ny philosophy as a system. I could not deal with the richness of detail in is presentation, but its presence in this volume is of inestimable worth to nose who have an interest in its subject.

A.C.D.

NOTES

1. G. W. F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, vol. I, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: larendon Press, 1975), 11.
2. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, 315–16.

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Noël Carroll

DANTO, THE END OF ART, AND THE ORIENTATIONAL NARRATIVE

I. Introduction

Outside the precincts of philosophy, Arthur Danto is, in all likelihood, best known as the critic who has proclaimed that art has come to an end. Though often misunderstood, the thesis has been broadcast widely enough that Danto's moniker, cued by the phrase "the end of art," could probably qualify as an entry in a *New York Times* or *New Yorker* crossword puzzle. Indeed, with that clue, Danto would undoubtedly elicit faster name-recognition than Hegel, his most notable precursor in the end-of-art business.

A conjecture so bold, of course, has invited a great deal of criticism. Perhaps the most embarrassing charge of all is that Danto's philosophy of art history is inconsistent with—in fact, flatly contradicted by—Danto's own analytical philosophy of history (as expounded in the book of the same name). Specifically, the kind of historical narrative that Danto wants to tell about art—which narrative concludes with the end-of-art thesis—is not, by Danto's own account of history, a proper historical narrative at all. It is exactly the kind of history that Danto, the philosopher of history, proscribes. To tell the story of the end anything still in play in the here and now, by Danto's analytical lights, is not to produce genuine history, but history *manqué*. Thus, if Danto the philosopher of history is right on this score, then he may be the most decisive critic of Danto the philosopher of art history.

Exploring the tension between Danto's end-of-art thesis and his conception of the nature of historical narration is the central topic of this essay.

In the course of the discussion, I will attempt to establish a way in which the end-of-art thesis, suitably modified, may be considered to count as an acceptable historical narrative, though I hasten to add that the reconciliation I propose between Danto's philosophy of history and his philosophy of art history may not be to Danto's liking.

However, before attempting to help to extricate Danto from the logical corner into which he has argued himself, we must first look at the end-of-art thesis carefully. I shall begin by sketching some misunderstandings concerning it, and then try to set it forth in its canonical form. Next, I turn to the problems the thesis confronts on its own terms, including its inconsistency with Danto's philosophy of history. Finally, I will propose a reinterpretation of the thesis that will render it more cognitively palatable, although undoubtedly at the cost of making it philosophically less adventurous.

II. Misunderstandings: The Endlessness of Art

When, in 1986, Danto first announced the end of art, the proposal was greeted by art world types with derision.[1] Philosophers are notorious for privileging the abstract results of their theorizing over the facts that are there in plain sight for anyone to see. Leibniz had his synchronized monads. The end of art was Danto's fancy, a Hegelian redux maybe all the more farcical for being a replay. For surely, as anyone could observe in 1986, the art world was teeming with ambition. Neo-expressionism was still a going enterprise, painting was back, as evidenced by the skyrocketing price tags on the canvasses of David Salle and Julian Schnabel, and the postmodern class of 1976 was steaming ahead at full throttle. How could so much expansive movement herald the end of art?

In 1986, there were, in all probability, more artists at work than ever before in world history. That had to be true, if only for the simple demographic fact that, *ceteris paribus*, there are always more people, including particularly more people ready to enlist as artists, in highly technologically advanced, information societies like our own. Museums were being erected at a rate of more than one per week. Many of them were museums of contemporary art, waiting to be filled with product. Only some benighted philosopher with a big idea could stare all this activity in the face and declaim the end of art.

Indeed, one might have been tempted to chastise Danto for advancing the end-of-art thesis even more sternly than one would have been disposed to upbraid any other philosopher of art who ventured a comparable assessment. For Danto's own philosophy of art would appear to imply the endlessness of art.

Like Hegel, *x* is an artwork for Danto only if (1) *x* is about something—i.e., *x* possesses a meaning—and (2) that meaning is embodied or presented in a mode/manner/form appropriate to whatever it is about.[2] For example, various religious paintings by El Greco are about aspiring spirituality, a theme expressed or appropriately embodied in vertically elongated figures. Moreover, this conception of art, when combined with certain mundane facts about human life, entails that the future of art is, in principle, endless.

