

THE *TRANSFIGURATION* TRANSFIGURED:

CONCLUDING REMARKS

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Confronted by this outpouring of philosophical analysis bestowed upon a book I published twenty five years ago, I all at once realize how impoverished our language is in words for expressing gratitude. I mean that all we have is some variation on “thanks,” whether someone has passed the salt or held the door open, or rescued a child or saved ones life or murmured, like Molly Bloom, yes I said yes I will Yes. The word, compared to whatever elicits it, is inadequate and mechanical. Perhaps its having become perfunctory implies how commonplace generosity really is in our lives. It is the default condition of each of us to be in constant need of acknowledging the generosity of others. So I thought of the feast of thanksgiving that our forefathers thought of as a way of acknowledging the magnitude of grace by devouring its benefits, *showing* thanks by demonstrative philosophical gluttony. Lydia Goehr, in her brilliant mock sermon, has after all blurred the boundary between a conference and a congregation, somewhat playing on my own propensity for secularized liturgical language, which Richard Shusterman has made the occasion for his remarkable keynote address. “Transfiguration,” as you will see, is the least of it.

So I have tried, as a sign of devouring if not entirely digesting this banquet of essays, to respond as I could to each of them, sorted into courses by the organizers. The “Concluding Remarks,” while not quite as long as the aggregate length of the papers, is long enough to have been indigestible were it read aloud at the end of a conventional

conference, with everyone stifling yawns and looking at their watches and wondering when will he be *done*? That may be one of the immediate benefits of the online conference, to compensate for those that Lydia itemizes as the pleasures of what we must henceforward call offline conferences. There are many others – like downloading presentations for later perusal, rather than frantically taking inadequate notes, and reading over and over what, at a conference, we could not possibly ask the speaker to repeat.

I have some observations to make, though not on this occasion, of how the medium inflects the message, to pick up on Lydia's alerting us to the differences the Internet can make in communication. Instead, I conclude this thanksgiving preamble with a genuine acknowledgement. I cannot begin to say how much I have learned from this interchange, from having to think through in some degree what came in these papers, not just about the book but about our subject as aestheticians and philosophers of art. I hope that will be evident as you in your turn work through what I have written in response to you.

The format of *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* [hereafter TOC] was, for all the wild pyrotechnics of its examples, fairly classical: a quest for a real definition of art along Socratic lines. The need for such a definition was inspired by George Dickie, who really advanced the first definition that responded to the changes in the art world that had moved me, in the first instance, to write my 1964 essay, "The Art World." I was, however, convinced that his Institutional approach to art was philosophically unacceptable, and set out to find some necessary conditions for something being an art work in the face of the possibility that something might look exactly – or exactly enough

– like a commonplace object without being one, since art. It is well known that I arrived at two necessary conditions, that a work of art embodies a meaning. It ought to have been clear, to me at least, that this could not have been the whole story, though it might have come close to being the whole story for the exciting but impoverished examples that especially engaged me – Warhol’s Brillo Boxes, certain minimalist sculptures by Robert Morris, Duchamp’s ready-mades, and monochrome paintings. But it hardly accounted for the deep value art was known to have in most cultures, and in certain great moments in art history. In particular, it made no allowance for aesthetic properties, which had been pretty much the meat and potatoes of academic reflection on art – if that is not too robust a diet for what I felt was a singularly thin literature. It was my revulsion at this literature that accounts for the somewhat anti-aesthetic coloration of the book, when all I was entitled to was a denial that possessing aesthetic interest constituted a third necessary condition. Admittedly, I was, like most philosophers thinking primarily of beauty, and my grounds for denying its necessity was based on the observation that much of the world’s art is prized not for its beauty, since there is none, but for other reasons altogether.

AESTHETICS

I confess that my conception of beauty is, contrary to Michael Kelly’s, perceptual, and that I am hard pressed to understand what he means in claiming it to be relational – unless he means that something is beautiful in relationship to the senses - in which case everything perceptual is relational, colors and sounds included. Helen of Troy – or Abishag the Shunammite – would still be knockouts relative to their sisters. But I think this a fairly barren issue set against the interesting example that Michael raises in his

discussion of Gerhard Richter's masterpiece, *October 18, 1977* – a suite of fifteen paintings based on photographs of members of the Baader-Meinhof gang after their alleged suicide. Michael says, I believe rightly, that “these paintings open up a reflective space for grief and compassion for all the subjects, German or otherwise, who have been affected by any of the events surrounding the complicated social history of the Baader-Meinhof Gang or, again, its legacy, especially in the context of more recent forms of terrorism.” It is true that painting has this power, without this being a necessary condition either for being a work of art or even for being a painting or a suite of paintings.

But I was struck by an observation in Kalle Puolakka's spirited defense of TOC against a criticism of Richard Schusterman, where he draws special attention to Chapter 7 of TOC – “Metaphor, Expression, and Style” – which he cites Noel Carroll as saying has been overlooked, and which, according to him, yields a positive answer to his question of whether there is room for aesthetic experience in the book. It is TOC's longest chapter, and it frustrated the best efforts of my editor to divide it. Puolakka makes the use I make of the rhetorical concept of metaphor the ground of his defense. A statue of Napoleon dressed like a Roman emperor is a visual metaphor for his greatness, and is calculated to induce awe and respect in the viewer. I was blind to the aesthetic implications of this observation, and the reason is simple. I did not, in that book or elsewhere, pay sufficient attention to the concept of “embodiment.” I used embodiment to help distinguish between representations that are art works from representations that are not. There is a difference between saying “Napoleon was as great as Julius Caesar” and *showing* Napoleon as Julius Caesar. His greatness is embodied in the display of him in imperial Roman garb. In truth, Napoleon so dressed is a perfect example of what Kant called an *aesthetical idea* -

an idea made perceptually objective. I have recently argued, in fact, that aesthetical ideas just are embodied meanings. (See my “Embodied Meanings, Isotypes, and Aesthetical Ideas,” forthcoming in *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*.) Returning to Michael Kelly’s rich example, it is possible, through an astute exercise of art criticism, to show how the aesthetic components of his interpretation are internal to the way the images are embodied in the paintings. Their being black and white, for example, and especially the way they appear as if blurred photographs might evoke compassion and grief – like certain grainy photographs of concentration camp victims. And the dead they picture look almost spectral, like ghosts. This requires carrying aesthetics well beyond the rather restricted domain of beauty, which I consider all to the good. But it is Michael’s example, and I leave it to him to work out.

Aesthetics, in any case, resides in the mode of an idea’s embodiment, and embodiment, accordingly, is a good bit more complex than York Gunther realizes, when he attempts to explain what can be said for my analysis. I accept some responsibility for this, not having carried the analysis of embodiment further than I did in TOC. But what has to be realized is that the meaning penetrates what meets the eye – so that the figure of Napoleon wearing a toga (carved in marble or cast in bronze) is the metaphorical embodiment of the meaning that Napoleon is great – as great as Julius Caesar. It is the proposition “Napoleon is as great as Caesar” expressed as a Kantian aesthetical idea. And the meaning itself is not merely a Fregian concept, as Gunther supposes, but a proposition, with a subject (Napoleon) and a predicate “is great.” The artist has found a way of expressing this non-verbally, in a complex of meaning and matter. In writings subsequent to TOC, I have distinguished between “work” and “object” where the

“object” designates a lump or expanse of matter, bronze or painted linen, for example. The work consists of those parts and properties of the object picked out by the meaning. The actual weight in kilos or the size in square centimeters is usually not part of the work. Which parts and properties of it are parts of the work is a matter of interpretation. In the somewhat tongue-in-cheek exhibition of red squares with which TOC begins, different parts and properties of the red squares are part of the work, depending upon the meaning therein embodied. The structure of the work is a fusion of meaning and matter that parallels the fusion of body and soul in a living being.

From all this, it follows that we do not need an extra “aesthetic” condition, as York proposes. The aesthetics is already in the work, as its “aesthetic” qualities, which may or may not compass “beauty.” York is led to his proposal by an impoverished view of embodiment. When Hegel classed the pyramids as “symbolic,” it was because history had not yet made available the category of abstract art. The pyramid is about the royal being entombed, about which it proclaims his or her greatness through its size – and perhaps implying through the vector of its shape that the person therein is (this is sheer speculation) already in heaven. In any case, Hegel’s three stages of art are really three forms of embodiment, thought of as forming an historical series, developing out of one another.

Finally, I find in York’s proposal of functionlessness in connection with works of art, that he speaks like a legislator who thinks of art as so much frill. In most of the great artistic traditions, works of art had definite jobs to perform. A king sends a portrait of himself, as Philip the Second did to Henry VIII, to give himself a presence in the latter’s court, as Gadamer has explained. The function of the Viet Nam Veterans Memorial was

to heal a nation. The function of a bloody Jesus in Counter-Reformation Rome was to strengthen faith. The function of an icon in Constantinople was to give its owner direct access to the saint present within it. The function of toga'ed Napoleon was to instill awe. Kant has a lot to answer for in his suggestion that a thing of beauty is merely an object of pleasurable contemplation, though he later redeemed himself somewhat with his marvelous intuition that works of art are aesthetical ideas.

