NARRATIVES OF THE END OF ART

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> [Tragedy] grew little by little . . . and passing through many changes, tragedy came to a halt, since it had attained its own nature.
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> *Aristotle*, Poetics
> *(Richard Janko's translation)*

In 1984, the German art historian Hans Belting and I, speaking from different disciplines and in different languages, both published essays on the end of art. Belting offered his essay in the form of a question, *Das Ende der Kunstgeschichte?* The question could have meant that art had reached the term set for its history or that Belting's own discipline had come to its end, and there is little doubt that Belting meant to raise both possibilities. I, driven by the characteristic will-to-power of systematic philosophy, titled my paper "The End of Art." I am not supposing Belting and I had, independently, discovered something of great importance, like the calculus or the theory of evolution, where the issue of priority becomes vexed, only that, from our different perspectives, we had each arrived at a congruent historical claim, suggesting at the very least that something was in the wind. And indeed a certain gloom had settled upon the art world itself at the time—it has not altogether dissipated today—so that artists and critics alike expressed themselves with varying degrees of pessimism as to whether art had a future at all, or whether, as may have seemed plausible, a certain extraordinary adventure had run its course, and all that lay ahead were cycle upon cycle of the same options, a kind of interminable oscillation that meant the close, in disorder, of a system of energy everyone until then had believed open.

The most energetically discussed artistic strategy of that moment was that of appropriation, in which one artist takes as her or his own the images, the often extremely well-known images, of another: making photographs of photographs that everyone familiar with photography

knows very well, or painting Morandis and Picassos without seeking to put them over *as* Morandis or Picassos—without seeking to deceive or dissimulate. My friend the critic Joseph Masheck, writing of the artist Mike Bidlo, who was at the time painting Morandis, said more or less this: "Morandi painted his Morandis and Bidlo painted *his* Morandis." Now, in the sense in which Bidlo painted Morandis, Morandi did not paint Morandis. Morandi painted still lifes and landscapes that we class as Morandis because he painted them. Bidlo's Morandis have Morandis as their subject matter, not bottles and boxes and skimpy trees and houses, and they are Bidlos by the criterion that Morandis are Morandis. Morandi could paint Morandis in the way Bidlo painted them only if he appropriated himself, which of course he never did, despite the remarkable similarity between one Morandi and another. And though a Bidlo may resemble a Morandi as closely, or even more closely than one Morandi resembles another, a different critical vocabulary applies to a Bidlo than applies to a Morandi. The delicate critical vocabulary required for Morandi at best applies to what Bidlo shows, in the way that, for example, "foggy" applies to a landscape Turner shows, without applying to the painting itself. I am uncertain, in truth, what should be the critical language for appropriation, made all the more difficult by the fact that Bidlo shortly went on to paint Picassos. There is no way the sensibility that expressed itself in the characteristic trembling still life by Morandi could have done so in the *Demoiselles d'Avignon*, no way, looking at a Bidlo, we could give an affirmative answer to the question posed before *Guernica*: Did he who made those boxes and bottles make thee?

Appropriation might easily have been a metaphor for the life having gone out of art, as if artists had to seize upon the achievements of others in order to enjoy a secondary and derivative life: for art having no future other than that of repetition, in which someone appropriates Sherrie Levine's photographs of Walker Evans and someone appropriates those, so that we might have an exhibition of indiscernible photographs by different artists, each meaning different things, and only some of the photographs would show sharecroppers in their natural dignity,

