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THE RE-EMERGENCE OF METAPHYSICAL AESTHETICS

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THE RE-EMERGENCE OF METAPHYSICAL AESTHETICS

by

BETTY CONRAD ADAM

A THESIS SUBMITTED
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

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MAY, 1983
ABSTRACT

THE RE-EMERGENCE OF METAPHYSICAL AESTHETICS

by

BETTY CONRAD ADAM

Metaphysical aesthetics is alive and thriving in contemporary aesthetic literature. It goes by the name of the philosophy of art and Arthur C. Danto is its most obvious proponent. He openly proclaims an ontological approach to art. Nelson Goodman is also in this camp, though this is certainly not obvious; but in the sense that Goodman's general views in the philosophy of art are determined by his answer to the question of what there is, it may be said that he, too, is a proponent of the metaphysical aesthetics that is alive today.

The dissertation begins by defining the term "metaphysical aesthetics," a term which is not new to this study but has little use in current philosophical literature. The first chapter takes up this task by considering four examples of early twentieth century aestheticians from the perspective of the relationship between metaphysics and aesthetics. These four aestheticians, Benedetto Croce, Henri Bergson, John Dewey, and R. G. Collingwood, are classified as metaphysical...
aestheticians because they write within a classical tradition that assumes a relationship between aesthetics and metaphysics. This chapter then considers early twentieth century criticisms of "metaphysical aesthetics." I will suggest that as the twentieth century develops, the mainstream of aesthetic thought moves away from metaphysics altogether; thus during the middle of the century aesthetics is taken to be independent of metaphysics. This chapter does not purport to be a history of twentieth century aesthetic thought, but rather to set out in relief the distinct character of the work of Danto and Goodman.

The second chapter of this study introduces Arthur C. Danto as a metaphysical aesthetician. The earliest of Danto's articles in aesthetics, "The Art-world," is considered with respect to its metaphysical character, a character that has not yet been recognized by commentators. Also, an early Danto article in the philosophy of language, "Reflections Upon Randall's Theory of Language," is reviewed in order to underscore Danto's preference for a general metaphysical approach to questions in philosophy. Finally, Danto's article, "Artworks and Real Things," is examined because it is the most explicitly metaphysical of all Danto's articles in aesthetics.
The third chapter analyzes Danto's most substantive work in aesthetics, his recently-published book, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* (1981). This analysis spells out the metaphysical character of the book and demonstrates that Danto's metaphysical views impinge upon his definition of art, his theory of imitation, and his concept of the structure of an artwork.

The fourth chapter examines Nelson Goodman's *Languages of Art* in terms of this controversy. Goodman's conclusions in the philosophy of art, like Danto's, are determined by ontological commitments, in this case the ontological economy of a nominalist. Goodman thus stands as a further example of a philosopher working within contemporary analytical aesthetics whose aesthetics are based on ontological rather than strictly empiricist foundations.

The final chapter formulates the nature of contemporary metaphysical aesthetics against the background of metaphysical aesthetics in its traditional form, that of the classical aestheticians and that of the early twentieth century aestheticians.
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION ............................................. 1

CHAPTER

I. AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ............................ 5
   A. Early Twentieth Century Metaphysical Aesthetics ...... 5
   B. Early Twentieth Century Criticisms of Metaphysical Aesthetics .. 14
   C. An Overview of Mainstream Aesthetics in the Middle of the Twentieth Century .... 19

II. AN INTRODUCTION TO ARTHUR C. DANTO AS A METAPHYSICAL AESTHETICIAN .................. 30
   A. Danto's Early Commentators and "The Artworld" ............ 30
   B. The Early Danto: A Return to Metaphysics in Philosophy .... 42
   C. "Artworks and Real Things" Reconsidered: An Essay in Metaphysical Aesthetics .......... 49

III. THE TRANSFIGURATION OF THE COMMONPLACE .......... 57
   A. Philosophical Analysis and Descriptive Metaphysics .......... 58
B. Metaphysical and Epistemological Underpinnings of a Definition of Art .......................... 62

C. Danto's Realist Theory of Imitation ................. 79

D. Artworks and the Self .......................... 91

IV. NELSON GOODMAN AS A METAPHYSICAL AESTHETICIAN ................. 106

A. Goodman's Metaphysical Views .................. 107

B. Aesthetic Views in Languages of Art ............ 115

V. CONTEMPORARY METAPHYSICAL AESTHETICS ........ 128

BIBLIOGRAPHY ........................................ 140
INTRODUCTION

Metaphysical aesthetics is alive and thriving in contemporary aesthetic literature. It goes by the name of the philosophy of art and Arthur C. Danto is its most obvious proponent, who openly proclaims an ontological approach to art. Nelson Goodman is also in this camp, though this is certainly not obvious; but in the sense that Goodman's general views in the philosophy of art are determined by his answer to the question of what there is, it may be said that he, too, is a proponent of the metaphysical aesthetics that is alive today.

Just what all this means will take time to fill in. First, an effort will be made to define by example the term "metaphysical aesthetics," a term which is not new to this study but has little use in current philosophical literature. The first chapter of this study will take up this task by considering four early twentieth century aestheticians from the perspective of the relationship between metaphysics and aesthetics. These four aestheticians, Benedetto Croce, Henri Bergson, John Dewey, and R. G. Collingwood, are classified as metaphysical aestheticians because they write within a classical tradition that allows that there should be a relationship between aesthetics and metaphysics. In addition, this
chapter will consider early twentieth century criticisms of "metaphysical aesthetics." I will suggest that as the twentieth century develops, the mainstream of aesthetic thought moves away from metaphysical aesthetics and that for the most part during the middle of the century aesthetics is taken to be independent of metaphysics. This chapter does not purport to be a history of twentieth century aesthetic thought, but rather to set out in relief the distinct character of the work of Danto and Goodman.

The second chapter of this study is an introduction to Arthur C. Danto as a metaphysical aesthetician. The earliest of Danto's articles in aesthetics, "The Artworld,"\(^2\) will be considered with respect to its metaphysical character, a character that has not yet been recognized by commentators. Also, an early Danto article in the philosophy of language, "Reflections Upon Randall's Theory of Language,"\(^3\) will be reviewed in order to underscore Danto's preference for a general metaphysical approach to questions in philosophy. Finally, Danto's article, "Artworks and Real Things,"\(^4\) will be considered because it is the most explicitly metaphysical of all the Danto articles in aesthetics.

The third chapter is an analysis of Danto's most significant work in aesthetics, his recently-published book, \textit{The Transfiguration of the Commonplace} (1981).\(^5\)
This analysis will draw out the metaphysical character of the book and demonstrate that Danto's metaphysical views impinge upon his definition of art, his theory of imitation, and his concept of the structure of an artwork.

The fourth chapter is an examination of certain topics presented in Nelson Goodman's *Languages of Art.* Goodman's conclusions in the philosophy of art, like Danto's, are determined by ontological commitments, in this case the ontological economy of a nominalist. Goodman thus stands as a further example of a philosopher working within contemporary analytical aesthetics whose aesthetics are based on ontological rather than strictly empiricist foundations.

The final chapter of this study will bring together various strands from the work of Danto and Goodman in an effort to formulate the nature of contemporary metaphysical aesthetics. The contemporary form of metaphysical aesthetics will be discussed against the background of metaphysical aesthetics in its traditional form, that of the classical aestheticians and that of the early twentieth century aestheticians. Some of the problems presented by this new metaphysical aesthetics will be aired, and its viability as an approach in aesthetics will be briefly explored.
FOOTNOTES—INTRODUCTION

1Throughout this study, I am using the term "metaphysical" and the term "ontological" interchangeably.


CHAPTER I

AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

A. Early Twentieth Century Metaphysical Aesthetics

Although the term "metaphysical aesthetics" does not enjoy popular usage in contemporary aesthetic literature, it appears, for example, in Monroe Beardsley's history of aesthetics, where he refers to Jacques Maritain's *Art Et Scholastique* (1920) as "one of the most influential essays in metaphysical aesthetics." This reference to Maritain's essay is made within the context of a discussion of twentieth century aesthetic ventures distinguished by a "metaphysical character." Beardsley also mentions Benedetto Croce whose aesthetics, he tells us, was an essential and inherent part of his philosophy of mind, and Henri Bergson, whose aesthetics relied upon a "worked-out ontological and epistemological context." A recent example of a venture distinguished by its metaphysical character is, Beardsley goes on to say, that of Paul Weiss' *World of Art* (1961) and *Nine Basic Arts* (1961) where Weiss assigns to the arts the function of revealing the "texture of existence," the category of existence being one of the four basic categories of his
metaphysics. Iredell Jenkins in *Art and Human Enterprise* (1958) distinguishes three dimensions of man's world, one of which (that of the "particularity" of things), is taken hold of, expressed, and illuminated by art. Lastly, Beardsley mentions Alfred North Whitehead whose metaphysics would have supported an aesthetics had he written one.  

Beardsley makes no attempt to fill out in more detail the sense of the term "metaphysical aesthetics," nor does he explain the concept of an aesthetics distinguished by a "metaphysical character." A central purpose of this chapter is thus to analyze the term "metaphysical aesthetics" by considering the works of Croce and Bergson, and other early twentieth century aestheticians, from the perspective of the relationship between their metaphysics and their aesthetics. Such a task is preparatory to understanding the central claim of this study that two aestheticians in the contemporary forefront are metaphysical aestheticians.

Our first example will be Croce, who never questioned that there should be a relationship between aesthetics and metaphysics. Expanding upon Beardsley's remark that Croce's aesthetics was an essential part of his theory of mind, we may understand this to mean that for Croce the aesthetic activity was an essential activity of the mind in that the other mental activities,
such as logical thought, or action, presupposed it. That is, the aesthetic activity, which involved the use of the imagination, was a condition upon which the other mental activities were founded. Hence, for Croce, aesthetics was essential to metaphysics; that is, any general theory of the mind must include a theory of the aesthetic activity.

That aesthetics is connected to metaphysics also follows from Croce's general concept of systematic philosophy, about which he tells us in his Preface to the 1902 edition of *Aesthetics*: Aesthetics does not stand alone, for "Philosophy is unity and when we treat of Aesthetics or of Logic or of Ethics, we treat always of the whole of philosophy." In this same Preface, Croce makes an even stronger claim regarding the relationship between aesthetics and metaphysics. Not only is aesthetics essential to metaphysics, it is also, at its best, a study prior to metaphysics. Here Croce attributes a special status to aesthetics; since, for him, the aesthetic activity is the first-born of the mental activities, mistakes made in our concept of this fundamental activity filter down through all subsequent analyses in other branches of philosophy. Or to state this positively, for Croce, a cogent analysis of the aesthetic activity is of value not only in itself but also inasmuch as it reveals
mistakes in other branches of philosophy and paves the way for a cogent analysis elsewhere. It is with some irony and interest that we may look back at a shift in metaphysics that Croce made between the time of writing his 1902 *Aesthetics* and his work a few years later. Initially, in 1902, he postulated a dualistic ontology of Spirit and Nature and set his analysis of the aesthetic activity within the context of a realist metaphysics that distinguished between the Subject and the Natural World. However, a few years later, he was led, through his analysis of the aesthetic activity, to reject the Spirit-Nature duality and to claim instead a Spiritual Monism. ¹³ It is, of course, this Spirit Philosophy, or Spiritual Monism, for which Croce is so well remembered as an arch-idealist, but it is a less known fact that it was his venture in aesthetics that led him to it. Croce exemplifies in practice and states in theory the principle that aesthetics is a corrective to metaphysics. His view may be taken as the strong view of the relationship between aesthetics and metaphysics.

The course of our next metaphysical aesthetician, Henri Bergson, was the other way around; his work in metaphysics was temporally prior to his work in aesthetics, and one senses a reversal of the Croce understanding of the relationship between aesthetics and
metaphysics. Early in his philosophical career, in 1896, with the publication of *Matière et mémoire*, he positioned himself as a Spirit-Matter dualist in ontology and developed an epistemology that distinguished between intuition, that led to absolute knowledge of the Spiritual Realm, and analysis (or description) that led to relative knowledge of the Material Realm. In 1900, he completed his work in aesthetics, entitled *Le Rire*, in which he developed a theory of the comic within the context of his ontology and epistemology. For example, he aligned the experience of the comic with analysis and the Material Realm, claiming that laughter comes into being when men silence their emotions and call nothing into play but their intelligence. For Bergson, laughter looks at life as mechanization and fails to focus upon the vital and the interior soul of things. This experience of the comic Bergson contrasted with the experience of the beautiful (and the tragic) which called into play the intuition and emotion and led to knowledge of the Spiritual Realm. We might say that for Bergson his aesthetics wrote itself out of the stuff of other branches of philosophy; it is the metaphysics that enjoys a special status and the aesthetics bows to it.

Bergson's aesthetics, growing out of his general philosophical program, harkens back to the kind of metaphysical aesthetics that the ancients found
intelligible. Plato, for example, first developed his ontological distinction between Forms and particulars in the early books of *The Republic* and he used the language of imitation and representation in characterizing the particular things of our sensible world. In the tenth book of *The Republic*, in which he makes his famous denunciation of representative poetry, he begins the discussion by recalling his theory of Forms and his previously worked-out relationship between sensibles and Forms, the relationship he calls "representation in general." It is within this metaphysical context of the distinct realms of Being that he finds art to have no cognitive import, it being an inferior subspecies of representation, a representation of a representation or an imitation of an imitation.\(^\text{16}\)

Although Aristotle's metaphysical aesthetics is less obvious than is Plato's, the *Poetics* being a separate book from the *Metaphysics*, he sets his theory of poetry within the context of metaphysical claims, such as the Four Causes developed elsewhere; in this sense, we may say that his aesthetics develops out of the stuff of his metaphysics. It is relevant to the present topic that Aristotle rejects Plato's Realm of Forms that is separate from our world, for this rejection allows him to give art cognitive status, art being directly related to universals in things, and not
two removes from Reality. It is also of interest that it is out of a realist distinction between our experience and the world that Aristotle supports his theory of art as imitation. (These points will be elaborated upon in the following discussion of Danto and Goodman.)

John Dewey is another early twentieth century metaphysical aesthete whose work in aesthetics grew out of his work in metaphysics and epistemology. In 1925, Dewey published *Experience and Nature*, in which he rejected the various ontological dualisms that distinguished experience and the natural world. He proposed, instead, a monistic ontology, that identified experience and nature, and he called this ontology a "naturalistic metaphysics." Also, he proposed an epistemology that did not distinguish in kind between ways of experiencing or modes of perception. Over against the verificationists, Dewey proposed that scientific experience, as well as artistic experience, combined the cognitive and the emotive; in fact, science was an art, rather than distinguished from art. Over against the rational metaphysician and the intuitionist, who purported to arrive at the universal and permanent character of the world, Dewey proposed that experience gives evidence of a different metaphysics. He declared that his method in metaphysics was empirical, and
concluded with a naturalistic metaphysics: that is, experience pointed to a world that joined the precarious and the settled, the novel and the assured, and the irregular and the uniform. It was this union that characterized the world—a union that also characterized art. For Dewey, art, as well as ordinary experience, reflected the metaphysical character of the world. 20

Some years later, in 1934, when Dewey elaborated upon his aesthetic theory in Art as Experience, his main concern was to carry out the consequences for art of his identification of experience and nature. A primary concern of his aesthetics was to show how it was that art objects were not distinguished from ordinary things 21 and that aesthetic experience was not distinguished from ordinary experience. 22 He attacked those existing aesthetic theories that started from a dualistic compartmentalization of the artistic and the spiritual, 23 and he set about, instead, to restore continuity between the refined and intensified forms of experience that are works of art and the everyday events, doings, and sufferings that are universally recognized to constitute experience. 24

This project in aesthetics underscored a general philosophical program whereby all forms of experience were one.

The last full-blooded metaphysical aesthetician to be considered in our study is R. G. Collingwood.
Collingwood's aesthetics was intimately connected to his metaphysics and epistemology, and in his *Principles of Art*, published in 1934, he takes us headlong into metaphysics as well as into aesthetics. In his Preface, he claims that an empirical or descriptive account of art requires justification in terms of the metaphysics and epistemology upon which it is founded. His intention in the *Principles* is to justify in Book II the preliminary account of Book I. In Book I, Collingwood gives an account of an artwork as an "imaginary object," something internal and existing "in the head," and in Book II, he argues for a theory of the imagination, or consciousness, upon which the account is founded. Book II, he tells us, is written in answer to "the schools of philosophy now most fashionable in our country" (the neo-realists and the logical positivists presumably), and it is an account of the objects of consciousness as ideal. For Collingwood, as conscious beings, we are not in direct, or indirect contact with an independently-existing world of objects; rather, it is through the faculty of the imagination that we make the individual objects of perception out of the flux of sensation; that is, we construct through retention and attention "ideas" of objects. In Collingwood's world, there are no real objects, properly speaking; there are only things that owe their existence to a faculty of
imagination that individualizes and identifies things out of momentary and indeterminate sensation.