I freely confess that the discussion of aesthetics in TOC, discounting the way in which aesthetics enters through the back door in Chapter Seven in Puolakka's valuable gloss, is fairly unevolved. Borrowing a witty recipe I once encountered in a feminist discussion of how to deal with women in writing the history of philosophy – "Stir once and add women" – my tacit procedure was to stir once and add beauty. Like many in my generation, I had greatly admired Frank Sibley's work on aesthetics concepts, and I am grateful to Elisabeth Schellekens for bringing it into the discussion here. I think Sibley was the first philosopher to take seriously J.L. Austin's obiter dictum regarding the range of aesthetic terminology in his "A Plea for Excuses" - "How much it is to be wished that similar field work will be undertaken in, say, aesthetics; if we could forget for a while about the beautiful and get down instead to the dainty and the dumpy." Sibley's use of the term "dainty" is a signal that he had gotten Austin's message. I don't know that he was right in saying that to perceive daintiness *requires* taste, as if taste were some special perceptual mode. Taste enters the picture when one has a taste – an aesthetic preference – for daintiness, as might a woman who wishes to emphasize her femininity by wearing dainty garments or surrounding herself with dainty accessories. But I would agree with Schellekens that daintiness is a perceived quality, and that postulating a special "sense of

daintiness” is hardly required. But then why not concede that beauty itself is a perceived quality, and that it is no less than gratuitous to postulate a sense of beauty? I think she is entirely right in her criticism that my comparing a sense of beauty with a sense of humor may lead to certain unfortunate consequences. The difference may be that beauty is more than a perceptual quality, as I suggest in *The Abuse of Beauty* – it is also a *value* – and whether values are objective is a question with a long philosophical history.

But I think my argument stands, that possessing aesthetic qualities is a not a necessary condition for being a work of art, nor part of art’s definition – and especially not if we restrict the range of aesthetic qualities to the beautiful and the sublime. What *can* be said is that certain aesthetic qualities are, in given instances, *internal* to the meaning of a work. I introduced the concept of internal beauty in *The Abuse of Beauty* in connection with certain works of art, like Maya Lin’s Viet Nam Veterans Memorial or, to take a more obvious example, with the Taj Mahal. The beauty of the latter expresses the beauty of Mumtaz Mahal, the favorite wife of Shah Jahan, who had it built as her mausoleum. A case of external beauty would be that of the sculptures in the German Baroque masterpiece, *Vierzehn Heiligen*, where it is merely a universal stylistic attribute of the art of that period. It might be internal to the style without being internal to the meaning of any of the fourteen sculptures from which the church derives its name. So it would be external beauty so far as their meaning is concerned, even if internal to the sculpture of that period. German Baroque art is beautiful as a matter of course.

But it strikes me that what is true of beauty is true of aesthetic qualities as a class – that they may be internal to the meaning of the works that embody them. The delicacy of Gothic or Moorish ornamentation may testify to the virtuosity of the artists that is

being contributed to the deity to whom the buildings are dedicated. Kierkegaard brings this out in his description of an altar cloth in *Purity of Heart is to Will One Thing*:

When a woman makes an altar cloth, so far as she is able, she makes every flower as lovely as the graceful flowers of the field, as far as she is able, every star as sparkling as the glistening stars of the night. She withholds nothing, but uses the most precious things she possesses. She sells off every other claim upon her life that she may purchase the most uninterrupted and favorable time of the day and night for her one and only, for her beloved work. But when the cloth is finished and put to its sacred use: then she is deeply distressed if someone should make the mistake of looking at her art, instead of at the meaning of the cloth.

In certain crafts, like glass-work, the material is inherently beautiful, which becomes a point of criticism, since it is in consequence often external to the meaning of the work. It is internal when the work is itself about glass, but a lot of glass art merely happens to be glass, and hence its beauty is incidental to the work. The distinction between internal and external beauty is importantly corollary to the aesthetics of meaning that I advocate. Since this distinction was not available to Sibley, he did not draw the crucial distinction between aesthetics in art and aesthetics in general.

INTERPRETATION

Both Sherri Irvin and Robert Stecker address themselves to my claim that interpretations *constitute* works of art. I did not mean this in the sense that a painting is constituted by paint and canvas – by the kinds of materials that a museum registrar would itemize in the inventory of her institutions holdings, though any of these materials might wind up in the artwork as constituted by interpretation. I had in mind the use of “constitution” that figures in Phenomenological discourse, as when, in his 1927 *Encyclopedia Britannica* essay, Husserl writes, in marking various modes of perception,

including pictorial representation, of how the object, under a given mode, “constitutes itself in a flowing intentionality.” I found “flowing intentionality” a pretty appealing idea, implying metaphors like the “flights and perches” that James invokes in writing of the “stream” of consciousness, or that Dewey would describe in his own wooden way. There are, as we know, psychic processes like –another metaphor – “visual saccades,” as the eye leaps from point to point in looking at a painting or in reading a text, “constituting” it as a work by swift inferences. We don’t, that is, read by starting with the first word and going to the next and the next after that, but rather, our eye lights on a word and constitutes what the text says by following an erratic path in which the eye movements can be tracked. My word for all this has been “interpreting” and the “flow of intentionality” involves revisions as what the eye registers does not fit into a coherent structure, so the whole is revised until it does. A word may be missing, for example, and the reader has to hypothesize what the missing word might say. This in any case is how it goes with the reader or the viewer, but the artist too is in a flow of intentionality that the commonplace use of the term “intention” freezes in a phenomenologically false rigidity, as he or she brings the work into being. All this is pretty straightforward. Artist and viewer alike are engaged in an continuous creation. That in any case, is how I was thinking of constitution – how the work is interpreted and reinterpreted through time, and under what constraints.

What belongs to the object but not to the work is part of the process of constitution. Sherri Irvin brings up my example of the cracked glass, which happened as an accident to Duchamp’s *Large Glass*. Though Duchamp decided that it would henceforward be part of the work, the matter is not as simple as that. The program of that

work is extremely complex, and Duchamp gives us a great deal of information about how the various components of the *Large Glass* relate to one another in the erotic allegory the title *La Mariée mise à nu par ses célibataires, même* suggests. Everything has a special name, and an intricate relationship with everything else. One cannot fit the cracked glass into this system of meanings. So it belongs to the work and it doesn't. Compare it with another example I once used – the networks of cracks in Malevich's original Suprematist *Black Square* of 1915 . This is something that happens to oil paintings after a certain period. It is difficult to see how to interpret it as part of the work. It is part of the object, to be sure, but to restore the work would mean repairing the surface, however that is to be done. Rauschenberg decreed that anything that happened to his 1951 *White Painting* belonged to the work – a fly landing on it, or a ball of dust. This prompted John Cage to refer to the work as a “landing field,” and to adopt the same attitude in connection with sounds in his composition of the following year, *4'33”*.

My overall point is that, as I think Sherri Irwin is suggesting, an artist does not paint and then interpret, nor do we see and then interpret. We interpret as we make and experience art. Interpretation is part of the “flowing intentionality” of either process. What the example of the preceding paragraph implies is that there is always a decision to be made, due to deep changes in the world of contemporary art, whether we are dealing with art or dealing with reality. Is a person performing or is that just eccentric behavior? Is that a monochrome painting or just a painted panel? Is that a readymade or just a flashlight? It was that that provoked my taking up the philosophy of art in the first place.

John Dilworth raises the danger of what he calls *vehicle fetishism* – which is a belief in the “obscure artistic powers of concrete vehicles themselves,” via, of the actual

squares of red canvas “mysteriously independent of their legitimate representational roles in expressing artistic meanings.” He encourages a “propositional” account, in which the work just is the meanings. If I understand him, he would endorse a witty proposal once made me by Odo Marquard at a conference in Bad Homburg, viz, Why not have just one red canvas, with a handout of all the interpretations. One (uninterpreted) red square is as good as another. And Dilworth suggests, as an aid to persuasion, the indifference a painter might have to which piece of canvas he uses to make the work. Matters get more complicated when the artist’s labor is mingled with the work by painting it. A different artist painting it red might or might not matter. But when the artist is Jackson Pollock, the skeined pigment might be too much the work to consider its meaning in abstraction from it. Would that be fetishism, or a materialist view of the art work? The issue is rather different with literature, perhaps, since whenever we have the inky reality of the printed text we have the poem or the novel. Dilworth contends that the vehicle plays or may play an epistemological but not an ontological role, e.g. in identifying “The Israelites Crossing the Red Sea” by physical properties, as we identify individuals by DNA, even if it would be fetishistic to say *I am my DNA*. The question in part is where the vehicle ends and the work begins. It gets more and more difficult, the more complex the working of the material gets. So I am agnostic on the issue he raises. And what if the vehicle just is the work? The artist Robert Gober actually makes everything that is part of his work, including the paper, if there is paper. Suppose he made a sheet of paper just like – indiscernible from – a sheet of ordinary bond typing paper, including the watermark? It happens to be “a Gober.” The issues are fascinating, but beyond me for the present.