praising them by giving them a place in works of high photographic art (the photographs of Walker Evans do not require praise); and only with some of the photographs would the aesthetics be clear and relatively a matter of consensus. But I meant nothing quite like this in talking about the end of art. I meant something that emerged in the sometimes sour polemics that surrounded the art of appropriation, where certain critics, thoroughly hostile to it, insisted that the appropriating photograph was not a work of art even if it could not be told apart from the one appropriated. That things looking quite alike should differ in such a way that one was a work of art and the other not meant that part of what the art of appropriation required in order to exist was a justification that it was a work of art. This justification is something very different from what would be required to distinguish a Walker Evans from a Sherrie Levine that looks quite like it—it is not an exercise of connoisseurship and authentication, but the answer to a philosophical question. And part of what I meant by art coming to an end was not so much a loss of creative energy, though that might be true, as that art, raising from within the question of its philosophical identity, was doing philosophy, so to speak, in the medium of art, and hence was transforming itself into another mode of what Hegel would term Absolute Spirit. The art of appropriation was a confirmation of this, almost as if mine, like Belting's, were an empirical historical thesis after all.

The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, the book in which I lay out the beginnings of a philosophy of art to address the philosophical questions raised by art, began with an exceedingly contrived example. I imagined a set of red squares, each of which had a distinct artistic identity: an historical painting (Kierkegaard wittily described a painting consisting of a single red shape as the Red Sea after the forces of Pharoah had all been drowned); a psychological portrait; a still life; a landscape; a minimalist abstraction, and so on. The differences in genre mean that quite different properties of these various squares, retinally indiscernible from one another, become artistically relevant, so though the shape and color remain the same through the example, the works are distinct and not

just numerically distinct. I also imagined a red square consisting of the ground laid onto canvas by Giorgione, who would have executed upon it a *Sacra Conversazione* had he not died so tragically young, in case someone thought being painted by an artist was criterial; and then a square of red paint made by no one in particular which was not a work of art though it looked just like some works of art. I thought it clear that whatever were the bases for distinguishing one artwork from another that appeared to look identical to it, different bases would be required to distinguish any of them from something that looked exactly like them but was not a work of art at all. I was delighted to meet a group of artists led by Marcia Hafif, after the book was published, who in fact painted red squares to the exclusion of anything else (though there were some near heretics who painted green ones), and to learn how complex the aesthetics of such reduced images really is. In any case, the problem of what makes something art when something phenomenally indistinguishable from it is not art had begun to enter the art world at its heart, and remains there to this day, if not quite in this form, appropriation being a case in point. And though, abstractly, the issue had always been available for philosophers, I thought it striking that no philosopher had ever raised it before, that the art world itself brought it forward as part of the question of its own nature. And since that happened at a certain moment in history, it was inevitable that I should wonder, as a philosopher, what the narrative was that required, at a certain climactic moment, that the question of art should arise from art in an acute philosophical form. It was almost as if the consciousness of its own nature became part of its nature at a certain historical moment, and that why art was art should be part of what art was, when, before, this was not really a question. Heidegger writes in effect that human beings are such that the question of what they are is part of what they are, but consciousness of this question was the essence of a philosophy when philosophy itself began and Socrates asked what he was. That a similar question should now have arisen for art implied a philosophization of art that meant the end of a history.

Neither Belting nor I was claiming that art had stopped

or that it was going to stop, but only that whatever way it was going to go on would be consistent with its having come to an end. A philosophical imbecile in an audience before which I once laid out my views imagined my thesis as something like one which held that the making of chairs had stopped—and seeing chairs being made by chairmakers the world round, it seemed to him that my thesis must be spectacularly false, like a claim that there are no material objects, or that Achilles can never catch up with the tortoise, or that space is unreal. Belting very likely and I certainly would want to distinguish coming to an end from coming to a stop, and to identify an end with an ending, hence with a moment in a narrative structure. The *Iliad* comes to an end, but the war does not stop. Homer could have stopped, unable or disinclined to complete his story, but that would imply a broken or an aborted story, rather than one consumated through a closure. One could imagine a history for art in which coming to an end would make no sense because it would not be a narrative history: if, for instance, there were an unbroken production of icons in which an effort was made that one should be as much like another as humanly possible, so that artists participating in that history would not have the consciousness of being part of a narrative but only a sort of industrial process, which of course could come to an end, say when demand stopped: there would be no distinction between the two sorts of termination then. Or one could argue that the making of art is so deeply human an activity that so long as humans exist, art of some form will be made: the psychologist Gibson contends that pictures at least have been found in all cultures since Cro-Magnon times, and though something can be a picture and not be a work of art, an inference is available that artistic pictures preceded nonartistic ones as poetry preceded prose. Still, it no more follows from there always being art in this sense—that there will always be art in the sense that there will always be metabolism, say—that all of this has to integrate into a narrative in which the question of coming to an end is almost a logical necessity, since narratives cannot be endless.

