatever degree (because of the gradational structure of the concept of artwork) as an artwork. This process is perfectly illustrated by Danto's metaphor for art: Transfiguration. It is natural that when we know more about something, we see it differently than before. In the transfiguration of Jesus, he began to look glorious as soon as people knew that he was the Christ; in the case of lovers, there is a Chinese proverb that says "in the eyes of a lover anyone can look like Xishi (a famous beauty in ancient time)". That means the knowledge of the sub-structure of certain objects can change our way of seeing it and

¹¹⁸ Carroll, Noël. "Danto, Style, and Intention." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 53, no. 3, 1995, p. 252.

thus change what we get from it. Being a work of art is absolutely a very magical aspect of something's sub-structures: it asks us to get deeper into its other parts of sub-structures.

But, as the world of art never lets us off the hook, there are atypical cases which are not triggered by the receiver's knowing that something is artwork, but by the receiver's own decision to take something as artwork. This is a very debatable, controversial type of art, which I mentioned in chapter I: people admire something (which is originally non-art) as art so that it gradually becomes admirable as art to more people. Except for the photograph of the nebula I presented, there is another example which has more or less become a business or industry in China: rare stone collecting.



These stones are admired by collectors, of which the price may be raised up to several million RMB. They are so valuable not because of their physical material, nor the rareness of their chemical composition (though certain colors presented on the stone are caused by its containment of rare chemical composition), but because of their shape or the pattern of their section. From the pictures above we can see that the left one can be interpreted as a scene of a riverbank with plants, the right one looks like a scene of a waterfall with trees and rocks, and both look like very exquisite imitations of classical Chinese painting. These patterns are natural, found by accident in exploring travel, mining industry or deliberate quarrying. The dealing of them certainly require many professional techniques, but scarcely artistic technique. These

stones are “drifting” on the border of the realm of artwork, visually being situated at the light grey area in the image of “gradational structure” of the concept. But if they do have some artistic property, I believe that the property is not inherited from the action of mining or burnishing of workers, but from people’s admiration. Of course, if there are some collectors who dedicate themselves to searching for rare stones, and burnish the stones themselves from the artistic perspective of choosing the best way to present the beauty of the stones, their actions can somehow be considered as artistic creations, but at the same time the creation must include admiring the work of nature as art as well. Their decision of considering the stones as artworks is a fundamentally necessary condition for the stones’ transfiguration into artworks.

These are activities which are directly involved in the art process. Although we use the terms “create”, “produce”, “receive”, “admire” to briefly summarize these activities, if we need to know more about what people do in this art process, then they must be investigated more concretely, which means that the activities should be reduced to actions. In the creation of art, the creation is accomplished by many actions: raising an arm with a brush in the hand, cutting the material, stretching the leg for a posture in the dance, speaking one sentence in front of the camera. Therefore, it is these artistic actions which directly carry the artistic property. Since they are after all actions, in order to analyze them, the better way maybe is to start with a certain theory of action.

3. Hypothesis: the essence of art is in the artistic intention of action

There are many things that humans “do” while involved in the art process, such as action, thought and perception. But as I mentioned before, the essence of art, the property which makes the outcome of what has been done an artwork is in the action, because without action the audience won’t be able to sense the existence of the work, thus the art process cannot be accomplished. The existence of the artwork is

dependent on the existence of artistic action; the artwork cannot be realized simply by perception or thought, it is born from the action. Yet perception is also necessary for no matter the creation or reception of artwork; thought is required for creation, and also necessary for the reception of artwork if the audience is trying to understand it, but they are not sufficient to bring out the work. The most important difference between the creation and the reception of art is that creation necessarily includes action, but being involved in an action is not necessary for the reception of the artwork. Looking at a picture or listening to music does not necessarily involve bodily movement (walking to the museum or driving to the concert don't count since they are actions which are proceeded in order to participate in artistic activity, they are not directly the artistic activity itself); but one cannot paint or sing without any bodily movement: art creation inevitably involves bodily movement. Neither can we play music, take photographs, nor write novels (even tell an oral story), without moving any parts of our body. Someone may propose a counterexample by imagining creating a work of art without bodily movement, an extreme example: a performance art, a person sitting somewhere, without any bodily movement. But apparently, only sitting somewhere without moving doesn't make the sitting an artwork: the artist first needs to get to this place and sit down (that makes going to the chair just like painters moving their arms), then the artist must make people aware that he is doing performance art (maybe by organizing the work in an art institution, or by previous informing or advertising, or placing indications beside him), otherwise people may just think that he is a psycho or that he is petrified.

The standard understanding of action in the philosophy of action is that each action involves a bodily movement. Mere thinking (a mere mental state) without bodily movement will, generally speaking, not form an action. But since mere bodily movement can be caused by external force or nervous switch, in the case of which there is no action; so, there must be something in addition to bodily movement in action, some mental cause. Thus the general concept of action is to understand action as a bodily movement + some mental state. Many different theories offered different propositions for the possible mental states in action, such as consciousness, awareness,

belief, and intention. Davidson emphasizes two compositions of an action's mental cause: belief and desire; while others such as Bratman and Anscombe place an emphasis on intention.

John Searle in his book "Intentionality: an essay in the philosophy of mind" described these three mental states in action as such: "Just as my belief is satisfied if the state of affairs represented by the content of the belief actually obtains, and my desire is satisfied if the state of affairs represented by the content of the desire comes to pass, so my intention is satisfied if the action represented by the content of the intention is actually performed."¹¹⁹ This means that a belief is supposed to be true, a desire is supposed to be fulfilled, an intention is supposed to be carried out, and it is carried out when the action is performed. Therefore, in the case of art, I believe that the artistic action is more likely identified by the artistic intention of the action, though maybe there are also beliefs and desires involved in the action as well. The belief of the painter about the material, the belief of the dancer about the body strength, the belief of the writer about the grammar, are all necessary for their art-making. However, the belief about the material also helps the factory workers, the belief about the body strength also helps the athletes, the belief about the grammar also helps students. It is hard to say that there are specific artistic beliefs which can determine whether the action is an artistic one. Desire is easily mixed with intention, but sometimes a desire can be fulfilled without the action of the desire-holder, such as someone's desire that the rain stops is actually fulfilled by the fact that the rain does stop, or a child receives a Christmas present which he desired, while one cannot intend to stop the rain, nor intend to receive a specific present. This won't happen in art-making, it's impossible that a person desires to create an artwork and the exact work falls down from the sky. Even if it happens, then it is not him but the sky who produced this work, the person cannot be the creator of the work without dedicating any of his action. However, the intention is something which can only be satisfied by action. Of course, sometimes we intend to do something, such as to pick up a pen that fell on the ground, and before you move someone picks it up for you. But this result is

¹¹⁹ Searle, John R. *Intentionality: an Essay in the Philosophy of Mind*, Cambridge University Press, 1983, p79.

not carried out by the original intention, though it fulfilled the relevant desire: to have your pen back, while your intention is not the cause of the event that the pen does come back. “‘Intention’ is commonly understood in the sense of an intention to do something, or a purpose.”¹²⁰ Searle believes that there are no actions without intentions, every action is intentional, and “An intentional action is simply the condition of satisfaction of an intention.”¹²¹ Therefore, it seems that in artistic actions, desire is not fundamental. It is surely possible and very common that the creator has many desires to be fulfilled in the process of art-making, like a passionate painter having the urge to represent his illusions or a novelist having the urge to spit out a story; but in the end, the work is realized necessarily by intentional actions, and what is carried out by these actions will as consequence also fulfill their desires. In art making, belief is necessary, but not a defining element of the artistic property of action. So it is more likely that the artistic property lies in the content of the intention of artistic action, rather than in belief or in desire.

From now on, it is clear that the creation of art is composed of artistic actions, and that an artistic action is an intentional action, which necessarily involves a bodily movement and an artistic intention. Combined with the artistic property which Danto has revealed, the content of this intention is to represent a subject with a metaphorical ellipsis. Since an intention is supposed to be carried out by performing an action, in the artistic creation, the intention to make a metaphorical representation is supposed to be carried out by performing some action, in other words, by creating the artwork.

The condition of carrying out the artwork is scarcely fulfilled by accomplishing only one bodily movement (one action), but rather by many bodily movements (many actions). Also, it doesn't seem right that in many creative actions the metaphorical representation is the only intention a single action has. If a painter working on his painting by raising his arm with a brush in his hand is interviewed, being asked: “What are you intending to do by raising your arm?”, he possibly won't

¹²⁰ Spiegelberg H. (1981) “Intention” and “Intentionality” in the Scholastics, Brentano and Husserl. In: *The Context of the Phenomenological Movement. Phaenomenologica* (Collection Fondée Par H. L. van Breda et Publiée Sous le Patronage des Centres D'Archives-Husserl), vol 80. Springer, Dordrecht

¹²¹ Searle, John R. *Intentionality: an Essay in the Philosophy of Mind*, p80.

answer that "I am intending to representing a view", but rather "I am intending to finish the touch of this cloud on my canvas." So, do all these actions performed for the same work simply share one intention, or do they have separate intentions? Is it possible that one action has multiple intentions? To answer these questions, Searle's theory of intention has offered a clue: there are different levels of intention in the same action. He differentiates two kinds of intention, for one the condition of satisfaction is only one simple action, such as in the case of the intention to hit someone, to comb the hair, or to add one touch of the cloud on the canvas; for the other the condition of satisfaction is performing not one but many actions, such as in the case of the intention to lose weight, to learn a language, or to produce an artwork. In order to lose weight, one has many things to do: to measure the actual weight, to eat less, to calculate the calories, to go to the gym. Each of these intentions can only be satisfied by performing more actions: to stand on the scale, to cook something light, to run on a treadmill. So similarly, in art creation, though there may be different basic intentions such as to put one touch on the canvas, to speak one sentence on the stage, to adjust the shutter of the camera, all these actions have one intention in common: to represent some subject in a metaphorical way, which would be satisfied by the performance of all the necessary actions for carrying out the metaphorical representation.