I enjoyed Scott Walden's contribution, not least of all because it is the only response I am aware of to a paper I care a great deal for, "The Naked Truth," which was prompted by some serious dissatisfactions with Richard Avedon's disregard for the rights of the sitter to be shown in some way consistent with the sitter's own conception of how he or she should be shown. I really hated the way I came out in a portrait that Timothy Greenfield-Saunders made of me, but I knew I would get entangled in controversy that would do no great good if I rejected the picture, and let the matter drop. But I did get a grateful letter from Isaiah Berlin when, in a review, I objected to the way Avedon showed him in his portrait "The Philosopher Isaiah Berlin." I felt it was an artifact of shutter speed: the camera is faster than the eye. It is not that that much art, therefore, was involved in taking the photograph, but rather, that Avedon picked it out from a contact sheet. To the eye, Berlin never would have looked that way. I think the moral issue can be solved by giving the sitter "first refusal" rights. When I was photographed by Steve Pyke, he sent me several images, one of which I loved. I don't know if I really look the way he showed me, but I wanted to be seen that way whether I looked that way or not. In any case, I was glad to have these ethical issues raised here.

STYLE

The idea for the style matrix, so elegantly analyzed by Sondra Bacharach, first occurred to me when I was spending the summer in Rome, obviously before 1964 when I published "The Art World." Like most of the ideas I have had on art, it came from actual experience; and, like most of my philosophical ideas, the framework was the philosophy of history, as I had worked that out in the *Analytical Philosophy of History*, published in 1965. I went one day to visit some catacombs under the railroad yards, in which there had

been a cult of Mithra worship, consisting of Roman soldiers. I was with Joe Stefanelli, a second-generation Abstract Expressionist painter, who happened to be in Rome. In the catacombs we encountered a stubby effigy of Mithra, roughly executed in some white material like plaster. Stefanelli was very excited by this and other figures, and observed that they were very expressionistic, referring to the handling of the surfaces. I had no thoughts about style at the time, but I was struck by the fact that no one in Roman times would have described them that way. "Expressionist" was commonplace in Manhattan in the Fifties, but I imagined non-existent in ancient Rome, where, of course, most sculpture was non-expressionist, with smooth, even polished surfaces - and this was particularly true of Baroque statuary, which was expressive without being expressionist. The two ways of treating surfaces was a sort of style module that ended up as the "style matrix" the following year.

Bacharach is quite right that having a position in the style matrix was something works of art would have, but not their indiscernible real things. The style matrix defined the structure of what I called "the art world," meaning: the community of art works. So it was not tacked on at the end of "The Art World." It was central to the picture of that community that I was trying to execute. My basic initiative was to say what enfranchisement and disenfranchisement in that community meant. To be enfranchised in the art world meant to be defined by the network of stylistic categories that was the organizing principle of that world, as I understood it. I was less interested in how something got enfranchised than in what enfranchisement meant, hence I had no interest in the social mechanism the Institutional Theory of Art was to postulate. I suppose there

could have been a style matrix for commercial art, in which the ordinary Brillo boxes would have a place, together with the real-life counterparts of the “grocery boxes” that Warhol exhibited along with the Brillo Box.

I accept with gratitude Bacharach’s defense of my style matrix against the criticisms of Noel Carroll and Jerrold Levenson, philosophers whom I admire and respect, but whose arguments in any case would never especially have gotten me to abandon my device. Especially not what Carroll thought was the danger of backward causation. It was not as if later paintings would cause new figures to appear in paintings done hundred of years earlier! In the *Analytical Philosophy of History*, I was interested in narrative sentences, like “Mithraic sculpture anticipated the sculpture of de Kooning,” which nobody could have understood in the era of the Antonines. Nietzsche was exultant when he discovered that he had a predecessor in Spinoza. There was not a causal relationship in either direction, for he was not influenced by Spinoza. He already had the ideas he discovered Spinoza also had, or had versions of. They were narratively connected, but not causally connected. But we could speak of some of Spinoza’s ideas as Nietzschean in what I called a “narrative sentence,” without backward causation. The similarity might cause us to say this, perhaps, but that would be as far as one would want to go.

What somewhat soured me on the style matrix was the notion of affinity, as used by art historians, curators, and critics. A distinguished art historian gave a lecture once on Warhol, in which he discussed Brillo Box as an example of “box art” - minimalist sculpture, for example, or a cube by Goethe, or a work by Eva Hesse called *Accession*. I thought that that was useless. It helped explain, it helped us understand, nothing. And this

turned out to be the case, over and over, with the similarities pointed out in the two-projector art history lectures I heard too many of. What I came to realize was that while Stefanelli's observation was true, I was uncertain that the surface handling of Mithraic sculpture was a style. There might have been a reason for it, without it being part of the meaning of the sculpture. The effigy might have been slapped together by the soldiers themselves, without this being a meaningful part of the god they assembled, underground, to worship.

The issues of style taken up by Regina Wenniger and Stephen Snyder belong to a section of TOC that did not enter the critical literature generated by the book, nor in consequence in my own subsequent work in the philosophy of art – so I find in reading their criticisms, I am using intellectual muscles long out of play, except in the following respect. I have come to recognize that two art works may look exactly alike and yet have quite different styles. In an unpublished paper titled “Three Brillo Boxes,” for example, I discuss the boxes of James Harvey, Andy Warhol, and Mike Bidlo from the perspective of their different styles. Harvey's box celebrates Brillo as a cleansing product, and everything in his design graphically sings the praises of Brillo. Its rhetoric is clear and readable. It is difficult to say that it exemplifies Harvey's style, since it is hard to see how the box coheres with the Abstract Expressionist paintings in which he took pardonable pride. The box then has a style that is not Harvey's style at all. He was just doing a job. Warhol's box continues to have the rhetorical style of domestic excitement, but it is not his style, since he produced several different grocery boxes at the same time, none of the others of which have that kind of excitement at all. Maybe he expresses excitement about consumer culture, as is sometimes argued, but that belongs more to the philosophy of

Andy Warhol than to his style, which was laconic, detached, a bit ironic, matter-of-fact. None of this belongs to the style of Bidlo, who was working in the spirit of appropriation, about which little can be deduced from his oeuvre, which included Jackson Pollock paintings, Picasso paintings, Leger and Matisse paintings, as well as Warhol's works. I feel I can describe Walker Evans's style as a photographer in his picture of a sharecropper's wife – compassion, sympathy, or maybe detached concern with getting an adequate visual document of sharecropper culture, which includes what it does to the faces even of once beautiful women. But none of this belongs to Sherrie Levine's photograph of the photograph. Hers is in the style of a sort of snip, who has decided to make the image her own without any of its feelings being part of her repertoire of feelings. For her the relevant properties of Evans's photograph are its fame. The style in each of the cases is, as Wenninger would say, intended. It tells us something about the way the various artists saw the world. It expresses their personalities, but the style is not in the work so much as in the making of the work and what the artist intended to achieve. It belongs to their different personalities, and it may or may not be known to them.

Wenninger's use of my use of Lichtenstein is a little bit off, I think. Lichtenstein was, in the art he did about art, highly ironic. They were hard edged pictures of art that was often not pictorial in its own right, like Mondrian. His personality was ironic, but the question is whether he could have been non-ironic, given his personality, and that question is open. Irony is the way he saw the world, though one would have been hard pressed to see this in his early abstract paintings, before the bubblegum wrapper of Mickey Mouse changes his life. As he grew older, many of his targets were no longer as virulent as they had been, but the irony was always there. It was not a manner. It was

l'homme meme. It was so much him that even if he acknowledged it as that, there was little that he could have done about it.

