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Author(s): Jane Forsey

Source: *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 59, No. 4 (Autumn, 2001), pp. 403-409

Published by: Wiley on behalf of The American Society for Aesthetics

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/432292>

Accessed: 19-02-2018 13:07 UTC

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## Philosophical Disenfranchisement in Danto's "The End of Art"

In 1984, Arthur C. Danto wrote two papers, both with enormously provocative themes. One, "The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art," is a chronicling of aggressive strategies made against art by philosophy in an effort to contain and control it, and a call for art's re-empowerment. The second, "The End of Art," offers a Hegelian model of art history in which art (necessarily) comes to an end with its own philosophical self-consciousness. Both papers appeared in a volume of Danto's essays in 1986.<sup>1</sup> "The End of Art" caused an explosion of almost unanimously negative response in symposia, conferences, papers, and books by a "who's who" of the philosophy of art world that has continued for a decade and a half.<sup>2</sup> "The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art" has been met with virtual silence.<sup>3</sup>

As the smoke begins to clear fifteen years later, a retrospective look at these works engenders a certain amount of bewilderment. First, it is odd that the critical response by the philosophical community has been focused only on "The End of Art." "The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art," with its provocation to defend the discipline of philosophy, should have been an equal candidate for making noise in academic circles. What is more puzzling, though, is that these two papers have not been considered together. That they are seemingly contradictory is interesting enough: art as oppressed by philosophy in one, and in the other, art looking into a mirror and seeing philosophy as its own reflection. Indeed, the same argument appears in and overlaps both papers. For all their seeming disparity, though, it appears that Danto *intended* them to be taken together. In his introduction to the volume in which they appear, Danto states that these papers "form a natural narrative order,

almost as though they were chapters in a single book with an overarching theme."<sup>4</sup> This theme, the relation among art, philosophy, and historical consciousness, begins with disenfranchisement but ends with liberation. "The End of Art," claims Danto, is an effort at the *re-enfranchisement* of art through a forced division between it and philosophy.<sup>5</sup> This division, he asserts, will lead to freedom for both.

Thus the one paper really cannot be properly assessed without the other. Whatever critiques "The End of Art" has been subject to, and however much Danto's critics think areas of his argument are flawed, their attention has been directed toward showing that whereas Danto thinks art has ended, it really has not.<sup>6</sup> The most important question that has not been asked regards the project as a whole: does "The End of Art" succeed in its intended liberatory goal? This essay will pursue that question. After laying out the general thrust of both papers to demonstrate their narrative continuity, I will consider them together in light of this broader claim. But I will argue that "The End of Art" is an astonishing confirmation of Danto's thesis in "The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art." Whatever Danto set out to do, the arguments of "The End of Art" amount to the most comprehensive disenfranchising strategy ever launched against art.

### I. THE DISENFRANCHISEMENT OF ART

"The history of art is the history of the suppression of art," states Danto in "The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art" (p. 4). It is a "massive collaborative effort" to neutralize art, to render it impotent to effect change in the world (DOA, p. 4). Underlying this suppressive effort

is some sense that art is potentially dangerous; to insist that art “can make nothing happen” (DOA, p. 4) is to fear that it can. This is a grave charge to make against philosophy. It suggests that art may have potential power to move the human spirit but that this power has been systematically stripped away. In fact, Danto notes that we *cannot* know what art can or cannot do, because it and philosophy have become so intricately linked that art is in part “constituted by what it is philosophically believed to be” (DOA, p. 5). What is required, he claims, in order to properly assess the potential of art—in order to learn what it *is*—is that we must first “archeologiz[e] these disenfranchising theories” (DOA, p. 4) to discover their political subtext. This is the task he undertakes in this paper.

The history of oppression springs from Plato’s theory of art and consists of two distinct lines to what Danto calls the “Platonic attack” (DOA, p. 7). The first, “ephemeralization,” strives to separate art from life or reality by making an ontological distinction between the two: if art is not part of life, it cannot affect us in any real way. Plato’s conception of art as imitation twice removed from the reality of the Forms is echoed for Danto in Kant, for whom our attitude toward art must be *disinterested*. This Danto contrasts with “having an interest” or with the “human order” itself, since “to be human is very largely to have interests” (DOA, p. 9). Art is thus “a kind of ontological vacation place from our defining concerns as human” (DOA, p. 9). Our responses to it differ from our responses to the real world: set off from all cognitive, practical, and moral pursuits, art is separate from life, ephemeral. On the Kantian view, art is “purposiveness without any specific purpose” (DOA, p. 10): it may look as though it has use but it does not; compared to other human purposes and concerns, art indeed “can make nothing happen.”