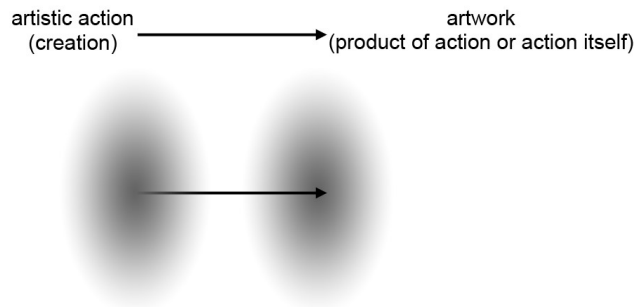
Then comes another problem: if the content of the artistic intention should be expressed as "to represent something metaphorically", and a person must be aware of his intention while performing it (otherwise it won't be called intention but sub-consciousness), it seems it can be inferred that everyone who is creating an artwork has already become familiar with the theory of metaphorical representation since it's the content of his intention, which is quite impossible. For an amateur who is painting, the action of raising the arm with a brush in the hand is absolutely an intentional action, with the intention of putting a touch on the canvas; but as an artistic action, it should also have the intention to metaphorically represent a subject, while the actor possibly does not know very much about the concept of metaphor and representation. The truth is, people won't express their intention of art-making in this

way. For a certain subject S, professional artists may say: “I am representing S”, a child will simply say: “I am drawing S”. But this doesn’t mean that a child or anyone who hasn’t any concept about metaphorical representation is not able to perform artistic action and create artwork. And it doesn’t mean that the artistic intention in these creators’ actions is unconscious, or unaware, but rather that it is expressed in their mental state in a different form, or told by the creator using different terms. If the content of an artistic intention is expressed by “I intend to draw a horse”, it implies that “I intend to metaphorically represent a horse” because drawing, as a highly institutional form of art, already implies that the action of drawing is to represent something metaphorically. So, the child’s expression implies a standard artistic intention, with a proper subject and the way to carry out the intention involving this subject. Therefore, as long as the content of the intention of the action implies that the performer has a subject in mind, and intends to represent it metaphorically or is aware that his way of carrying out the subject is in a certain existing form of art, this intention is an artistic intention. This explains why most of the unprofessional artworks are created in the existing art forms: since artistic action is intentional action, the person who performs this action must realize that he is creating artwork, so if he has not enough comprehension of the metaphorical relation between the work and the subject, the only way he can create an artwork is to follow the existing pattern, doing something which he already knew as art, such as forming an imitational image or playing existing music.

There are two kinds of role an artistic action can play in creating artwork: some artistic action is intended to present the action itself as artwork, such as dancing, acting in film or theatre, and performance art; the other kind of artistic action is intended to present the product or result of the action as artwork, such as painting, photography, sculpture, graphic design. An important sign of differentiating these two is that in the first kind the audience is supposed to directly perceive the performer’s bodily movement (or at least part of the bodily movements in the case of singing or playing music), while in the second kind they can not. Again this differentiation is not an all-or-nothing matter, on certain occasions there are both of these two, and an

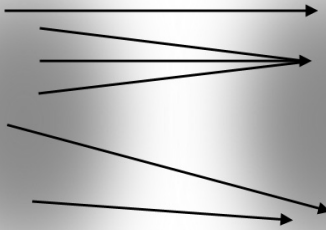
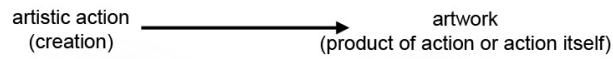
action can be both of these two at the same time, since nowadays there are many live performances that produce something as artwork as well, such as installations with actors, performances with products, or films in which the actors and actresses are involved in the first kind and the director or cameraman is involved in the second kind. However, this description is made from the artwork-based point of view of the concept of art. If alternatively, we take the action-based point of view of art, these are all simply actions: for the same work, all these people act differently but all act with artistic intention. The only reason why the performance-type of work and product-type of work seem to be distinct from each other is that in the former one the bodily movement in action is not only necessary for creating the work but also is a constitutive part of the work, while in the latter one it is not. Whether to include the action as a part of the work depends on the creator's decision about how to represent his subject.

It has been proved in the former parts that the extension of the concept of artwork has a gradational structure, and since the artistic property in the artwork is inherited from the artistic action which produced it, the extension of the concept of artistic action should logically have a gradational structure as well. So, it seems that the corresponding relation between these two extensions should be as such:



But there are two facts which must be noticed concerning the correspondence between the graded artistic nature of the artwork and the action: first, one artwork could be produced by many artistic actions, while these actions for the same work may have different degrees of being artistic; second, even though the work is produced by a group of actions which are artistic on the same level, the work may not be situated in the gradational structure of artwork at the same distance to the center

area as the corresponding actions in the gradational structure of artistic action. For the first one, the production of film would be a proper example; for the second, a very unsuccessful painting which totally failed to represent its subject would be a proper example. So actually, the image of the correspondence of these two concepts is as such:



Since I have previously claimed that the artistic property of the action comes from the intention of the action, it seems that the artistic degree of a certain action is dependent on the artistic degree of the artistic intention. However, can we say that the intensity of the intention gives rise to this difference of artistic degree? Is the intensity of the intention even measurable?

Supposing that in the center of the gradation of the concept of artwork, there is a perfectly artistic work created by a group of actions which are in the center of the gradation of the concept of artistic action with perfectly artistic intention, what are the conditions for them to be perfectly artistic? According to the definition of artwork and artistic action which has been proposed, there are several necessary conditions for the work to be in the center of the gradational structure. First, the artistic intention shouldn't be disturbed by other intentions of the same level, such as the intention of making a profit or promoting a product. In every artistic action there must be many co-existing intentions on different levels, since some of them are linked by means-end relation, such as the intention of drawing a single flower and the intention of

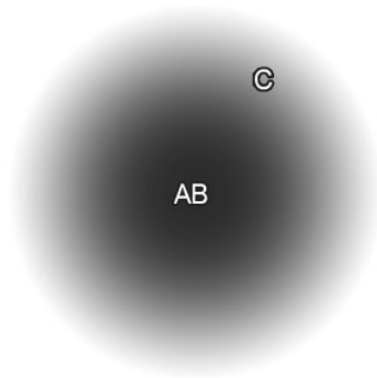
representing the view of “Coquelicots”; some of them are not, for they are co-existing together as the end, as the goal for all these actions, such as the artistic intention and the intention of promoting a product. Roughly speaking, the artistic intention seems to be weakened by other intentions. What actually happens is that the intentions on the same level in certain artistic actions are probably incompatible with each other, therefore when the creator makes decisions for the work, he must sometimes disobey his artistic intention, which makes the artistic intention less than one hundred percent carried out and makes the action and the work under consideration less artistic. Second, the content of the artistic action, the subject and the metaphorical way of representing the subject should be chosen at the will of the creator, in other words, should be decided independently by the creator. Third, the creator has the ability to fully carry out his artistic intention as he wished. So in reverse, according to these facts, there are several possible reasons why a certain artwork is not situated in the central area of the gradational structure: first, the actions are shared between the artistic intention and non-artistic intentions; second, the person who performs the actions doesn’t decide the subject or the way of representing it (if he doesn’t decide any part of either of these two then his action is not an artistic one), or he is only able to decide a part of the subject or part of the way of representing it (in the case of collective creation and interpretational creation); third, the creation is interfered with by some difficulties and thus doesn’t successfully manifest the creator’s artistic intention.

There are two things about the transmission of the artistic degree from the action to the work which mustn’t be confused. First, as explained above, a highly artistic action located in the central area of the gradational structure of the concept of artistic actions can produce work which is not situated correspondingly in the central area of the gradational structure of the concept of artwork, but an artistic action with lower artistic degree cannot create work located in the central area of the gradational structure of the concept of artworks. The artistic intention of action can be weakened by being interfered with by other intentions, and its outcome can be influenced by the skill of the artist or the material that he uses, but cannot be strengthened by these

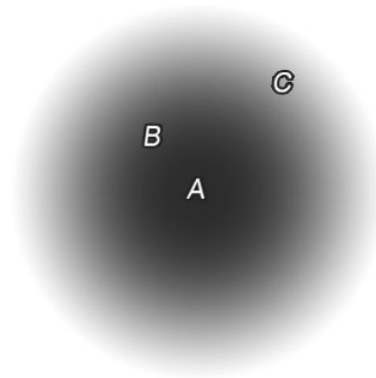
elements. The artistic degree can only be degraded but never be upgraded in the process of the transmission from the artistic action to the artwork, because having an artistic intention of a certain artistic degree is only the necessary condition for transmitting the same artistic degree to the artistic action, but not a sufficient condition. Second, the judgment of the artistic degree of a work and the evaluation of the work (whether it's a good artwork or not) are not logically related, and should not be confused. The artistic degree of a work is only determined by the artistic degree of the intention and whether the creator achieves to fully fulfill his intention; whether a work is good or not depends on many elements such as the subject, creativeness and the experience of the audience. A professional artist's painting is usually much better than an amateur's painting, but they can be artistic in the same degree. In the artistic institutions, the professional works are judged and evaluated, but generally speaking, they are all situated in the center of the gradational structure of the artwork, thus they are artistic in the same degree though they may have different artistic values.