And that I think is how it must have been with Ion the Rhapsode. He had this great gift he would perhaps never have known he had in another culture, in which the kind of performance from which he earned his living and his reputation did not exist. He was a man of his time and place. Moreover, Snyder is right in saying that Ion had a lot of knowledge. He shared with his audience a knowledge of the world of human feelings, and he knew how to press their buttons. A lot of his problem concerns the difference between Homer and the other poets. Homer was simply a greater artist – you could not get the same results in terms of audience response with other writers. It would be like the difference between Shakespeare and Shaw. But even after all this, he was probably intuitive the way a gifted lover is intuitive. He knew what would make his audience laugh, what would make them weep. Some of that was experience: he recited a passage one way, with no results, then another way and his audience wept. His talent was seasoned and reinforced. He could not teach that to others – he knew how to learn without being able to teach what he knew. Was this rhetoric? It was rhetoric-like, in the sense that he knew how to sway feelings, whatever his own feelings were. He was a rhetorician of affect, in the sense that you could not analyze his procedure in terms of tropes. Somehow one thinks Ion was sincere. That is a kind of moral question. Guido Reni used to boast how he could move his viewers by his knack of getting a beautiful woman's eyes to look heavenward in an expression of religious rapture. He could manipulate feelings in that way, and something of the same sort could have been true of Ion. Still, it was his gift, like the persuasiveness of a born salesman.

CONNECTIONS

While under Ion's spell, the audience lives through a number of intense emotional experiences, some joyful, some horrid. They live through deaths of noble warriors, like Hektor and Patroclus; they live through moments of ecstasy, when Alexandros and Helen make love; they weep with Priam over the loss of his son. When the recitation is over with, some catharsis has taken place, and they feel purged and purified, if Aristotle is right. But they don't have to bury any bodies, they don't have to worry about whether someone is pregnant, they have felt a father's sorrow without having lost any of their children. They have undergone, what Mario Wenning speaks of in his very deep argument, transfiguration rather than transformation. Art is like philosophy, as Wittgenstein sees it, leaving everything as it was beforehand. This answers Wenning's, and ultimately Adorno's question as framed by Wenning, regarding the need for transformations rather than transfiguration. It is a question that comes up today in forms not dreamt of until the Internet, of a variety of sexual intercourse in which the sex is faceless, emotions are not involved, one can go about one's life without being involved in a messy relationship with anyone. Wouldn't it have been better to have had real sex? I suppose the answer is yes and no.

I sometimes think that Adorno thought of art as a *pis aller*, a second best, and that a world without art but in which the transfigurations achieved by art have been achieved in reality instead, is a better world than a world in which art is needed. Or at least that is implied in Wenning's analysis. And my response again is yes and no. Real transformations leave us a lot to deal with that we had not bargained for. Some revolutions are worth it, some are not. The Sixties were frivolous in the sense that there

was a recreational revolutionism, an anything-is-better-than-this-ism. I have always been impressed, having lived in France in May, 1968 (after April at Columbia in April, 1968), how everyone decided that it was time to go for a drive in the country. Columbia was rescued by the advent of summer vacation. I think – since I don't really know Adorno's philosophy – that he was a lot more serious about revolution than I ever would have been. I like the idea associated with Popper of piecemeal social engineering. Basically, I see the modern world as wonderful, with some patches that need serious reconfiguration. The Sixties brought about some deep changes – feminism, equal rights for blacks, gays, and others – but it left the fabric of society alone. The awful thing about the Bush administration is that it created patches that are going to have to be cleared up, but still, it has left enough of what was there before that it can be patched up. I think, in brief, that Adorno was a lot more of an idealist than I am. I believe in correcting what needs to be correcting, and to leave the rest alone. When I think of transfiguration I shudder to think of what would have happened had it been a transformation instead.

I have one further observation to register regarding Ion, with whom I have a certain sympathy. I cannot read every writer with an equal degree of understanding. I have managed to read Hegel in recent years, and to think of him in collegial terms, whereas I get stuck trying to reading Baudrillard. I think I understand why: I trust Hegel and don't trust Baudrillard. Hegel was struggling to say things to which his language was inhospitable, but he comes through ultimately as a mensch. I feel that what Baudrillard is trying to say could be said in a perfectly straightforward way in a language once known as a vehicle of *clarté*, but he comes across to me as a mountebank. I in fact attended the lecture Baudrillard gave at the Whitney that John Carvalho cites in his engaging essay,

and was even a guest at the small dinner party in Baudrillard's honor afterward. I found I was unable to follow the lecture, along with most of the audience that evening, who walked out, many of them, scratching their heads. So I avoided Baudrillard at dinner, feeling we had little to say to one another. I am both surprised, then, and even rather pleased that Carvalho has found the parallels between us that he itemizes in his second paragraph.

One caveat. Carvalho attributes to me the belief that there was in the case of Warhol "an aura, something of 'the man himself,' *l'homme même*, [that] shined through this, to all the world, mechanical reproduction of otherwise mere real things." I don't think I had any sense of Warhol, other than as the painter of Campbell's Soup cans, and now these. There was a lot of talk in that part of the art world I was in those days about Warhol's show, making visiting it imperative. I think that I was willing to accept it as art without having thought through why. Perhaps it was the swank of the Stable Gallery itself and its location that convinced me of its status. It was located just off the foyer of an upscale east side town house, and one entered it through a large mahogany door with polished knobs, from a black-and-white-tile entry way, with an ornate stairway leading to the upper stories. It was elegance *même*. The gallery itself, inside, looked like a stock room, as if Safeway had rented space in a mansion, just to hold cartons. But there were several elegantly dressed people walking about, exclaiming, and not a stock clerk in sight. Contextually, it was art. But I knew enough about Pop in 1964 to accept it as art without hesitation. Don't forget, I had not yet written a philosophical word about art, so I had no reasoned argument about what made Pop art. I just took that for granted. I guess there could have been other than contextual evidence, had I looked for it. The boxes were

self-evidently silk-screened, and that was pretty uncommon in a fine art gallery in those days. Warhol discovered photographic silk screen “by accident” in mid-to-late 1962, and that tended to inflect the way his images looked from that point forward. And so far as aura went, he liked it because of its anti-aurific qualities: “I think it would be so great if more people took up silk screens so that no one would know if my picture was mine or somebody else’s,” he said in 1963. There was no special Warhol touches on any of the cartons. The touch, if anywhere, was in the idea, and so invisible.

And anyway, there were differences between real Brillo boxes and his. They were just not relevant. So the two orders of box were *functionally* indiscernible – indiscernible enough for me to grasp the elements of the way I was going to pursue the issue of the philosophical difference between art and what, for the occasion I hastily called “mere real things.” No one after all was going to pawn off a real Brillo box as a Warhol, or the other way round. No money problem of authenticity was involved. Andy had gotten away with murder up to then. The Campbell’s Soup people left him alone, as did the Brillo people, when today you cannot even reproduce a picture fully credited without paying an arm and a leg. He got into some difficulty with the four posies he took from *Photography Today*, after he had moved to Castelli, but only a pittance was involved. His one serious problem was when he hired a lookalike, Alan Midgette, to impersonate him when the Velvet Underground toured campuses. When the truth leaked out Warhol was sued. Students demanded the real thing. Baudrillard is wrong in saying that “the second order simulacrum simplifies this problem by the absorption of appearance or the liquidation of the real, whichever.” It would have been no solution at all had Midgette liquidated the

real Andy Warhol, as Valerie Solanis sought to do. But perhaps Baudrillard is hung up on the mechanically reproduced, like some others I know.

One further biographical point. Carvalho claims that “I lament the loss of trades of first order simulacra.” That is, if I understand him, lament the disappearance from art of portraits, landscapes, etc – “real art.” From the beginning I accepted Warhol’s work as art, knowing as philosopher that it had to be dealt with. I had none of the reservations of Michael Fried. The good old first order simulacra were great while they lasted, but I always follow history where it leads. I guess there is yet another disagreement I would note. I don’t think I ever thought “the cause of art is not advanced, and we have sheer directionless entertainment.” Warhol opened art up to philosophical possibilities I never dreamed of when I, like the rest of my peers and pals, was in the grip of Abstract Expressionism. *Je suis de mon temps*. I don’t know *where* Baudrillard is.

In the end, I am sensitive to the irony Cavalho opens his paper with. I don’t quite know what my life would have been had I not seen the show of grocery boxes. It is over forty years ago, and I have not exhausted the Brillo Box yet! It has been a kind of Rosetta Stone for me – but looked at dispassionately, it must seem a bit crazy to have spent so much time on something quite so unprepossessing.