The ontological marginalization of art continues to the present day in the philosophy of art, and Danto provides examples, among them the works of Santayana, Bullough and his theory of aesthetic distance, Stolnitz (disinterested attention), and George Dickie’s institutional theory of art whereby an object’s status as art is conferred on it and contained by the institutions of an “artworld” (DOA, p. 11). Many of the theories that Danto slots into this line of art’s sup-

pression attempt to define art in essentialist terms, rendering it a special category of objects or activities that can be distinguished from “real” life. This enterprise serves to put “art in a box,” as a respondent to this thesis notes.<sup>7</sup> Plato’s definition of art as mere appearance, then, is less a theory of art than it is a strategy for showing art to be metaphysically defective. And it is this *political* motivation that, for Danto, lies behind all ephemeralizing strategies.

The second line of the attack on art—“takeover” (DOA, p. 8)—is an attempt to substitute philosophy for art by allowing art “a degree of validity,” suggesting it is a primitive form of philosophy, doing what philosophy does, albeit “uncouthly” (DOA, p. 7). This, for Danto, is the political subtext (DOA, p. 9) of the Hegelian system. In the internal logic of Hegel’s dialectic, Consciousness (or *Geist*) moves through necessary “moments” or stages in its development toward Absolute knowledge, the final three of these being art, religion, and philosophy, respectively. All three reveal the Absolute or express the same “content” but in different “forms”: art in sensory form; religion in pictorial imagery; and philosophy in the form of conceptual thought.<sup>8</sup> Art is thus a self-alienated stage of Consciousness. As Consciousness approaches the Absolute, the need for sensory expression drops away, to be replaced by the purity of conceptual thought. Danto interprets this to imply that it is the “historical mission of art to make philosophy possible” (DOA, p. 16), after which it no longer has any role to play. “Art cannot speak philosophy”<sup>9</sup> (although the converse is possible): its “mission” ends by its revealing “the philosophical essence at its heart” (DOA, p. 16). Thus art, if it is not already a weak form of philosophy, *becomes* philosophy: its “fulfillment and fruition,” for Danto, “is the philosophy of art” (DOA, p. 16).

The attempt to supersede art does not play out in the philosophy of art in the same way that the ephemeralizing tactic did: it is not a matter of essentialist theories imposed by philosophy onto art. Rather, Danto traces the “takeover” of art from within the artworld itself, suggesting that art is somehow complicit in its own oppression. The history of art can be read as the gradual transformation of art into philosophy, which was completed at art’s posing the *philosophical* question of its own nature. And this history is

the point at which Danto's second paper takes over from the first.

## II. THE END OF ART

"The End of Art" serves three overlapping purposes. First, it offers a certain model of art history characterized by the same Hegelian theme that, while noting that it is "one form of the disenfranchisement of art" (EOA, p. 81), Danto supports as the most plausible model available that will account for the breadth of art practices and the changes of these practices through time. Second, "The End of Art" shows how this history of art made possible and necessary the philosophy of art and operates as a defense of the discipline, and in particular as a defense of Danto's theory of art.<sup>10</sup> Third, this paper somewhat ambiguously attempts to liberate art from philosophy's disenfranchising attacks. This last goal is more clearly developed in Danto's subsequent returns to the theme,<sup>11</sup> but is nevertheless apparent in the original.

Art has a history, and this history is for Danto developmental, or progressive. As with eschatological models of time, a linear history of art implies that it might come to an end, as indeed Danto believes it has done. Briefly, the art history he traces begins with art as imitation, in both theory and practice. Art moved toward ever more realistic semblances of things until the advent of cinema, which effectively took over this task (EOA, pp. 89, 99). Robbed of the purpose it once had, Danto claims that art this century can be characterized by its inward turn, becoming reflexive as it sought new direction and meaning. The proliferation of new art movements (and Danto names fauvism, cubism, surrealism, dadaism, abstract expressionism, and pop art, among others [EOA, p. 108]) has raised the question "what is art?" and each has offered itself as a "possible final answer" (EOA, p. 109).