A: a very artistic action
 B: a very artistic action
 C: a less artistic action

A: a very artistic work created by A
B: a less artistic work created by B
C: a less artistic work created by C



The gradation of artistic degree of action



The gradation of artistic degree of artwork

For every artwork, there is always a process of transmission from the content of the creator's intention to what is apprehended by the audience. In the former parts, I have already mentioned that the intention of the artistic action does not always correspond to the real effect of this action. For example, the action of painting a cat performed by a child or the action of singing a song performed by a tone-deaf person

is not only unable to form a stable and distinctive style at will, but more importantly, is unable to represent the subject as the agents really intended (although sometimes the clumsy skill does have good effect of representation, but that would only be a coincidence in which the effect happens to conform to the mainstream value, not because the creator intended to). What is the relationship between artistic intention and the effect? How does it work and fit into the action-based theory of art?

I have proposed that having the intention of representing a certain subject with metaphorical ellipsis is a necessary condition of being an artistic action. But when this definition is employed to judge whether an action or its product is artistic or not and to what degree it is, what we have access to most of the time is only the effect of representation, not the intention. The metaphorical core of being art, the rhetorical ellipsis, is constructed to get the most effective, persuasive result from this rhetoric. So according to its logical structure, it would be the best to remain silent about what should be filled into the ellipsis. That means the audience should be told only the hint about the subject (such as the title) and the information about the work itself, but not the description of the similarity and continuity between the subject and the work (which is not often the case in contemporary art, since many contemporary works are too demanding of audience's database thus it is too difficult to fill in the rhetoric ellipsis by audiences themselves). Even if there are artists who explain their works in interviews or brochures, the action of this explanation is not included in artistic action, since this action is not intended to metaphorically represent the subject.

The concept of artwork, as Danto has suggested, is a relational concept, because the judgment of whether something is an artwork or not does not depend on the judgment of whether it is involved in a certain type of relationship with a subject. Yet it is not the only relation in which the artwork is involved. It is also involved in a relationship between people: the "creator—artwork—receiver" relation, since it is defined by the artistic action while artistic actions are performed by people. A relational concept has a distinctive character when it is involved in a relationship with people: suppose that we have a relational definition of a relational concept A, and this relation involves a person, then for a certain object O, if a person P involved does not

realize that he is involved, for P, O is not A (while for another person involved who realizes this relation, O certainly is A); or for someone who is not involved, neither for him O is A. This happens especially in family relationships, since the concepts about family such as father, brother, uncle are all relational concepts. For example, Luke Skywalker in *Star Wars: Episode I* didn't know that Darth Vedar is his father, at that time for him Darth Vedar is only a strong enemy; but Luke in *Star Wars: Episode II* discovered the truth that Vedar is his father, then Vedar became father to him; but for the audience who has read the novel before going to the cinema, Vedar is always Luke's father. So the concept of artwork as a relational concept defined by a relation which involves people, should have a similar structure: an object is an artwork for someone, but it's possible that for another person it is not an artwork; an object is not an artwork for someone, but it's possible that in one second after certain events it may become an artwork for this person.

Therefore, from the audience's perspective, whether the effect of an action is an artwork or not, depends on whether the person realizes that he is supposed to play the role as an audience in the relationship, that is to say, whether the person realizes he is faced with an artwork. There are very many ways of getting into this artistic relationship. When people participate in institutional artistic activities such as going to the art exhibition, concert, theatre, they have already accepted their role to admire artworks; or when people gather around to karaoke for singing or give a "like" to a friend's painting on their blog, they already accept that singing or painting is artistic. These are the most ordinary ways of putting ourselves into artistic relations in which most people will naturally realize that they are dealing with art. But if we take the example of performance art that I mentioned in the former parts, that a man sitting in the park maybe with a tiny label to remind the people in the park that it is an artwork, then the people who don't notice the label wouldn't see this action as artistic action because they are not getting into this relationship, thus for these people it is not an artwork. Though the example of this performance art is an extreme example, it is true that in contemporary art there are many disputable works such as ready-mades whose identity as artwork seems doubtful in non-professional audience's view until today.

This phenomenon shows that although the intention of an artist in his action gives the action an artistic character, this character can only be measured by means of the effect from the audience's perspective.

For artwork, the existence of an audience and the perceiving of the effect of an artistic action by the audience is inevitable, because even for unpublished works or unrealized works, there is still one audience: the creator himself. In consequence, the intention-audience transmission always exists in every artistic action. Thus the understanding or interpretation of art is, as Carroll described, "utter about a past event in light of consequences of that event that are known to us."¹²² There are many works which are difficult to identify whether they are artworks or not, sometimes because the artistic intention of the action is seriously interfered with by other intentions, sometimes because the intention of the creator is not accessible. The judgment of whether a work is created with artistic intention is sometimes only a guess from the accessible information. In the former part, I picked a poster for sale as the example of non-artistic advertising, but the judgment that it's non-artistic is made due to the circumstance that I don't have more information of the intention of the creator. Whereas, if the creator of the poster is interviewed and reveals that the color and the font he chose is representing some subject, the conclusion would be different. Likewise, since the judgment of the artistic degree depends on the artistic degree of the intention of action, it is also a probable judgment unless the intention of the creator is entirely revealed. The knowledge of the intention of the artist will dramatically change our view of his work. So even though theoretically the definition of the artistic intention has been made clear, it is still possible that the identity of some works remains unclear because of the practical difficulty of detecting comprehensively the creator's intention.

So, the relationship between artwork, artistic action, and artistic intention can be summarized as such:

¹²² Carroll, Noël. "Danto, Style, and Intention." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 53, no. 3, 1995, p. 253.

Artwork is the outcome of artistic action.

Artistic action is the action with artistic intention.

Being artwork is not an all-or-nothing matter but is possessing artistic property in varying degrees.

The artistic degree of the artwork is the result of not only the artistic degree of the intention but also the degree of fulfillment of this intention.

Combined with Danto's definition of artwork, the artistic intention will probably be summarized as such: an artistic intention is to represent a certain subject with style by means of metaphorical rhetoric, and also intends to represent a style which must be referencing art history, i.e. to have an "Artworld". But as presented in chapter IV, Danto's theory has its shortcomings, so if my hypothesis of the content of artistic intention is representing something with a metaphorical ellipsis, some conditions proposed by Danto must be proved unnecessary for defining art, which are having an "artworld" (in Danto's sense) as an art defining property and having style (with each of the two of Danto's conflicting definitions of style) as an art defining property.

1) The concept of "Artworld" is not necessary for defining art

In Danto's arguments, the "Artworld" is not only concerning a necessary condition of being artwork: "Nor would these things be artworks without the theories and the histories of the Artworld."¹²³, but also a necessary condition for understanding artwork: "To see something as art requires something the eye cannot decry--an atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of the history of art: an Artworld."¹²⁴ "...in order to see it as part of the artworld, one must have mastered a good deal of artistic theory as well as a considerable amount of the history of recent New York painting."¹²⁵

The concept of Artworld is dependent on his concept of style (which is explained in the article "Artworld", not the one in "The Transfiguration of the Commonplace", since these two are conflicting), which is the composition of all the artistic related

¹²³ Danto, Arthur. "The Artworld." *The Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 61, no. 19, 1964, p. 584.

¹²⁴ Ibid, p. 580.

¹²⁵ Ibid, p. 581.

predicates (presented or denied) of a work. The Artworld is composed of all the existing styles in art history. The understanding of an artwork by reflection towards the history of art is concerned with only half of the representation: the representation of the artist's style; therefore according to Danto's proposition that an artwork is not only representing the subject but also the style, in order to fully understand a work of art, it is not only necessary to grasp the subject but also to grasp the art-historical significance of the work. Here the historical significance only refers to the achievement in creating the work with a style that references art history (deliberately choosing to keep or abandon every existing artistic predicate in the Artworld), rather than to the achievement of the representation itself such as neat metaphor, meaningful subject or excellent skill. Though these two aspects are equally important, I would rather speak of these two aspects of a work in reversed priority: for fully understanding a work of art, it would be better to grasp the art-historical significance of the work with the knowledge about its Artworld (the existing styles of its own time and how it obtained its position in the Artworld); but what is necessary is to grasp the subject, which is in most cases even more important than the knowledge of the Artworld. That is to say, the knowledge of Artworld is not always necessary for understanding an artwork. There are artworks which must be understood and interpreted in respect of art history, they are actually works which are representing art history and representing their own entrance into art history: the subject is about art history. This is a special type of artwork which mostly appears in contemporary art, often revolutionary artwork on which Danto has been concentrated, and that's why he placed so much emphasis on the relationship between artwork and art history.