Collingwood's overall claim, as sketched out in Books I and II, is that since all objects of consciousness find their source in the imagination, artworks do likewise. It is a mistake to postulate, as "realistic philosophers" have, an objective world as distinct from our subjective experience of the world, and it is a mistake to postulate, as "realistic aestheticians" have, an objective (physical) aspect of an artwork as distinct from our subjective (aesthetic) experience of the artwork. For Collingwood, the distinction between subject and object cannot be made out, since all objects are, properly speaking subjective. In short, Collingwood's The Principles of Art gives us an ideal theory of art that is founded upon an ideal theory of the world.

B. Early Twentieth Century Critics of Metaphysical Aesthetics

One prominent aesthetician writing at the turn of the century was a critic of metaphysical aesthetics. This was George Santayana, who sounded a note in his The Sense of Beauty (1896) for an aesthetics that was independent of metaphysics. He attacked in particular those "audacious metaphysicians,\"\textsuperscript{31} who had made aesthetics a footnote to their own metaphysical principles
and systems. And this was the case, he thought, with most of what had called itself aesthetics in the history of philosophy. Santayana proposed, instead, that aesthetics was properly a psychological inquiry that dealt with the nature of the aesthetic experience. His interest centered upon the question of what happened when one experienced something beautiful. Later in Santayana's philosophical career, when his main focus shifted from psychology to ontology, he was brought to modify his definition of beauty in terms of a theory of essences,"32 but his work in aesthetics was remembered for its psychological approach and its influence held sway in years to come.

In 1923, two Englishmen at Cambridge--C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards--in their The Meaning of Meaning, launched an attack on traditional metaphysical aesthetics, centering upon the Bergsonians and the Intuitionists. Ogden and Richards claimed that the states of aesthetic contemplation or aesthetic satisfaction should not be described, as had often been the case, as states of knowledge. They said that

The temptation to a philosopher when concerned with a subject in which he feels a passionate interest, to use all the words which are most likely to attract attention and excite belief in the importance of the subject is almost irresistible. Thus, any state of mind in which anyone takes a great interest is very likely to be called 'knowledge,' because no other word in psychology has such evocative virtue.
If this state of mind is very unlike those usually so called, the new 'knowledge' will be set in opposition to the old and praised as of a superior, more real, and more essential nature. These periodic raids upon aesthetics have been common in the history of philosophy. The crowning instance of Kant, and the attempted annexation of aesthetics by Idealism are recent examples. 33

Ogden and Richards called for an aesthetics that was independent of metaphysics and epistemology; this independence was a consequence of their distinction between the emotive function of language and the symbolic (descriptive) function of language. Aesthetic contemplation, for them, was an emotive experience, and aesthetic propositions were expressed in emotive language; hence, aesthetics was not concerned with claims that could be given a truth value. For these Englishmen, poetry and the arts expressed and evoked feelings and attitudes, and it was the "business of aesthetics" 34 to order and describe these attitudes. Aesthetics, in this sense, was set apart from the business of science which devoted itself to the propositions of knowledge, to propositions, that is, which were clearly true or false.

In the second decade of the twentieth century, this distinction between the symbolic and emotive functions of language won converts everywhere, and often enough the distinction was used to denounce whatever was not a proposition of physical science. 35 Also, it
was in this decade, under the influence of the Vienna Circle, that metaphysics began to be seriously questioned as a worthwhile enterprise. The members of the Vienna Circle had been persuaded by the remarks of Ernst Mach at the turn of the century that metaphysics made no contribution to human knowledge. For Mach, if a scientist were led to suppose that theoretical entities exist, he had crossed the boundary marking off fruitful science from the marshy wastes of metaphysical speculation: physics was to be independent of metaphysics and ontology. In 1922, at the same time that the Vienna Circle was forming, Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* was translated into English, making an immediate impact upon the younger philosophers at Cambridge. Wittgenstein's claim that metaphysical propositions were nonsense was heralded, and it became a mainstream conviction of the twenties and thirties that analysis and clarification was the object of philosophy, not metaphysical truth.

By 1928, Thomas Munro was already noting a change in the aesthetic literature, indicating a departure from metaphysical aesthetics. He said in his *Scientific Method in Aesthetics* that

Many recent works in aesthetics have come a little nearer to reality in giving up the old quest for absolute laws of beauty, to be proven logically by deduction from metaphysics. The failure of all attempts at
such proof, and the spread of the general worldview based on natural science, have led modern writers to be sceptical about all alleged absolute standards of value in art. Aesthetics has been coming, therefore, to lose its metaphysical character, and to turn into a highly abstract sort of art criticism. A modern textbook on the subject usually makes no claim to finality, but simply recounts a few of the chief conflicting theories and tendencies in the various arts, along with some recent ideas about the psychology of aesthetic experience.39

Munro mentions two approaches of the past that have been in conflict. The first is the "Fechner tradition"40 that claims that aesthetics should be based on observation. Gustav Fechner had made a memorable distinction in his Forschule der Aesthetik (1876) between "aesthetics from above" (the theorizing downward from universal principles to particulars) and "aesthetics from below" (a kind of science of aesthetics that would proceed from observation and induction), Fechner himself seeking to propose an aesthetics from below. The second tradition to which Munro alludes is the "metaphysical approach"41 that held itself aloof from art criticism "because of its heritage from the philosophy of idealism" and its contempt for all material embodiments.42 Proponents of this latter approach believed that fundamental problems could be solved only on the plane of abstract ideas, using the methods of metaphysics. It is this metaphysical approach of "classical theories"43 that Munro opposes, stating that
the traditional dogma that 'Aesthetic theory is a branch of philosophy, and exists for the sake of knowledge and not as a guide to practice' has saved many lofty doctrines the shock of having their emptiness revealed. Without being tried as a guide to practice, no theory can be made reliable and genuinely explanatory. 44

C. An Overview of Mainstream Aesthetics in the Middle of the Twentieth Century

A first-hand historical review of aesthetic thought during the middle of the twentieth century is beyond the scope of this study, but a capsule account of mainstream aesthetics in the middle of the century, as reviewed by well-known authorities in the field, serves our purpose of throwing into relief the distinct character of the aesthetics produced by Danto and Goodman. It is the intention of this section to bring together the characterizations of mid-century aesthetics that are pertinent to our discussion, as given by Joseph Margolis, Virgil C. Aldrich, Monroe Beardsley, and Albert Hofstadter and Richard Kuhns, who collectively confirm that by the middle decades of the twentieth century metaphysical aesthetics had had its day.

There has been a tendency in the literature to take metaphysical aesthetics as equivalent to idealism, or at least it may be said that idealism has born the brunt of the criticism of an aesthetics that is connected to metaphysics. Joseph Margolis, for instance, in 1965
speaks of a vogue against idealism in aesthetics and a gravitation toward Wittgensteinianism during the fifties:

An earlier vogue in aesthetics... was distinctly concerned to oppose idealism and to exploit in a very general manner the new analytic currents informed principally by the inquiries of Wittgenstein. Since that time, idealism has somewhat declined as the inevitable opponent, with the withering away of the expression 'theory of art,' and analytic contributions have become more detailed in inquiries into critical language...45

Virgil C. Aldrich confirms the ascendance of Wittgensteinianism in aesthetics by his claim in 1963 that it has been "the spirit of the later Wittgenstein which has dominated the Anglo-American approach to philosophical aesthetics."46

In his history of aesthetics, Monroe Beardsley begins his discussion of twentieth century developments with a section entitled "Croce and the Metaphysicians" and closes with a section entitled "Empiricism." In this last section he discloses a pattern of thought emerging in the literature of the time, e.g., 1966 or so, that characterizes aesthetics as an empirical inquiry. We have shown, earlier, in the case of John Dewey, that a methodology in "naturalistic metaphysics" can be empirical, but this point does not enter into Beardsley's discussion. Within what Beardsley calls "contemporary philosophical Empiricism," he finds (1) one group that
pursues the scientific study of artistic phenomena (scientific aesthetics); and (2) one group that is interested in the philosophical analysis of our talk about art (analytical aesthetics). Beardsley sees the task of contemporary Empiricism to be the sorting out of those elements in a philosophical problem that are empirical and those that are logical so that the way will be made clear for the psychologist, the anthropologist and other scientific investigators to solve the empirical problems, and the remaining ones, having to do with the clarification of concepts and the examination of logical inference, can be approached by the philosopher. 47

With regard to (1), scientific aesthetics, Beardsley speaks of Thomas Munro in the United States as being the most forceful proponent of this approach. He quotes Munro's statement in 1951 as a formulation of the scientific program, a program that he had first set out in 1928 in Scientific Method in Aesthetics. According to Munro, the program recommends

a scientific, descriptive, naturalistic approach to aesthetics; one which should be broadly experimental and empirical, but not limited to quantitative measurement; utilizing the insights of art criticism and philosophy as hypotheses, but deriving objective data from two main sources—the analysis and history of form in the arts, and psychological studies of the production, appreciation, and teaching of the arts. 48

Beardsley continues that the idea of submitting aesthetic questions to laboratory experiment goes back to Gustav
Fechner, who resolved to do "aesthetics from below" and not "aesthetics from above": he resolved to take the "plain, empirical" road, thus leading the way for the psychological investigation of shapes, colors and pictures, poetic meter, the structure of jokes, etc., or what may be called psychological aesthetics. 49

Running alongside the work of the scientific aestheticians is the work of (2) analytical aestheticians. This group contains many variations of viewpoint but the variations, according to Beardsley,

share the conviction that philosophy has its own special task, quite distinct from science. This is the critical examination of basic concepts and basic assumptions involved in all of our beliefs. The aim is to increase the rationality of those beliefs by clarifying the concepts and testing the reasoning. 50

Beardsley, himself, is part of this analytical school, and he describes his own work as having formulated the 'concept of aesthetics as metacriticism'. 51

The method of analytical philosophy begins with the study of "actual usage," both that of ordinary language and the language of critics; this movement has examined such concepts as 'form', 'style', 'expression', and 'representation', and the logic of disputes about such matters as the objectivity of beauty, the relativity of critical evaluations, the relevance of truth to value in poetry. 52 These "aesthetic usage-analysts" (or "ordinary language philosophers") derive
their methods from the Wittgenstein of the Philosophical
Investigations and his followers. The underlying
assumption of this approach was made explicit by John
Austin in his famous presidential address to the
Aristotelian Society in 1956 when he said that

Our common stock of words embodies all the
distinctions men have found worth drawing,
and the connections they have found worth
making, in the lifetimes of many generations:
these surely are likely to be more numerous,
more sound, since they have stood up to the
long test of the survival of the fittest,
and more subtle, at least in all ordinary and
reasonably practical matters, than any that
you or I are likely to think up in our arm-
chairs of an afternoon--the most favored
alternative method.53

That there has been a move away from the tradition
of metaphysical aesthetics, what has variously been
called idealism, or intuitionism, or "aesthetics from
above," or simply armchair philosophy, is also confirmed
by Albert Hofstadter and Richard Kuhns, who argue the
other side of the coin in lamenting the demise of
metaphysical aesthetics. In the introduction to their
anthology, Philosophies of Art and Beauty, they speak
of "the dissipation of philosophical aesthetics" in the
work of David Hume, who was "able to write only as a
critic of criticism, not as a philosopher of art."54
They continue that

In England the interest in aesthetics
evolves toward a form of analytical,
psychological theorizing about art. The
attempt is made to determine lawful con-
nections between the characteristics of
aesthetic objects and human psychological
dispositions. Consequently, English
theorizing . . . leads to a psychology
of the aesthetic rather than to a philosophy
of art . . . . The only deviation from
this tradition in England is found in the
work of Collingwood, who derives his
philosophy from Croce.

Hofstadter and Kuhns contend that an aesthetic which is
a "philosophy of art" connects topics in aesthetics to
topics in metaphysics and epistemology. Their anthology
is brought together for the purpose of illustrating the
relevance of aesthetics to broader philosophical claims
and the philosophers they chose for this purpose
(Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, Augustine, Ficino,
Shaftesbury, Kant, Schelling, Hegel, Schopenhauer,
Nietzsche, Croce, Dewey, and Heidegger) are "thinkers
who have taken the problems of art and beauty as central
to the elaboration of their philosophies."55 Hofstadter
and Kuhns assert that because the "immediate philosophic
scene" in aesthetics is influenced by analytical
philosophy, psychoanalysis, and art history, there are
no contemporary illustrations of a fully-realized
"philosophy of art."56 They do admit, however, that a
reader familiar with contemporary writings in aesthetics
may find their selections strangely weighted in the
direction of idealism and the high German metaphysics of
the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, but
they suggest that they have good reason for this: their selections

have to do with aesthetics as a branch of philosophy not with criticism or the principles of criticism. In a philosophy of art, or in philosophical aesthetics, more generally speaking, beauty and art are understood in terms of essential philosophical ideas, while philosophy itself is taken to be at least in part constituted by aesthetic reflection. Thus the great philosophies of art have interpreted beauty and art in metaphysical terms as a natural expression of the belief that philosophy is born in the aspiration toward and understanding of the beautiful. 57

Were it not for the contemporary work of Arthur C. Danto, and less obviously so, that of Nelson Goodman, these remarks of Hofstadter and Kuhns might be taken as mere remnants of a debate gone by. If, however, the following chapters successfully establish that the aesthetics of Danto and Goodman are metaphysically based and reach out to other branches of philosophy, the debate may well be taken up again. Establishing that Danto and Goodman are in fact metaphysical aestheticians is the work of the following chapters.
FOOTNOTES--CHAPTER I


8 Aesthetics from Classical Greece to the Present, 327.

9 Aesthetics from Classical Greece to the Present, 327.

10 Aesthetics from Classical Greece to the Present, 327.


17 Aesthetics from Classical Greece to the Present, 55-56.


22. Art as Experience, 11.

23. Art as Experience, 11.


26. The Principles of Art, 139.

27. The Principles of Art, 131.


30. This presumption is based on Passmore's conception of the dominance of realist schools during the early part of the century (the new realism of Moore and Russell and the critical realism of the 20's) and the emergence of logical positivism in the thirties. See John Passmore, A Hundred Years of Philosophy (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co., LTD., 1957). The presumption is also based on Collingwood's references to the "realistic" philosophers and to the "two uses of language" as developed by I. A. Richards in to the
Principles of Art (41, 149-151, 262-263).


34 The Meaning of Meaning, 159.


36 A Hundred Years of Philosophy, 331.

37 A Hundred Years of Philosophy, 353.

38 A Hundred Years of Philosophy, 364.


40 Scientific Method in Aesthetics, 18.

41 Scientific Method in Aesthetics, 19.

42 Scientific Method in Aesthetics, 19-20.


44 Scientific Method in Aesthetics, 28.


47. Aesthetics from Classical Greece to the Present, 376-377.


49. Aesthetics from Classical Greece to the Present, 380.

50. Aesthetics from Classical Greece to the Present, 385.

51. Aesthetics from Classical Greece to the Present, 386.

52. Aesthetics from Classical Greece to the Present, 386.

53. Aesthetics from Classical Greece to the Present, 387.

54. Philosophies of Art and Beauty, xvi.

55. Philosophies of Art and Beauty, vii-viii.

56. Philosophies of Art and Beauty, xviii-xix.

57. Philosophies of Art and Beauty, xiv.
CHAPTER II

AN INTRODUCTION TO ARTHUR C. DANTO AS A
METAPHYSICAL AESTHETICIAN

A. Danto's Early Commentators
and "The Artworld"

Arthur C. Danto's first significant article in
aesthetics, "The Artworld," published in 1964, has not yet
been appreciated as a venture distinguished by its meta-
physical character. Commentators of "The Artworld,"
speaking from the perspective of Wittgensteinianism, have
been impressed with the article, but they have suggested
that Danto's meaning in certain sections of the article
is unclear.