Each movement generated a theory of art of its own as it explored its own nature in greater and greater depth. Successive schools depended "more and more upon theory for [their] existence as art" until "virtually all there is at the end *is* theory" (EOA, p. 111). The end of the history of art is art's becoming philosophy at the moment that it is "vaporized in a dazzle of pure thought about itself" (EOA, p. 111), and sensory form becomes unnecessary. This moment of

transformation occurred in 1964 with Andy Warhol's exhibition of *Brillo Boxes*, which asked not simply "what is art?" but "why is something a work of art when something exactly like it [a "real" Brillo box] is not?" (DOA, p. 15). For Danto, *Brillo Boxes* finally posed the question of art's nature in its proper philosophical form, as for him it is definitive of philosophical problems that they treat issues of indiscernibility.<sup>12</sup> The task of *answering* this question is the proper task of the philosophy of art, because it alone "is equipped to cope with its own nature directly and definitively" (DOA, p. 16, and see EOA, p. 111). In this adaptation of Hegel's system, the philosophy of art is both a natural outcome of the history of art and the only possible medium in which to explore art's essence. For Danto, the "importance of art then lies in the fact that it makes philosophy of art possible and important. . . . [T]he historical stage of art is done with when it is known what art is and means" (EOA, p. 111). Art can set up the philosophical problem, make "the way open for philosophy" (EOA, p. 111), but it cannot answer the question it raises.

Handing over the task of its definition to philosophy has a liberating effect on art. While art may have ended, the practices of painting, sculpting, and so on will not stop: they will simply cease to move *toward* any goal. We have arrived, in the present day, at a "post-historical" era of artmaking when our artistic activities no longer have any historical significance (EOA, pp. 84, 112). In this age of artistic pluralism, one direction is as good as another, because "there is no concept of direction any longer to apply" (EOA, p. 115). In transferring the weight of self-definition to philosophy, art is for Danto "liberated from history" and enters an "era of freedom."<sup>13</sup> What happens next, he does not know, suggesting in turns confusion,<sup>14</sup> a return to simplicity and entertainment (EOA, p. 113), or a return to art's serving human needs as "an enhancement of human life."<sup>15</sup> But these future directions only become possible through art's participation in its own disenfranchising history up until the moment of its release.

## III. DISENFRANCHISEMENT IN "THE END OF ART"

An understanding of the two papers as a single narrative in the service of a larger project affords

a deeper appreciation of the subtlety and sophistication of Danto's work. His argument in "The End of Art" is a continuation of the thesis of "The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art." Using Hegelian ideas of historical necessity, Danto imagines that he is re-enfranchising art when he claims it is over: the completion of its historical mission is the only way it can be freed from the oppressive moves of philosophy, and Danto works to convince us that this is what has occurred. Art has ended, but it has ended for a reason. What seems like "takeover" is in fact the road to freedom. Once Danto's goals are clearer, his work can be properly assessed in light of them. The question of whether "The End of Art" has been successful no longer means only "is art really over?" but "is its end really its liberation?" In this preliminary attempt to tackle the bigger question, the answer comes back, "no."

Ironically, perhaps, the disenfranchising effect of "The End of Art" occurs along both lines of the "Platonic attack" as Danto had characterized them. The ephemeralizing strategy, which sought an ontological distinction between art and life, can initially be seen operating in Danto's philosophy of art itself. Danto states, "My aim has been essentialist—to find a definition of art everywhere and always true."<sup>16</sup> This essentialist theory begins with the problem of indiscernibles<sup>17</sup> and isolates two conditions for a definition of art. First, unlike real things, artworks possess "aboutness" or "affirm some thesis" on which we then ground an interpretation.<sup>18</sup> Real things, by contrast, are not *about* anything at all. Second, an artwork "embodies" meaning in its sensory presentation; a thing can be interpreted only so long as one supposes it to embody or carry meaning.<sup>19</sup> The model of art history Danto sketches is intended to support his theory against counterexamples (a major problem for essentialist theories): once the question of art's nature is framed in terms of indiscernibles (and thus once art ends), no further theoretical breakthroughs can come from the artworld, and an essentialist theory—Danto's essentialist theory—finally becomes possible.<sup>20</sup> But to frame a theory in terms of indiscernibles is immediately ephemeralizing: Danto seeks the conditions by which artworks are *not* "mere real things,"<sup>21</sup> and these conditions ensure that our response to art (interpretation) differs from our response to the rest of the

world, just as Kant's notion of disinterest or Bullough's theory of aesthetic distance had done before.