Nevertheless, as I introduced in chapter I, in the reality of art this kind of work is only a small portion among whole "artwork population". Not even all contemporary works are art-history-related. Focusing too much on this type of works made Danto propose a definition which is too narrow, and which takes certain unnecessary conditions as necessary conditions into the definition. It also leads Danto to the conclusion that most amateur's work and children's work are not artwork, which is against the reality of art. For the art-history-related work, in fact, knowledge about the

“Artworld” is necessary for understanding, not because the “Artworld” is necessary for understanding all the artworks, but because this knowledge is necessary for understanding this specific type of work, because they represent art history: the knowledge of art history functions as part of the “database” of the audience to fill the metaphorical ellipsis in the representation. In the case of other types, I would never agree that an ordinary person is not able to understand a painting of a landscape of his hometown without the knowledge of art history, since he can very possibly be able to recognize the view and sense the peaceful, warm image of his homeland as the subject of the representation; we can only say that he wouldn’t achieve to understand the representation of style, but he would absolutely understand the representation of the subject.

What Danto asks of the audience by introducing his definition of artwork is to understand both the subject and the style. But as many reviews have pointed out, Danto’s concept of style is a relatively a weak link in his theory. Most people consider the understanding or interpretation of art as figuring out the subject of the representation, to understand why and how the work represents the subject, in other words, to fill in the metaphorical ellipsis with one’s own life experience. To understand the concept of style of artwork is not only too demanding for the audience, but also too demanding for the artist and artwork. Not only do the amateurs or children not intend to represent art history, but many professional artists in the age of classical art could not possibly have been intentionally representing art history. Most of them were creating works within the existing pattern explored by the revolutionary masters, focusing more on the representation of the subject. Since I insisted that the artistic property of the work comes from the artistic intention, if the representation of art history is not in the artist’s intention, then the work is not representing art history, even if the work did gain historical significance by neat metaphor or wonderful skill. Therefore, not every artwork is representing art history. Having an Artworld cannot be a necessary condition of being an artwork.

2) The concept of style is not necessary for defining art

Since I have proposed that it's the intention of the artistic action that bears the artistic property, so the question of the necessity of having a style for being artwork can also be altered to: is representing the style necessarily included in the intention of every artistic action? It has been revealed that Danto has presented two inconsistent definitions of style: the first one is composed of an artist's every choice of whether or not to create the work with certain artistic predicate in the passing art history, which has been proved not necessary for being artwork since the Artworld is composed of styles in this sense; the second is an artist's personalized way of metaphorically representing the world which is influenced directly by an artist's way of seeing the world. The latter one sounds very persuasive, as when someone is performing a creative action, he inevitably is doing it in his own manner, i.e., with his style. But does that mean it is also a part of his intention, namely, that he has consciousness of his own style and is representing it deliberately? Professional artists may have this intention, but for children and amateurs, or even many great masters in art history, it's not very likely the case. But not intending to represent one's style definitely shouldn't make one's work not be an artwork. For some of Van Gogh's works, especially his works that were created during his suffering of mental instability, it is quite possible that he was not deliberately intending to representing his style; but inevitably he did represent his style since "style is the man himself", he sees the world just like what we see in his painting, he just can't get rid of it.

Van Gogh's works are, from today's professional view, brilliant with distinct style (which suggests that he is a distinct person too). There are more works in all the seven parts (in chapter I) in the world of art (not in Danto's "Artworld" but the real art world) occupying different positions in the gradational structure of artwork, which didn't achieve to manifest a distinct style. In the example of Picasso's tie and a little boy's tie, Danto accused the little boy's work of not having a style and thus that it wouldn't get into the realm of art, however if we accept Danto's definition of style—the manner of creating things resulting from the way of seeing the world—the little boy's work definitely has a certain style, only the style comes from the way that a child sees the world. If we accept Danto's presupposition that the boy's tie is not an artwork, it

would be more reasonable to say that the reason why it's not an artwork is the absence of the subject, and furthermore, according to my hypothesis, the absence of the boy's intention of representing a subject. Because Danto in this thought experiment supposed that the boy is only trying to paint an old tie in blue as smooth and flat as he could, so we can assume that the boy didn't intend to represent anything but rather to practice his skill with brush and pigment. So, this work is never a representation: it would obtain its style if it's equipped with a subject, but it has no subject. The boy's tie is an example situated in the white area of the "gradational structure" of the concept of artwork.

Not all the works of children and amateurs are like the boy's tie, many of them do have subjects of representation. These works, the amateurs' works (with a subject) which have always been neglected by Danto, actually should be identified as artworks just like the professional ones according to Danto's definition. Take the thought experiment of Picasso and the little boy again. This time we make the boy paint a cat. The boy understands that to paint a cat means to make the image of his painting look like a cat, and the painting is supposed to be about the cat, he may even already understand that painting is a type of art. So, he performs all his actions intending to represent a cat, his subject, which makes his work a representation; but his skill is not very mature so that he ended up with an image not too life-like: a bad painting in a professionals' point of view. But this, on the contrary, gives the work a quite visible style, because the image is formed through his unskillful hand in his own way of representing the world, even though this style does not make a contribution to art history and is similar to the style of other children's paintings. So the little boy's painting actually should be considered as artwork according to Danto's definition. Meanwhile, Picasso also painted a cat in his stylish way, which coincidentally looks exactly the same as the boy's painting, just like when he said: "It took me four years to paint like Raphael, but a lifetime to paint like a child." Picasso's work no doubt will be admitted as artwork as well, but more valuable, more artistic, since his subject is richer and his skill is better: he is able to fully fulfill his artistic intention; he is not only representing a cat, but also representing his will of trying to be like a child, and

in Danto's theory, more importantly, he is representing his style with the reference of its position in art history.

Now the answer to the problem of Danto's concept of style is at hand: if the style is the way that we represent the world in our own way, then many examples which are excluded by Danto are treated unjustly since they do have certain styles. In the example of the boy's cat and Picasso's cat, on the one hand, the inference made from this understanding of style is contradictory to common sense because neither the professional nor the amateur would admit that the boy's painting has style. On the other hand, having a style is not necessary for being artwork, but rather a criterion for the evaluation of art. In order to clarify the concept of style, it must be figured out what it is that makes this difference between works which are considered "stylish" and those which are not.

The persuasive part in Danto's elaboration about the style is to explain style as the way that the work is represented in artist's own manner, which is influenced by the artist's way of seeing(sensing) the world. However, having one's own way of seeing the world is a necessary condition but not sufficient of successfully representing the style. For children or unskillful amateurs, in the case of visual art, they are trying to represent what they see, what they consider beautiful or interesting; but without a certain level of skill, they may have failed to completely fulfill their artistic intention. Similarly, many people want to sing as good as the singers but are restricted by their talent of music, skill or voice that are bestowed by nature, thus they cannot sing as they wanted. This is the case that the creator has the intention to achieve a certain goal but doesn't succeed. Furthermore, in the case of children, their perspective of seeing the world is very changeable, and develops along with their growth, so if they have so-called style (in Danto's sense) then the style must be quite unstable, therefore I would rather say that most of the children's works have no stable style (except for the genius who can already form his distinct style in his childhood), or generally speaking children's works have a similar style since children's ways of seeing the world are similar. In both of these cases, the manner in which the creators represent the world and how they see (sense) the world doesn't entirely correspond to

each other; but these actions: painting a cat, singing a tune, are no doubt artistic actions, it is only that they do not have very good results. For Danto, the style must be represented in the work for it to be an artwork, but in my action-based definition of art, the representation of style is not a necessary condition. If we consider that every hand can leave individual traces as the demonstration of style according to Danto's view of style, then having a style through artistic action is in fact inevitable rather than necessary. Furthermore, if the style is the personal way of doing things which will leave the trace in the result, then it is not only the art-making but all the actions that are performed with the performer's own style, which implies that having a style covers a range of creations much broader than the confirmed necessary and sufficient condition (creation with the intention of metaphorical representation) and therefore it is not necessary for defining art. We can do many things with distinctive personal style: make a speech with style, wear clothes with style, work with style, write a philosophical text with style as Danto did, or even live a life with a style which means to live in one's own way.

Danto mainly employed the concept of style in order to distinguish the artwork from the mere representation such as the scientific diagram, but since later he had developed the idea of metaphorical ellipsis from Goodman of metaphorical ellipsis, the concept of style is no longer necessary for this differentiation. Metaphorical ellipsis can already explain the difference between an artwork and a scientific diagram: there is no metaphorical ellipsis in a scientific diagram. In the example of "Portrait de Madame Cézanne", the subject of Lorain's diagram is the structure of Cézanne's painting, the subject of Lichtenstein's painting is the way that Cézanne sees his wife, represented with a metaphorical ellipsis which should be filled in with the structure of the painting as illustrated exactly by Lorain's diagram. On the contrary, if we employed the concept of style here, it would not be able (or at least not very appropriate) to explain the difference between these two: they look the same, in respect of the appearance they are of the same style. The only aspect that matters to Lichtenstein's work is to make it look exactly the same as Lorain's diagram and in the same size of Cézanne's painting, what he did here is to conceal his own style rather

than demonstrate it.