A distinction between stopping and coming to an end must temper criticism of Giorgio Vasari, historian of art,

and George Hegel, philosopher of the history of art, two great speculators to whom Belting and I appeal from our respective disciplines. Both of these spoke of art as having come to an end in, respectively, 1550 and 1828. But the century that followed Vasari's certain claim that Michelangelo had given the "final form" to the three noble arts saw Caravaggio and Rubens, Velázquez and Rembrandt, Poussin and El Greco, in all of whom painting attained heights that must be reckoned sublime even against Vasari's daunting paradigms of Michelangelo, Raphael, Leonardo and Titian. Hegel gave his course in aesthetics for the last time in Berlin in the winter semester of 1828—and the next one hundred twenty years includes the Impressionists and Cézanne, Picasso and Matisse, and culminates in Pollock and De Kooning. Both these post-narrative periods compass legions of great and near-great masters, alas for the prophetic credibility of our two figures, and there is an immediate question as to whether Belting and I are to fare any better. It is, I think, a commonplace and almost a consensus in the art world today that we are living through what Elizabeth Frank has called "bad aesthetic times" and which Roy Lichtenstein recently described as "just sort of an uninteresting moment . . . sort of nauseating." It is widely conceded that the heavy engines of the art world turn and turn without any of their massive energy, economic and publicitaire, translating into creative energy. But I wonder if Belting's thesis and mine might not hold even if these were rather good aesthetic times, times that disguised the truth that a story had ended. Belting and I have sensed something in the wind, but what if there were no wind, no reason (aside from our own arguments) for members of the art world to think us right, nor for others to think this a "moment" after which things might start up again, might reanimate with some of the excitement Lichtenstein remembers from the 1960s. Whatever the case, neither Vasari nor Hegel was saying that art had stopped. The question is: how it could be consistent with art's having come to an end that it should go from greatness to greatness afterwards?

Vasari did not believe he lived in bad aesthetic times. His great work, *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculp-*

tors, and Architects, ends with his own life; he thought reasonably well of himself and of his contemporaries. But he felt that the great narrative enacted through the lives of the artists in his book had come to its end, that the perfection of art had largely been attained, in the sense, I suppose, that someone might have thought that with Newton the main elements of the universe had been understood, even though there remained work to do, say, on the orbit of the moon, for a long time to come. I think Vasari supposed that the general principles of making perfect works of art were now understood, that the models were all in place. According to Belting, Vasari was the father of the concept of the academy. The Accademia del desegno was founded in 1563, just between the two editions of the *Lives*: "The Lives had erected as absolute standards the 'maniere' of the Golden Age of Art . . . ; the Academy in turn proposed a theoretical and practical education according to the ideal style of the *Lives*." Belting in fact argues that "The first two and a half centuries between the founding of the first academy and the secession of the later Nazarenes from the Viennese Academy might even be thought of as the age of the academies." The Nazarene Peter Cornelius left Rome for Munich in 1819, and Friedrich Overbeck's *Rose Miracle of Saint Francis* was executed in 1829 in Assisi, and though I do not know to what degree Hegel knew the Nazarenes, they give us a nice connection between our two thinkers—and were Hegel to have based his view that art had come to an end on the work of the Nazarenes, there might have been the same double justification, in theory and in art, that I would appeal to in connection with my own and Belting's views, since they are pretty vapid painters.