"The End of Art" further ephemeralizes art in its interpretation of Hegel's system. For Hegel, the *telos* of Consciousness is cognitive, leading toward Absolute knowledge, and for Danto the history of art likewise has a cognitive goal (EOA, p. 107). However, while for Hegel art is a stage in the internal development of Consciousness, Danto refers only to the stages of *art's* progress, as though this history were a separate trajectory from history as a whole, its progressive path affecting us and being affected by us only incidentally. This implies that art can presumably reach self-consciousness ahead of, or without, the larger culture also reaching this goal.<sup>22</sup> At the end of *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, Absolute knowledge is *Geist* knowing itself as *Geist*;<sup>23</sup> it is a philosophy of Mind that is nothing other than complete self-knowledge, which contains within it all prior dialectical moments, including religion, art, and social history in general. But for Danto, the philosophy at the end of history is specifically his philosophy of *art*. While he adopts Hegel's narrative model of the *Bildungsroman* (EOA, p. 110), Danto moves art from its place as a stage through which *Geist* passes in the process of self-disclosure to center stage: art becomes the protagonist of the story and the subject of a separate history.<sup>24</sup> The end of this story is not, however, a Hegelian reconciliation of Mind with itself in full encompassing self-consciousness; nor is it a quasi-Hegelian self-consciousness of art in Absolute knowledge of its own nature. Danto's end of the story includes a substitution of heroes: art makes way for the *philosophy* of art, as philosophy alone can divine the nature of art and bring it to fruition.

There is thus a twofold ephemeralization at work in "The End of Art": art things are not real things according to Danto's theory (although indiscernible from them), and art history is an internal dialectic that unfolds at worst without us, or at best alongside us, but certainly in a realm of its own. In both cases the product is, as Danto asserts in his earlier paper, "an ontology in which reality is logically immunized against art" (DOA, p. 7). Art is separate from life—different *in kind* from the real, with a history of its own; art is thus effectively neutralized and cannot af-

fect our lives in any real way. If art is "liberated" in this scheme, it is liberated only through its successful marginalization: finally and fully shown to be ontologically distinct from life, art sheds the burden of self-understanding and can now go on its *own* way; artists can create as they wish, in the rarefied air of an ephemeral realm.

Turning to the second line of the Platonic attack, it is Danto's characterization of both art and philosophy that in the end allows the latter to take over the former. Danto needs to make (or "force," in his terms) a clear distinction between the two disciplines in order to support his art history, to defend the need for a philosophy of art, and to bring forth his liberatory message. One of the things Danto takes from Hegel is a sense of art's ineffectiveness and failure. While art had always had "a set of problems," it was after the advent of cinema that it became a "problem for itself."<sup>25</sup> But art *as* art cannot solve this final problem—it cannot arrive at knowledge of its own essence. Posing the *question* of what art is is as far as it can go. It fails in the task of answering the question, and this failure, rather than the fulfillment of its historical mission, is the reason it hands itself over to philosophy (EOA, p. 111).

Let me probe this idea of failure a little further. The ineffectiveness of art lies for Danto in the fact that it is a *nonverbal* activity,<sup>26</sup> and this inability to verbalize has limited it. Philosophy, by contrast, *is* verbal and alone operates on the "level of abstract self-consciousness"<sup>27</sup> required for this task of definition. This echoes Hegel's characterization of philosophy as pure conceptual thought. Art "can make nothing happen" because here it lacks the tools. However, in spite of this liability, up to the moment of its astounding failure, Danto grants that art has accomplished much: it has not only nonverbally raised the question of its nature, but nonverbally has raised it in "proper philosophical form": that of indiscernibles. As Michael Kelly notes, Danto is actually suggesting, oddly, that art is "incapable of answering a question it is capable of asking."<sup>28</sup> Moreover, Danto does not explain his certainty that *Brillo Boxes* was, indeed, asking a question at all. The reflexive stage of art until 1964 was characterized by Danto as a number of movements, each of which was a "projected definition of art"<sup>29</sup> that offered itself as a possible final answer. Art prior to Warhol, as it became dependent more and more upon theory, had been

engaged in more than raising questions: by Danto's own admission, it had been speculating, hypothesizing, conjecturing, and theorizing. And all of these activities, including questioning itself, are activities in the purview of philosophy as well as, it would seem, art. *Brillo Boxes*, then, like its earlier counterparts, *could* have been questioning its own nature, but it could also have been conjecturing or exploring or proffering a theory of its nature as well. And this blurs the line between the two disciplines that the idea of "verbality" does nothing to clear up.