For the course of human affairs is always changing. The old is always giving rise to the new: new social types, new customs, new anxieties, new hopes, possibilities, problems, syndromes, and so forth. Consequently, there is perennially something novel for art to be about—something, furthermore, that will require the invention of new forms of embodiment or presentation to which forms are appropriate or that suit the new content.

Human history, in other words, guarantees that there will be no end of phenomena for art to be about, while the pressure to discover or imagine new artistic forms and structures that correspond aptly to the novel subject matter will be equally relentless. For a theory of art like Danto's, the temporality of human existence would seem to assure that the career of art will be never-ending.

In stark contrast to his end-of-art thesis, Danto's conception of art strongly suggests that human life can always resort to art to express its evolving concerns. That is, an unforced reading of Danto's philosophy of art seems at odds with his philosophy of art history.

III. The End of Art

The preceding objections to the end-of-art thesis allege (1) that as a matter of fact, art has not ended—it is being produced in greater numbers than ever before, and (2) that, in principle, art, construed as someone like Danto does, will continue to be made so long as there are people living in changing times. I suspect that Danto will be happy to concur with both these claims. But he will be quick to add that neither objection makes contact with what he intends by the phrase "the end of art."

Were there to be a complete cessation of art making, Danto would call that turn of events "the death of art." And though Danto's hypothesis has sometimes been misconstrued as the assertion that art is dead—that the practice of art making has shut down altogether—Danto has something else in mind by "the end of art."

When the fairy tale ends and we are told that the deserving family lived happily ever after, we presume that we are being told that they may have gone on to have a great many other rewarding adventures, but that those

other adventures are not part of the story we are now hearing. For we have reached *the end* of that particular tale.

Similarly, when Aristotle maintains that the ending of a tragedy is that from which nothing else follows, he is not committing a metaphysical howler. Rather, he is making a point about a certain kind of narrative, namely a narrative with closure. Likewise, the sense of an ending that Danto invokes when he speaks of the end of art is a literary artifact, specifically that of narrative closure. When Danto speaks about the end of art, he is talking about the end of a certain kind of narrative, namely a certain kind of art-historical narrative. He is contending that the pertinent art-historical narratives have reached a terminus—they have attained closure, or at least, they have gotten as near to closure as they can possibly get.

Of what kind of art-historical narrative is Danto thinking? A developmental narrative. But what is that? To get a handle on the notion of a developmental narrative, let us start with one that is not art-historical in content. Recall Woody Allen's altogether comical account of the history of the sandwich.

The Earl of Sandwich is brooding over an assortment of ingredients: slices of bread, various viands and cheeses, relishes, and so forth. He wants to combine them in a convenient way for eating. He experiments, but his initial attempts are failures. First he puts a piece of bread between two pieces of salami and sloshes mustard on top of the meat. But when he grabs the assemblage, it slips out of his hand and sails across the room. Then he puts the condiments between the meat and the bread. That's better, but it is still pretty slippery. Next he piles the meat and the condiments on top of a single piece of bread. If he balances it just right, he can get it into his mouth without getting his hands greasy. But the construction is unstable; things can slip off of it. Finally, it dawns on him: put the meat and the condiments between two pieces of bread. Now that's the ticket. He waves the results triumphantly. The sandwich has been invented.

This is a developmental or progressive narrative. It is animated by a problem—the discovery of a way of eating that keeps the mustard on the meat and not on your hands. Each episode in the story charts a step in the solution of the problem. Every episode is part of the story because of its relation to the problematic. When the problem is solved and the first sandwich is made, the story of the sandwich—or the story of how the sandwich became the sandwich—is over. Closure obtains at just that point in the narrative because the questions that have focused our attention—when and how will the sandwich be born?—have been answered. That is, to speak more precisely, the story of progressive attempts to get the design of the sandwich just right has come to a close. The End.