George Dickie has called the article "provocative"
and "stimulating," crediting Danto with suggesting "the
direction that must be taken by an attempt to define
art." Dickie does state, however, that Danto's summary
remarks, "to see something as art requires something the
eye cannot descry--an atmosphere of artistic theory, a
knowledge of the history of art: an artworld" are in need
of elucidation, but he takes Danto to be emphasizing,
like Mandelbaum, the "nonexhibited properties" of art
objects and to be pointing to the institutional nature of
art. It is Danto that Dickie credits with originating the concept of the artworld and thus with fathering the institutional theory of art. 58

Another commentator, Richard Sclafani, has said that the Danto article "may be as important to the Philosophy of Art as the work of Hanson, Toulmin, and especially Kuhn has been to the Philosophy of Science." 59 He equates Danto's concept of a theory with Kuhn's concept of a paradigm, but finds problems regarding historical accuracy and an oversimplification of artistic activity. Sclafani does call for more explanation from Danto and suggests that "if the view that the meanings of art and its correlates are theory-laden can be explicated in a not overly general, relatively clear way, then Danto has provided a new way to understand the role of art theory." 60

W. E. Kennick is less generous in his remarks on "The Artworld" and wonders how the various sections of the article, as for example the section on art theory and that on the "is of artistic identification," hang together. He also says,

Many times in the course of his paper Danto says such things as 'it is the role of artistic theories, these days as always, to make the artworld, and art, possible'. I find these remarks perplexing.

and

I am not sure what Danto means by 'art theory'. His example of the Imitation
Theory and Reality Theory are of little help, although they do suggest that what he has in mind are the familiar theories described in histories of aesthetics and anthologized in aesthetic textbooks.

but

Even if doubts on these issues are resolved, it is still not clear what Danto is asserting.\textsuperscript{61}

Ten years after the publication of "The Artworld," Anita Silvers,\textsuperscript{62} in an article discussing both Dickie and Danto, explains Danto's summary remarks that Dickie found obscure and the role of theory in Danto's account that Kennick found perplexing. She has the benefit of two additional articles by Danto in aesthetics, "Artworks and Real Things," and "The Transfiguration of the Commonplace,"\textsuperscript{63} that were published after "The Artworld." Silvers states that Danto is formulating an institutional definition of art. Both Dickie and Danto agree, she tells us, that the compositional constituents (those features present to us) cannot be what makes an object an artwork. Both propose that it is an object's relation to its social environment that determines whether or not it is to be acknowledged as art. Danto, in particular, proposes that if an object is subsumable under an aesthetic theory, then the object can be admitted to arthood; that is, a soup can can become art if the artworld agent provides the soup can with a theory. It is this role of artistic theory that distinguishes Danto's view
from Dickie's view that requires only an agent of the artworld to confer the status of artwork.

Silvers, however, does not appreciate that Danto's work in aesthetics fits within a general philosophical program which he has developed. She alludes to his description of an artwork as a "vehicle of interpretation," to his proposal of an informal semantics, and to his suggestion that artworks make statements about reality and art and thus come close to shading into philosophy, but she has no sense of how Danto has used these remarks in his writings in other branches of philosophy nor how his concept of an artwork fits within his larger scheme of things. For Danto, the philosophy of art is logically tied to other branches of philosophy: this is a consequence of his characterization of philosophy as systematic. In *What Philosophy Is*, published in 1968, Danto speaks of the interrelatedness of various branches of philosophy. It is not only that it is difficult to discuss one set of philosophical problems without bringing in implicit reference to another set of philosophical problems, but it is also the goal of discussion to move from one branch to another. Danto specifically mentions the case of moral philosophy and the importance of understanding how moral questions are a "part of the entire design" of a philosophical system. He tells us that
questions of philosophical ethics are seen as crucial only when the bearing of their answers upon the wider conceptual queries of philosophy are revealed. One cannot, really, get serious results on any portion of philosophy without keeping the entirety of philosophy always in mind. The parts are intelligible only in the circumference of the whole.  

The whole of the design is the general conceptual scheme adopted by the systematic philosopher; this is his metaphysics to which he is led from other branches of philosophy. In What Philosophy Is, it is the philosophy of knowledge, the philosophy of language, and the philosophy of action that converge in a metaphysics.

If we attend closely to the language of "The Artworld," we see that Danto's interest in artistic theories has much to do with their relation to whole systems. The article begins with a brief discussion of two versions of the Imitation Theory. Danto finds what he calls the Socratic formulation, namely that art is a mirror held up to nature, defective because it renders art non-cognitive.

Socrates saw mirrors as but reflecting what we can already see; so art, insofar as mirror-like, yields idle accurate duplications of the appearance of things, and is of no cognitive benefit whatever.  

Here, Danto is pointing to the consequences for art of the Platonic epistemology and metaphysics; the discussion is carried out within the context of the Platonic
system, wherein art is related to the mere "appearances of things" and hence lacking in "cognitive benefit." Danto adds that it is on "profound grounds" that he is exploring the defectiveness of the Socratic position, and goes on to show how the Imitation Theory as re-formulated by Shakespeare corrects the earlier formulation.

Hamlet, more acutely, recognized a remarkable feature of reflecting surfaces, namely that they show us what we could not otherwise perceive--our own face and form--and so art, insofar as it is mirror-like, reveals us to ourselves, and is, even by socratic criteria, of some cognitive utility after all.\textsuperscript{71}

That Danto finds the Hamlet formulation to be more than of passing significance is indicated when he returns to the formulation at the close of the article, making a contemporary application of it:

And, to return to the views of Hamlet with which we began this discussion, Brillo boxes may reveal us to ourselves as well as anything might: as a mirror held up to nature, they might serve to catch the conscience of our kings.\textsuperscript{72}

On this formulation, an imitation is reflective; that is, it can tell us about ourselves, increasing self-knowledge. With this formulation, Danto has placed us and the Imitation Theory within the context of his own philosophical system, a system that postulates (1) a world of real things, (2) a category of imitations, and (3) a self to which imitations lead us. It is the
self-reflective quality of art that is being emphasized, and this is part of Danto's general program of the self-referential quality of all representations. But we could not have known this had we not ventured forth into Danto's other writings in epistemology and metaphysics, where he postulates (1) an objective world of real things, (2) a class of things known as representations, and (3) a self to which the class of representations stand in relation.

Danto adds to his discussion of the Imitation Theory that in Socratic dialogue the aim was to match a "real defining expression" to a term in active use; the test of adequacy for such a term consists in showing that there are no counter-examples. This discussion calls into play a distinction that Danto makes elsewhere, in What Philosophy Is, a distinction between a real definition and a nominal definition. A real definition, as Danto understands it, expresses "the very essence or nature of the thing defined. Such a definition would be genuinely informative" and would be given in a sentence that itself is either true or false. A nominal definition by contrast is a stipulative definition ('Let a mean b!), that "is only a proposal, fit or unfit, but neither true or false." The kind of definition that Danto is working toward in this article is properly neither a real definition nor a
nominal definition, as he understands them; rather, it is a definition that lies somewhere between: a definition of a concept and the projected ontology of the thing to which the concept refers, given in a sentence that is neither informative nor true. A discussion of what all this means will be postponed for the time being, but suffice it to say that a grasp of Danto's account of definition requires a grasp of his account of how much an ontology can tell us about the world.

Danto continues his discussion of the Imitation Theory (IT) by contrasting it with a description of what he calls the RT (Reality Theory). The RT was an enunciated theory under which the new artworks during the period of post-impressionism in European art history came to be accepted: the RT replaced the IT because it could explain the works of Van Gogh, Cezanne, Gauguin, and the Fauves, as art, while the IT could not. Here, Danto is drawing upon the concept of a scientific revolution as recently explored in the philosophy of science. He represents

certain episodes in the history of art as not dissimilar to certain episodes in the history of science, where a conceptual revolution is being effected and where refusal to countenance certain facts, while in part due to prejudice, inertia, and self-interest, is due also to the fact that a well-established, or at least widely credited theory is being threatened in such a way that all coherence goes.75
He tells us that

Some such episode transpired with the advent of post-impressionist paintings. In terms of the prevailing artistic theory (IT), it was impossible to accept these as art unless inept art; otherwise they could be discounted as hoaxes, self-advertisements, or the visual counterparts of madmen's ravings. So to get them accepted as art, on a footing with the Transfiguration (not to speak of a Landseer stag), required not so much a revolution in taste as a theoretical revision of rather considerable proportions, involving not only the artistic enfranchisement of these objects, but an emphasis upon newly significant features of accepted artworks, so that quite different accounts of their status as artworks would now have to be given.16

Danto may well have a Kuhnian analysis in mind here, as Sclafani has suggested, but what needs to be appreciated is that for Danto the "conceptual revolution" that takes place entails a change in ontology. Danto's discussion is based, not on a Machian view of scientific theory; that is, not on a view refusing to recognize ontological commitments. Rather, it is based on a Kuhnian or Quinian analysis of scientific theory, one that admits that our theories commit us to the existence of certain entities and that a theoretical revision often entails a revision in our ontological commitments. Danto tells us that according to the RT,

the artists in question were to be understood not as successfully imitating real
forms but as successfully creating new ones, quite as real as the form which the older art had been thought, in its best examples, to be creditably imitating. Art, after all, had long since been thought of as creative (Vasari says that God was the first artist), and the post-impressionists were to be explained as genuinely creative, aiming, in Roger Fry's words, 'not at illusion but reality'.

In other words, the IT embraced an ontological distinction between the unsuccessful imitation (the illusion) and the real forms that they tried to imitate, but the RT embraced the view that the new created forms "were quite as real as" the forms which the older art had been thought to be imitating. The RT could be interpreted as committed to one real category of things, to which both artworks and real things belong.

Danto, however, asserts that we need not assume automatically that the RT postulated one ontological category; that is, we need not assume that artworks, which are non-illusions, belong to the same ontological category as real things. An artwork rather occupies a freshly opened area between real objects and real facsimiles of real objects: it is a non-facsimile, if one requires a word, and a new contribution to the world . . . . By means of this theory (RT), artworks re-entered the thick of things from which socratic theory (IT) had sought to evict them: if no more real than what carpenters wrought, they were at least no less real. The Post-Impressionist won a victory in ontology.
Danto chooses to interpret the RT as opening up a new ontological category to which the new artworks belong, rather than as identifying the reality of the new forms and the reality of real things. Here, Danto is setting the stage for his own ontological views to emerge. Real things are, and must remain, on Danto's view, distinct from these new real forms. This interpretation of RT is systematic philosophy in the grand style and hinges upon Danto's insistence that the world is distinct from representations. Danto's metaphysics demands that he make a distinction not only between imitations and the objects they represent, but also between non-imitations and the objects they refuse to imitate—between Van Gogh's *Potato Eaters* as a non-facsimile, for example, and the real life potato eaters that they do not imitate but that they are about.

Other sections of "The Artworld" also fit within the wider conceptual scheme adopted by Danto. Section B, for example, explains in what sense artworks are real and what may be said about the ontological structure of an artwork. In individuating an artwork, Danto explicitly makes use of Strawson's concept of a person. Artworks, according to this theory, are to be distinguished from things that are not art, just as persons, metaphysically, are to be distinguished from things that are not persons; both persons and artworks are
complex objects, a person being "a complex entity made up of a body and some conscious state: a conscious-body" and an artwork, as a Rauschenberg bed, being "a complex object fabricated out of a bed and some paint-streaks: a paint-bed." Those familiar with Strawson's concept of a person will be able to grasp the main outline of Danto's suggestion here, but just how Strawson's concept of a person is integrated into Danto's general program and how an artwork reflects this concept of a person is a matter about which we must look elsewhere in Danto's writings. In order to be in a position to understand Danto's view of the ontological structure of an artwork, we must look at the larger ontological framework of which it is a part.

The commentators with which we started our discussion of "The Artworld" have missed much of the metaphysical context out of which Danto is developing his definition of art. Neither Dickie nor Kennick mention any of Danto's ontological remarks, and when Silvers does, she does by way of a footnote. Sclafani does see that Danto's interest in theory involves propositions regarding the relation between art and reality, but this is what he finds to be overly general and relatively useless. What is overlooked by these commentators is that Danto's approach to art is
fundamentally different from their own. Danto's approach centers on the relation between art and reality and the connection between artistic theories and metaphysics. It is general by intent, addressing the fundamental problem of the structure of our thought about art objects and answering questions as to what general elements of our thought are permanent and what elements are impermanent. This deep structure, as it were, cannot be read off the surface of the artworks themselves, but it is this deep structure out of which the artworks are produced, and later criticized. Danto is interested, to be sure, in those aspects of our thought that change through the years, in those theoretical revisions that need to be made to get certain artworks recognized as art, but the center of his interest has to do with those permanent aspects of our thought about art: what in the most general sense can be said about artworks and our thought about them.

B. The Early Danto: A Return to Metaphysics in Philosophy

An essay that Danto presented in the same year that he published "The Artworld" is of special interest to our topic, for the essay discloses Danto's special preference for metaphysical approaches in philosophy, and it reveals him as a man set against current trends.
This essay, "Reflections Upon Randall's Theory of Language," underscores our suspicion that Danto is at heart the metaphysician, and it leads to a conjecture as to how he might distinguish himself from his commentators in aesthetics.

In this essay, Danto speaks of three approaches in the philosophy of language, the first two of which enjoy special status within contemporary philosophy of language. The first approach is the socio-linguistic approach of the later Wittgenstein and Austin, an approach concerned with the situational matrices of use. Danto finds that the contemporary scene is overly influenced by Wittgenstein, and together with Austin and his school, the philosophy of language has come "dangerously close to a socio-lexicographical enterprise, exercised in an ill-defined territory vaguely bounded by social psychology and structural linguistics." Danto finds that this emphasis allows no room for "specifically philosophical uses of language." What he admires about Randall's theory of language, about which he is writing, is that it is not an exercise in linguistic philosophy. Randall's theory raises those ultimate, unwieldy questions about language which cannot be answered, but only evaded, by scrutinizing, however fastidiously and with whatever delicacy of wit, the mere convoluted surfaces of usage. Philosophical utterance has no
place in the domestic economy of ordinary speech; it has a region of its own. But we can, since the mere words are often the same, have entered it unawares, and so will locate ourselves wrongly. We cannot respond to Randall's queries without adjusting our focus to accommodate wider philosophical horizons than the ones within which we have latterly been confined.83

The second approach that Danto mentions is the syntactical approach concerned with the formal shape of language. This approach with its "formal reconstruction of language, with meaning postulates, formation and transformation rules" has been, "until relatively recent times, the dominating preoccupation of 'philosophy of language'."84 Randall's theory of language resists this second approach as well as to the first. Randall's main topic is the generation of sentences out of the material of the world: Randall, according to Danto, is working in the area between language and the world.

He is concerned with language as the activity of shaping sentences forth, language virtually as a force of nature, generating sentences out of the raw material of the world. It is this which gives his discussion so exceptional a philosophical interest. 85 Danto considers Randall's work so exceptionally philosophical in that it is carried on in the shadow of immense metaphysical considerations, which brood like forbidden, unacknowledged Himalayas on the horizons
of even the most mincing bits of linguistic analysis—considerations which dominate our investigations whether or not we recognize them. The linguistic activity, as Randall is concerned with it, is one of primordial conversion and transformation: he sees language as almost literally transforming things into words, as though sentences were merely final products from a manufacturing process, the raw material of which consists of the brute world, language being just the shaping of this rude stuff into sentential form . . . the metaphysical questions to which I allude, and which stand whether we tolerate this Aristotelian orientation or not, are how must the world be if it is to be 'put into words', and how must language be if it is to capture the world sententially? And who, since the great days of Logical Atomism, has so much as raised these questions? 86

It is clear that this third approach is set against the first two. The third approach is thus the approach used by those who think language is an activity that forms and creates sentences, an approach that asks how the world must be if it is to be put into words (the worldly conditions of the possibility of descriptive language) and how language must be if it is to capture the world sententially.

Danto draws an analogous division for the various approaches to the philosophy of science. He speaks of (1) the approach that takes the philosophy of science to be the study of "what scientists say when" and (2) the approach that is concerned with the language of science and its rational reconstruction in. o formal
theories. The third approach Danto likens to his third above; (3) is the generative approach wherein the philosophy of science is thought to be concerned with "how the world must be if it is to be put into theories" (the worldly conditions of the possibility of theories), and "how theories must be if they are to represent the world."\(^8\) It is this third approach with its metaphysical underpinnings that Danto finds exceptionally philosophical in the philosophy of science.