The writings of Niklas Luhmann are far more prepossessing, the kind of thing a professor of philosophy ought by rights to spend his time with. I am fascinated and impressed that Francis Halsall has found so many parallels between Luhmann’s systems analysis and TOC. I admire Luhmann’s rather loose idea of system, in the sense that it renders obsolete the tighter and more structured systems, like Marxism, in favor of something closer to the actual way history shapes itself through what he calls

“communications.” The art world has undergone so many changes since I entered it that if it is a system, it seems to have worked its way through time by means of an internal dynamic that no one controls or could have imagined. I am sensitive to the globalization that has overtaken artistic production, I know that the role of the collector and the curator have become dominant, and that the role of the critic has greatly diminished from what it was in the time of Clement Greenberg and Harold Rosenberg. In their time, the art world was small enough to be dominated by single individuals, who seemed to know what was happening. But it changed without anyone especially intending the changes, and took on a direction of its own, which continues to change. It is true that, if I understand Luhmann’s concept of autopoiesis, that the art world has generated through its own resources the present situation. I think Luhmann’s conception of system captures this without giving us grounds for thinking that, now that we understand it, we can actually acquire some control over it. The Louvre has begun to follow the Guggenheim in replicating itself in various centers – and no one knows what the outcome of that will be. What impresses me, on the other hand, is how little it all matters so far as the kind of questions TOC attempted to answer, viz, what are the conditions necessary for something to be an art work? In the years leading up to 1981, when the book was published, I had been following the art world through many changes – surrealism, Abstract Expressionism, Pop, Minimalism, Conceptual art. All this more or less stopped by the late 70s, when I began writing the book. A few years after it was published and I began to writing art criticism, the age of movements was finished, the idea of purity of the medium was finished, there were only individual artists, as Gombrich wrote, prematurely, in his history of art. Painting became marginal, though making periodic efforts to retake the

heights. The idea of embodied meanings, with which I emerged in 1981, has carried me safely into the world of globalized pluralism. There will, I have often said, be surprises but not any philosophical surprises. Maybe Luhmann's conception of an art system will ride the waves as well as my ontological definition has. But my hunch is that if that is true, I will learn as much by following the art journals as by reading him. The thing is, that his idea of systems is something that has always been true. It is not a post-modernist theory in the sense that it applies just to post-modernist history. History is a lot more like Cage's 4'33" than it is like a well-wrought drama.

I am a great deal more comfortable with Kant, just because it has the kinds of logical structure I grew up with and understand. I found Jerome Langguth paper on "aesthetic disappointment" elegant and unexpected. It suggests, to me at least, that our concepts of natural and artistic beauty are more complicated with one another than one would have supposed. Hegel famously speaks of artistic beauty as deeper – or higher – than natural beauty, because it is "born of the spirit and born again." It is true we are not responsible for nature being beautiful, in any straightforward causal way. But Kant himself argues that there is the possibility of indiscernibility between the artful and the natural, and that if we find what we believed natural to be artful, we will be disillusioned. So part of finding it beautiful is believing it is natural and being right. I imagine the artful disorder of the English garden would be another example, if we believed that the flowers just happened to grow that way. Or a rock garden. Or if the beauty of a woman turns out to be entirely due to cosmetics, like Mrs. Dombey's, as Dickens describes her toilette. So the idea that Kant advances, that the perception of beauty is concept-free requires some overhaul. And that should alert us to the possible needs for revision in our own cases,

which Langguth might explore. Aesthetic disappointment, I would think, comes with the discovery that something is fake. “What differences does it make?” is a not infrequent question, but it does make a difference. I recall reading a Japanese story in one of Donald Keene’s anthologies, about a woman so in love with a certain man that she had an effigy of him made that could not be told apart from the man himself. The woman lay down with the “man,” and fondled him – but quickly grew disgusted, and threw the effigy away. Recently a friend of Norman Rockwell died, leaving what his family believed was an original, that proved upon examination not to be. The man was an artist himself, and he made the painting, hiding the original, because he did not want his divorced wife to come into possession of it. He built a hidden closet to keep it in, which was finally discovered. The copy was, if not worthless, all but worthless. The original set a record for Rockwell when sold at auction.

THEORY

In my response to Carvalho, I observed that when I saw Warhol’s exhibition in April, 1964, I was prepared to accept Brillo Box and its peers as art, the question being why if it was art, the real Brillo boxes were not. Later in that year, when I began to think through the essay that was presented and published as “The Art World,” I wrote that “to see something as art requires something the eye cannot descry,” “an atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of the history of art – an art world,” which Theodore Gracyk cites at the beginning of his exceptionally challenging paper. In a way, it was an explanation of the atmosphere I carried with me into the Stable Gallery. I did not mean to make especially heavy weather of these conditions – I meant in general some knowledge of what had happened in the art world leading up to work like Brillo Box, and what

interested persons – persons belonging to the relevant art world – thought about work like that. I did not mean knowing about the history of art in any professional way. Nor was there a technical body of theory I would have appealed to, but just a general sense of the kinds of issues such people would have brought to bear when the question of what is art arose. In 1964, prior to “The Art World,” I did not have much by way of theory as a gallery goer, and as far as art history is concerned, I had learned about Pop Art in 1962, and had more or less followed the shows of it, such as they were – at Castelli, the Green Gallery, Sidney Janis, and the rest. As I later thought of it, the structure of art history as it bore on the Stable show was a kind of conversation, and the various parts of the history were like moves in a conversation. I was much taken with the idea of conversational implicature that Paul Grice had developed, and I was thinking that there may be a kind of “historical implicature” holding between events. An event “fits” into an historical structure, and prepares it for the next one of the many things that carry the conversation forward. In “the Art World,” my only philosophical idea was that Brillo Box and the Brillo boxes have disjoint causal histories – what explained the Brillo cartons was the history of packaging. Packages and only quite contingently, the Brillo boxes, entered the history of art. Warhol’s Stable show could have had all the cartons it did have, except the Brillo Box, and still have fit the conversational model of history. Why the Brillo Box? does not, I think, have an interesting answer. The interesting question was – why the boxes at all for Andy’s 1964 show at the Stable gallery?

Between 1964 and let’s say 1977-79, when I wrote TOC, I did not think a lot philosophically about art. I wrote a lot of philosophy in those years – on the philosophy of history, of knowledge, of action – and I kept up with the art world after a fashion.

Most of the art that figured in my thought was what I had seen or imagined in the Sixties-Pop, mostly, and Minimalism, plus odd and ends from the more traditional history of art as it seemed relevant. And Gracyk is quite right that music did not figure in my book, or, for the matter, in my thought. Cage, yes, though he does not figure in the book, and some of the dance that took place at Judson. These seemed to raise the same kinds of questions that the visual arts did, and I thought I could deal with them if I had to. There was music in my life – my wife was a musician, and was devoted to contemporary music and to Pierre Boulez. My children were involved with the Beatles and maybe the Stones. But all of this was part of life. It was not something I was thickly involved with as I was with art, understood as painting, drawing, sculpture, and the like. Noel Carroll and Sally Banes have written deeply about post-modern dance. There were many many examples where the problem of indiscernible counterparts arose. There were in the Judson agenda dances that were entirely composed of ordinary movements. Banes and Carroll mention Judith Dunn's *Acapulco*, "in which she brushes her hair in slow motion, played cards, and ironed a dress;" and an untitled work by Steve Paxton in which he ate a sandwich. Yvonne Rainier, Lucinda Childs, Douglas Dunn provide us with other examples. That was all in the air in the Sixties, and someone could have written an "The Art World" kind of paper using examples from dance, or from music, using Fluxus compositions and performances. One would have had to know the kinds of history and theory of the relevant arts to "see them as dance" or "hear them as music." My sense is that all these examples involve what Gracyk calls "transfiguration." There were and are dance worlds and music worlds entirely parallel to one another and to the art world. Gracyk writes "Apart from a very few special cases such as Warhol's Brillo Boxes, Danto's method of

indiscernible counterparts does not invite reference to art theory and art history.” I think it was a problem with that show, and with several others, because the art one encountered was so discontinuous with what even one who saw a lot of art would have been stopped by in their tracks. That does not mean that they did not carry an atmosphere of art history and art theory in the far more routine kinds of encounter with art, even modern and difficult art. No one had to pause and think – what makes this art. That is why the Sixties was such an amazing period.

Let’s consider Fluxus performances. Most of the Fluxus composers were students in John Cage’s course in Experimental Composition, taught at the New School through the Fifties. In the “Neo Dada in der Musik” program, held in Dusseldorf on June 16, 1962, there were several performances by such figures as Nam June Paik, La Monte Young, Dick Higgins, Jackson Mac Low, Benjamin Patterson, George Machiunas, Vostell, to name only the more well-known. The Fluxus Symphony Orchestra performed a Fluxus Concert at Carnegie Recital Hall on June 27, 1964. There were dozens and dozens of Fluxus musical events, in which the defining feature of the performances involved “the progressive incorporation of extra-musical sounds into the circumscribed materials of music,” to quote from an essay by Douglas Kahn. Cage’s own attitude, exemplified in *4’33*” was “Let sounds be themselves.” Here is the score for George Brecht’s 1959 *Drip Event*:

DRIP MUSIC (DRIP EVENT)

For single or multiple performances.

A source of dripping water and an empty vessel are arranged

So that the water falls in the vessel.

And here is Nam June Paik's *Physical Music*

Performers gather around a large tub or bucket on stage. All piss into the bucket. As each pisses, he sings his national anthem. When any contestant stops pissing, he stops singing. The last performer left singing is the champion.