Admittedly, people are still making sandwiches today. And every once and a while, modifications are made on the basic design: the club sandwich,

the hoagie, the Dagwood, and so on. But in a certain sense, the developmental story of the sandwich is done once the basic design of the sandwich has been perfected. Everything that comes after that, including all the sandwiches that you and I make, is (to change foodstuffs) icing on the cake. Our sandwiches, though undeniably sandwiches, are posthistorical sandwiches—that is, sandwiches confected after the heady days when the scullery was aflutter with the Earl of Sandwich's daring experiments.

So a developmental narrative is a narrative propelled by a project or a problem the episodes of which involve successive, progressive, intended approximations toward the solution that drives the endeavor the story depicts. To the extent that such narratives have a goal to be attained, they will eventuate in closure when the question of whether that goal is realized is answered. That is, such a narrative ends when the solution is achieved or when the enterprise gets as close as it can to a resolution.

When Danto speaks of the end of art, he is invoking the notion of discursive closure with respect to certain developmental narratives. He is not talking about the end of the literal activities of art making. Instead, he is claiming that a certain developmental, art-historical narrative has come to an end—or has reached closure or something like it. But which art-historical narrative is Danto talking about?

Actually for Danto, two developmental art-historical narratives dominate the history of Western art. They are interconnected and, according to Danto, they are both over (though "over" in different ways). The first, which Ernst Gombrich labeled "the gradual conquest of natural appearances," began in ancient Greece, was rejoined in the Renaissance, came to be called "realism" in the nineteenth century, and culminated with the inventions of photography and finally motion pictures. This historical narrative was underwritten by a project—to perfect the Platonic mirror that Hamlet bade artists to hold up to nature.

Episodes in this story include the rediscovery and refinement of perspective. When the very appearance of movement is captured on screen, the story comes to an end, since in terms of how things look, there is fundamentally nothing left to accomplish. People, of course, are still making realistic pictures—indeed, millions of them. But the story of the "conquest of natural appearances" is a closed book.

Nevertheless, the conclusion of the aforesaid story of the conquest of appearances provoked new problems. If the story of Western art's greatest adventure to date was over, what was left for the ambitious artist to do with himself? If the once noble aspiration of conquering visual appearances could now be discharged more efficiently, accurately, and comprehensively by a machine no more complicated than a camera, what was the self-respecting artist to do?

Several avenues of development presented themselves. But the one that came to command the most influential following is what Clement Greenberg anointed as "Modernism," and with Modernism came the second great developmental, art-historical narrative.

Modernism, on Greenberg's view, assigned a project to advanced painting.[3] Roughly, the idea was that the aim of genuine painting is to discover its own nature. True painting is reflexive—it functions as a critique of its own conditions of possibility (to put it in the Kantian epistemological idiom that appealed to Greenbergians). That is, the role of serious painting is to reveal its own essence through the medium of painting. Nor is this merely a preoccupation of recent vintage. Critic/historians like Michael Fried and Leo Steinberg traced it to way back when.

The aim of art during the epoch of the conquest of visual appearances was to capture the look of reality. That accomplished, artists still remained obsessed with reality. But increasingly, the reality that concerned them was not the reality putatively mirrored and depicted by the painting; rather, what preoccupied them was the nature of the painting itself, construed as a real object. A picture of a tree is no less an object in the world than the tree it pictures. A picture has at least as much reality as a chair. So what kind of thing is it? The inquiring artist wants to know and to embody the answer in a form appropriate to the answer.

The question—"what is art?"—is what supposedly drove artistic research onward from the advent of impressionism to, according to Danto, 1964, when Andy Warhol exhibited his *Brillo Box* at the Stable Gallery in New York City. According to Greenberg and his followers, the largest portion of this reflexive race toward identifying the essence of art operated under the assumption that, fundamentally, paintings *qua* paintings are flat surfaces. Successive modern art movements refined this alleged insight, along with its corollaries, with greater and greater clarity.