If we take these thoughts of Danto's, and apply them to "The Artworld," the suggestion leaps forth that Danto is attempting to carve out an approach that is set against contemporary aesthetic approaches. In "The Artworld," there are subtle references to the inadequacies of usage approaches, of the ordinary language variety (perhaps an analogous (1) approach for the philosophy of art): we are told that "we are supposed to be able, in the words of a recent writer, 'to separate those objects which are works of art from those which are not, because . . . we know how correctly to use the word 'art' and to apply the phrase 'work of art','" but that today on the contemporary art scene, "telling artworks from other things is not so simple a matter, even for native speakers."\(^8\) There are also references in "The Artworld" to the inadequacies of presentational and formalistic views. In the context of discussing
possible counter-examples to his principle of individuation, Danto argues that we need to rely upon something more than that which meets the eye: "we may forget questions of intrinsic value." 89

In a later article, "Artworks and Real Things," published in 1973, Danto makes explicit reference to presentational views (perhaps an analogous [2] for the philosophy of art) after discussing another case as a possible objection to his thesis: the case of the artwork that has "significant form compris," and that is indiscernible from what happens to be routine can-openers. In this case, Danto tells us

we must avert our eyes from the objects themselves in a counter-phenomenological turn---Von den Sachen selbst!---and see whatever it is, which clearly does not meet the eye, which keeps art and reality from leaking hopelessly into one another's territory. 90

In a still later article, "The Transfiguration of the Commonplace," published in 1974, Danto explains that in the present state of the artworld it is possible that a square of primed canvas be exhibited as a painting. The problem this raises is then how to distinguish this painting as an artwork from a mere square of primed canvas. What is called for, in order to differentiate the two, is an approach that goes "outside the objects and into the atmosphere of their ontological status, and seek criteria under-determined
by retinal indiscrimination." For Danto, the contemporary art scene calls for an ontological approach to the definition of an artwork, leaving approaches of "educated peering" far behind.

Though Danto never explicitly offers a threefold division for the philosophy of art, it is possible to conjecture that he might have one in mind in the light of his remarks in the Randall article. But conjectures aside, it is reasonable to state that Danto is working in an area, in the philosophy of art, that is primarily concerned with the generation of artworks out of something, broadly called the world (and perhaps, more narrowly, the artworld). In this area, the philosopher asks "ultimate, unwieldy questions about art" which cannot be answered by scrutinizing the faces of the artworks, and he is interested in the deep structure, as it were, of our thought about art, asking those metaphysical questions as to how the world must be if it is to be put into art (the worldly conditions of the possibility of art) and how art must be if it is to capture the world artistically. We may wish to add as a footnote that we cannot respond to Danto "without adjusting our focus to accommodate wider philosophical horizons than the ones we have latterly been confined."
C. "Artworks and Real Things" Reconsidered: An Essay in Metaphysical Aesthetics

It is worth our while to briefly discuss "Artworks and Real Things" since it is, of all the Danto articles, the best example of a work in metaphysical aesthetics. The article telescopes three distinct views in aesthetics, two of which distinguish between artworks and real things, and one of which identifies artworks with real things, and it intimates that three distinct ontological views determine these distinct aesthetic views. With the history of metaphysical aesthetics in mind, we are now in a position to appreciate Danto's article as an essay in metaphysical aesthetics.

Danto first considers Platonic metaphysics wherein art is defined as an imitation belonging to an ontological category inferior to the category of real things. Here, art is defined relative to a third and superior ontological category, the Forms. Danto notes that artists have traditionally participated in ontological matters, and he suggests that they have sought ways to promote art ontologically and thereby answer Platonic criticism. One way that artists have attempted to promote art has been to identify artworks and real things: much of the New York painting from circa 1961
to 1969 has moved in this direction, with its readymades and found objects. Another way in which artists have promoted art is by creating a new ontological category for art (that freshly-opened area that he described in "The Artworld"): the post-impressionists moved in this direction using disfiguring conventions so that these objects resist categorization as imitations, as "illusions" of anything. With this latter move, non-imitativeness becomes the criterion of art, and it is thought that the more artificial and the less imitative a work is, the purer it is. For Danto, this move is problematic since non-imitativeness is also a criterion for reality and thus this move is in danger of reaching the conclusion of the New York School: that of the identification of artworks and real things.92

Early in the article, Danto suggests that Aristotle provided a preferred response to the Platonic challenge. Aristotle retained the Platonic distinction between artworks and real things, but he did not develop the distinction as one between an inferior category of illusions and a category of things that at least participated in reality. Rather, Aristotle showed how the pleasure we take in art logically presupposed the distinction between art and reality, and
that art belongs to a category of things that have the right to be valuable.\textsuperscript{93}

Danto does not explain that it is because Aristotle rejected the Platonic separate category of the Forms that art is valuable in the Aristotelian aesthetics, but the differences in the Platonic and Aristotelian evaluation of art depend upon, and can be explained in terms of the differences in their respective metaphysical schemes. For Aristotle, universals are in things. Because imitations are directly related to the universals in things, art is knowledge-giving and thus valuable. Aristotle's metaphysics is a realist metaphysics in the sense that ordinary things exist independently of our consciousness of them; this view is distinct from Platonic realism that postulates classes of things independent of things.

Danto finds the realist framework of Aristotle congenial, and the bulk of the article is devoted to showing how artworks are distinguished from real things by virtue of their statement-making properties. Speaking from within this framework, Danto claims that art cannot be identified with reality, and that the ontological promotion of art, as attempted by the New York School and the post-impressionists, is a "logical impossibility."\textsuperscript{94}
From a realist metaphysical aesthetics, metaphysics "from above," an artwork cannot be strictly identified with a real thing: it is not logically possible. But there are other metaphysical views, and Danto acknowledges this when he speaks of "one further move to reckon with."\textsuperscript{95} This is the move made by Hegel or Berkeley, or more generally by idealist philosophers, who may serve to inspire critics like Rosenberg to read "the canvas as an arena in which a real action occurs when an artist . . . makes a wipe of paint upon it."\textsuperscript{96} This is a move that brings the realist world of ordinary objects into our minds and identifies all things of this world, artistic or otherwise, as created by us. From this framework, an artwork is ontologically identical to any other so-called real thing.

This article implies that a dualistic metaphysics that distinguishes between the world of real objects and our experience of it results in a view of art that distinguishes between artworks and real things. A monistic idealism, on the other hand, postulates only a world of our own making, and results in a view of art that identifies artworks and real things. If these conclusions are correct, then arguments in metaphysics impinge directly upon arguments in aesthetics.
The metaphysical aesthetician owes us not only an account of art, but also an account of the metaphysics upon which the aesthetics is founded.
FOOTNOTES--CHAPTER II


64 "The Artworld Discarded," 444.


68 What Philosophy Is, 17.

69 What Philosophy Is, xvi.

70 "The Artworld," 571.

71 "The Artworld," 571.


What Philosophy Is, 31.


"The Artworld," 573-574.

"The Artworld," 574.


"Reflections Upon Randall's Theory of Language," 199.

"Reflections Upon Randall's Theory of Language," 199.


"The Transfiguration of the Commonplace," 140.

"Artworks and Real Things," 2, 4.

"Artworks and Real Things," 3.

"Artworks and Real Things," 15.

"Artworks and Real Things," 16.

"Artworks and Real things," 16.
CHAPTER III

THE TRANSGURATION OF THE COMMONPLACE

In 1981, Danto published his most significant work in aesthetics, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* (TC). In this new book, Danto attempts to clarify much of what has confused his early commentators. Much of what was left undeveloped in the early articles is more fully developed in the new book which gives a full-blown definition of art with necessary and sufficient conditions. Danto reiterates that he is interested in "ontological" distinctions, and he sets his approach apart from more mainstream approaches: from the formalist, the ordinary language, the non-definitional, and the institutional.

TC is a work in metaphysical aesthetics, and it intimates the epistemological-metaphysical views upon which its definition of art is founded. Danto has not yet been recognized as a metaphysical aesthetician, nor has anyone yet pulled together the various strands of his broad program into a coherent whole. It is the intention of this chapter to bring together these epistemological-metaphysical views that impinge upon Danto's definition of art; thus this chapter serves not
only as a clarification of certain unexplained moves in the book but also as a justification in metaphysical terms of his analysis of art.

A. Philosophical Analysis and Descriptive Metaphysics

In the Preface to TC, Danto tells us that his book "aims at being an analytical philosophy of art."\textsuperscript{97} This aim is similar to the aim of three other works by Danto that in fact declare this aim in their title. In 1965, Danto made a contribution to the philosophy of history with his \textit{Analytical Philosophy of History}\textsuperscript{98}; in 1968, he contributed to the philosophy of knowledge with his \textit{Analytical Philosophy of Knowledge}\textsuperscript{99}; and in 1973, he contributed to action theory with his \textit{Analytical Philosophy of Action}.\textsuperscript{100} In 1968, Danto published \textit{What Philosophy Is}, and though its title does not proclaim it, this work is also an analysis of a concept, this time an analysis of philosophy itself. These titles and aims indicate that Danto takes himself to be working within an analytical tradition, but a close examination of the kind of analysis that Danto has in mind indicates that the analytical tradition with which he is properly associated is that of Strawson, not that of the later Wittgenstein.
Danto has pointed out in his *Analytical Philosophy of History* that the kind of conceptual analysis that interests him is a kind of analysis that "becomes, in the end, a general description of the world as we are obliged to conceive of it, given that we think and talk as we do. Analysis, in short, yields a descriptive metaphysic when systematically executed."¹⁰¹ Danto is speaking here as a systematic philosopher, not unlike the "serious and systematic philosopher (and there can be no other kind)"¹⁰² that he describes in TC, who works his way through a whole cycle of internally related topics, perhaps beginning with art, like Nietzsche, or ending with art, like Kant. For this systematic philosopher, conceptual or philosophical analysis results in a general description of the world or reality, or what Danto calls in TC a representation of "reality as a whole."¹⁰³ This general description is made out by an analysis of certain concepts that are thought to be inherently philosophical: a single philosophical concept, for example, will be analyzed; having analyzed this concept, a move to the nature of the thing in the world is allowed. Then analyses of other concepts in other areas of philosophy are carried out, and if a structural parity between the various concepts is discovered, the scope of the analysis is enlarged and it moves closer
to its goal of a general description of the world. In the end, given the assumption that common ontological categories run through the various branches of philosophy, we may conclude that a series of objects in the world, that through a structural parity, fall under one class of things that may or may not contrast with another class of things.

Philosophical analysis, for Danto, involves not only defining a concept in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions, but also describing the metaphysical or ontological structure of the thing in the world to which the concept refers. Such a view of analysis sets Danto apart from those aestheticians like W. E. Kennick and Morris Weitz, who deny that a concept can be defined in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions, and those institutionalists, like George Dickie, who take their definition of art to be purely linguistic. Danto's definition of art leads to the ontological structure of artworks in the world, and this fact places him in the camp of those who do at once aesthetics and metaphysics.

Danto's brand of philosophical analysis falls more closely in line with the work of P. F. Strawson, who first coined the term descriptive metaphysics in the introduction to Individuals. Danto's work is reminiscent of Strawson's on several accounts:
(1) both Strawson and Danto stress the generality and scope of their findings, Strawson asserting the ahistorical nature of his conclusions regarding the permanent categories of thought, and Danto asserting the ahistorical nature of his definition of art.

(2) Both Strawson and Danto state their intention to go beyond purely usage approaches in the philosophy of language: their individual methods reveal the ontology that is implied by our predications. In Individuals,105 Strawson notes the kinds of predicates that we use in speaking of ourselves, finding that we ascribe to the very same thing both states of consciousness and physical characteristics; on this analysis of the use of predicates he bases the claim that the ontological structure of a person is one kind of thing under two aspects. Danto uses a parallel argument to show how the kinds of predicates that we use in speaking of artworks reveal that the ontological structure of an artwork cannot be identified exclusively with a material object and that the form of an artwork must always be distinguished from its content.

(3) Both Strawson and Danto state that we think of the world as independent of our consciousness of it. Danto's program, in particular, is a variation of commonsense realism. In other words, it is a dualistic metaphysics that postulates an objective world as one
ontological category and a subjective consciousness as another ontological category. We, as conscious beings, respond to the objective world, giving meaning and significance to sentences, to paint, and to sound: we give our subjective understanding of the objective world, representing our thoughts about the world. In short, this is a realist metaphysics: we depend upon the objective world, though it does not depend upon us, our assumption being that the objective world would be just as it is were we not here to be conscious of it.

B. Metaphysical and Epistemological Underpinnings of a Definition of Art

Danto combines his aim in TC for "an analytical philosophy of art" with another goal. This he describes in the Preface. He refers to the "aspiration of artists from platonic times to the present of redeeming art for reality." He tells us that the possibilities of success for this aspiration are "exceedingly limited . . . and it is interesting to consider how little has been achieved in actualizing the dream of centuries." It is the task of his book, he continues, to establish the limits to which art may be redeemed for reality.
This goal takes us back to Danto's interpretation of the Reality Theory in "The Artworld" and to the Aristotelian response to Plato as suggested in "Artworks and Real Things." The task of TC is to establish the limits to which art may be taken as real; that is, the limits to which an artistic product may be said to be a real thing.

This stated task underscores Danto's intention to analyze artworks from the perspective of the relationship between art and reality—a perspective that we suggested Danto takes to be "exceptionally philosophical" and appropriate for the philosophy of art. Danto is interested in the generation of art out of something, broadly called the world, just as he has been interested in the generation of theories, and the generation of language, out of the stuff of the world. Danto's approach, we may infer, is carried on in "the shadow of immense metaphysical considerations, which brood like forbidden, unacknowledged Himalayas on the horizons of even the most mincing bits of linguistic analysis—considerations which dominate our investigation, whether or not we recognize them."

His approach sees the artistic activity as one of "primordial conversion and transformation" of the stuff of our world into artistic form; that is, it investigates the activity of transfiguring the
commonplace into art.

The chief task of the first chapter of TC is to establish that there is indeed a distinction between artworks, as a human product, and real things. This task is preliminary to a definition of art. Danto first constructs a case that appeals to our intuition that the distinction between art and mere things has not been erased, contrary to what Brillo boxes and Campbell Soup cans indicate. This case suggests that we cannot rely upon our eyes to decide whether an artwork is a real thing: we need an approach that is meta-empirical. We are invited to imagine a gallery that is exhibiting eight red surfaces, all of which are taken to be perceptually indiscernible. Our task is to differentiate between the red surfaces. The first red surface is a painting of "The Israelites Crossing the Red Sea" (the artist having explained that the Israelites had already crossed and the Egyptians were drowned). The second square of red paint, entitled "Kierkegaard's Mood," is a painting based upon Kierkegaard's having commented that he found an analogy between the first red square and his own spiritual struggles that ended in a mood, a single color. The next red surfaces are both entitled "Red Square" and one is a clever bit of Moscow landscape and the other is a minimalist example of geometric art.
The fifth is entitled "Nirvana," an example of religious art; and the sixth is a still-life executed by an embittered disciple of Matisse, called "Red-Table Cloth." The seventh red surface has historical interest for it is a canvas grounded in red lead by Giorgione, but its anticipated painting was never realized, Giorgione having died before its realization. The last red surface is painted in red lead, but is a mere artifact, in the exhibition not because it is a painting, but because it has some philosophical import, it being a mere thing with paint upon it.

The important question that arises from this constructed case is how are we to explain that the last two red surfaces are mere things, whereas the preceding ones are artworks. Danto recommends that we go back to three historical theories of imitation, which maintain "a distinction between artworks and mere things, and may help us accordingly in understanding a boundary that our examples cross without erasing." He subsequently gives us his reading of three theories of art (that of Plato, Aristotle, and Nietzsche), each of which he finds to be deeply metaphysical and deeply realist.

Danto explains how the concepts of art with which Plato, Aristotle, and Nietzsche were working implied a certain metaphysics, one that distinguished
between imitations and real things. The Platonic theory of mimesis marked out a distinction between art and an "antecedent" and duplicable reality; that is, Plato's concept of art presupposed an antecedent world that was capable of being duplicated. The Aristotelian theory of mimesis marked out the distinction between art and the world as forming the condition upon which artistic pleasure depended: that is, artistic pleasure presupposes the knowledge that art is distinct from reality (it presupposes an epistemology compatible with a metaphysical realism). The Nietzschean theory of imitation spoke to the historical development of a conceptual scheme that distinguished between art and reality. Nietzsche proposed that the distinction developed as part of a historical process reflecting a change in the general conceptual scheme of man. Nietzsche's discussion of tragedy reveals that with the birth of tragedy, a distinction arose between an imitation and its object of imitation: what was, previous to this conceptual change, a bit of reality, a re-presentation in the Dionysian rites, became, as part of a historical process, a representation, an artistic form distinct from reality. This reading of Nietzsche reflects Danto's own view that with the dawn of civilization, consciousness (self-consciousness) awakened, so to
speak, and man came to understand himself as distinct from nature and as thinking about nature: that is, civilization ushered in the ontological distinction between man and his experiences, and nature.