My favorite Fluxus piece is Dick Higgins's *Winter Carol*, where a group of people gather at a set time to listen, for a set time, to the snow falling. In his forward to *M*, Cage wrote: "I had taken steps to make a music that was just sounds, sounds free of judgments about whether they were musical or not." Since Gracyk is understandably reluctant to consider these music, let's just say that they are avant-garde music. And with avant-garde art the kind of episode the Brillo Boxes involve are legion. He quotes Anita Silvers's observation that "most of the popular audience has no reason to wonder if pop songs are art." Exactly. It is philosophers like Gracyk and me who have reason to wonder. That's what the philosophy of art is about. I think Gracyk's examples of the Grateful Dead or the Who are wonderful, but it seems to me they fit perfectly into philosophy of art conveyed by TOC.

The sense in which I used the term "theory" in my early writings was more or less equivalent to having a reason for believing that something like *Fountain* or *Brillo Box* were works of art – that their presence in gallery or even museum spaces would not automatically elicit "That's not art!" I did not have in mind anything that was a *philosophical* theory of art – a theory of the kind that I was to begin to advance in TOC. Brandon Cooke raises a question about philosophical theories of art, mine included, and seeks an answer to what the truth status of such theories is. Are they, to use his distinction "truth-apt" or "true absolutely." From his discussion it is clear that Cooke

recognizes that a statement like (S): “That is black and white paint and nothing more” can either be an art-critical description of a painting, or a description of that same painting by someone who is a perfect candidate for a person who lacks the relevant art historical and art theoretical knowledge to understand how (S) can be art-critical. A perfect example of (S) as art-critical is a statement made by the painter Frank Stella of his black-and-white pin-stripe paintings of 1964-65: “What you see is what you see.” Of those same paintings, Michael Fried argues in his *Three American Painters* that the pin stripes refer to the external shape of the canvas – that there is an internal reference, so that the stripes have at least a referential meaning. Mere black stripes don’t make references, are not vehicles of meaning. Stella wanted to say that the only thing there is in his paintings is what critic and philistine alike see – black and white paint on canvas. His declaration became one of the mantras of Minimalism in the Sixties. For the record, I was unaware of this discussion in 1964.

The question Cooke asks is whether Stella’s claim should be taken as truth-apt or absolutely true. I guess I would say that the philistine is literally right, but in the context of art world discourse, (S) is a bone of contention. How is it to be settled? Neither Stella nor Fried is literally right, but there are grounds for saying that they are both truth-apt in art-critical discourse. I guess (again) that Stella would say, at least of his work, that there is no more to the matter than what the philistine would acknowledge. That is: *Don’t interpret these works*. It is an imperative that acknowledges the existence of art-critical discourse, just ruling it out of bounds for these works. But what are we to say of this discourse? In the Wittgensteinian hey-day, we might respond by saying “This language game is played!”

In my recollection, this was stated by Peter Geach in a debate over an analysis by Norman Malcolm about the Ontological Argument. Geach was reputed to be an observant Catholic, and I often wondered if he was satisfied to say that “‘God exists’ is true” just means that (in Cooke’s terms) “The language game that ‘God exists’ is part of, is actually played.” It would greatly conduce to peace on earth if “This language game is played” was accepted by religious folk as an absolute truth, making “God exists” and “Allah exists” truth-apt. In any case, it helps us understand that art criticism and religious discourse are logically of a piece, which explains how both should count as moments of Absolute Spirit in Hegel’s philosophy. It helps us see the ontological parity between relics and art works. Both religion and art belong to the *Geisteswissenschaften*, which is consistent, of course, with human beings believing that sentences about relics are absolutely true. Ditto about right and wrong, good and bad, legal and illegal. Following Cooke, “X is an artwork” can be absolutely true in the respect that there are those for whom it is a work of art, even though something that looks just like it – is indiscernible from it – is false. There are plenty of truth conditions for both the ascriptions.

The “marginalization of aesthetics,” raised once again by Robert Kraut, can’t be entirely due to deficiencies in the texts themselves. Nor would a more immediate concern with actual works of art necessarily remedy the alleged dreariness of the subject. No body of literature could be imagined more dreary than academic art criticism as practiced in recent decades by post-structuralist writers in heavy debt to Derrida and Foucault: it is jargonist, portentous, pretentious, and larded with quotations. It is, more or less, a scandal. Kant’s *Third Critique* is hardly drearier than the first two *Critiques*, which are

widely admired by the professional philosopher, in no small part because they raise enough of the kinds of questions philosophers like to think and write about, and which they consider important. I think “importance” is the operative term: professional philosophers just don’t think *art* is important enough to justify thinking about it. The philosophy of art is marginal because art itself is counted marginal – “frill,” in the idiom of legislators looking to lop unneeded expenses from bloated budgets. To understand this attitude in philosophical culture, a serious piece of cultural history would have to be written. It is in any case not likely to change soon, however intellectually challenging the philosophical literature on aesthetics and the philosophy of art might be.

In my response to Brandon Cooke, I proposed what, if I am right, are some fairly deep analogies in the philosophies of art and of religion, considered ontologically. Both art and religion belong to what Hegel called *objective spirit* – to visual culture in the case of art and to “religious culture,” to coin a phrase that designates the phenomenology of religious practices and objects in daily life. But both belong as well to Hegel’s domain of absolute spirit as well. Philosophers rarely speak of the issues in religious philosophy – in philosophical theology – as marginal, if only because enlightenment attitudes remain in an arrested state, and religion continues to vest the lives of philosophers and ordinary persons with meaning. Personally, I think that art does or can do this as well, but one has to live a certain form of life for art to have this effect. In any case, the reasons that aesthetics is marginalized are more or less cultural, and likely to remain that way.

I am entirely in agreement with Kraut on the distinction he wants to draw between the philosophy and the criticism of art, a distinction somewhat complicated by the fact that most works of art are generated in part by bodies of theory that do not rise to the

level of philosophy. The artworks of the artist Tom Friedman are in themselves not much to look at, though they involve considerable skill. One of his works, for example, is a sculpture that consists in the graphite and wooden shaving created by sharpening a pencil until it is turned into a single wooden-and-graphite spiral, with formal affinities to Brancusi's *Endless Column*. Another consists in a filament of bubble gum stretched floor to ceiling. Friedman is, in addition to an adroit craftsman, a thinking kind of person, whose art executes and illustrates his thought, and the more one knows of the thought that generated the work, the deeper the work becomes. In a way it is the thought that makes the difference between a pencil shaving that is a work of art and one that is just a pencil shaving. But the work in his case is a piece of thought together with a material object that embodies it – and the claim that that is what makes it art is a philosophical claim.

Philosophy of art in my case has a special connection with art criticism, including art criticism as I practice it. The definition of art as embodied meaning does not tell us what the meaning of art works is, nor the mode of their embodiment. For that one has to do art criticism, as in Friedman's case, or Warhol's. TOC is filled with exemplificatory pieces of art criticism, more, I think than most. But certainly not more than Hegel's *Aesthetics*. Hegel was a great critic of art, thrilling to read from that perspective. Kant, by contrast, has a fairly impoverished catalog, in the main context in which he begins to furnish a philosophy of art in the *Third Critique* – namely §49, where he introduces his stunning concept of aesthetic ideas, using as a main example an undistinguished sonnet by Frederick the Great. Richard Wollheim, years ago, gave a course in the philosophy of style, without using a single example, much to the despair of his students, who pleaded for some.

There is one last point. I loved writing *the Transfiguration of the Commonplace!* And I wanted readers to enjoy reading it. Contemporary art was a lot of fun, and I wanted some of that to inflect my writing about it. But lately I have had a ring-side seat from which to observe the work from a cultural perspective that Stephen Davies' informed and sympathetic essay on intercultural understanding makes vivid. Philosophy is not outside the cultures in which it arises, as might be deduced from its kinship, according to Hegel, with art and with religion. I would like to close these remarks by discussing TOC as a cultural object – seeing it, so to speak, from within the perspectives it opened up.

Few of the commentaries on the book have moved me more – have moved me as much – as Richard's Wollheim's appreciation of the book in his contribution to Mark Rollins's *Danto and his Critics*, where he writes that my aesthetic "could scarcely be more clearly rooted."

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

It is a great and enviable achievement to have imported so much *actualité* into Anglo-Saxon philosophical prose. At the same time, a hostage is given to fortune, for quite how far the general tendency of the argument will carry the reader along with it can never be completely divorced from how sympathetic the reader already finds himself to the art that substantiates the aesthetic. [36-37.]