The impressionists dissolved the object into washes of color; Manet defied the laws of perspective, the ensuing optical distortion disavowing the conceit that a painting is a transparent window onto the world. Cézanne emphasized the pictured object as a painted artifact on the brink of abstraction, while the Fauves highlighted the two-dimensional property of color. In Matisse's paintings with fabric, two-dimensional patterns often seized optical control of the canvas. The cubists contracted the picture plane only to be exceeded by Pollock's drip paintings, which reduced it to nothing more than a site for the interplay of line and color. Perhaps the finest hour in this artistic quest to acknowledge the allegedly two-dimensional nature of painting came at the moment when Morris Lewis, in his series entitled *Unfurleds*, soaked his canvasses in paint to the point that they became so saturated that the surface of the support and the painted picture plane merged.

As should be evident already from the preceding paragraph, the conception of art embarked upon a reflexive interrogation of its own identity that lent itself quite readily to be represented by a developmental, art-historical narrative. The art historian or art critic could plot each movement, each artist, and in some cases, each painting along a narrative arc, much as Vasari had charted the march toward perspective. Some work contributed to getting ever clearer about the essence of art. That work propelled the story forward. But there was also backsliding and regression—for example, Dali with all that vulgar, deep pictorial space. Indeed, critics and art historians could use this developmental narrative as an evaluative grid. Art that advanced the narrative was good—"on the side of history," as they used to say. Art that shirked or impeded the narrative program was suspect and probably retrograde, stupid, and worse. It belonged in the dustbin or the pale of history. Choose your metaphor.

Though the reflexive art-historical narrative was in some ways the converse of the conquest-of-appearances narrative (the former construing painting as a certain kind of object itself, the latter conceiving painting as merely a window onto another object), the two stories are parallel inasmuch as both posit a target toward which art history as a process was aimed. Thus, both histories, as progressive narratives, afforded the possibility of being brought to an end; narrative closure would be achieved when the target that energized art making was hit. The advent of cinema was the bull's-eye that ended the epic of the conquest of visual appearances. Would the reflexive chase after the essence of art be wrapped up as neatly?

Not quite, according to Danto. This is where Warhol's *Brillo Box* (see plate G18) enters the picture, so to speak. The reflexive art-historical narrative, like many modern philosophies of art, presupposed that the essence of art was something that the eye could discern—such as pictorial flatness. But Warhol's *Brillo Box* unhorsed this presumption. For though Warhol's piece was acknowledged to be an artwork, its everyday counterpart—the cartons in which Proctor and Gamble shipped Brillo to grocery stores—was not, despite the fact that the everyday carton and Warhol's carton were perceptually indiscernible. What, on Danto's account, Warhol thereby demonstrated was that art status does not categorically involve the possession of certain perceptual properties since ordinary Brillo boxes and Warhol's had (*ex hypothesi*) the same visible properties but the latter was art and the former not. Moreover, this putative discovery constitutes a decisive peripeteia in the history of art.

Why? According to Danto, Warhol, as presaged by certain experiments by dadaists (notably by Duchamp with his readymades), realized that art status was not something the eye could descry. This had supposedly been the complacent presupposition of artists and aestheticians alike before the work

of (especially) Warhol awakened us all from our dogmatic slumbers. What Warhol's *Brillo Box* insinuated was that art could look like anything—for example, it could look like an ordinary carton of Brillo boxes. Reflexive artists, art critics, and philosophers of art alike had been "looking" for the essence of art in the wrong place. They thought they would find it in the realm of discernibilia. But what Warhol indicated was that the essence of art resided elsewhere; it was indiscernible.

Thus, according to Danto, Warhol was able to get the project of the definition of art on the right track. Thanks to Warhol (and others), the question—"What is the essence of art?"—was now in its proper philosophical form; it now had the right philosophical orientation. It was a matter of locating some set of perceptually indiscernible properties that were (ideally) necessary and sufficient criteria for membership in the republic of art.