Nietzsche's theory, furthermore, gives a clue to the feature that distinguishes artworks and mere things. Nietzsche, Danto tells us, discloses in what respect a tragedy is distinct from its object of imitation: this is in its designative or symbolic respect. Danto describes this designative or symbolic character of an artwork as standing in the place of something else: the tragic hero stood in place of, or represented, Dionysus himself ("as our representatives in Congress stand proxy for ourselves"). Danto adopts this way of thinking about artworks and later claims that over time, the mere designative or mere symbolic character of artworks became less important, except in the case of commemorative portraits, historical paintings, and the like. What becomes important to artworks is what Danto calls their semantical or representational character. The semantical aspect of an artwork is a relational aspect that connects the descriptive structure, or meaning structure of an artwork to what it is about. Artworks are variously spoken of as "vehicles of representation," as "semantical vehicles,"
and as "vehicles of meaning," and they belong to a special class of things that are about something. Informally, this means that a certain object is an artwork if it is about something and possesses a meaning structure; this is to say that it is an interpreted thing.

Aboutness and interpretation are features that distinguish artworks from mere things; these features constitute the necessary condition for arthood. In giving his definition of art, Danto needs to show not only that artworks are about something and are thus interpreted things, but he also needs to show that mere things do not possess these features. Perhaps because TC is written for artists and art critics as well as for philosophers, Danto spares us the details of his epistemic-metaphysical views, but it is clear that his own view of the nature of the world of mere things and its relationship to us is critical in making out the definition. Danto's epistemic and metaphysical views are contained in his Analytical Philosophy of Knowledge. Here he argues that a fatal mistake in the history of epistemology has been to take the objects of our experience as representative of something else. This mistake has been made by advocates of a representational theory of perception. Such a theory was championed by Descartes who took
our true perceptions to be representations of something in the External World. Danto argues that it is this application to ordinary objects of a theory that properly applies only to imitations that has given rise to the arguments from illusion and their purported demolition of common-sense realism. Once we recognize this misapplication, we come to see that there is no problem of the External World: there are objects of our experience and they are external and independent of us, and we are in direct relation to them; the problem of our knowledge of them does not even arise. 117

In *Analytical Philosophy of Knowledge*, Danto also analyzes the concept of knowledge and finds that the concept implies a distinction between our perceptions, as given in our knowledge claims, and the reality that these claims are about: only the knowledge claims are designative and not what the claims are about. An analysis of the concept of belief also demonstrates that our belief sentences possess this designative character. These belief sentences are about something, although the something that they are about need not exist, it being the case that a false belief is still a belief. In short, Danto's claim is that knowledge claims, beliefs, and belief sentences, products of a designating
consciousness, are representational or semantical (they are semantical vehicles), and that those objects or events that these representations are about, are neither semantical nor representational.

Danto's theory of knowledge takes our ordinary objects of experience to be objects simpliciter, objects in and for themselves. These real objects bear an objective feature that is public and accessible to the eye.

According to Danto (and contra Goodman) it is possible to see objects in a neutral way, invariant and independent of interpretation. For Danto, it is our culture that interprets seen objects and thus adds meaning and significance to these perceived objects, telling us what these objects are to be seen as, but the objects seen are the same whatever interpretation we place on them. In this sense real objects are given and fixed, public and independent of the perceiver. An object perceived without interpretation is like the perception of a bare arm movement—without meaning or significance; both the object and arm movement look the same with or without interpretation, with or without gestural significance. If we had no degree of acculturation, or if there were no culture, our perceptions would be invariant. Furthermore, the predicates that we apply to an object in a neutral
way are logically independent of the predicates through which it is described in cultural terms. Danto tells us, "Whether in the sphere of perception or of action, philosophers may seek for descriptions of what is perceived or what is done in terms which presuppose no special cultural information, and which may then be counted as universal, being invariant to every possible coloration history or culture may add."\textsuperscript{118}

It is in this respect that Danto's philosophical program presupposes a notion of "the way the world really is."\textsuperscript{119} The aim of knowledge is "to interpret the world in the sense of fitting our representations to the way it is."\textsuperscript{120} This view asserts an invariant and universal aspect of the world--the way the world really is--and it asserts the possibility of our describing the world as it really is, that is, the possibility of forming descriptive statements that correspond to the world, when true.

When Danto gives his formal definition of an artwork, he brings together his view of mere things and his view of representations. "An object \(o\) is then an artwork only under an interpretation \(I\), where \(I\) is a sort of function that transfigures \(o\) into a work: \(I(o) = W\). Then even if \(o\) is a perceptual constant, variations in \(I\) constitute different works."\textsuperscript{121}
This definition of an artwork presupposes that there is a neutral way of looking at an object but that by contrast, if o is an artwork W, there is no neutral way of seeing W, which is I (o). This definition presupposes, as Danto tells us, that "one may be a realist about objects and an idealist about artworks."\textsuperscript{122}

Danto has been credited with a theory-laden view of artworks in "The Artworld,: and we see this view repeated in TC, but what has not yet been recognized about Danto's view is that it rests upon a nontheory-laden view of perception and a realist metaphysics of common-sense objects. For Danto, there is no neutral way of seeing objects in the gallery; we go into the gallery with the idea of achieving the "form" of the objects on exhibition, the form being "that gerrymandered portion of the object the interpretation picks out,"\textsuperscript{123} and which disappears without interpretation, its esse being interpretari. But the other side of the thesis that "it is analytical to the concept of an artwork that there has to be an interpretation" is that mere things, from which artworks are distinguished, are not intrinsically interpreted things. It is not only that commonplace objects in Danto's world are non-designative, but it is also that it is not of their esse to be interpretari: this is a thoroughgoing commonsense realism that makes an
ontological distinction between us and our perceptions, and the objective world.

For the most part in TC, Danto merely assumes that commonplace objects are non-designative and intrinsically uninterpreted things, rather than arguing for this thesis in some straightforward way. He does imply in several passages that other views of reality have led us astray in our thinking about imitations, and if we are to make progress in our analyses we need to cut off these views. The Platonic Mimetic Theory postulates one such view of Reality and Danto asks us to abstract from our consideration of mimesis the metaphysical aspect of Plato's theory. Danto, as we have seen, invokes the Platonic theory in the first place because it posits an ontological distinction between an imitation and a mere thing, and this is the distinction that Danto seeks to preserve even in cases such as Warhol's Campbell Soup cans and Duchamp's Fountain, where the artwork is in part a mere thing. But there is a further distinction, between the world of common things and the world of Forms that Danto finds at the root of Plato's criticism of art, and it is this further distinction that he wishes to subvert.

In a brief discussion of "the complex metaphysical structures that compose the core of Platonic theory," Danto tells us that for Plato objects were
exemplifications of the Forms, and we may take this to mean that sensibles *stand in place of*, as an inferior proxy of, the Forms. The Platonic metaphysics asserts a designative relation between things and the Forms, or to follow Platonic language, it is the things that are representations or imitations of the Forms, while artworks in consequence become representations of representations. This Platonic concept of Reality is incompatible with Danto's concept of reality, and Danto dismisses it summarily. From this point on in the discussion Danto assumes that we stand in direct relation to reality and that the distinction between illusions (or appearances) and real things can be made out within experience.

Before returning to the examples of red squares with which we began this section, a further explanation of Danto's use of the term "semantical" is in order. Danto has used the term elsewhere in connection with knowledge claims, and a brief excursion into his philosophy of knowledge will prove valuable in unpacking the use of his term in the philosophy of art.

Let us consider Danto's understanding of a knowledge claim in its semantical aspect: Take s to be "The trees have leaves now," spoken by a at time t in place p. According to Danto, we would not examine the bits of print on this page in order to say
something philosophical about this sentence. What is philosophically interesting about s is non-perceptual: that aspect of s that causes us to ask, What does s say or mean? Furthermore, to answer this question, we attend to a relationship or to the connection set up by the statement and what it is about, in this case, an objective feature of the world at time t in place p; we cannot discuss what the statement means without referring to the world. If what s says corresponds to a feature of the world, then s is true.

It is part of Danto's program that a knows that s is true because he is in direct relation to the world at time t in place p, and he just knows it immediately. It does not follow, however, from the fact that he knows it immediately that the sentence itself pictorially corresponds to the objective feature of the world. The Tractatus picture theory of language asserted that the world is independent of our picturing it (and thus it made the distinction between our representations and the world), but it wrongly assumed, according to Danto, that there was a picturing connection between our sentences and the world. For Danto, a sentence that truly describes what it is about need not share a common feature with its subject matter; it need not resemble nor give back
the world's structure. Therefore, the *Tractatus'* picture theory of ordinary language should be rejected, since it asserts that ordinary language gives back the form of the thing pictured. But Danto stresses that a rejection of the picture theory need not lead us to the thought that "there can be no fit connection at all between language and the world," or that language cannot capture reality at all, and he offers his own theory of the connection between ordinary language and the world: it is a modified version of the correspondence view of truth with a "sufficiently weakened notion of correspondence . . . without (pictorial) congruence," and one that he concedes does suppose "antecedent structures in the world" and a matching up between these structures and our descriptions. For Danto, a statement connects to an antecedent and nonaltered structure in the world not by mirroring it but by merely being associated with it. That aspect of a statement (its relational aspect) that reaches across to the world is the semantical or connective aspect that the statement bears.

In addition to the connective relation that a bears to its content, we may wish to consider the statement in relation to a; this might be the case particularly if it is discovered that the sentence is false; and we want to understand what caused a to make
the statement: in what psychological state was he during the production of this statement? Because of our interest in the relation of s to a, we come to understand that statements are totally relational in the sense that they stand in a relation to the real world, either in a successful or unsuccessful relation, and they stand in a relation to their speakers.

Danto claims in TC that he is as interested in carving out the nature of the philosophy of art as he is interested in defining the concept art, and we may understand that by the philosophy of art he means the semantics of art. Returning to Danto's examples of red squares, we can now understand that it is the non-perceptual semantical aspect of the first six red squares that distinguish them from the last red squares that are not artworks. The case of the red surfaces is designed to show that there is an ontological distinction, not an institutional one, between an artwork and a mere thing, and that an ontological difference is not something that can be perceived by the eye. The case in fact rests upon the principle that there are non-perceptual properties of an artwork; these non-perceptual properties are those relational properties, or semantical properties that connect each of the first six red surfaces to its content and cause. The case reveals that a mere
examination of the surfaces of the red canvases (the formalist move) like of the bits of print of a sentence, is insufficient for a philosophical analysis of an artwork. In order to uncover what the various surfaces say or mean, we need to think in terms of the relationship between the surface of each and its content and cause. To make this discovery, we move to a meta-empirical perspective that examines relationships rather than canvases per se. It is revealed that each of the first six red surfaces stand in a relationship to a content and to a cause, some of these paintings being extensional representations, like the Moscow landscape painting, and some of these paintings being intensional representations, like those that represent an action or a mood or a geometric form. These first six representations belong to one class of things and are distinct from the last two red surfaces that do not stand in a semantical relationship to anything, these surfaces not being about anything. Although they are perceptually identical to the others, they are not artworks at all.

This method of indiscernible counterparts Danto tells us elsewhere derives from a famous model in the philosophy of perception,\textsuperscript{131} where it has been wrongly applied to our ordinary objects of perception. The method is properly applied to artworks, however,
since artworks bear a designative, or representational, property. Later in TC, Danto offers the "speculation that the phenomenon of confusable counterparts belonging to distinct ontological orders arises only when at least one of the confusable things bears a representational property: where at least one of the counterparts is about something, or has a content, or a subject, or a meaning."^{132}

C. Danto's Realist Theory of Imitation

We have suggested how Danto appeals to three historical theories of imitation in explaining how contemporary examples of art are distinct from real things. We have not yet shown how Danto moves from the distinction between an imitation and its object of imitation in the world to a distinction between an artwork, or a picture in general, and what it is about; that is, how he moves from imitation to artwork. It is the intention of this section to fill out this matter. It is Danto's concept of an imitation that brings him into explicit conflict with Nelson Goodman, whose views on imitation have been much discussed in the aesthetic literature since the publication of Languages of Art in 1968. Particularly startling in 1968 was Goodman's view that resemblance is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for representation.
This view is in the background of TC. Although Danto does not explain his difference with Goodman as a difference in metaphysics, my claim is that their differences are explained by their differing views of reality. Goodman, like Danto, is a contemporary proponent of metaphysical aesthetics. This section will earmark some of the details of what I am calling the Danto-Goodman debate and I will begin to demonstrate, by focusing upon Danto's realist theory of imitation, how a dispute in aesthetics may be at heart a dispute in metaphysics.

Danto moves from the concept of imitation to that of an artwork via the concept of representation. He tells us that imitation need not be a purely extensional concept; that is, reference to an existent object need not be entailed by the meaning of the concept. Instead, it is better to understand imitation as a representational concept, whose aboutness is relevant whether or not what is represented exists: an "imitation of o" does not entail that there exists an object o that the imitation copies; therefore, "imitation of o" is analogous to "picture of o," both being representational concepts about something. 133

Danto distinguishes two kinds of representations: (1) "an external sense of representation" or a referential sense in which pictures denote the things
they resemble, as in a portrait, and (2) an internal sense of representation," \textsuperscript{135} or "pictorial concept of representation," \textsuperscript{136} which has to do "with the content of an imitation or a picture." \textsuperscript{137} It is noteworthy for our purposes that in the latter case Danto continues to maintain that there is a distinction between the representation and what it is about; this distinction is filled out as one between the way something is represented and what is represented, a distinction that is later formulated as a distinction between form and content.

It is convenient at this point to reiterate Danto's general philosophical distinction between two ontological categories. Danto asserts a general distinction and connection between (1) complex entities that represent the world and (2) the world. Two further distinctions play a prominent role in Danto's metaphysics: (1a) a complex entity (the self or consciousness) and (2a) the world and one between (1b) complex representations of the self and (2b) the world.

Danto's claim is that these distinctions cut across the mental-physical distinction, and he insists that his program is neither a Cartesian dualism (that posits an ontological distinction between mind and body), nor a version of reductionism (that reduces
everything to one ontological category, either to the Mind or Spirit, or to material things).

Of the nature of those entities falling under (1), Danto tells us that they are not to be identified with mind; rather, these entities on one side of the distinction are complex entities, possessed of, on the one hand, a physical and perceptual part and, on the other, a nonphysical and non-perceptual part. Persons and their actions as representations, and persons and their assertions as representations play a prominent role in his program, all falling under (1), both persons and representations being complex wholes. 138

In explaining what he means by (2), Danto calls forth a distinction between the descriptive level of thought and language and the semantical level of thought and language. When we use 'real' descriptively, he explains, we attach the term to something outside the mind, but when we use 'real' semantically, what is outside the mind and what is in the mind belong alike to 'reality'. 138 (2) The world, then, is not to be identified with what is outside the mind: the world, or reality, in its semantical or philosophical sense, may be construed broadly as any object of consciousness, including those ordinary objects of perception and what we usually speak of as
mental contents.

Mental and non-mental alike belong to the class of experientia, or belong alike to the world. What does not belong to the world is our experience of it. Experiencing the world, which is mediating between language and the world, is radically distinct from the world experienced . . . .139

Danto's position here, that there is a radical distinction between (1) our experience of the world and (2) the world, exhibits what we have already referred to as his realism or alternatively, as his dualism. It is this position which we have implied is assumed by descriptive metaphysics.