In any case, the institutionalization in academies of the great progress traced by Vasari from Giotto to Michaelangelo would give a vivid example of how it was possible for art to come to an end without coming to a stop. By analogy, we might think of our era as the age of the art school, in which, in a certain sense, academicians go forth in vast numbers—from Calart and Yale and Pratt and Rhode Island School of Design and the Boston Museum School and perhaps the Columbia University School of the Arts—to stock the increasing numbers of museums, just as

their predecessors went forth from the Vasarian academies to embellish walls and design tapestries and plan monuments, even if art had come to an end. The difficulty in our own time is that we cannot accept with quite the equanimity of Vasari that it should *go on* having come to an end.

The difficulty with this elegant distinction is that it cannot be reconciled with the great artists who came after the end as Vasari describes it. And part at least of Belting's problem lies here: "One problem has never disappeared. The problem of how to write the subsequent history of something which had already appeared in Vasari's 'Bible' as a finished process." In a certain sense, history after the end of history is a sufficiently uncomfortable notion that one wants to question seriously whether it is the end, and hence whether the narrative in which it ended is a true one. But Vasari's powerful narrative gives us the one good example we have of an historical theory of art that makes sense of a mass of art history, and we are reluctant to abandon it, for if Vasari's narrative goes, conceptual chaos comes: it would be like opening that great sack of winds the Aeolians gave Odysseus just when one is in sight of home, blowing him violently off course to where, as Odysseus laments, "We do not know where the darkness is or the sunrise, nor where the Sun who shines upon people rises nor where he sets." So let us focus on art just after Vasari, in Italy "Circa 1600," to appropriate the famous title. Is there a narrative structure that can integrate everything that Vasari's account makes so splendidly coherent, together with everything that fails to fit the history of art if Vasari's narrative of an ending is true: 1600 until just short of 2000 is a long lapse, to be as loosely understood as "Painting lived happily ever after"?

Vasari's is an internal narrative of the mastery of visual appearances, a bit like the history of the airplane or the automobile: a progression in which technology generates technology better than itself with reference to a defining goal, after which there are minor refinements and, as said before, institutionalization. Vasari's narrative contains external *references*; Piero della Francesca's *Legend of the True Cross*, for example, refers to the fall of Constan-

tinople in 1453, though Piero's place in the internal history has nothing to do with Constantinople, but rather with his contribution to perspective. What happened between Raphael and Caravaggio was an *external* event, not part at all of Vasari's story, the parameters of which are developments in what he enumerates as rule, proportion, order, draftsmanship, and manner. It was with respect to these that the "Masters of the Third Age," as Vasari designates them, attained "supreme perfection," excluding the possibility of a "Fourth Age" into which Caravaggio, or the Caracci, or the great masters of the Baroque would have to fall. "A historical theory of Baroque art, properly speaking, never emerged at all," according to Belting. The external event, which Vasari's scheme had no way of forecasting, was the Counter Reformation. Here is one way to continue the narrative.

From about 1300 until just before 1600, artists were concerned with the development of an illusory visual space, a space sufficiently like real space that by and large the same skills that enable us to navigate real space optically, serve to rationalize the placement of objects in illusory space. Hence the appropriateness of the metaphor of the window—Ruskin, in his essay on perspective, reminds us that the word means "looking through"—and it was really as if the Renaissance artist commanded a magic window, enabling us as witnesses to observe the events that mattered to us most, even if (and this is where the magic comes in) we are temporally excluded in the ordinary course of things from the events in question. We could, in effect, only see through the window, and hence the magic reduced us to disembodied eyes, pure visual spectators. The disembodiment of the eye is confirmed, for me at least, by the fact that in Piero's Saint Francis Chapel in Arezzo, each of the pictures is structured from an eye level the person who enters the chapel could never occupy, unless there were a complex scaffolding of some sort. Now Piero was the supreme master of perspective, and could have arranged his compositions so that they fell perspectively in place from a spot on the floor, instead of which there are several positions, none of which can be bodily occupied, from which the scenes may be optimally witnessed, that is, witnessed so that illusion is a possibility.