But this advance came with a cost, especially for artists. According to Danto, it debars them from further participation in the quest for the definition of art. For as artists, their craft is ostensibly ill-suited for identifying the abstract criteria that are constitutive of art. That is a task for another guild—namely, philosophy. As Danto puts it, artists would have to give up being artists and become philosophers in order to answer the question of the nature of art, once it has been posed, as Warhol did, in terms of indiscernibilia. So the end of the reflexive art-historical narrative comes not with closure—not with the answer to the question "what is art?"—but stops at the foothills of a solution, at which point the task must be handed over to philosophy.

Artists arrive at the limit of what they can achieve as artists in terms of defining art, and then they have to turn the project over to philosophers, since philosophers rather than artists have the expertise to handle inquiries into the ontology of things constituted of indiscernible properties. Artists have carried the quest for the essence of art as far as they can professionally, given their job description. The reflexive narrative of art history comes to a halt; from the perspective of the practice of art, it just stops. It does not secure closure in the way that the conquest-of-appearances narrative did. It does not reach a solution from inside the practice of art. Rather it delegates that task to others—specifically to philosophers, like Arthur Danto. Instead of being called the end of developmental art history, this juncture might better be labeled "art history retires," i.e., art history is relieved from the task of pursuing the progressive agenda of reflexivity.

Danto has never been as clear as he might be about why he thinks that artists must turn the task of defining the essence of art to philosophers. Though there are hints here and there, he has not explained at length his reasons for supposing that artists cannot, after Warhol's reframing of the project, further contribute, by means of their artistic practice, to the analysis

of the nature of art. My own suspicion is that Danto thinks this must be the case since artists in their role as artists traffic in visual images and visual images alone do not possess the wherewithal to identify the indiscernible properties that constitute art.[4]

Painting is nonverbal, but in order to define art in the requisite way, one would need to advert to conceptual formulations. To see a monochrome canvas as art required a theory. But the theory had to be propounded in discourse that existed outside the painted canvas. The theory was not, so to say, the canvas itself. Theory-building took place off the canvas—the domain of the artist—and in the art world that surrounded it—the domain of the theorist and the philosopher. In order to enter the debate about the nature of art—in order to isolate the indiscernible properties that constitute art—painters would have to put down their brushes (or whatever), leave off creating appearances, and cultivate the very different kind of talents required to engage in theoretical or philosophical conversations.

Like Hegel before him, Danto seems to think that art has come to an end precisely because it cannot compete with the conceptual and linguistic resources of philosophy. Of course, there are differences between Hegel and Danto. Hegel emphasizes the limitation of art's resources for conceptual articulation relative to the expression of the self-consciousness of spirit in general, whereas Danto cites the limitations of artistic fecundity relative to the articulation of the self-consciousness of art via artistic means. Nevertheless, both calculate the end of art at just that point where due to limitations in art's communicative powers—limitations due to art's intimate connection to the realm of the senses—art is superseded by philosophy.

Though some may take the end of art à la Danto to be a fall from grace, Danto himself does not. For once art drops out of the forward march of history, artists are free to explore their own agendas. A brave new era of pluralism—which Danto labels posthistorical—blooms, abetting experimentation in every direction. No longer driven by a single tyrannical obsession, art can be a thousand and one different things. Caught in the grip of a developmental narrative of art history, artists had been subjected to an unforgiving discipline by art critics. But with the end of that narrative comes liberation. Now that art is over (in the sense of an ending Danto has in mind), the artist may follow her inclinations wherever they lead. There is no one place she has to go. The plurality of expression is the order of the day.

Warhol revealed that art can look like anything. This possibility is in evidence everywhere in the contemporary art world. This condition stands in sharp contradistinction to the world of modernist painting where the artwork had to acknowledge its flatness. If the period of modernist art was historical, that is, describable by means of a progressive narrative, then the present epoch is posthistorical since there can be no plausible evolution of

visual forms where art can look like anything. Thus does Danto explain the lay of the art world today—the pluralistic, posthistorical art world of which he has become the reigning critic. Not only has the end-of-art thesis enabled him to explain the life of art in our times; it also allows him to celebrate it—to appreciate its wide-ranging and unruly diversity as a consequence of its emancipation from philosophy.