Richard and I were, for a period, colleagues at Columbia, and united by a deep friendship that survived our great difference in taste. He was one of the few philosophers whose

passion for art was as intense as mine – but he had little use for the art that engaged me, though his love for New York equaled mine. His enthusiasm was for Poussin and Ingres, and, among contemporaries, for contemporary British painters like Frank Altschuler and Leon Kossoff. He admired R.J. Kitaj. We shared an enthusiasm for Wayne Thibaud. But the art that captivated my philosophical imagination left him for the most part cold. He was, however, generous in his assessment: “Danto brings us up, time and time again, against what it was that made the American experimentation of the past 50 years such a bold undertaking.”

One feature of the book has grown increasingly plain as the years have passed. This is the way in which I drew on features of the culture that would have been recognized by my contemporaries. I brought, to take Richard’s metaphor literally, a lot of the soil in which the philosophy was rooted into the book. With the passage of time this has become increasingly foreign territory, not only to the students who read the book, but even to those, now younger and even much younger than I, who teach it. David Carrier has more than once observed that it is time for an annotated edition. More than a few of the artists I alluded to are forgotten. But so has a lot of the culture I allude to. The argument and analysis of the book are still, I think, pretty vital. But more and more of the book belongs to its time and place.

Where I am particularly sensitive to this is in the number of translations the book has had. Translation always must deal with what Davies speaks of as “the veil that culture lays over ...what is universal in human nature and art,” as well as the inevitable differences in the languages. Few are at once fluent in both in the language and the culture of a book. My great French translator, Claude Hary-Schaeffer, used to send me

lists of things she did not understand. She had the unusual advantage of being married to a fine philosopher, Jean-Marie Schaeffer, and has a natural ear for the American, not to say New York cadence and inflection. Reading her version, I feel as if I myself had written it in a French I am actually incapable of. But lately translations have been commissioned into languages I have no access to at all – Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Croatian, Slovenian, and on. My hope is that enough gets through to make it worthwhile to readers in these languages. But I know that cultural distance creates a thicker and thicker fog around my book, until finally only a vague hulk is visible. My *hope* is that the hulk suffices the larger philosophical aims of the book in providing the elements of a definition of art that will accommodate art everywhere and always, even if the soil out of which the philosophy grew has ultimately to be left behind.

What Davies does not touch upon is something that has overtaken the art worlds of almost all the current cultures that have an art world at all. This is the extraordinary globalism that has become a feature of artistic life in the past few years. I don't know where it would fit in the passacaglia of contemporary life. It is not universal since it is so recent, and it is cultural without being local. It is international rather than intercultural, since it depends upon the resources that only nations command, and it presupposes tourism as a style of life. It concerns national pride, since it is nations that host the great biennials, and sponsor the museums complexes that attract tourists between biennials, and that have sufficient internal security to make the great art fairs viable. Globalism implies a world at peace, stable economies, the possibility of leisure. It will be some considerable while before there is a Baghdad Biennial – but it is a safe prediction that sponsorship of a Biennial will be one of the first things a stabilized Baghdad will do. It

will proclaim to the world that it, Baghdad, is ready to join the world of art, and secure enough to welcome tourists, as Kabul has recently begun to do. There is finally a culture of global art, consisting of dealers, collectors, artists as a matter of course, journalists, hotels, restaurants, banks, clubs, spas, galleries and shopping malls – and enough local color to give everyone the sense that globalism has not taken over entirely.

There is a who's who of global artists who make up the core of the global art world. Their work is widely recognized and widely sought. How different they are from world-class writers, whose works must be translated! Art, dance, and music are portable and importable, constituting the bass level of the global passacaglia. The language arts – poetry, drama, fiction - are global only through translation. My hope is that so far as a philosophy of art is needed, that of the *Transfiguration of the Commonplace* will find a use for itself in new world we have entered.

KEYNOTES

I must now address the two marvelous keynote essays, both of which raise very large questions for me, and each of which involves a special generosity in committing a major piece of writing to an uncertain and ephemeral context – an Internet conference, with a limited tenure. But I share a piece of history with each of the two writers – Richard Shusterman and David Carrier – whereas, in contrast with Lydia, who knows almost everyone who answered the Call for Papers, I know very few of you. And I know that with each of the keynoters, there is a personal meaning in writing for the conference, as it continues a relationship of human as well as philosophical interchange that has already marked us over us a sustained period of our lives. So I owe them a special embrace.

Richard Shusterman, true to his philosophical bent, has approached my appropriation of the term “transfiguration” in the existential spirit that informed and continues to inform his philosophical quest, as well as his life. By this I mean a certain courage, an openness to risks of I kind I would never have exposed myself to. The core of his paper recounts an episode that amazes me – his traveling to Japan to study, not as a scholar but as a pilgrim – the discipline of Zen meditation. I have exempted myself from meditation by saying that my mind is too restless for it – like the “twitching of a young elephant’s ear,” to use an expression that evokes ancient Ceylon, which I learned from a young Sanskritist, Robert Olsen, years ago. But I know deep in my heart that it is more than that, a kind of fear of letting go and getting lost, and hence a lack of existential courage that Richard possesses, and which lends a certain personal authenticity to his philosophical adventures.

There is a powerful episode in E.M.Forster’s *Passage to India*, a book that has meant a great deal to me, in which several of the characters make an excursion to the Marabar Caves, which are celebrated for a certain echo: whatever one says, the echo is the same: “Bou-oum.” This is especially unsettling to an elderly English lady, Mrs. Moore, who was, before the expedition, an exemplarily generous and good person, who embodies a certain Christian decency, and is willing to make friends with the native Indians, to cross a gap her fellow English refuse even to enter. She is totally changed by the encounter with the echo, becoming a crabby old lady, who mutters to no one in particular “Their sorrow is not my sorrow.” She has had a mystical experience, and is transformed by it, not, one feels, for the better. But, as an authorial voice abruptly addresses us at right angles to the novel’s action, “Wait until you’ve had one, dear

reader!” I am not willing to lose my bearings, which means at the very least that my use of liturgical language is a *façon de parler*. Richard is in this respect made of a bolder fiber. I will in extenuation take a moment to explain why the Brillo Box has been important to my philosophy in a way that Duchamp’s readymades never were, as Derek Allan wonders about in a comment to our conference. The answer is that I *encountered* the Brillo Box, actually *encountered* it. It was not something that I read about in an art history text. It entered my life and thought and transformed them both. That is how it is with living existentially, as Richard’s anecdote exemplifies. I think it cannot be too heavily stressed that one of the things that makes *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* the book it is, is the history of such encounters with art upon which it rests. The encounter with the Brillo Box turned me into a philosopher of art, which is as far from reality as I am prepared to go.

The circumstances of encounter cannot be discounted. Richard encountered the oil drums in an especially beautiful site, as I read his text, by the sea. In some way mediation sublated their identity as oil drums, and opened him to the beauty of the rustiness, usually taken, along with ashes, as a mark of squalor. But rust *has* the kind of beauty he discerned, which is why architects use Cor-ten steel, specifically for its disposition to become rust clad, with the hoped-for result that a steel structure will come to look like bronze. I thought of a very different site – Richard Serra’s *Tilted Arc*, an immense curl in Cor-ten steel, set down in the mid-Eighties as a piece of public art in Federal Plaza in New York, where its presence vexed the office workers who were, to say the least, inconvenienced by it. Serra saw it in aesthetic terms, as did many of his strong supporters. I remember Rosalind Krauss virtually leaping over desks when one of her

colleagues spoke disparagingly of *Tilted Arc* at a conference. She shouted “What is *wrong* with you people at Columbia!!!” She could have included me. I had encountered the sculpture on an admittedly bleak winter day, with dirty snow piled against its base, and wind blowing discarded plastic across the vacant plaza. The artist David Hammonds had earlier done a performance by peeing against it, expressing the opponent view. I subsequently wrote an essay in the *Nation*, urging its removal. The experience we all had with Serra’s magnificent *Torqued Ellipses* a few years later was altogether different. They were sublime. In New York, they were first shown in Gagosian’s immense Chelsea Gallery. They were a little bit scary to walk into, especially as the wall bent over me, but I recall noticing, in transit, the beauty of their rust-clad surfaces.

One cannot with full impunity close, let alone obliterate, the gap between art and life. This was acknowledged, though in a way that at the time looked ridiculous, when George Sugarman proposed a kind of metal gazebo as a public art work for a space similar to Federal Plaza but in Baltimore. Critics of the proposal, decades before the suicide bomber was dreamt of, warned that it was ready-made shrapnel in case a terrorist were to plant a bomb. Sugarman, in contrast with Serra, had enlisted the office workers in his preparations, and there was no resistance whatever to the execution of his plan. The terrorist scenario was simply overridden, and I have cited it only as a metaphor for the danger of crossing art with life. I think Richard’s reflection on how Orthodox Judaism, enacted into law, creates a tangle of obstacles in the living of daily life in Israel, suggests a parallel danger in closing the space between religion and life. Our Founding Fathers were wise in building the separation of church and state into the way life was to be organized in the United States. We see everyday the consequences of breaching the gap –

a kind of no-man's land into which only philosophers should venture, protected by the armor of their rationality. I think Andy was right in the way, to everyone's astonishment when the truth came out, he treated his religion as a private matter, between himself and God.