4. Conclusions about art and all the art-related concepts

1) Art

Art is a property of the action, the property of having the intention to metaphorically represent something. This intention can be called an artistic intention, the action performed with an artistic intention is an artistic action, and the artwork is the outcome of the artistic action. The property of art is only directly possessed by artistic action, and the artistic property in the artwork is only derived from the artistic action. If art is properly defined, all the art-related concepts can be explained based on the definition of art. The following part will try to make clear all the conclusions that can be inferred from the action-based definition of art about artwork, artistic action and people's role in the art process.

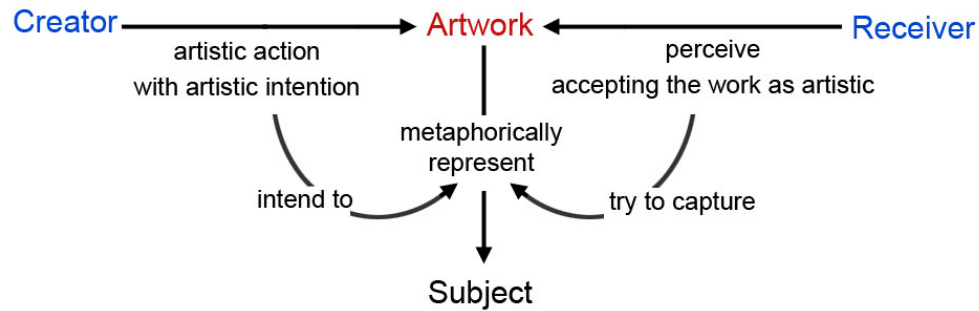
2) Artwork

Artwork is the outcome of the artistic action, in some cases, the artwork is the product of the artistic action, in other cases, the artwork is the artistic action itself.

As Danto has revealed, nowadays it is possible for anything to be transfigured into artwork, therefore an artwork and a non-artwork can be indistinguishable from the appearance, which indicates that the defining property of being artwork is unobservable, i.e., cannot be detected by mere observation. This leads to the conclusion that the defining property of artwork is something that is not in its appearance but rather in its "substructure", and is very possibly the product of a specific kind of procedure. Thus, a procedural definition seems to be a suitable form for the definition of artwork. Since artworks are all created by actions, this specific procedure may be a specific kind of action: the artistic action.

Danto also has suggested that artwork is a relational concept: artwork must be defined by being involved in a specific relation, the relation of aboutness between the subject and the work itself. This work-subject relation can be soldered with the

creator-work-receiver relation.



As we can see in this schema, artwork is in the center of this whole process. Although I have argued that the concept of art never equals the concept of artwork, artwork still is the most accessible one among all the art-related concepts and the most important manifestation of the artistic property.

Artwork is a concept of which the extension has a “gradational structure”. The prototype theory explains it as the gradation of typicality. My explanation is that the possession of artistic properties is not an all-or-nothing matter but a matter of degree, that is to say, there are artworks which are very artistic, other works which are less artistic, and some works which have a very low artistic degree so that their identity as artwork is not very clear. Since artwork is the outcome of artistic action, this gradation is possibly inherited from the artistic degree of artistic action. The artistic degree of the artwork depends on the artistic degree of all the artistic actions which are necessary for creating it and the practical conditions involved in the process of fulfilling this intention such as the skill of the creator; the artistic degree of the artistic actions varies with the artistic degree of the artistic intention.

Last week at the gate of park I asked my boyfriend to take a photo for me. I told him to step back so that he could take my whole body, then I got this



No the girl in hat is not me

I'm here



In the former part of this chapter, I have presented the examples of a photograph which have shown different degrees of being artistic. Since now I have proposed that the artistic property of artwork is inherited from the artistic intention of the action, which means that different photographs are taken by actions with different degrees of artistic intention, I can't wait to put forward this collection of mine: the most non-artistic photograph one has ever seen. It was posted by a girl on Sina Weibo (Chinese equivalent of Facebook), a photo taken by her unmindful boyfriend who has not at all any intention to properly represent his subject (unless he deliberately disobeyed his girlfriend and toughly insisted on representing the girl in the hat or the grandness of the part gate, though these still wouldn't make his representation a good one).

The artistic intention can also explain why there are other photographs which can be considered as half-artwork, such as many wildlife photographs. Wildlife photographers usually not only intended to present faithfully the appearance of animals but also intended to

represent their dynamic, their strength, their life, even the beauty of nature—therefore this action of representation is performed with both the intention of metaphorical representation and the intention to document. Similarly, commercial designs can be considered as half-artworks created with both the intention of art and the intention of

designing something practical or of making profit.

Now this definition of artwork is ready to be testified with all the seven overlapping categories of artwork which I have listed in chapter I.

i) Art developed from the avant-garde, created by professional artists, mostly exhibited in the museums or performed at the stage

Thanks to Danto's main concern of these works, they can be perfectly explained by the theory of metaphorical representation and the action-based concept of art. The follow-up of the revolution is that first here come the works which are indistinguishable from the commonplace by mere observation; second, there are works which are installed in certain environments, while their representation depends on other non-artistic objects. The material of the artwork no longer matters to the essence of art, and the boundary between artworks and other objects no longer exists, which has hastened Danto's idea that the artwork's defining property is in the work's sub-structure.

Since these works are mostly produced and published inside art institutions, and since professional artists are always trying to contribute new ideas in the work, thus the artistic intention of their actions is often very firm, strong, clear and pure (without being interfered with by other instrumental intentions).

ii) Arts in the classical forms (painting, sculpture, music, movie, theatre, literature)

These are the most typical metaphorical representational artworks. Most of them are imitative, and so the subject can often easily be figured out. For the past few hundreds of years, the artists' intention of metaphorical representation has been strong and firm, but in earlier centuries when art was still considered as technique, the artist's intention was usually mixed together with the religious intention and the practical intention.

iii) Arts outside the art institution, created by craftsmen or amateurs(handicraft, online fiction, graffiti, etc.)

As long as the work is created with an artistic intention, it is an artwork, no matter whether it is created by a professional artist or not. These amateurs' artworks are not

necessarily bad works, which means the quality of an artwork has nothing to do with the identity of its creator, neither should it be evaluated according to the identity of its creator. French artist Jean Dubuffet has given a name to these arts: l'Art Brut, after he had visited several psychiatric hospitals and discovered many talented paintings of the patients. From the perspective of Danto's concept of style (the way of representation effected by the creator's way of seeing the world), the style of l'Art Brut is less affected by training and the doctrines of art institutions, but directly, purely reflects the creators' way of seeing the world. The amateurs' artworks have made figures in the world of art, often by their natural, unadorned styles which are stimulated more likely by talent and passion.

On the other hand, in these art forms, there are many works which can be considered as "half-artworks", i.e. in the grey area of the gradational structure of the concept of artwork, not because of their quality, but because the intention of creating them as representation with metaphorical ellipsis is not fully fulfilled, or is mixed with other intentions. There are pure representative forms such as paper folding, online fictions; but others are sometimes much less artistic, for example, the action of knitting is usually performed with instructions, and the pattern can also be non-representative. If the person is knitting while inventing new patterns to represent something (even geometric patterns), his work (such as a sweater) is more artistic than a whole colored sweater, but still much less artistic than many artworks in the museum because he also knits it with an instrumental intention: making a sweater.

In the cartoon movie "Ratatouille" in the story of which a mouse can cook, the gastronome and food critic Anton Ego wrote an article, after being touched by the extraordinary dish cooked by the mouse Remy. He wrote: "Not everyone can become a great artist, but a great artist can come from anywhere." This means that although everyone is able to act artistically, the creation of great artwork still needs something more, such as a passionate soul, a sensitive heart, colorful life experiences, and more importantly, hard work. But none of these should be bound to a certain class, gender, race, profession, education, or even age. It is really heartwarming support for all the art creators, eliminating the bias when an artwork is evaluated.

iv) Commercial art, works which bear more practical values other than the artistic value (graphic designs, poster, furnishings, fashion design, etc.)

These works are all situated in the grey area of the “gradational structure”, but at a different distance to the center. As these works are all created for both artistic and practical purposes, thus the intention of representing is weaker than the works around the center of the gradational structure, since the creation must take other non-representational values into account. In this field, there are roughly speaking two kinds of commercial designs. Of the first one, the subject of representation is commercial: in short, advertising. The work itself can no doubt be representational, but with a specific subject: the product. So, in this respect, the creator’s intention is not as strong as the pure artistic creators is not because he is not fully focused on the representation, but because he is not free to choose the subject. Also to ensure that the effect is representing precisely the subject, the creator cannot leave too much space for the metaphorical ellipsis to the audience as he wishes, in order to guarantee the effect of advertising, which weakens his artistic intention as well. For the second kind of commercial art, the intention of metaphorical representation is directly corroded by other intentions, for example, the design of a teapot at least must ensure that it can contain hot water, the design of a dress at least must ensure that it can be worn on the human body.

v) Art from non-western traditions which haven’t been investigated by most of the art theories (Chinese and Japanese painting, aboriginal art of America and Australia, etc.)