Indeed, Danto might invoke the end-of-art thesis to meet the objections to his viewpoint cited in the second section of this essay. If the art world is currently teeming with activity, Danto might argue that that is a function of the newfound freedom that comes with the end of art. Moreover, the end of art may be a condition for the theoretical possibility of the endlessness of art, since once art could look like anything and identical-looking artworks can be different, the potential number of artworks can, in principle, reach some multiple of the total number of ordinary things.

V. Criticisms of the End-of-Art Thesis

An initial problem with the end-of-art thesis is one of ambiguity. It appears to be advanced as a theory about painting, or at least the visual or fine arts, but on occasion, Danto seems to think that it applies to art in general. It is true that one finds strategies for framing the issue of indiscernibility—which are comparable to those of Warhol and Duchamp—outside the sphere of painting and sculpture. One thinks of John Cage in music, the Judson Dance movement, and some performance art (especially the performance arts, such as Happenings, that are the stepchildren of painting and sculpture). But it is not the case that even if the essence of every artform were a matter of a set of indiscernible properties that it would follow that every artform would be limited in such a way that it would have to turn over to the philosophers the reflexive task of defining itself or, for that matter, art in general.

For the reason that Danto gives for the end of painting in particular is the nonverbal nature of painting. The realm of painting is appearance. Were the nature of art (fine art) something that was perceptually discernible, then maybe the painter could point to it by way of her easel. Her painting could exemplify the essence of art by underscoring it in a particularly pointed or salient way—by, for example, subtracting what she takes to be every extraneous feature from the canvas, as in the case of certain color field abstractions. But if the essence of art is strictly indiscernible, then putatively one cannot get at it through appearances alone. One needs language, especially the discourse of analysis and argument. One needs philosophy or some other form of theory very like it.

Let us grant for the moment (but only for the moment) that this is true of painting. However, it is not true of all of the other arts. It is not true of literature, theater, opera, cinema, video, song and, in fact, much performance art as well as some postmodern dance. These artforms possess language and thus have the wherewithal, in principle, to argue and analyze. Nor is this a mere abstract possibility. Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, for instance, discourses on the nature of fictional characters.

Not all the arts are beset by the problem of speechlessness that Danto attributes to painting, and, therefore, not every artform must turn necessarily to philosophy to articulate either its essential characteristics or the essential characteristics of art in general. Some arts can speak for themselves. Consequently, the end-of-art thesis does not apply to the arts across the board. Perhaps it only applies to the visual arts.

But that is not right either. For, there are many genres of contemporary visual art that incorporate language—spoken, recorded, and written. These include installation art, conceptual art, language art, video art, collages, performance art, cinema, and so forth. These practices employ verbal discourse of every sort. Thus, all of them have the capacity to articulate reflexive hypotheses about the—albeit indiscernible—essence of art. In fact, some artists working in these modes, such as Joseph Kossuth, have actually attempted to do so. Of course, one might claim that when Kossuth tacked up on the gallery wall his theses defining art, he was wearing a philosopher's hat. But doesn't that simply beg the question?

When asked, I once defined art during a performance piece by Spalding Gray entitled *Interviewing the Audience*. Surely, that was part of the performance; it did not occur outside the artwork. It was not an intermission in which the audience was subjected to a word from the sponsor—ART. Consequently, I surmise that the visual arts in general are not wanting for a voice—even a philosophical voice—at the end of the day.

Perhaps Danto will respond that all of these genres exist only as beneficiaries of the work of people like Warhol and Duchamp. I am not convinced of that. But even if that were the case, it would not support the end-of-art thesis, since that thesis claims that artists in principle lack the means to pursue any further the reflexive interrogation of the nature of art. And the aforesaid practices show this to be false. It would make no difference if it was the discovery of the indiscernibility issue that allowed the visual arts to speak. In fact, there is something deliciously, even poetically, fitting if such a scenario rings true.