In an article entitled "Representational Properties and Mind-Body Identity," Danto fills out his ontological distinction between (1) and (2) in terms of a distinction between a thought and the content of a thought: the relation between these, (1) the thought and (2) the content of the thought, is that of aboutness or of-ness, either on "an intensional or an extensional reading" of the prepositions.140

With extensional aboutness and intensional aboutness, there remains a "distinction between what belongs to content and what belongs to what has the content."141 Here, too, he relies on a realist distinction between a thought and the content of a thought, setting aside "what is thought of as well as the way in which this is given to thought." He tells us that "the last place one
might look to see what are the properties of thought is to their contents,"\textsuperscript{142} and he offers the speculation that "the way something is represented is not a property of it."\textsuperscript{143} His discussion, he tells us, is applicable to sentences, pictures, stories, and theories, and he finds the case of representational art to be particularly instructive in clarifying this distinction. If we take a painting of a tree, we see that (1) that which has the content (the vehicle of representation) cannot be identical to the (2) content of the vehicle, that a painting of a tree is inevitably distinct from a tree. Even when, as Jasper Johns has tried, an artist makes the properties of the vehicle coincide with the properties of the thing represented, "the former is of the latter, and the distinction would remain, granting that it would now be easy to confuse and difficult to recognize the differences between (say) a square of painted white canvas and a square white painting of a square."\textsuperscript{144}

This discussion telescopes much of the work of TC, for there Danto will argue that with intensional representation, what he calls false imitations, or false pictures (as well as with extensional representation, what he calls true imitations, or true pictures), there remains a distinction between the way something is represented and what is represented. The latter
portions of TC may be taken as following out the implications of this basic realist distinction by showing that paintings, and artworks in general, have "none of the properties associated with what they are of."\textsuperscript{145} There is a Form/Content or Medium/Content distinction, whether it is in the Lichtenstein paintings or brushstrokes that insist on the "discrepancies between what is shown and the way in which it is shown, surface and subject being virtually antonymic,"\textsuperscript{146} or in a Gainsborough or in a Rembrandt. The argument in all three cases is that "it is crucial to distinguish the form of a representation and the content of a representation."\textsuperscript{147} This distinction is prerequisite to the formulation of a sufficient condition for something's being a work of art, for on Danto's account what makes out the difference between an artwork and a mere representation, and allows an expressive element to enter into the nature of an artwork is the relationship of form to content.

In the sixth chapter entitled, "Works of Art and Mere Representation," Danto uses the method of examining aesthetic predicates in order to show that the form or medium of an artwork may not be reduced to its content, a Socratic reduction (the Transparency Theory) that finds its metaphysical analogue in idealism.\textsuperscript{148} This method not only shows "the degree to
which the imitation theory has always been deeply metaphysical," but it also demonstrates the extent to which Danto's distinction between Form and Content is at root realistic.

In "Representational Properties and Mind-Body Identity," Danto demonstrates how disputes in the philosophy of mind between materialists and idealists largely result from a failure to make out the realist distinction between the process of perceiving or thinking and the content of the perceiving or thinking. The sixth chapter of TC may be viewed as demonstrating a similar point in the philosophy of art. Danto shows that our commonly used aesthetic predicates more often than not apply to the medium or the image and not to the content or the motif of the artwork: he uses for examples "is powerful," "is swift," "is fluid," "has depth," "has solidity," "is sharp," "is eloquent," "is delicate," and he suggests that these, though used to apply to drawings of flowers, are seldom used to apply to flowers themselves. Consequently, if our aesthetic predicates have any validity at all in use, we must rid ourselves of an account of art that reduces the medium to content. This is, of course, to suggest the thesis that the form of a representation is distinct from its content and the properties that belong to the form or the medium do not belong to the content of the
representation; and this is the case with a false imitation or false picture, as well as with a true imitation, or true picture.

It is Danto's theory of a true imitation that is most obviously realist and it is this theory that brings him into explicit conflict with Goodman. Both Danto and Goodman agree that resemblance is not a sufficient condition for imitation. Early in TC, just prior to the discussion of Aristotle's concept of dramatic pleasure, Danto tells us that "It is widely appreciated that resemblance, even exact resemblance between pairs of things, does not make one an imitation of the other,\textsuperscript{151} and he implies that his method of indiscernibles demonstrates that resemblance is not a sufficient condition for imitation, all of the red squares resemble each other, yet none of the red squares is an imitation of any of the others. Danto's view that resemblance is not a sufficient condition for imitation is a reiteration of Goodman's view in the Languages of Art that

in many cases neither one of a pair of very like objects represents the other; none of the automobiles off an assembly line is a picture of any of the rest; and a man is not normally a representation of another man, even his twin brother. Plainly, resemblance in any degree is no sufficient condition for representation.\textsuperscript{152}

Danto and Goodman disagree, however, as to
whether resemblance is a necessary condition for imitation. In Languages of Art, Goodman claims

Nor is resemblance necessary for reference: almost anything may stand for almost anything else. A picture that represents—like a passage that describes—an object refers to, and more particularly, denotes it. Denotation is the core of representation and is independent of resemblance. 153

Goodman continues that the standard theory of representation distinguishes between verbal or diagrammatic denotation and that of pictorial denotation in terms of resemblance. This theory considers that resemblance, while no sufficient condition for representation, is just the feature that distinguishes representation from denotation of other kinds. Is it perhaps the case that if A denotes B, then A represents B just to the extent that A resembles B? I think even this watered-down and innocuous-looking version of our initial formula betrays a grave misconception of the nature of representation. 154

Danto's view of resemblance in TC is similar to the version that Goodman describes as watered-down. Danto claims that resemblance is a necessary condition for imitation and for picturing, when an artwork denotes, and this is just the feature that distinguishes artistic denotation from sentence denotation. For Danto, "When pictures denote as pictures, resemblance is a conceptual requirement." 155

While it is the case that Danto brings together his view of the designative (or denotative) aspect of
sentential claims and his view of the designative aspect of artworks, it is not the case that he brings together his modified version of the correspondence view of truth and his view of a "true imitation." As we have seen, Danto's modified version of correspondence, or association, rejects the Tractatus picture theory of language. With true imitations, on the other hand, the picture shows what it is about, and this showing is made out in terms of resemblance to the object of representation. If we look closely at Danto's extensional theory of pictures, we see that it is an application of the Cartesian representational theory of perception, with the crucial exception that the theory is applied to what is properly a designative entity, an artwork, and is not applied, as Descartes erroneously applied it, to a mere thing. A true imitation, for Danto, is an "imitation of something, and true in case (1) it denotes what it is of, let this be o; (2) o enters into the explanation of the imitation; and (3) it resembles o."^156

The Cartesian representational theory of perception ran afoul because it could not account for what true perceptions resembled. How could it be said that a true perception resembled its cause in the External World, when its cause in the External World was beyond our experience? Danto's theory of true imitation
does not run afoul in the same way, given that we can account for what true imitations resemble. Here our thesis that Danto is doing metaphysical aesthetics is evident. Danto can assert his theory of true imitations on the supposition that we are given an objective world of commonsense objects whose antecedent structure is publicly known and can be reproduced or imitated at will. In this respect an imitation is a descriptive meaning vehicle that pictorially gives back the commonplace object or what we ordinarily take to be the world. As Danto tells us,

The View of Toledo represents Toledo, Mrs. Siddons As the Tragic Muse represents Mrs. Siddons; and though we could make, by a matter of decision, the former stand for that city and the latter stand for that woman, it would surely be false that The View of Toledo pictures Mrs. Siddons, or that Reynolds's portrait pictures that Spanish town. And it is far from plain that picturing does not require resemblance to its denotation when it denotes, and far from obscure that imitation actually requires it. So not only must some structure be assigned the imitation or the picture, but some projective relationship between this and what is denoted when imitation or picture is true.19

This projective relationship is a parity of form between an antecedent structure, which is part of the perceptible world, and its imitation.
D. Artworks and the Self

Very generally, we have spoken of Danto's philosophy of art as an approach that focuses upon the generation of artworks out of the stuff of the world. Thus far, we have concentrated upon the relationship between an artwork, as a representation, and the world (either taken as a descriptively real content or as a mental content); we have found that the necessary condition of arthood is made out in terms of the feature that distinguishes artworks and mere things, or more broadly, reality in its semantical sense.

In the latter portion of TC, Danto directs his attention to another relationship involved in the generation of artworks: the relationship between an artwork and the artist that produces it. It is out of an examination of this relationship that Danto supplies the sufficient conditions for arthood that distinguish artworks from mere representations.

It is relevant to our thesis that Danto is a metaphysical aesthetician to explore two aspects of Danto's discussion in the latter part of TC: (1) the structural parity, ontologically speaking, between an artwork and the self and (2) the self-reflective relationship between an individual artwork and its artist, a relationship that Danto only sketches.
In order to understand fully how Danto arrives at his distinction between artworks and reality, we need to take one step back and consider the distinction between the self and reality upon which the former distinction depends. Such a consideration takes us to Sartre's concept of consciousness. In 1975, Danto completed a book on Sartre in which he speaks of having taken fragments of Sartre's philosophy and "incorporated them as elements in my own structures." In TC, it is Sartre's concept of consciousness that he explicitly draws upon to reinforce his own distinction between the self and reality and to explain a structural parallel, ontologically speaking, between artworks and the self.

In Danto's own writings, he refers to consciousness as an "alienating mechanism," and by this he means a mechanism that is conscious of its separation from the thing that it is conscious of. It is this concept of consciousness that Danto finds suggested in Sartre's Nausea, where Roquentin, as Sartre's spokesman, cries out about his experience of the root of an ancient chestnut tree: Roquentin says, "I was entirely conscious of its existence. Still detached from it—since I was conscious of it." According to Danto, this note sounded by Roquentin plays a dominant role in Sartre's philosophy. Sartre makes an ontological
distinction between the structures of a conscious
being and structures of those objects of his conscious-
ness, there being, according to Danto's interpretation,
"no point at which one's awareness of the root will
or can obliterate the further awareness that one is
aware."161 Danto summarizes Sartre's view of
consciousness, as follows, and this reading of Sartre
may be taken as a summary of Danto's own view of the
self as distinct from its object and about its object:

to be conscious is to be aware in a
transitive way of something external to
consciousness . . . consciousness will
always have some content, however dimly
and confusedly presented. And this is
so for psychological states generally--
memory and desire, hope and belief, anger
and love: there is always an object for
these in some sense of the term. It
makes no sense, for example, to speak of
merely believing: one must believe
something or other to be the case . . . .
This inexpugnable feature of aboutness--
or intensionality, to introduce the
technical term--is what makes the basic
difference between conscious beings and
mere things, between Roquentin and the
root of the chestnut tree, which may
totaly occupy his consciousness as an
object without the distinction between
his consciousness and its object being
thereby obliterated.162

We are now in a position to appreciate that it
is this "basic difference between conscious beings
and mere things" that Danto finds repeated as the basic
difference between artworks and mere things. The
implication seems to be that if consciousness, or the
self, is always about something, then a representation, such as an artwork, that issues from consciousness, is likewise always about something.

In TC, Danto refers to Sartre's *Pour-soi* and *Pour-autrui*.\(^{163}\) It is helpful to summarize Danto's remarks about these concepts, as given in his book on Sartre. Danto explains that Sartre has proposed two ontologically primitive types of being: (1) conscious beings, *être-pour-soi*, or beings for themselves, whose nature is that they are aware of themselves and cannot exist without this awareness, and (2) *êtres-en-soi*, beings which exist in themselves and are objects for an alien consciousness, having no consciousness of their own. A third type of being figures in the latter portions of *Being and Nothingness*, that of the (3) *êtres-pour-autrui*, or being for others, and the *pour-soi*, much to its torment, has this third mode of being as well as the first mode of being, having both an exterior and an interior. *Êtres-en-soi* exist in themselves, in the sense that their existence does not depend upon anyone's consciousness of them; but this is not the case with *pour-soi*, which logically depends upon something other than itself of which it is conscious.\(^{164}\)

In TC, Danto emphasizes two points about Sartre's concept of consciousness (1) that consciousness distinguishes itself from its object in the sense that it
has the capacity for self-reflection and (2) that the ontological structure of consciousness is fully realized when the pour-soi comes to understand that he has two modes of being, an exterior, as well as an interior, and thus he "participates in the degraded mode of being of the things it has always distinguished itself from." It is this last point about the ontological structure of consciousness that Danto brings to bear upon the ontological structure of an artwork. He brings this Sartrian structure together with the Strawsonian concept of a person as one kind of thing under two aspects, and he suggests that these are fitting analogues to the ontological structure of an artwork. Both the Sartrian concept and the Strawsonian concept are compatible with Danto's own view of the ontological structure of the self as a complex entity composed of both a non-perceptual part and a physical part. Danto's claim in TC is that the ontological structure of an artwork is constituted of two modes of being, an exterior and an interior, and that an artwork is a complex entity, like the self:

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 . . . . It was as though the artwork in every instance was a complex entity with the red square . . . our arrayed examples were almost as though several souls shared the self-same body.
Danto reinforces his view that there is a structural parallel between an artwork and that of the self by using the Strawsonian method of predication. He tells us that the ontological structure of an artwork cannot be identified with its matter since aesthetic predicates that are often used, such as "has depth," do not apply to the material part, i.e., paint, canvas, and so forth; rather, these predicates are applied to the artwork itself "which can no more be identified with matter than with content." The Opaque Theory of art, Danto tells us, insists that an artwork can be reduced to its material part, that an artwork is "the canvas and paper, ink and paint, words and noise, sounds and movement." This theory fails to recognize what our aesthetic predicates imply about the ontological structure of an artwork.

If we return to our conception of Danto's general philosophical program as asserting an ontological distinction between (1) complex entities that represent the world and (2) the world, and reconsider those two entities falling under (1): the self and representations of the self, we will be in a position to understand how Danto's analysis of the concept art and his move to the ontological structure of art contributes to his overall goal as a systematic philosopher. The TC is a detailed analysis of a concept thought to be inherently
philosophical. The outcome of the analysis is that artworks through a structural parity join other kinds of things previously analyzed as falling under the ontological category of complex entities that represent the world. That is, as a kind of thing that is complex and distinguished from the world, and is about something, artworks join persons, knowledge claims, belief claims, and actions.

The second Sartrian point emphasized in TC, that consciousness has the capacity for self-reflection, inspires Danto's thinking about the relationship between an artwork and its artist—that an artwork is in effect a mirror of the style or interior of the artist, albeit a "convex mirror." In the last chapter of TC, Danto branches out beyond the philosophy of art to a theory that explains the "reference" or "aboutness" of intensional contexts in general, a theory that has been prompted by his analysis of an artwork as a complex medium or representation that joins other complex entities in belonging to a particular ontological category. The chapter, in this respect, may be viewed as an example of how the philosophy of art contributes to theories in other branches of philosophy, or more particularly, how aesthetics gives aid to a metaphysics that applies itself to what we as individuals are.
Danto suggests that an intensional context refers to a representation or to the way something happens to be represented; that is, an intensional context refers to the way something is represented by the self, which is taken to be a system of representations.

In other words, if m utters b (a belief claim), the words used by m refer to the way m represents the matter, to his interior representation Danto calls these interior representations "sentential states," and his theory is that

if m believes that s is true, there is a sentential state of m which s individuates. To believe that s is to represent the world in a way which s itself exemplifies. . . . Briefly, I would argue for the view that the mind is a medium in which sentential representations occur as literally as written sentences occur on paper or spoken ones in ether . . . .

Intensional contexts, then, are about specific sentences, or specific representations (antecedent structures) entertained by the self.

Danto finds this theory useful in explaining the condition of "metaphoric expression" that distinguishes artworks and mere representations, and that constitutes a sufficient condition for arthood. An artwork as a metaphor "presents its subject and presents the way in which it does present it"; that is, it presents a content and a form, the latter of which
exemplifies the way the artist has represented the matter.

In rounding out his sufficient condition for art-

hood, Danto seizes upon Goodman's notion that

"expression is metaphorical exemplification" \(^{175}\) and
develops it, as we shall see, in his own way. Danto tells us that

Exemplification is one of the simplest cases of representation, consisting in drawing a sample from a class and then using it to stand for the class from which it is drawn, with whose membership it is almost guaranteed to share whatever properties go to make the class up. Examples so conceived do not give rise to certain questions that the wider sorts of representations do, inasmuch as it must follow from the fact that e is an example of k that k must have members: for otherwise e would not be an example. So each example constitutes a sort of ontological argument in favor of its own designation. \(^{176}\)

He gives an analysis of exemplificatory representation as follows:

a exemplificatorily represents b if

(i) a and b instantiate the same predicate

and

(ii) a denotes b

(iii) because (i) is true

Here, Danto is thinking about an artwork as a "vehicle of representation," that is, an exemplification, or instantiation, or "instance," or "example," of the way
something is represented by the self. We are reminded of Platonic metaphysics here, particularly in view of Danto's earlier explanation of the Platonic relationship between things and Forms as that of exemplification. Danto tells us here that "exemplification is pretty much what Plato had in mind by mimesis,"177 and we see that art here is taken by Danto as a mirror, or imitation, or instance of an original representation of the artist. It does seem that Danto's theory of the relationship between an artwork as a metaphorical exemplification (an intensional artwork) and the artist as a self is based on the Platonic relation of exemplification between the Forms and things. After all, for Danto, the self is a system of representations or forms (though certainly these forms are not immutable, immaterial, or eternal) and the self as a system of forms is taken as the explanation and cause of the artworks that it produces. At the very least we can say that Danto is involved here with the intricacies of problems in metaphysics (such as the problem of the existence of universals that his account of exemplificatory representation entails) as well as the intricacies of problems in aesthetics (such as the problem of the intentional fallacy that his account of exemplificatory representation entails). Here, as elsewhere in TC, Danto is doing at once metaphysics and aesthetics.
97 The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, viii.