I have always been impressed by the extraordinary degree to which Christianity is inflected by metaphysics of the most abstruse order. I have often, listening to people sing Christmas carols, wondered to myself whether they could possibly understand what they were saying. Historians of Christianity characterize it as a fusion of Greek essentialist metaphysics and Jewish historicism, a combination that I, at a distance, have found irresistible. In any case I have found the language, which seems to come naturally to me, of great value in the philosophy of art and, really, everywhere else in philosophy.

David Carrier's paper is also rooted in issues that matter greatly to him in personal life, though he has framed them here as problems in the analytical philosophy of art. Though he sets out to examine whether my "aesthetic" is universal, his preoccupation is with two issues distinctive of my particular version of that particular discipline : (1) the inadequacy of the definition of art proposed in the TOC, since it enfranchises as works of art articles of clothing, etc; and (2) the "end of art," as I have formulated it, applies not to art universally, but at most to the art of the west. These are major questions, and I am uncertain that I can deal with them at all satisfactorily here. Well, better an unsatisfactory response than none. As the artist Alexis Smith has printed on a poster she designed for the dining room at the Getty Center, "Bad taste is better than no taste."

(1) TOC ends without having provided a condition that would exclude certain counter instances – things that embody meanings without obviously being works of art. There

is, as it were, a leak in the definition, and it is a defect in a book that sets out to furnish a real definition of “is an art work.” At best it offer two necessary conditions, and Carrier registers disappointment that the book ends where it does. My own feeling is that I felt that I had done enough for one book. I had done damage to formalism, which was the reigning theory of art; had laid the foundation for an aesthetics of meaning; and had demolished, I had hoped, the “intentionalist fallacy,” which was one of the supports of formalism. And I had shown how essentialism, which I believed in, was compatible with historicism, which I also believed in. And for personal reasons I wanted to publish the book. It was finished in a period of grief at the death of my first wife, Shirley Rovetch, and it was, as I write in the preface, a monument to our marriage. It was accepted for publication the year of my marriage to Barbara Westman. And in some way it celebrated the marriage of art and philosophy. But beyond all that, I had not thought about clothing outside the ontological category of “mere real things,” though I knew the writings of Ann Hollander, and her discussion of clothing *in art*, which would, of course, contribute to the meaning of a painting or a sculpture.

In my commentary at the ASA panel on TOC, organized last year by Tom Wartenberg, I explained that the book was pretty thin, concerned as it was with ontology, and with finding two necessary conditions which I all along appreciated were not sufficient – that by comparison with the actual richness of works of art, describing them as embodied meanings was pretty impoverished. Still, I thought, when one fills in the meaning of an actual work of art, say like Raphael’s *Transfiguration* – or Piero’s *Resurrection* - and then explains its mode of

embodiment, those taken together would constitute a pretty handsome piece of art criticism, and leave not a lot to say. The specific meanings and the specific modes of embodiment may, as Herder would say, vary greatly from culture to culture. So what looks pretty skeletal, stated abstractly, can differentiate the art of various cultures when the actual meanings and modes of embodiment are put in place.

Consider the two works of art described in the *Iliad* – Helen’s tapestry, which she is working on when we first encounter her, and the shield of Achilles. The tapestry shows scenes of battle as Helen can see them from the wall of Priam’s castle. There is something striking in the fact that the weaving – ‘woman’s work’ – should mean, should be about, fighting and killing in acts of warfare. Achilles’ shield, almost impossible to visualize, largely pictures daily life as it is lived. It is striking that the whole of common life should be emblazoned on an instrument of combat, used to protect the warrior that bears it. In a metaphorical sense the scene is what he is protecting – the life of peaceful domestic industry, the life Achilles laments when Odysseus encounters him in the underworld. “Better to be an underlaborer for a poor farmer than king of the underworld.” In a way the tapestry and the shield are related the way the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are – in the one we see domesticity surrounded by battle, in the other we see battle at the heart of domesticity. War and peace are coimplicated with one another in Homer’s art, the way sex and violence are in popular art today. When we work out the meanings of the two works and their embodiment in fabric and in metalwork, we simply have the Homeric world.

We can imagine the great image on the face of Achilles’ shield embroidered on the robe of state for King Priam, or for any king. Goya, who designed tapestries,

could have designed just such a robe for King Charles. It would be a work of art, the way the tapestries were, but that cannot be the kind of clothing Carrier is interested in. Clothing, I would say, for the most part has a use, rather than a meaning. It provides warmth for the wearer, and modesty, concealing the sexual parts of the wearer's body while signaling the differences between the sexes. It may do this for the different classes as well – the robe I describe proclaims the wearer as king, even if unembroidered. All of this is below the domain of fashion, where the meaning of garments is to make a statement about the one who wears it. At the level of fashion, clothing is paralleled by the messages about its owner that works of art emit – about their tastes, their wealth, etc. Both sets of meanings belong to visual culture. But consider the great multiple by Josef Beuys, consisting of a small heavy flannel suit. Nobody ever wore one of Beuys's suits. They represent clothing as clothing as a human need. Their minimalism is about the aching vulnerability of the naked human body. They are mass produced, the first garments, we imagine, of a clothing industry reestablished at the end of a terrible war, meeting a terrible need. They are about nakedness and cold. Their meaning is universal, which is why they are art.

My own sense is one would deal with clothing as a counter-example along these lines.

(2) Strictly speaking, the end of art came to me as an idea after TOC was published, certainly after it was written. It came when I was walking through one of the Whitney Biennials in the early Eighties. What I later came to see was that that particular show was an early display of pluralism in American art. I remember two displays especially – Leon Golub's *Mercenaries*, which I loved, and Jonathan Berofsky's *Hammering*

Man, which I hated. I was invited to participate in a panel on Pluralism at the School of Visual Arts a while later, by the art critic David Shapiro, who thought it might help promote the TOC, recently published. People in the New York art world were generally hostile to the idea of pluralism, and I can't say I was crazy about it. But it pressed in upon us because it is what emerged in the early Eighties. It wasn't what anyone expected. One thought that the next thing would stand to colorfield painting the way colorfield painting stood to Abstract expressionism – something like that. If you look at the essay I published in 1984, "The End of Art," you can see that I was disgusted by it. The last line of the essay was "It has been an immense privilege to live in history." I thought that history was over, and it was only later that I began to see that pluralism meant the end of art history, as we had known it. I was inspired by something that Jennifer Bartlett said in discussing the work of her peers at Yale. "I can like it all," she said. And I thought: that is the way to be. I finally liked pluralism for its freedom, and for the lifting of the burden of art history.

Pluralism was made to order for Globalism. As more and more cultures entered global art, pluralism was deeply enabling. The first real move into contemporary art by China was Communist Pop – a Maoist Cultural Revolutionary holding up a bottle of Coke. That was the break. Pluralism meant the end of the great narratives. There was art of course, but no narrative direction. The model was like all the great traditions flowing into Western art history like tributaries into the Mississippi river, and then their mingled waters ramifying, like what happens in the delta of that great river, as it enters the sea. It was the end of the national styles and the emergence of Internationalism, as I suggest in my response to Stephen Davies. The history of

western art ends with pluralism, just in time for the global art movement, which will be with us – which we shall all be in – for a very long time indeed.

THE ORGANIZERS

I do not know if this is the first online philosophical conference, but it surely will not be the last. It is a format whose time has come, and I have the utmost admiration for the enterprising young philosophers – Jonathan Neufeld, Brian Soucek, and Michalle Gal – for their foresight and vision in having conceived of it. And as they are all students of my dear friend and colleague *sans pair*, Lydia Goehr, I cannot imagine that many steps were taken in putting the conference together without her inspiration and counsel. But obviously a great deal more than conception was involved – getting the papers and the funding, lining up the keynote writers, organizing the schedule and designing the handsome webpage, and just making it happen in a medium that reveals greater and greater promise in bringing worlds and individuals together in great intellectual and artistic endeavors, is almost more than can be imagined. Of the three, I know Michalle best, and realize that she has participated fully in this enterprise while raising a child, finishing a dissertation, and managing a career that involves shuttling between two countries – Israel and the United States. I am sure that both Brian and Jonathan were similarly involved in competing demands for time and energy, in their lives and in their careers. It is one of the most exciting things to have happened to me, and I am moved beyond words that *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*, the writing of which was itself one of the great adventures of my life, should have been the occasion for so much wonderful philosophy and really, so much thought, engagement, and spirit.