It may be that, as a matter of fact, in the supposedly posthistorical art world, many visual artists have chosen to abandon the reflexive agenda (often for the sake of what they think of as political engagement). But, *pace* Danto, they have not been cast out of the garden of self-conscious

theorizing due to any essential insufficiency, such as the lack of access to linguistic discourse. Therefore, we have no reason to accept that, as a matter of philosophical necessity, the visual arts have reached the end of their line. Even if many contemporary audio-visual installation pieces are not concerned with questions of self-identity, they have the means to address ontological questions, should artists be so disposed.

Indeed, it is not even true that painting and sculpture cannot incorporate words. Certain genres of religious and historical paintings contain words. If certain religious icons—including stained glass windows—include scripture that telegraphs theology to the faithful, surely aesthetics *could* also be inscribed on the picture plane. Much sculpture incorporates text; even Danto's beloved *Brillo Box* has words splashed all over it. Thus, there is no reason in principle why painting and sculpture must eschew verbiage. That at present they do is contingent, not necessary, as shown by the fact that throughout art history, words and images—whether two-dimensional or three-dimensional—have coexisted side by side in the same artworks. If this strikes you as counterintuitive, just remember that titles are proper parts of visual artworks.

Perhaps Danto will suggest that when words and pictures combine, the result is not truly art, or that only the pictures count as genuine art. This would be an unfortunate move to make for several reasons. First, there are many so-called hybrid artforms—like opera—which are nevertheless genuine artforms. Second, the kind of purism that this gambit presupposes is precisely that which is associated with the species of Modernism that Warhol confounded—successfully, according to Danto—and, in fact, is incompatible with the recognition that the quiddity of art is indiscernible.

So far we have examined several reasons to reject the notion that art in general or the visual arts—either individually or collectively—have necessarily arrived at the point where they must leave off the reflexive enterprise of interrogating their constitutive ontological conditions. If most artists today are less interested in the ontology of art than other issues, then that needs to be explained historically rather than in the metaphysical style to which Danto resorts. For if the critique of art by art is presently in abeyance, then that is not a matter of logic but of something else.

Yet even if it were the case, as Danto suggests, that we are necessarily at the end of the trail with respect to art's interrogation of its own nature, it is important to point out that that would not entail that we have reached the end of art in Danto's special sense of that phrase. For Danto, *the end of art* would occur only when there were no more developmental art-historical stories to be narrated. Supposing (mistakenly, as I have tried to show) that the reflexive narrative is necessarily over does not imply that there might

not be other developmental narratives about art to be told. For the reflexive narrative is not the only available progressive art-historical narrative.

As we have seen, before the reflexive narrative there was the conquest-of-visual-appearances narrative. Undoubtedly, there are others. Perhaps the art of the future will rededicate itself to the promotion of visual pleasure. And with the promise of evolutionary psychology, who is to say that there may not be some fairly determinate strategies to this end that artists can approximate successively, as they did the rendering of visual appearances? There is no a priori argument to show that there are no projects like this one to be mobilized and, therefore, no reason to imagine that there cannot be more developmental histories of the sort that the projects of mimesis and reflexivity, respectively, involved.

So even if Danto had proven that the reflexive interlude was necessarily closed (a hypothesis that I contest), he has not shown that the art world will not adopt some other progressive program in the future that will once again call for a developmental art-historical narrative—one that has not yet ended since it has not yet begun. Surely no one now can know that such a possibility is foreclosed.

Like Hegel, who in his own times proclaimed both the end of history as well as the history of art, Danto asserts that we are presently—*hic et nunc*—living after the end of art. Ours is a posthistorical epoch as far as art is concerned. There is nothing more to be added to the reflexive narrative, and there are no further alternative developmental narratives in the offing. But is it possible to close the book on either of these alternatives at present? There is some reason to be skeptical about both these counts. What is perhaps most surprising is that the grounds for this skepticism have been argued most elegantly by none other than Arthur Danto himself.

Substantive philosophers of history from St. Augustine to Francis Fukuyama have repeatedly announced the end of history. Hegel and Marx are perhaps the best known members of this visionary company. They pretend to tell the whole history of humankind—including the beginning, middle, and end (in the Aristotelian sense of closure). But how can one know that there is closure to a process—i.e., know that there are no last minute complications that once again will open up the horizon of narrative possibilities—until long after the event when sufficient time has elapsed so that one is sure that all the pertinent consequences of the event have borne fruit?