102 The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, 54.

103 The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, 78.


105 Individuals, 89-90.

106 The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, v.

107 With the sole exception that one red surface has the paint applied somewhat more thinly than do the others.

108 The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, 8.

109 The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, 8.

110 The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, 14-15.

111 The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, 19.
112 The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, 77.

113 The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, 77

114 The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, 79.

115 The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, 71.

116 The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, 66.

117 Analytical Philosophy of Knowledge, 191-194.

118 Analytical Philosophy of Action, xi.

119 Analytical Philosophy of Action, 7

120 Analytical Philosophy of Action, 16.

121 The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, 125.

122 The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, 125.

123 The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, 125.

124 The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, 13.

125 The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, 11.

126 Analytical Philosophy of Knowledge, 262;

127 "Reflections Upon Randall's Theory of Language," 212.

128 "Reflections Upon Randall's Theory of Language," 204.

129 "Reflections Upon Randall's Theory of Language," 204.
The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, 54.


The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, 138-139.

The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, 68-69.

The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, 72.

The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, 72.

The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, 75.

The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, 72.

What Philosophy Is, 129.

Analytical Philosophy of Knowledge, 207-208.


"Representational Properties and Mind-Body Identity," 408.


The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, 109.

The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, 70.
The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, 172.
The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, 151-152.
The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, 152.
The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, 155.
The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, 13.
Languages of Art, 4.
Languages of Art, 5.
Languages of Art, 5-6.
The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, 155.
The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, 70.
The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, 73.
Analytical Philosophy of Knowledge, 55.
Jean-Paul Sartre, 23.
Jean-Paul Sartre, 24.
Jean-Paul Sartre, 43.
The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, 10-11, 163, 206.
Jean-Paul Sartre, 41-42.
The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, 10.
The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, 101.
The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, 159.
The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, 159.
The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, 173.
The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, 181.
The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, 204.
The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, 187.
The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, 187.
The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, 191.
The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, 189.
The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, 190.
The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, 190.
CHAPTER IV

NELSON GOODMAN AS A METAPHYSICAL AESTHETICIAN

The preceding chapters have demonstrated that the work of Arthur C. Danto runs counter to the mainstream characterization of aesthetics as independent of metaphysics. Danto is not a complete anomaly in this respect. Nelson Goodman is another prominent aesthetician whose work in aesthetics runs counter to this characterization. It is beyond the scope of this study to comprehensively examine the relationship between Goodman's metaphysical views and his aesthetic views; thus, I will select two key metaphysical tenets from Goodman's general philosophical program and show how these views underlie certain aesthetic views in Goodman's Languages of Art. This chapter claims that Goodman's rejection of absolutistic metaphysical schemes and his ontological commitment to individuals are fundamental to central theses in Languages of Art. This claim is taken as sufficient evidence that Goodman is an aesthetician who takes aesthetics back to a metaphysical base.
A. GOODMAN'S METAPHYSICAL VIEWS

Languages of Art (1968) was written late in Goodman's philosophical career, a career that had been devoted to the philosophy of science and logic, metaphysics and epistemology. In 1947, Goodman co-authored with Quine "Steps Toward a Constructive Nominalism," in which they declared "we cannot use variables that call for abstract objects as values." "That it is in the values of the variables, and not in the supposed designation of constant terms, that the ontology of a theory is to be sought." In 1951, Goodman published Structure of Appearance, in which he developed a nominalistic system that was ontologically committed only to individuals. The term "individuals" was selected because it had previously been used in logical contexts, and it was to be disassociated from connotations of "continuity, uniformity, sanctity," and from "personal integration." Controversy arose over Goodman's definition of nominalism and his theory of individuals; Goodman thus attempted to clarify his theory in "A World of Individuals" (1956) by comparing nominalism and platonism.

Before exploring Goodman's nominalism and his ontological commitment to individuals, it is expedient to take up another key theme of Goodman's that is in the
background of his nominalism. Throughout his career, and with special emphasis in his well-known articles "Sense and Certainty" (1952) and "The Way The World Is" (1960), Goodman has told us that he rejects all philosophical programs that claim to describe the world in an absolute way. For instance, Goodman explicitly rejects the logical atomism of the early twentieth century because it "sought by means of reductive analysis to describe the world purely in terms of metaphysically simple facts." Logical atomism conceived of the world as comprised of atomic objects and atomic facts corresponding to certain proper names and atomic sentences, and thus made the dangerous error of supposing that the structure of a veridical systematic description mirrors forth the structure of the world. Since a system has basic or primitive terms or elements and a graded hierarchy built out of these, we easily come to suppose that the world must consist of corresponding atomic elements put together in similar fashion. No theory advocated in recent years by first-rate philosophers seems more obviously wrong than the picture theory of language. Yet we still find acute philosophers resorting under pressure to a notion of absolutely simple qualities or particles.

Goodman also rejects views in terms of "the given" that claim an absolutist description of the world; such views duplicate in epistemology the "monism, atomism, and the intermediate pluralism of metaphysics." Goodman, in particular, mentions logical positivism as an attempt to
"show how all knowledge was built out of epistemologically simple experiences." The logical positivists, like the logical atomists, attempted to build up a system that specified what constitutes the world. Both tried to answer the question of "the way the world really is."

For Goodman, the question "What is the way of the world?" is a bogus one, because there is simply "no such thing as the structure of the world for anything to conform or fail to conform to." That is, there is no structure of the world nor any given for our descriptions to attempt to capture. This is the bottom line of his relativism.

That there is no structure of the world does not lead Goodman, however, to take refuge with the Wittgensteinians and the ordinary language philosophers. These he characterizes as "concerned not with systematic reductive analysis at all but with the interpretation of those aspects and locutions of ordinary language that gives rise to puzzlement and confusion." Goodman is not led to the ordinary language camp because he claims that

the rejection of absolutistic justifications for system-building does not of itself constitute justification for the extremely asystematic character of typical current British analysis. Unwillingness to accept any postulates of geometry as absolute or self-evident truths hardly diminishes the importance of the systematic development
of geometrics. Unwillingness to take any elements as metaphysical or epistemological ultimates does not make pointless all systematic constructions in philosophy. There are virtues in knowing where we began, where we have gone, and where we are going, even if we fully acknowledge that we might as well have begun somewhere else. Emphasis on spot analysis is a natural reaction to heavy-handed system-building; but too little regard for system can lead us to run in circles or to overlook important likenesses while we are busy cataloguing subtle distinctions.192

Acceptance of the thesis that there is no system that mirrors forth the world does not lead to an asystematic philosophy that rejects all definitions, analyses, and symbolization. Nominalist definitions may be formulated provided that all absolutistic elements are expunged from them, and general theories may be considered provided that they do not contain absolutistic elements. With the tools of logic, constructional systems may be developed that relate symbols to the particulars and qualities that are chosen by the system. Systems may be constructed under the proviso that the laws of logic be operative within the system, that ontological economy be given top priority, and that it be clearly understood that the symbols do not describe any epistemologically simple experiences or metaphysically simple facts. These systems are to be recognized as selective and conventional organizations of the world
that label and classify what is to be taken as the individuals of the system. That is, these systems are maps and not mirrors and they carry with them no "likeness" in any ultimate sense to the territory that they map, though they carry with them their own scheme of projection that connects the map to its objects. In general terms it may be said that these systems pick out something, but their descriptions and classifications do not reach across to the world. We cannot move from predications to ontological structure.

Goodman has told us in his latest book, *Ways of Worldmaking*, that his orientation is at once "skeptical, analytic, constructionist."\(^{193}\) We may take this to mean that he is skeptical toward absolutist metaphysical-epistemological views, but that he is interested in the kind of philosophical analysis that leads to systematic constructions that meet the criteria of ontological economy, simplicity,\(^{194}\) clarity and coherence.\(^{195}\) Systematic constructions that meet this criteria are nominalistic constructions that give a unified and coherent description of the world; here it is the description that is unified and coherent, and this description does not imply that the world is unified and coherent. A nominalist constructional system does not imply that there is no world, that nothing is given, nor does it imply that there can be no representation of the
world. For Goodman, there are many equally true descriptions or representations of the world but all involve conventionalizations. None of these are exclusively true: "none of them tells the way the world is, but each tells us a way the world is."\textsuperscript{196}

"A World of Individuals" is Goodman's attempt to fill out his version of nominalism and his theory of individuals. Nominalism, he tells us, "consists specifically in the refusal to recognize classes."\textsuperscript{197} Because the nominalist refuses to admit classes, his system is ontologically more economical than the platonistic system that admits classes; admission of classes allows the platonist to "make two or more distinct entities from exactly the same entities."\textsuperscript{198} The nominalist, however, "balks at a distinction of entities without a distinction of content . . . the nominalist denies that two different entities can be made up of the same entities."\textsuperscript{199} In other words, differences in entities can be reduced to differences in their \textbf{individual} elements, or more generally, differences in entities can be reduced to differences \textbf{in what the system takes as its individuals}, i.e., that "element of the system that contains no lesser elements for the system."\textsuperscript{200} This is to say that the identity of an object is reducible to what the system takes as its individuals.
Because all objects within a system are reducible to the individuals of the system, the system only admits individuals as entities. "Nominalism describes the world as composed of individuals . . . so to describe the world is to describe it as made up of entities no two of which break down into exactly the same entities." 201

Goodman continues his elucidation of nominalism:

Nominalism as I conceive it (and I am not here speaking for Quine) does not involve excluding abstract entities, spirits, intimations of immortality, or anything of the sort; but requires only that whatever is admitted as an entity at all be construed as an individual. 202

Here Goodman is speaking formally about nominalism, and he asserts that "the nominalist is free to construe anything he pleases as an individual." 203 That is, nominalism does not place constraints upon the nature of the one kind of thing taken as the individuals of the system. Therefore, it is possible, under Goodman's criteria, to admit individuals of a nonmaterial nature. The consequence, however, of admitting nonmaterial individuals is that all entities of the world of the system must be reducible to these nonmaterial elements. Likewise, any system that chooses material entities as its individuals cannot admit any other entities that are not reducible to these material individuals. All entities in the world of the latter system are reducible to the material entities taken as the individuals of the
system.

When Goodman applies his formal principle, he takes material entities as the individuals of his system; that is, he takes "perceptual individuals" as the value of his variables. In Structure of Appearance, Goodman gives a phenomenalistic interpretation of individuals as qualia, e.g., red, and as sums of qualia ("complex individuals" that are nothing more than its simple parts, which are individuals). However, he makes it clear that a physicalistic or particularist approach is equally acceptable, since the choice between a physicalistic and a phenomenalistic interpretation is quite free. The choice is free because he refuses to recognize the simple elements of any system "as corresponding more closely to what is directly apprehended or immediately given, that one more nearly than the other represents naked experience as it comes to us--prior to analysis, inference, interpretation, conceptualization. Goodman tells us,

An economical and well-constructed system of either sort provides an orderly and connected description of its subject matter in terms of perceptible individuals. It does not have to be further justified by evidence that its orientation reflects some subtle epistemological or metaphysical hierarchy.
B. AESTHETIC VIEWS IN LANGUAGES OF ART

In Languages of Art (LA), Goodman brings his metaphysical-epistemological views to aesthetics. He rejects resemblance as a condition for representation and he rejects all imitation theories. These aesthetic views are founded upon a philosophical program that rejects absolutistic metaphysical-epistemological schemes and accepts a nominalism that is committed to one ontological class of things. Furthermore, his discussion of the distinction between an artwork and a forgery and his description of the identity of an artwork assumes his commitment in practice to material individuals.

Goodman openly proclaims that aesthetics is not independent of other branches of philosophy. He states that the scope of LA "does not coincide very closely with what is ordinarily taken to be the field of aesthetics."^209

On the one hand, I touch only incidentally on questions of value, and offer no canons of criticism . . . . On the other hand, my study ranges beyond the arts into matters pertaining to the sciences, technology, perception, and practice. Problems concerning the arts are points of departure rather than of convergence. The objective is an approach to a general theory of symbols.^210

Goodman's goal is a "systematic inquiry into the varieties and functions of symbols"^211 and a "comprehensive grasp
of the modes and means of reference."^{212} The examination of pictorial representation and musical notation in LA as symbols and modes of reference is an integral part of this systematic inquiry.

As we have seen, Goodman claims in LA that resemblance is not even a necessary condition for representation, since "almost anything can stand for almost anything else."^{213} This claim is based on an earlier claim made by Goodman in "Sense and Certainty" regarding the denotative relation between verbal symbols and what they are about; that is, the semantic relation between pictures and what they are about, as developed in LA, is based upon the semantic relation between language and the world, as developed in "Sense and Certainty." In "Sense and Certainty," Goodman diminishes the importance of resemblance in explaining the relationship between language and the world:

Plainly we cannot look to resemblance for any help. The English statement "There is a blue patch" and its Chinese equivalent are very unlike, and both are even more unlike the blue patch itself. In no literal sense does language mirror experience. Yet this false start has something in its favor. The explanation in terms of resemblance is very good except for being so wrong. By that I mean that to explain the relation in question is to subsume it under or analyze it into more general relations. Such terms as "describe," "is true," "denotes," and "designates," requires explanation insofar as they are idiosyncratic to cases where the first element in question is linguistic.
If only words and strings of words denote or are true, our problem is to reduce these linguistic predicates to predicates that have familiar instances in non-linguistic experience.214

Here Goodman is attacking a language theory that takes resemblance as necessary to the denotative relation between statements and the world. He suggests that the resemblance theory has merits, however; that it subsumes the denotative relation between language and the world under a more general relation. Goodman may be thinking here of resemblance theories as postulated in platonistic metaphysics to explain the connection between any two objects in the world; the language theory that he is attacking has subsumed the connection between linguistic entities and non-linguistic experience under the relation of resemblance between any two objects. The implication here is that although the resemblance theory is so wrong, it correctly goes outside the linguistic realm to explain the connection between language and the world. This procedure is contrasted in footnote to Tarski's explanation of the denotative relation in terms of "the linguistic notion of satisfaction."215

Goodman wants to subsume the linguistic-non-linguistic relation under a more general relation outside the linguistic realm, but the general relation
he is looking for is not a resemblance relation that leads to the postulation of classes. The general relation that he finds as a model is that between a sensory experience that "signals" another sensory experience; this is a relation between two non-resembling sensory experiences (as a toot and a train, or a ray of dawn and the daylight) that are familiarly associated together within our ordinary experience of the world. Denotation is to be explained in terms of this familiar or habitual relation among associated items. He tells us that

A clue to a better starting point than resemblance lies in the fact that a toot may warn of an oncoming train or that a ray of dawn foretell the approach of daylight. Here are nonverbal events standing as signals for others. In like fashion two sensory experiences or phenomena are often such that the earlier is a promise or a warning or signal of the later. A feeling of warmth may signal the imminent appearance of a fiery red patch in the visual field; an evenly shaded patch may signal a certain factual experience to come.216

Goodman then subsumes the linguistic/non-linguistic relation under the general signaling relation:

If experiences comprised of such presentations as shaded patches can signal, there is no mystery about how an irregular black patch or a brief stretch of sound may function in the same way. And a statement-event or other string of word-events, is simply some such patch or stretch. Just as a blue patch and some kinaesthetic presentations may signal the
coming appearance of a red patch, so also does a statement-event--let us name it "P"--saying in advance that there will be a red patch in the visual field at the time in question T. Statements are merely more complicated, and hence often more specific, than some other signals. It is clear enough how a signaling system can be elaborated and refined, once even a few signaling relationships are available. Under some circumstances or other, almost anything can be made to serve as a signal for almost any subsequent experience.\footnote{17}

It is Goodman's nominalistic commitment to individuals, and in practice his commitment to "perceptual individuals" that allows him to apply the relation of two non-linguistic sensory experiences to the relation between a linguistic entity and what it is about. Since there is only one class of entities in Goodman's nominalism, there is no ontological problem generated by an identification of sensory presentations and linguistic presentations. The relation of signaling between two sensory experiences is repeated as the relation between a linguistic experience and a non-linguistic experience since the linguistic experience is reducible to a sensory experience.