This category is not parallel to the others. In non-western arts, there are classical and revolutionary ones, purely representational ones and commercial ones, professional ones and amateur’s ones, and of course, they occupy different positions at a different distance to the center of the gradational structure as well. However, taking them into account in our investigation brings in many more examples from all kinds of art, which research in the past may have missed the chance to encounter.

vi) Primitive works and classical works which may have been partly or entirely made for other purposes in the past, but still are or have begun to be

admired as art today.

According to the essence of art proposed by this thesis, whether something is artistic depends on the intention of the action which created it. Thus, whether primitive people were creating the objects which are now staying mutely in the museum with metaphorical representational intention is most of the time mysterious, because it's impossible to travel back in time to discover more about their intentions. But at least some of the primitive paintings and sculptures are obviously imitative, thus it can be assumed from the effect of these actions which were performed millions of years ago that these works clearly have their subjects. If the creator realized that he was representing it not only in the primitive religious sense (re-presentation in Danto's theory) but also in the modern sense, the work can be considered as an artwork. Anyway, whether those primitive people were doing art counts on more archaeological discoveries. But as far as I know, there is no practical way to detect the true mental states from the skull, thus the identity of their creative action of being artistic will remain undistributed.

vii) Works from the other domains or social departments other than the art institution(astronomical photograph, wildlife photograph)

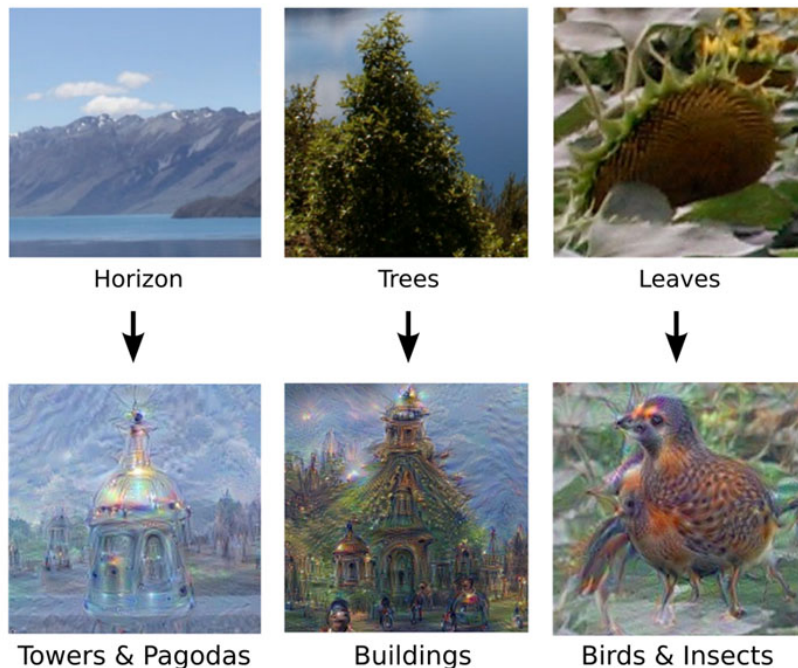
In other social departments, there are partial artistic representations, and also representations which are entirely non-art. These representations are usually created with both artistic and non-artistic intentions, so it is scarcely possible that these works appear in the center of the gradational structure of the concept of artwork. But these representations might be admired by someone and then be equipped with a subject leaving metaphorical ellipsis, and therefore become artworks. But in this case, the creator is not the person who originally produced it but the person who offered it a subject. From this respect, the photograph of the nebula taken by scientists manipulating the Hubble telescope (if equipped with a subject) is not much different from Duchamp's Fountain.

viii) Other atypical phenomena about art

Different from Danto's assertion about the "end of art", in the last decade there are still new phenomena which are even more challenging for art theories. New

techniques have been developed so that some robots or artificial intelligence have been claimed to be able to create artwork.

There are several extraordinary examples. Google company has started the project named “Deep Dreams Generator”, and the artificial intelligence’s “style” is called “Inceptionism”. It is a system imitating the neural network of humans, based on the research of Leon Gatys and Andrew Zisserman, *Visualizing what a neural network is learning while it is being trained*, in 2014, and got into shape in 2015 by software engineers led by Alexamder Mordvintsev. If a picture is uploaded into the generator, it will recognize the elements in the picture and transform the picture according to its database (which is “learned” from other uploaded pictures), like this:



Similarly, there are other artificial intelligences concerning art such as Kulitta, an automated music composition program; PaintsTransfer, a digital tool which can color the drawing or sketch with certain parameters set by the user; “Cloudpainter”, a robot which can paint and draw on real paper and canvas; Microsoft’s artificial intelligence “Xiaoice” which can generate poetry according to the picture uploaded.

In the frame of the action-based concept of art, it is possible that the works produced by these robots and artificial intelligences are artworks, only under the

condition that we take the person who uploads the original data or gives orders as the creator of the work has the intention to represent a certain subject with metaphorical ellipsis. The robots and artificial intelligences should not (at least not until now) be considered as the creator of art, since they are not able to perform actions: they are not able to form an intention, and scarcely can their physical being be called a “body”. In these cases, if we consider the products as artworks, then the machine, software, robot, and artificial intelligence are no more than a tool for the real creator of art. In the actions of the real creator, their essential function is just the same as a camera, graver, or piano.

Except for the robot and A.I., rumors are saying that non-human animals can also create artwork. Here are several examples. The “worst” one is producing the “best” works: in Thailand, elephant shows are always catching the eyes of tourists, among which an extraordinary event is the elephant’s painting show: elephants take brushes with their nose painting flowers, animals on papers. Their “works” look really good, even better than many children’s painting, while in fact they learned it from brutal training. They are given certain models to imitate, practicing with chains, small cages, and a trainer standing aside with a hook. When they make mistakes putting wrong touches on the paper, the trainer will hit them hard, so they basically remember the pattern by mere conditional reflex, and each elephant can only paint the models that it learned but not any other creations. These products can scarcely be called art but rather works of maltreatment, since nothing in this process can be called an artistic action, neither the action of the elephant nor the action of the trainer.

Comparatively, the little pig named “Pigcasso” in South America is very lucky: it one day showed great interest in the brush with pigment on it, so its mistress let it try on the paper. Since then, it has been indulging in painting by holding a paintbrush in its mouth. But my observation through the images on the internet is that it only loves putting colors on the center of the paper, hardly can we tell the subject from the effect, thus all its “works” are with very similar pattern: a heap of color, with different composition of colors which its mistress gives it. Still, it is curious that Pigcasso apparently enjoys painting, thus if we could talk to animals, we would absolutely try

to figure out what's its intention of doing it, but unfortunately, we can't. So Picasso's works have a mysterious intention and undetected subjects, its works so far remain the result of non-artistic actions. Similarly, there are dogs which are claimed to be able to sing, but actually, they just love howling with certain music; Parrots or mynas love singing and can sing with a good sense of melody, but these are merely imitations of the sound they often heard, they are not able to do any creative.

Another extreme example created by an unusual creator would be the works of mentally malfunctioned people, such as people who suffer from schizophrenia and dysgnosia. All through art history, it is not so rare that an artist had schizophrenia, but this mental disease usually appears to be intermittent, thus the patient might be able to perform proper actions with artistic intention; dysgnosia, on the other hand, is relatively persistent, but there are many patients of dysgnosia who can create good paintings as well. So maybe the situation depends on the degree of their illness. But anyway, if the patient is able to act with intention, then it is reasonable to say that their works are artworks; if not, then their works are not artworks.

The last controversial example of artwork is marginal not because of the specificity of the creator, but because of the form: mere metaphors. Danto has claimed in "The Transfiguration of the Commonplace" that "every metaphor is a little poem.". Unfortunately, I am not quite sure whether he is serious about this or not, at least it seems hard to tell from the context. Indeed, according to Danto's definition, a mere metaphor should be considered as an artwork: it is a representation with metaphorical ellipsis, but it is somehow against common sense that a single metaphor is also an artwork. Neither has he discussed the style of mere metaphor with any of his concepts of style, so it is hard to say that a mere metaphor has a certain style. However, in the action-based definition of art proposed by the thesis, whether a mere metaphor is an artwork depends on to what extent the speaker intended to offer a representation with the metaphor. At least, when I joked with my friends saying "Look, the sky is smiling, wicked!" in a last-quartered moonlit night, I didn't intend to create an artwork, neither did I intend to represent a certain subject. However, though we will find it hard to call this simple sentence an artwork, it is natural and reasonable to consider the action of

speaking like this an artistic action. So it seems that the concept of artwork in people's mind is still somehow influenced by some social rules, while the concept of artistic action hasn't been influenced by such things. But basically we do learn about metaphor at school by admiring literature, which means that the metaphor is artistic in many contexts, and a single metaphor is a marginal artwork—especially in the case that some metaphors will someday turn into ordinary terms in the dynamic process of the emergence of new vocabulary, as Haruki Murakami suggested in his novel *“Kafka on the Shore”*: the world is constructed with metaphors.