Danto's claim cannot be that art does not treat philosophical issues, although this would be the easiest way to force a juncture between the two.<sup>30</sup> But nor can his claim be that art does not treat philosophical issues effectively *enough*. As Michael Kelly again notes, art has had an important role to play, for although philosophy can answer the question of art's essence, it was incapable of *asking* it.<sup>31</sup> What is implied by Kelly's statement is that the question of art's identity is only properly posed once an art object exists that is indistinguishable from an ordinary object. This requires *artists* to produce works that are indistinguishable in this way. Only once these objects exist can philosophy see that they are indeed art and then ask *why* they are art. Thus, through Warhol, art made a crucial contribution to its cognitive goal, without which philosophy could not have taken over the task. But this puts Danto into a bind: if it can be shown that art is ineffective or fails philosophically, then *Brillo Boxes* is deprived of the momentous force he claims it had. But if art *can* treat philosophical issues, and do so in proper form, Danto no longer has grounds to support the superiority of, and need for, a philosophy of art.

The takeover of art by philosophy is neither necessary nor historically inevitable in the way Danto needs it to be, because art has much greater philosophical effectiveness than he wishes to acknowledge. One critic has observed that the import Danto ascribes to *Brillo Boxes* indicates that "from the possibility of a work of *visual* art being philosophy, we can gather that philosophy itself is not restricted to language."<sup>32</sup> Indeed, Danto's first condition of a thing's being art, that of its "aboutness," holds the kernel of this idea. For if artworks are about something, then they are not just different sorts of things, but different sorts of *signs*. They are, as Martin

Seel suggests, “sayings *about* and showings *of* the world”<sup>33</sup> that do not have meaning in the way linguistic signs do, as they *embody* their meanings in a way that is singular and perhaps untranslatable. And if this condition is part of what constitutes a work of art, then one point of art is that it offers “unique appearances in the world which in turn display unique interpretations *of* the world.”<sup>34</sup> Danto’s adoption of Hegel’s conception of philosophy is in effect a privileging of the rational, verbal, and conceptual elements of the philosophical enterprise. But it is conceivable that philosophical meaning can be carried in an alternative form.

Danto’s characterization of philosophy includes an assumption that only these elements form the appropriate methodology for the task of self-understanding. And whether or not that is true (although I suspect it is not), the point becomes moot, because we have seen that Danto has changed the story from one of *self*-understanding (of art, or of philosophy once it has taken over from art) to an understanding and definition of *the other*. Philosophy defines art, and this task of definition, as Danto has asserted of essentialist theories, is nothing more than putting “art in a box” to contain and control it. The “takeover” by philosophy, if not the natural outcome of art’s development, must be reattributed to the political motivation Danto had suggested in the beginning and had sought to overcome. And the consequence of this is a failure of Danto’s project. For if there is liberation here, it is through not only the ephemeralization of art but also the stripping away of its identity and potential cognitive power.

A proper re-enfranchisement of art will require the reattribution to it of some of its power. It may not be that art is “dangerous” but that art is *useful*. If it has the cognitive function both Hegel and Danto ascribe to it, philosophy must move from its historical project of defining art to one of attempting to “read” the meaning it embodies. This will lead to a better understanding of art, and perhaps of philosophy as well, if the two disciplines are as intricately linked as Danto asserts. We do not need the complex project Danto undertakes in order to “return” art to the service of human needs; we need only an acknowledgment that this may have been its role all along. And it may be that this required ac-

knowledgment is what has been keeping the philosophical community at large from responding to “The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art.”<sup>35</sup>

JANE FORSEY  
Department of Philosophy  
Queen’s University at Kingston  
Kingston, Ontario  
Canada K7L 3N6

INTERNET: 6kjf@qlink.queensu.ca

1. The volume in which both appear is *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art* (Columbia University Press, 1986). “The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art” was written as a plenary address delivered before the World Congress of Aesthetics in Montreal, 1984, and “The End of Art” was the lead essay in *The Death of Art*, ed. Berel Lang (New York: Haven Publishing, 1984). Throughout this essay I will use the abbreviations “DOA” and “EOA,” respectively, when I cite the texts. Other citations from Danto or other authors will appear in endnotes.

2. Some of this response can be found in Lang’s “The Death of Art,” in *The End of Art and Beyond: Essays after Danto*, ed. Arto Haapalo and Jerrold Levinson (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1997) and in *History and Theory* 37 (1998), the whole volume of which was devoted to this work.