The interest in non-linguistic reference shown in "Sense and Certainty" foreshadows the attention given to the general theory of symbols in LA, where non-linguistic symbols as well as linguistic symbols may denote.\footnote{18} That is, Goodman's discussion of non-linguistic reference, briefly sketched in "Sense and
Certainty," looks toward the denotative function of representations developed in LA. In the first section of LA, entitled "Denotation," Goodman argues for the logical differences between representation and resemblance, pointing out that the resemblance relation between two objects is distinct from the relation between a representation and what it is about: relations between A and B in the world may produce resemblance theories, but the relation between a representation and what it is about does not. He suggests that we not confuse the relation of resemblance which is reflexive and symmetrical with the relation of representation which is not reflexive or symmetrical. A pictorial representation, rather than being an object that resembles another object, is more adequately understood as an object that symbolizes, or stands for, or refers to, another object; that is, a pictorial representation should be subsumed under the denotative relation between language and the world. Under this relation, a picture is tied to a system and is a sensory experience (translated into physicalistic terms as a perceptual thing) to which we respond, filling in the other sensory experience (thing) with which it is habitually associated. Just as we habitually associate a toot and a train, we habitually associate a statement or description and its object, and our association between a picture of Churchill, for
example, and Churchill may be subsumed under this
general relation of association.

Goodman's concept of a habitual association
between a picture and what it is about reinforces the
view that our modes of symbolization do not reflect any
epistemological or metaphysical structure; that is,
from this habitual or conventional association we are
not led to suppose that the world is fixed or given or
that our linguistic representations are. In the history
of philosophy imitations have been taken as standards
for mirroring forth the world, but it is Goodman's
contention that imitations, too, are only habitually
associated with what they are about. He considers the
traditional concept of a faithful imitation that copies
the "object just as it is."

This simple-minded injunction baffles me;
for the object before me is a man, a swarm
of atoms, a complex of cells, a fiddler,
a friend, a fool, and much more. If none
of these constitute the object just as it
is, what else might? If all are ways the
object is, then none is the way the object
is. I cannot copy all these at once; and
the more nearly I succeeded, the less would
the result be a realistic picture.419

Goodman refers us to his article, "The Way The World Is,"
for his underlying argument against all descriptions
(verbal and nonverbal) that purport to describe the
world as it is. The structure of a faithful imitation
is like the structure of a faithful statement or the
structure of a veridical systematic description in that it easily leads us to suppose that the world must consist of a corresponding structure. The case of pictorial imitation, however, is not idiosyncratic among other cases of denotation since "the world is as many ways as it can be truly described, seen, pictured, etc., and that there is no such thing as the way the world is." The concept of imitation as copying or duplication presupposes a form or structure that is to be copied, but under Goodman's relativistic concept of reality there is no such form or structure to be supposed. Therefore, for him, imitation is logically impossible: "The copy theory of representation, then, is stopped at the start by inability to specify what is to be copied."  

Given Goodman's relativistic concept of reality, pictures cannot reach across, through resemblance or through imitation, to the world. As he has told us, the "relativism rampant" in his general philosophical views "reverberates" in his work in aesthetics. The first chapter of LA has far-reaching consequences for Goodman's systematic inquiry, since

If, as I have argued . . . in the first chapter of Languages of Art, there is no one right way of describing or seeing or picturing the world, the availability of equally acceptable alternatives is not a feature that distinguishes science and
philosophy from perception and art. To exorcize the myth of absolutism of representation is to breach the barrier separating art from science and open the way to a unified general study of modes of symbolization.224

Elsewhere in LA, Goodman brings his metaphysical views to bear upon problems in aesthetics. For instance, it is his ontological commitment to material individuals that underlies his argument in "Art and Authenticity" that eventually we may come to perceive a difference between an artwork and a supposed perfect reproduction of it. Goodman's nominalism denies that there could be two distinct objects that are made up of the same content; thus, differences in objects are reducible to differences in their individual elements. By this principle, Goodman concludes that eventually we may be able to distinguish between an artwork and a fake by perceptual discrimination, since the fact that the two objects are distinct is evidence that there is a difference in the material constituents of the objects.225

Goodman's nominalism fosters a formalist approach to art whereby attention is directed to the material canvas itself or to the printed page. According to Goodman's nominalism, all complex objects are reducible to the material individuals of which they are constituted, and this is the case with an artwork as well as
with a mere thing. Goodman's approach focuses upon the perceptual aspects of an artwork: as he has told us, his investigation into aesthetics is an extension of the "structural linguistics" which has been developing in recent years.
FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER IV


181 Problems and Projects, 149.

182 Problems and Projects, 156.


186 Problems and Projects, 41.

187 Problems and Projects, 24-25.

188 Problems and Projects, 26.

189 Problems and Projects, 41.

190 Problems and Projects, 31.

191 Problems and Projects, 41.
Problems and Projects, 44.


Structure of Appearance, xiv.

Problems and Projects, 24.

Problems and Projects, 31.

Problems and Projects, 156.

Problems and Projects, 159.

Problems and Projects, 158-159.

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Problems and Projects, 159-160.

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Structure of Appearance, 105.

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Languages of Art, xi.

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Languages of Art, 5.

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Problems and Projects, 66.

Languages of Art, 58.

Languages of Art, 6-7.

Languages of Art, 6.

Languages of Art, 9.

Problems and Projects, 83.

Problems and Projects, 83.

Problems and Projects, 83.

Languages of Art, 99-107.

Languages of Art, xi.
CHAPTER V

CONTEMPORARY METAPHYSICAL AESTHETICS

We have explored separately the metaphysical aesthetics of Danto and Goodman. In a study devoted to the thesis that there is a contemporary movement of metaphysical aesthetics afoot, it is appropriate to ask about the nature of this recent development in metaphysical aesthetics. Is this a new metaphysical aesthetics? Or is it an outgrowth of the traditional metaphysical aesthetics of classical philosophy? Are there any special problems that arise from contemporary metaphysical aesthetics? This chapter intends to broach these questions, and then to conclude with an estimate of the value of contemporary metaphysical aesthetics.

Both Goodman and Danto contrast their metaphysical views with the views of traditional metaphysics. As we have seen, Goodman rejects "monism, atomism, and the intermediate pluralisms of metaphysics"²²⁸ because they claim to describe what ultimately constitutes the world. For Goodman, systematic descriptions project their labels and organizations onto the world, but these schemes of projection cannot give extra-linguistic answers. Danto also rejects traditional metaphysical schemes.
(that is, monisms such as materialism, idealism, naturalism, and mind-body dualisms) because they claim to answer the question of what is the ultimate substance or essence of the world; these schemes have wrongly assumed that their conclusions are extra-linguistic, while it is the case that these schemes merely tell us how we talk about the world. Danto suggests that metaphysics be more upfront; that it admit that its conclusions are merely projections from language and thus that they give no facts or information about the world per se. The ontological structure of an artwork, as postulated in TC for example, merely gives back what we think and say artworks are. Thus, for him, metaphysics or ontology is but the itemization of our ways of conceiving the world, and ontological statements are distinct from scientific or empirical statements that say something true about the world.

Danto and Goodman thus dilute the task of metaphysics. Nonetheless, each adopts a metaphysical scheme. As we have seen, Goodman chooses systematic reductive analysis over the "asystematic character of typical current British analysis" and prefers a nominalist construction. His ontology is guided by a commitment to ontological economy; although formally he espouses a nominalism free to construe anything as an individual, in practice he takes material entities as individuals.
Danto also adopts a metaphysical scheme, one that countenances two ontological categories: one for complex entities that represent the world and one for mere real objects. These categorical distinctions cut across the mind-body distinction, complex entities enjoying both a material part and a nonmaterial part. The guiding principle of Danto's metaphysics is his distinction between language and the world, a principle that he holds is an "absolute." For him, it could not be otherwise that the world is distinct from us. It is this distinction that underlies the ontological distinction between complex entities (persons and their semantical vehicles) and the world.

We have seen how these metaphysical schemes of Goodman and Danto form the basis upon which each develops his aesthetics. Goodman presents a formalist aesthetics that identifies an artwork as a material entity, or a perceptual thing. This identification springs from his nominalist commitment to material individuals. If there are only material entities to be countenanced in Goodman's ontology, then an artwork, as an entity, must be material. Goodman's metaphysical aesthetics, then, is a nominalist aesthetics and results in a view of art as a material thing. This nominalist aesthetics is more broadly a relativist aesthetics,
since Goodman develops his nominalism because he rejects all absolutistic views of reality. Danto develops a view of art as a complex entity, with both a material part and a nonmaterial part. Art belongs to an ontological category fundamentally distinct from the category of mere things. Danto's metaphysical aesthetics is what we may call a personalist aesthetics because it calls forth an absolute distinction between persons and the world. We may take his aesthetics more broadly as an absolutist aesthetics.

We have briefly sketched how Plato and Aristotle developed their aesthetics out of their metaphysical schemes, and we have considered early twentieth century aestheticians, in particular Bergson, Dewey, and Collingwood, who also develop an aesthetics out of metaphysical and epistemological views. The metaphysical wellspring of their aesthetics places Danto and Goodman within the tradition of classical aesthetics. That is, in spite of their denial of a "true metaphysics," Danto and Goodman analyze art within a systematic framework.

One problem resurfaces in this study of contemporary metaphysical aesthetics: the problem of the relationship between aesthetics and metaphysics. Should there be a relationship at all between aesthetics and metaphysics? If our answer is no, then we need to
dispense with two prominent aestheticians in the forefront of aesthetic discussion. If we agree that there is, after all, a deep relationship between aesthetics and metaphysics, then we need to examine the various relationships that exist between metaphysical views and aesthetic views. Our brief overview of traditional metaphysical aesthetics has suggested that particular aesthetic views manifest and depend upon particular metaphysical views. Plato's Theory of the Forms results in a noncognitive view of art, while Aristotle's rejection of the Forms produces a cognitive view of art. The Idealism (a monism) of Croce and Collingwood identifies artworks and ideal objects, and the identification of experience and nature (another monism) in Dewey results in the view that artworks are identical to ordinary natural objects.

Danto himself, as we saw in "Artworks and Real Things," believes in the interdependence of metaphysics and aesthetics. He claims that (1) a dualistic ontology distinguishes between the world of real objects and our experience of it and results in a view that distinguishes between artworks and real things, and (2) a monistic ontology (as in Berkeleyan idealism) postulates only a world of our own making and results in a view of art that identifies artworks and real things. Our study of
the metaphysical aesthetics of Danto and Goodman has tended to confirm these two principles. For Danto, the distinction between the world and us grounds the art/thing distinction. For Goodman, the monistic commitment to individuals grounds the identification of art and things. On the issue of the relationship between artworks and things, the suggestion leaps forth that idealist and materialist reductive programs (monisms) produce the artwork/thing reduction; these reductive programs are distinct from the realist non-reductive program that espouses that an artwork is not a mere thing.

What we have called the Danto-Goodman debate brings into focus other issues in metaphysics. We have seen that Danto's theory of a true imitation rests upon the supposition that there is an objective world of common sense objects whose antecedent structure is publicly known and can be reproduced at will. Goodman's general philosophical program, however, makes no such supposition. From his relativistic view of reality, a representational artwork cannot be an imitation. The denotative relation which Goodman posits between symbols and what they denote or refer to is grounded in its monistic ontological commitment to perceptual individuals. The difference between Danto and Goodman
on the question of what role resemblance and imitation play in representation evolves out of their differences as to what in some permanent or universal sense is on the other side of our descriptions and perceptions and depictions.

Another conflict between Danto and Goodman may be tagged the formalist issue. Danto argues against those who would give themselves up to "the work itself." His constructed cases of indiscernible objects (the red squares, for example) imply a "cautionary attitude" toward strictly formalist views. Goodman argues in LA for perceptually indiscernible differences between an artwork and a supposed perfect reproduction of it, but says Danto this argument rejects the condition of indiscernibility upon which Danto rests his constructed cases. Goodman argues in Danto's words

that no proof can be given that a perceptual difference may not be found, so things that look alike today may look so different tomorrow that it will seem retrospectively amazing that confusion ever could have arisen.

Thus, Goodman "enlists as evidence the extreme acuity of the eye and ear in registering astonishing differences on the basis of the most minute changes. So it is almost a problem in psychophysics rather than one in ontology." Danto counters by asserting that the
logical point that two things cannot be identical does not require that there be a perceptual difference, and he enlists as evidence "the actual instances where the differences are not such as may be registered by the senses."\(^{235}\) We have shown how Goodman's argument springs from a nominalist requirement that differences in objects be reducible to differences in their perceptual elements. Danto's constructed cases of indiscernibles suppose that there are nonperceptual properties of an artwork. The belief that there are such properties springs from Danto's view that there is a semantical difference between representations and the world. The formalist debate between Danto and Goodman is in actuality a nominalist-realist debate.

Danto and Goodman also espouse different views regarding the nature of aesthetic experience. Danto considers it a "matter of concealed bias on Goodman's part that he should spontaneously have assumed that all aesthetic differences are perceptual differences."\(^{236}\) Danto goes on to sketch a theory that there are two orders of aesthetic response, each order corresponding to the two ontological orders of things. Since, for Goodman, there is only one class of things to which one responds, aesthetic experience is not and cannot be unique. For Goodman, "perception, conception, and feeling
intermingle" in any form of experience, artistic or otherwise.

The question remains as to the value of the new metaphysical aesthetics. We have pointed to structural similarity between contemporary metaphysical aesthetics and traditional metaphysical aesthetics; both contemporary and traditional metaphysical aesthetics seek to place a theory of aesthetics within a larger scheme of things. But does this structural similarity imply that the contemporary versions of metaphysical aesthetics are subject to early twentieth century criticisms of traditional metaphysical aesthetics? Have we come full circle?

The answer is quite clearly no. The new metaphysical aesthetics takes the best from traditional metaphysical aesthetics and combines it with the best from the analytical tradition. It says that it is right to do language analysis and metaphysics. It places art within a larger philosophical context while analyzing those concepts used by artists and art critics. The aesthetics of Danto and Goodman is not just a footnote to metaphysics, nor does it hold itself aloof from art and art criticism. It is not an armchair aesthetics that theorizes without benefit of practical experience.
Contemporary metaphysical aesthetics is not aesthetics in a vacuum. As a matter of biographical fact, Danto was himself an artist early in life and is knowledgeable in the history of art and art criticism. He does not devise his constructed cases from thin air: in fact, he tells us, it was the 1964 exhibit of Warhol's Brillo boxes, indistinguishable from their counterparts in the supermarket, that gave inspiration to the method with which he begins TC. He is concerned to give a definition of art that can stand up to events in the artworld. Goodman, too, has his eye on the artworld. He, while not an artist, was an art dealer. Danto refers to Goodman as the "foremost philosophical art dealer" concerned with questions of forgery in LA. Goodman seeks practical results from philosophical analysis.

Thus contemporary metaphysical aesthetics brings together what Ted Cohen has recently called "the essence of aesthetics." Writing in 1980 about Danto and Goodman (among other contemporary aestheticians), Cohen says that

Aesthetics right now is a livelier and more respectable part of philosophy than it has been at any other time since the Second World War... aesthetics is settling into its properly peripheral position, the place in which it is at its best. As I see it, it is of the essence of aesthetics that it be a (perhaps the) marginal and problematic part of philosophy. Its preoccupations are (1) to say something interesting and
specific about art, without turning into art criticism or literary theory or whatever, and (2) to speak with philosophical sophistication, fortified by what is most vigorous in the main central parts of philosophy, without itself lapsing into epistemology or a theory of language.

Contemporary metaphysical aesthetics combines philosophical know-how with sensitivity to the arts, a feat not easily accomplished, but one for which the artworld and the philosophical world are better off.
FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER V

228 Problems and Projects, 26.
229 What Philosophy Is, 90-106.
230 Problems and Projects, 44.
231 Analytical Philosophy of Knowledge, 242.
232 The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, 41.
233 The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, 42.
234 The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, 42.
235 The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, 43.
236 The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, 43.
237 Problems and Projects, 108.
238 The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, vi-vii.
239 The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, 41.
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