3) Artistic actions

Artistic actions are actions performed intending to metaphorically represent a certain subject. The essence of art lies in the intention of artistic actions. Being artistic action is not an all-or-nothing matter but a matter of degree, because first in many occasions the action has intentions other than the artistic one such as being practical, being fun, being helpful, being political, etc. Secondly since the level of skill interferes with the effect of the representation, even though the creator intended to offer an obvious convincing representation, if he didn't achieve to realize his intention then the effects of the actions in the audience's eye would be not artistic enough, or not artistic at all.

The artistic action is an attempt to build two relations. The creation intends to build a metaphorical representational relation (I) between the work and the subject, and then to build a relation with the audience (II) no matter who the audience is, even the creator himself: to convince the audience to take a certain point of view as the creator expected, by leaving a rhetorical, metaphorical ellipsis. The reception of a certain work as an artwork means that the audience agrees to enter this relationship with the creator (II) by corresponding his life experience to find out the relation between the work and the subject (I). Then the audience is not only accepting the work's being art but is also understanding the work.

This process is very similar to another human activity: speaking. The art creator is

trying to say something to the world¹²⁶, he is saying it not in ordinary language but by art. I wouldn't say that art is a kind of language (though in many cases such as in literature the work is composed of language), but rather that art shares some similarity with language. Art is a way of telling things, a metaphorical way, which can tell so much more than language, since it can express feelings, sensations, images, all the things which cannot be conveyed by mere speaking; also the artistic way of telling things can be much more persuasive than language since it makes up a riddle for the audience, and seduces them into finding out the answers.

Now it is time to discuss the problem of art and philosophy. Danto thinks that art has turned itself into theory, into philosophy: "All there is at the end, is theory, art having finally become vaporized in a dazzle of pure thought about itself, and remaining, as it were, solely as the object of its own theoretical consciousness."¹²⁷ In Kelly's "Essentialism and Historicism in Danto's Philosophy of Art", he analyzed Danto's theory of the "philosophical disenfranchisement of art", and interprets Danto's description of the art revolution as considering that art was deliberately pushing itself to find a new definition and ended up with turning itself into philosophy: "So art is both philosophical and historical when its essence is concealed, and neither philosophical nor historical once its essence has been revealed."¹²⁸ But for the phenomenon of art revolution, I prefer to interpret it alternatively: the artists were not trying to find a definition of art, but were doing something to challenge the existing definitions of art; they didn't turn art into philosophy but started to express their philosophical point of view in an artistic way. First, it is absurd to say that "art turn itself into..." since only people, not the concept of art, can act in the art process, which means that the revolution of art was provoked by only some of the artists, not all of them. More importantly, there is a basic unreasonable presupposition in "philosophical disenfranchisement of art", that is to assume that being philosophy and

¹²⁶ It is very interesting that in French "le monde" means both "the world" and "the people", which would make it more clear that the creator is trying to say something to people, not to specific individual but the world in terms of people, so it includes the creator himself.

¹²⁷ Arthur C. Danto: "The End of Art", *The Death of Art*, ed. by Berel Lang, New York, 1984, p31.

¹²⁸ Kelly, Michael. "Essentialism and Historicism in Danto's Philosophy of Art." *History and Theory*, vol. 37, no. 4, 1998, p34.

being art are incompatible. Artwork, as Danto himself has revealed, is the representation of a subject. Hence the subject of an artwork can be philosophy or something philosophic, and it is not interfering with its being artistic. If the philosophical proposition is represented with metaphorical ellipsis, logically it must be more persuasive than saying it directly to the audience; even if it is not as clear as philosophical expression, it still has its advantage of expressing a proposition in the way of art which may carry more sensational information than a mere philosophical expression. That's the reason why Warhol and Duchamp chose to create artworks to express their philosophical ideas about art rather than publishing an essay about the philosophy of art in a philosophical journal. Putting forward the works as Warhol and Duchamp did, is just like saying "Let's discuss the definition of art, let's consider whether if it can be identical with daily commonplace or not, and I think it will work.", but saying it in the way of art. On the other hand, some philosophers would like to express their ideas in an artistic way: using metaphors, telling stories, etc. So philosophy is not necessarily non-art but can be a little artistic depending on the author's style of writing. The phenomenon of art revolution which Danto tried to explain is rather "the philosophical attraction to art" than "the philosophical disenfranchisement of art". Once philosophy is considered as a subject of art, it becomes less surprising since it's not the first time that artworks represent an ideological subject, otherwise there would be a "political disenfranchisement of art" as so-called propaganda.

Another kind of discussable action is the action in some highly institutionalized art forms. For these actions, though the effect may not clearly be a metaphorical representation or the creator may not be quite conscious of the logical relation between the work and the subject, as long as the work is produced in these forms, it can still be considered as artwork, or at least the action can be called an artistic action. This kind of art form includes drawing, painting, sculpture, singing and playing an instrument, playing a role in a drama, dancing, etc. Creators who are not very clear about the metaphorical relation between the work and subject are most of the time children or people who are not very willing to participate in creating art but only do it

for other reasons, such as some students who don't want to play their role in the drama in campus activities while they are forced to do so. An obvious common characteristic of these forms of art is that all of them are already highly institutionalized with mature systems and commonsense. There's not much dispute about whether these forms are art or not. It is commonsense to admit that painting, music, and drama are forms of art. So actually, even though for those people mentioned above the intention of metaphorical representation is not perfectly formed, they also have accepted the general idea that they are doing art by participating in some highly institutionalized artistic activities. Their artistic intention is implicated with their knowledge of the art institution, but it is rather a feeble intention since they are not willing to (or not able to) represent the subject but are just muddling through, or they are not quite clear about the subject they are representing since they are unwilling participants. So, the artistic degree of these intentions is relatively low, and the actions with these intentions are in the light gray area of the gradational structure of artistic action. These actions of these people can be considered as artistic ones only in the collective creation, which must be mainly performed or designed by someone with much stronger artistic intention.

4) Roles in participation in the art process

After clarifying the schema of artistic actions, it becomes improper to talk about people participating in artistic activities using the term “artist” and “audience”. Artist is rather an institutional concept which refers to people who take art creation as their profession or have gained high reputations in the field of art. There is no strong and logical necessary link between the concept of artist and concept of artistic action: it is neither necessary to be an artist for creating art, nor are the actions of an artist always artistic. Furthermore, one person can take different actions through time, so he can be an art creator at one second and be an audience in the next—thus the concept of creator and audience is just about playing roles, but not about either profession nor identity. For the identification of artistic action, what really matters is not the profession but only the fact of doing certain things. In artistic actions there are only

two roles: creator and receiver; but since these are only roles, naturally they can be reversed or combined. The creator can admire his own work; the audience are sometimes able to interpret the work and recreate it. Just like in the action of speaking, there are only the roles of the speaker and the listener: the speaker in most cases can hear his own voice, and the listener can utter what he heard in his own expression. All that matters is the action, is what you do when involved in this relationship.

There is a specific kind of action in artistic activities: the admiration of the audience which will probably turn a non-art object into artwork. One of the examples has already been mentioned in chapter I: the photograph of the nebula by the Hubble space telescope. This example has many specialties: it is a photograph (of which the artistic intention in the action of taking it is not always presented), and it has been admired by certain people as artwork. According to the action-based concept of art, it is not yet appropriate to call the photo of the nebula an artwork. In the first place, it is not, at least not now, a representation but a presentation. The Hubble telescope is remotely controlled by the Goddard Space Flight Center, so the essence of the action here is that the staff of NASA are using a huge camera to take photos in space. In this action, though we haven't interviewed this scientist manipulating the system, it is quite possible that he did not have the intention of representing a subject with the photo of the nebula, but presenting documentarily and authentically the image of the nebula for science research. There is no metaphorical ellipsis if there is no subject. Second, after the photographs were published, they were admired by many people who kind of consider it as an artwork. Here is the target of our examination: is this action altering the photo of nebula into an artwork? Until now, as far as I see, the answer is no, since no one has uttered a subject with a metaphorical ellipsis, which would be able to turn this work into a representation. This is an action similar to Duchamp's creation of *The Fountain*: claiming that something which is not originally one's creation and neither originally created as artwork is an artwork, only Duchamp's work has a subject and the photo has not. But according to what has been explained about the intention and effect, we can only see the result of this claim as an effect in the Hubble photo's case without any clue of the existence of a subject. Thus even if

there are people who think that the photo is an artwork and claim that with this intention, if we don't successfully detect the subject nor have knowledge of the metaphorical ellipsis, nor the whole representation, it remains to the public as non-art. Only admiring something as art won't make something into art. As Dickie and Scalfani proposed, in this case "saying that something is an artwork" is an evaluative usage of "artwork" rather than a classifying one. If in a parallel world one of the audience offered a subject to the photo of the nebula, for instance, "Vanity", then the photograph becomes an artwork, though not a good one, which is created by this audience, not the scientist, so strictly speaking in this action his role is not the audience but the creator.

Conclusions

Art is a property of action, which is having the intention to metaphorically represent something.

The action with an artistic intention is an artistic action.

Artwork is the outcome of artistic action. The outcome refers to the product of the action or the action itself.

Being artistic action is a matter of degree, not an all-or-nothing matter.

Being artwork is not an all-or-nothing matter, but a matter of degree.

The artistic degree will be degraded if the artistic intention is interfered with by other intentions or is not successfully carried out due to practical factors.