In a Baroque chapel, by contrast, account would be taken of the embodiment of the eye, and after 1600, the eye is reembodied in order that we, as spectators but now more than mere spectators, now participants, should be folded into the reality we were excluded from throughout the Renaissance progress, in every way save optically. From 1600 on, we become part of the illusion.

This shift does not continue the internal narrative of Vasari's *Lives*, which ends in the Third Age. Rather, it reduces all three of Vasari's stages to a *single* stage in a new narrative, the second stage of which begins circa 1600. The next or Baroque stage is not an internal development from the first stage, and need never have happened. It was caused by an event external to the Vasari narrative. In the new stage, painting is less a matter of visual than of what we might term "spiritual" illusion, where the scene of enactment is less a window seen through than a theatrical space physically occupied. The philosophical point is this: the end of art, meaning the end of a certain narrative of the history of art, is always in terms of an internal history, for which Vasari's is as good a paradigm as I know (though Hegel's is another). Narratives of the history of art can make no *external* predictions, but only a forecast from within.

Caravaggio has recently been invoked by the American abstractionist, Frank Stella, as a kind of predecessor; in Stella's view, he, Stella, was liberating abstraction from flatness just as Caravaggio was liberating illusion from flatness. He claimed, and I think correctly, that Caravaggio liberated painting from walls and pages, hence from decoration and illustration, by inventing what Stella calls "working space." Stella writes: "I believe that Caravaggio meant painting to grow outside of itself. His illusionism overcame technique, mandating in effect, that our technique should overcome illusionism." That sounds like Caravaggio was mandating abstract art! Caravaggio did mean for painting to "grow outside of itself," but not to overcome illusion; rather, to make possible a deeper illusion than visual art had been capable of before. Stella, as an artist, was reacting to an aesthetic that mandated flatness as the condition of painting, and his exuberant three-dimensional paintings celebrate the overthrow of Clement

Greenberg's tyranny. But Stella belongs to the *internal* history of modern art, reacting against a theory of what art must be—and he reads Caravaggio as internal to the history Caravaggio reacts against, rather than as the beginning of an entirely new history, a history of artists responding not to previous art but to the imperatives of new patrons. The *Madonna of the Rosary* is not a picture window into an event we witness from without: it is an instrument for including us, kneeling in prayer, as participants in that event. Obviously, nobody is going to fall to his knees in the Kunstistorsches Museum where the painting hangs, and the circumstances of the museum impose an essential visuality on Caravaggio's achievement. It is a tribute to Stella that he should have sensed the external space generated by the painting even so. In any case, considered merely as visual, Caravaggio does not go beyond Vasari's Third Age. It is by going beyond the visual that he belongs to a stage Vasari had no way of accommodating. In some way Caravaggio internalizes into painting what had belonged to architecture and even to sculpture.

I have found it valuable, if a bit too neat, to see the history of Western art as falling into three main periods, circa 1300, circa 1600, and circa 1900. I cannot speculate over what external event it was that gives rise to Giotto and the internal history of visual representation which generates the progress Vasari brought to general consciousness. I think we know what in general stimulated the shift to multidimensional illusionism around 1600, namely the conscious decision of the Church to enlist art in the service of faith by operating at the level of visual rhetoric. The shift to modernism is more difficult to identify, though two thoughts have occurred to me. One is that the advent of motion-picture technology took the capacity for illusion outside the hands of painters, forcing them either to rethink the nature of painting or simply to become outmoded. The Vasarian history continues into the moving picture, the entire narrative construed as the technical conquest of appearances, while painting moves along another and more philosophical tangent altogether, abruptly concerned as it is with what is the essence of painting. The other thought concerns the sudden percep-

tion in the late nineteenth century of the artistic merit of primitive art, which connected with the fading of a belief that Western civilization, emblemized by Western art, defined the apex of human attainment, defined the end state of a narrative supposed to chart the course for aspiring cultures. Here I give particular credit to Paul Gauguin, and my inclination is to believe that all the strategies of modernism just short of abstraction are to be found in his own innovation as an artist. Gauguin described himself as a "cerebral" artist and primitive art as rational or—as Picasso was to say of the work that so stirred him in the Ethnographic Museum at Trocadero—"*raisonable.*"