3. The exception to this is Richard Shusterman’s paper, “Art in a Box,” in *Danto and His Critics*, ed. Mark Rollins (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), pp. 161–174, which supports Danto’s thesis. Michael Kelly, in “Essentialism and Historicism in Danto’s Philosophy of Art,” *History and Theory* 37 (1998): 30–43, focuses mainly on “The End of Art” but argues that Danto’s strategy there amounts to a disenfranchisement of art.

4. Danto, *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art*, p. xiv.

5. *Ibid.*, p. xv.

6. Again, the Kelly article, while it does refer to “The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art,” does not look at both papers in detail or suggest in any way that Danto meant them to be taken together.

7. Shusterman, “Art in a Box,” see p. 164.

8. While the development of Consciousness is the subject of *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, it is in his later work on Aesthetics that Hegel offers a fuller discussion of the role of art in this dialectic. See Michael Inwood’s Introduction to Hegel’s *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics*, trans. Bernard Bosanquet (London: Penguin, 1993), pp. ix–xxxvi.

9. Inwood, Introduction, p. xxiv.

10. Danto’s theory of art is fully outlined in his *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* (Harvard University Press, 1981).

11. Danto continues to develop the thesis of “The End of Art” in “Narratives of the End of Art,” *Encounters and Reflections: Art in the Historical Present* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1986), pp. 331–346; in “Approaching the End of Art,” *State of the Art* (New York: Prentice Hall,

1987), pp. 202–220; in *After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History* (Princeton University Press, 1997); and in replies to papers, such as “The End of Art: A Philosophical Defense,” *History and Theory* 37 (1998): 127–143.

12. This metaphilosophical position is contentious, and Noël Carroll offers a good discussion and counterexamples in “Danto, Art, and History,” in Haapalo and Levinson, eds., *The End of Art and Beyond*, pp. 37–38.

13. Danto, “Narratives of the End of Art,” p. 344.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 345.

15. Danto, “Approaching the End of Art,” p. 218.

16. Danto, “The End of Art: A Philosophical Defense,” p. 128.

17. See his thought experiment involving identical red squares in Chapter 1 of *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*, pp. 1–32.

18. Danto, “The End of Art: A Philosophical Defense,” p. 130.

19. *Ibid.* Once one discovers that a thing does not embody a meaning, the interpretation of it withers away. Danto notes, “A flight of birds gets read as a sign from the gods until one stops believing in the gods, after which a flight of birds is a flight of birds” (*ibid.*).

20. See Noël Carroll, “Danto, Art, and History,” p. 38.

21. Chapter 1 of *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* is entitled “Works of Art and Mere Real Things.”

22. David Carrier makes this point in “Danto and His Critics: *After the End of Art* and Art History,” *History and Theory* 37 (1998): 13.

23. G. W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977). See the last section, entitled “Absolute Knowing,” p. 493, especially paragraph 808.

24. Carroll, “Danto, Art, and History,” p. 28.

25. Danto, “Approaching the End of Art,” p. 214.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 216. When Danto talks of “art,” he focuses only on painting, because, for him, it is paradigmatic of all arts. It is the avant-garde because it suffered a more traumatic identity crisis after cinema than the other arts, and the condition of the avant-garde reveals the condition of all art. While I acknowledge the numerous difficulties with this argument (that the avant-garde reveals the condition of art, that painting is the avant-garde, that painting is essentially nonverbal, that a nonverbal artform can stand for all art, etc.), I will pass over them here because they are tangential to the points I wish to make about a putatively nonverbal artform. Noël Carroll, in “The End of Art?” *History and Theory* 37 (1998): 22–24, offers a good discussion and critique of Danto’s position on this.

27. *Ibid.*

28. Kelly, “Essentialism and Historicism in Danto’s Philosophy of Art,” p. 39.

29. Danto, “Approaching the End of Art,” p. 217.

30. This would, however, be counterintuitive. From the social criticism of Otto Dix and George Grosz to modern works that deal with national, racial, gender, and sexual identity, art does have a history of dealing with a wide range of issues that are also taken up by philosophy.

31. Kelly, “Essentialism and Historicism in Danto’s Philosophy of Art,” p. 39.

32. Brigitte Hilmer, “Being Hegelian After Danto,” *History and Theory* 37 (1998): 85.

33. Martin Seel, “Art as Appearance: Two Comments on Arthur C. Danto’s *After the End of Art*,” *History and Theory* 37 (1998): 113.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 103.

35. I would like to thank Ella Ophir and David Bakhurst at Queen’s University, Roger Shiner, and an anonymous referee from *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* for their valuable comments on an earlier draft of this paper.