Being an artwork or not has nothing to do with the creator's profession.

Artwork is a relational concept; it is identified by certain relations in which it is involved. Therefore, something may be an artwork to one person while to another person it is not: the building of this relation sometimes fails.

One of the main reasons for this failure is that the intention may not be carried out as the creator intended; the second important reason is that in order to see something as a representation and to see the metaphorical ellipsis, more information is

needed for the receiver while they may not have access to it by mere perception.

The modifications and refutations to Danto's theory are as such:

Danto's definition is a definition of artwork, the thesis transformed it into a definition of art based on a theory of action.

Having a distinctive, stable style is not a necessary condition for being an artwork. In Danto's theory, the style is naturally bound with a person's way of seeing the world, so it is sufficient but not necessary for the definition of art.

Representing art history is not necessary for being an artwork.

Art won't become philosophy by representing philosophical ideas as subjects.

Danto's definition of artwork, the metaphorical representation, revealed the essence of art which is demonstrated eventually in the artworks. But with this definition, there are still phenomena in the realm of art which remain mysterious. For instance, if an artwork is a metaphorical representation, then it should be easy to tell whether something is artwork or not, while in reality, it is not so easy in many cases since we sometimes cannot tell determinedly whether it is artwork or not from the appearance of the work. Danto's own theory has emphasized that the defining property of artwork is not in its physical being but something in its sub-structure, this conclusion has already implied that the essence of art, the property which makes all the artistic aspects artistic, must be found in something behind the appearance of the work, and for me it naturally leads to the production of the work, which necessarily involves human actions.

Danto himself has a theory of action represented in his article "Basic actions", in which he differentiates basic actions and non-basic ones: non-basic actions are caused by other actions (may not be the action of the same actor), while basic actions are not caused by other events. This distinction is not very significant to the art process since it is clear that among the artistic actions there are both of these two kinds. Art making is a process often accomplished with modifications, cooperation, and interactions, which means that some artistic action can be caused by the former artistic action of

the creator, or can be caused by other creator's action. Only in cases such as drawing something without any hesitation and modification, or impromptu dancing without any plan and rehearsal, the artistic actions performed are all totally basic actions in Danto's sense. It is a pity that Danto didn't apply the concept of action to explain what's behind the appearance of the artwork. Actually, in his analysis of style, he had already been aware of the importance of the element of the creator; and he analyzed the way of understanding artwork of the audience, that is to say, the action or mental state of admiring art as well. He has already had enough jigsaws pieces, but he didn't have the thought to complete the puzzle. An action-based point of view of art will achieve to connect all the dots and provide a new perspective for all the studies about art.

Since then, in order to understand the artistic action, the study of art must be combined with the theories of action in which many theoretical achievements have been made. The element I chose to answer the question of what is art in the action is the intention, but the concept of intention is not the only concept related to the study of action. For the concept of intention is a complex concept for which many theories have been proposed which I haven't got enough time to explore. There are several unclear parts in the analysis of artistic intention that still seem vague. The first is that to understand the artistic intention as intending to metaphorically represent somehow falls again to the intellectualism that Danto has already been blamed for. Real art-making is not always that intellectual, but sometimes rather urged by talent, passion, even craziness. Second, how the different intentions interact in the mental state for the same action is something I didn't achieve to elaborate. Third, as the level of intention in Searle's sense has something to do with causality: in order to paint I need to raise my arm because the raising of my arm causes a further step of finishing the painting, it seems that the concept of artistic action becomes a very broad one: in order to paint I need to buy canvas, in order to go to the shop I need to eat enough for getting enough strength to walk...but it seems inappropriate to call eating and shopping artistic actions, and one will not say that he is intending to paint while he is eating breakfast. All these questions will find their answers in the further study of

some theory of action, as long as we consider art as a way of acting.

The transformation from an artwork-based perspective to an action-based perspective will not only remedy the shortcomings of the former but also will open up a brand-new perspective to survey all the questions concerning the world of art. It will alter many of these questions into more comprehensible utterances, such as the questions that have been mentioned in this chapter: “whether animals or robots’ works are artworks” will be altered into “whether animals or robots are able to carry out artistic actions”.

Furthermore, the moral question about art can also be expressed from this perspective: can we still call an immoral action an artistic one? From the action-based perspective, the artistic property of a work is irrelevant to the judgment of morality, a good and very artistic work can be produced by some immoral actions. But it definitely is not saying that we can sacrifice justice to make way for better artistic creations; on the contrary, the art theory based on the theory of action has reminded us that art-making can be immoral, and has offered an approach to analyze, to reveal, and to put these actions covered by the artistic halo under sanction. There are already enough shadows hidden in art-related activities: the abuse of drugs, the sex trade, plagiarism, and the torture of animals, which should be exposed even if the actor somehow does it for artistic purpose.

The action-based concept of art offers an approach to solve these questions, while the artwork-based understanding of art facing the same questions might not have a clue. The art theory will since then be developed along with the development of the theory of action, exploring the countless mysteries in the world of art.

Digressions:

During my investigation, I once asked a friend of mine who is an art student, that nowadays what on earth is the criterion for the professionals in art institutions to judge artworks, and what kind of works can be considered as good ones. It shocked me that she is totally confused as well: none, no criterion as she can tell from her

experience in the art institutions. She told me that normally the professionals praise only what they like personally, or the works of artists with whom they have a good relationship, and sometimes even go for bribery.

Apparently, although the concept of art can be pure and logical, the reality of art is always infiltrated by all the other kinds of social issues. In art institutions, according to my friend's description, it seems that certain works today are accomplished by two creators: the artist himself (sometimes with fraud, flubdub, pick thank), and the art critic (sometimes with puffery, bribe-taking, irresponsibility). This collaboration is not the standard process of creation-interpretation, but a co-creation under the cover of creation-interpretation: the creator produces the work but without a proper subject, or a subject which is not well linked with the representation; then the critic straightens the link by offering a suitable subject or offering interpretations to build the link. This makes me realize that though philosophers can propose a definition of art, though we can clarify the concept of art, it only helps people to understand what is art, but not to judge whether a work is good or not. The valuation of artwork, especially in the professional area, is beyond the reach of philosophy's hands and remains dominated by certain institutional powers and personal tastes.

But still, Danto's propositions combined with the hypothesis of this thesis at least would help people to clear up several clouds of suspicion in their mind in this "big bad art world".

Firstly, if you find yourself not being able to directly understand certain artworks, don't immediately doubt yourself but search for more information by reading indications, asking for brochures, searching on the internet. If the curator is not offering enough background information, you can blame the curator; if it is still difficult to understand with enough information, you can blame the artist. As I suggested in the former parts, creating art is like speaking to others, while some artists just don't want to talk to ordinary people but only want to talk to professionals, just like some people are fond of talking to each other using very professional terms so that an amateur can never understand without studying.

Secondly, for the individual audience, the judgment made by others of whether the

work is good or not doesn't matter too much. What really matters for art admiration, is to build your relationship with the work and thus build the relation with the artist. As I suggested, everyone's knowledge and life experience, no matter whether in the form of language, perception, emotions, sentiments, memories, or notebooks...can be considered as your database. Some works may touch you because they may conform to your important, familiar, sensitive or unforgettable part, then you will feel that the artist is speaking right to your heart, which means another person is speaking to you and you understand a part of his world even though this person may have passed away thousands of years ago.

For the future of the art world, what Danto believed is different from mine: "Of course, there will go on being art-making. But art-makers, living in what I like to call the post-historical period of art, will bring into existence works which lack the historical importance or meaning we have for a long time come to expect [...] The story comes to an end, but not the characters, who live on, happily ever after doing whatever they do in their post-narrational insignificance [...] The age of pluralism is upon us...when one direction is as good as another."¹²⁹ He believes that nothing more revolutionary could be done with art in the future--which is not necessarily true since the tactile, gustative, and olfactory sense of humans haven't been fully explored in the art process, and artificial intelligence is yet to be developed. Fortunately, until now most of the artists are creating works under moral principles. But there is a comic that tells a story of an artist who kills and makes installations with the bodies of the victims: a serial killer, and an artist¹³⁰. As I mentioned before, an action can be artistic and at the same time immoral. This challenge is not so far away from reality since we already have adult movies which seem artistic enough. Though terrifying, there is still possibility that art breaks through the moral laws, and this kind of art should absolutely be avoided.

Anyway, I think it's still too early to put a full stop to art revolution. Though the works which represent art history have been appreciated a lot by the critics, the

¹²⁹ Arthur C. Danto. "The philosophical disenfranchisement of art". Columbia University Press, 1986, p111.

¹³⁰ It refers to Antonio Altarriba's comics "*Moi, Assassin*" published in 2014.

theorists and Danto as well, this subject (art history) has already become less attractive to artists. As the history goes on, when people become used to the form of installation, performance art, and experimental music, as soon as they gradually understand how the metaphorical representation works through the “sub-structure” and realize that there’s nothing shocking or mysterious, these forms will soon lose their historical significance in our time but will become habitual as well. This process has already begun: contemporary artists have again started to focus more on different subjects of representation, rather than on obtaining historical significance.

Anyway, the art world is still changing, which means that the concept of art may still be altered one day. Danto has tried his best in his time, and I intend to try my best in mine.

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