Both my explanations, if they are that, required a redefinition of art of a kind Baroque art was not required to give; Baroque art could accordingly be seen as a smooth continuation of the sort of art Vasari understood so well. Modern art could not be viewed as such a continuation, and it required a fair amount of theory, a fair amount indeed of what I would term philosophy, in order to be perceived as art at all. It is striking to me that from its inception, modernism was a series of essentialisms, what philosophers a generation ago called "persuasive definition" of what art essentially was. To this day the charge that something is *not* art remains a standard accusation against things that could not easily be thought of as something else: just a few months ago, a *New York Times* critic, Roberta Smith, on the front page of the Arts and Leisure Section, had severe reservations regarding the paintings of David Hockney, the photographs of Robert Mapplethorpe and the glass creations of Dale Chihuly. Something's status as art has to be defended, indeed its defense is part of what something is, in the art world of modernity, as we saw in connection with appropriation; questions about something's status as art never could have arisen before the nineteenth century. It is this that I feel Hegel was describing when, in his stupendous work on the philosophy of art, he claimed, it must have seemed prematurely, that "art, considered in its highest vocation, is and remains for us a thing of the past."

> Thereby it has lost for us genuine truth and life, and has rather been transferred into our *ideas* instead of main-

> taining its earlier necessity in reality and occupying its higher place . . . The *philosophy* of art is therefore a greater need in our days than it was when art by itself as art yielded full satisfaction. Art invites us to intellectual consideration, and that not for the purpose of creating art again, but for knowing philosophically what art is.

It is with regard to this sort of consideration that I had meant to say not that art had stopped, nor that it was dead, but that it had come to an end by turning into something else, namely philosophy. And on this a few words must be said.

I am not enough of a Hegel scholar to know if he had anyone particular in mind, as critics of appropriationism might have had them in mind when saying art had run its course. It could have been a systematic consequence, with no external allusion, but Hegel's *Aesthetik* is so extraordinarily detailed a work that it does not fit with Hegel to suppose it mere unanchored conjecture. I like to think it was in fact the Nazarenes he might have in view, which would connect my narratives beautifully: they were secessionists from academic painting in the name of a theory of what art must be that goes against the academic grain, and they had a consciousness of art history such that it was necessary in their view to go back into the past, before the *Transfiguration* of Raphael, where it seemed to them a disastrous wrong turn had been taken. They went back in the 1820s as the Pre-Raphaelites were to do in the '40s and '50s, not as far as Gauguin, but more diffidently, which accounts in part for the diffidence of their work. In any case you could not respond to Nazarene painting without commanding a philosophy of history and a theory of art, and this contrasts acutely with art in its highest vocation, where no theory was needed, where in classical sculpture, in Hegel's grand narrative, the bodily form of the divinity gave perfect embodiment to the divine personality (to paraphrase Wittgenstein, the divine body was the best picture we had of the divine mind). In Symbolic art, which predated classical sculpture, body and thought were so external to one another that a rule was required to learn what or even that something meant something else. In Romantic art, the final

stage, where painting superceded sculpture, it did so, in the words of John Addington Symonds, altogether under Hegel's spell, in order "to give form to the ideas evolved by Christianity, and to embody a class of emotions unknown to the ancients." I think in fact it was this latter function that was magnificently discharged by Baroque art, which embodied the emotions by embodying the spectator as a participant, in whom the feelings were elicited in consequence of a total theatrical illusion. Romantic art might have to be the last stage of art for Hegel's narrative, because he could not envision what came after Christianity; it is at least the last stage in which art deals with something outside itself. In Hegel's time, art had begun to deal with its own processes: art about art, to take the title of a penetrating exhibition at the Whitney Museum some seasons back; art exhibited that order of self-consciousness of which, for Hegel, philosophy consists, and in which he locates the end of history itself: history terminates in the consciousness of its own processes or, in Hegel's terms, in self-knowledge, which for him was the same as freedom. And once there is freedom, then, strictly speaking, there is no more history. Such, in a kind of nutshell, was the total vision he had.

My own sense of this historical structure comes close to Hegel's. I think that whenever modernism begins, whether with the Nazarenes or the Pre-Raphaelites, or with Gauguin and Matisse and Picasso, its mark was that effort at self-definition which consists in saying: Art is *X* and nothing else, which is the essentialism so characteristic of modern art, with its vertiginous succession of movements and its waspish intolerances. The question "what is art?" was expressed in its pure philosophical form by Warhol, when he exhibited, in 1964, those marvelous Brillo Boxes, relevantly so precisely like the cartons of Brillo in the supermarket, raising the question acutely as to why something should be a work of art while something altogether like it should not. And that, I thought, was as far as art could go, the answers to the question having to come from philosophy. The '70s was an uneasy period of pluralism—uneasy in the sense that one could now do anything very nearly without having to worry whether someone would say it wasn't art, but at the same

time having to worry whether history ought not to start up again, as externally but falsely it appeared to do at the beginning of this decade.

The modern era has seen such a heterogeneity of things defended (and of course disputed) as art that for a time the most advanced philosophical view was that no definition could be had. That was the Wittgensteinian posture, by and large. It seemed, from the perspective of philosophy itself, that art would inevitably produce a counter-example to every theory, and there would have to have been a certain glee in discussions in which participants would ask, naming some improbable substance, could this be art? could that be?—as in a parallel debate with muddled missionaries in Forster's *A Passage to India* on the limits of divine hospitality in the mansions of the Lord's house. Will there be room for monkeys? Or, if these are admitted, for jackals?

> Jackals were indeed less to Mr. Sorley's mind, but he admitted that the mercy of God, being infinite, may well embrace all mammals. And the wasps? He became uneasy during the descent to wasps, and was apt to change the conversation. And oranges, cactuses, crystals and mud? and the bacteria inside Mr. Sorley? No, no, this is going too far. We must exclude something from our gathering, or we shall be left with nothing. [Though Forster shows how a more accommodating Hinduism has room for wasps, though mud presents an obstacle, perhaps temporary].

What Warhol demonstrated was that anything, if a work of art, can be matched by something that looks just like it which is not one, so the difference between art and non-art cannot rest in what they have in common—and that will be everything that strikes the eye. But once it is recognized that we must look for differentiating features at right angles to their surfaces, the entire urgency is drained from the enterprise of producing counter-instances, and the analysis of the concept can proceed without examples and without counter-examples: we are in the thin unhistorical atmosphere of philosophy. But once art-makers are freed from the task of finding the essence of art, thrust upon them at the inception of mod-

ernism, they are liberated also from history, and have entered the era of freedom. Art does not stop with the end of art history. What happens only is that one set of imperatives is lifted from the practice of art as it enters its post-historical phase. I cannot of course speak for Hans Belting, but perhaps, for different reasons, his conclusion would harmonize with mine. For him art as an historical process ends with the end of a master narrative of the kind Vasari's magnificently illustrates: when there is no longer such a narrative, then that is *Das Ende der Kunstgeschichte*. We can see that, as he does, perhaps, as a kind of disorder. Or that same disorder can be seen as a kind of freedom, where the question of whether something is art is less and less a question of what manifest properties an object has, more and more a question of how it fits a theory that has to be compatible with all possible sets of manifest properties. The same historical energy that liberates art liberates it from philosophy, and liberates philosophy from it as well. It is a heady moment, inevitably confusing to us all.