One could not have known that the Battle of Britain was over until it was absolutely clear that the Luftwaffe would never cast its shadows over Downing Street again. And that could only be known some time after the battle was literally over. It could not have been known in the thick of the fray. That is, in the case of a genuine historical narrative, a certain spate

of time must exist between the end of an event and the telling of the story of said event from beginning to end. Such a narrative cannot be told in the midst of the event, because only time will tell if there are no further, relevant complications ahead. This temporal remove is a necessary condition for a bona fide historical narrative.

But obviously, narratives of the end of history—including the end of art history—do not meet this requirement. Quite clearly, they are, of necessity, told prematurely. Indeed, narratives of the end of history would have to be told from a point outside history—a perspective no one, including the substantive philosophers of history, can inhabit. Because such narratives violate the criteria necessary for a discourse to count as an authentic historical narrative, stories about the end of history are not genuine historical narratives.

Danto writes:

> we might think of philosophers of history as trying to see events as having a meaning in the context of an historical whole which resembles an artistic whole, but in this case, the whole in question is the whole of history, compassing past, present, and future. Unlike those of us who have the whole novel before us, and are able to say with some authority what is the significance of this event or that, the philosopher of history does not have before him the whole of history. He has at best a fragment—the whole past. But he thinks in terms of the whole of history.[5]

Danto wants us to contrast the practice of the substantive philosopher of history with the pursuit of ordinary history. In the course of ordinary history, the researcher establishes the significance of an event in the past by connecting it to another event—perhaps as a consequence of the event in question—which latter event is known to the historian writing in the present but was not yet known at the time of the event being explained. That is, a work-a-day historian connects a past event to its fruition in future events, where the "future" events at issue are known to the historian because they are in his past.

But the substantive philosopher of history does not have the temporal distance on the events he speaks of with such finality. Fukuyama was not witness to the triumph of liberal democracy everywhere—since that event, should it ever materialize, lies in Fukuyama's future, not his past—nor can Fukuyama have known, with any degree of reliability, if at all, that the world is headed for it. For example, he did not anticipate the onslaught of a ferocious fundamentalist Islamic jihad nor does he or anyone else really know how this debacle will turn out. Given Danto's analysis of historical narration, it would appear that no one can now declare—in a legitimate

historical voice—that we are at the end of history, whether that is understood as the triumph of liberal democratic states everywhere or, alternatively, as the disappearance of the state à la Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Program*.

The substantive philosopher of history, in effect, is either a misguided or phony historian. For he attempts to cast the significance of past and present events in light of the whole of history, much of which lies in the future and about which he cannot claim knowledge. Thus, on Danto's account, the substantive philosopher of history is a historian *manqué*—one who misunderstands the structure of historical knowledge. The substantive philosopher of history appears to be doing history. But the appearance is deceptive.

Ironically, this devastating criticism of those substantive philosophers of history who have pronounced the end of history applies not only to the likes of Hegel and Marx, but to Danto, the philosopher of art history, as well. In 1989, Fukuyama was in no position to proclaim the triumph of liberal democracy everywhere. But similarly, Danto is not historically situated now so as to be certain that the reflexive narrative of art history will not be rejuvenated. This could happen, since, as I have argued, the arts, including the visual arts, have the linguistic and conceptual resources to do so. Moreover, neither is Danto in a position to be sure that the art world will not rise to another progressive agenda, perhaps one that we cannot yet imagine.

So if Danto's analysis of genuine historical narration is correct and his diagnosis of substantive philosophies of history is spot-on, then Danto himself would appear to be his own most implacable critic with respect to the end-of-art thesis.

VI. Rereading Danto

Two of Danto's most interesting philosophical hypotheses are at loggerheads—his analysis of historical narration and his end-of-art thesis. Can this clash be softened in any way, or must at least one of these conjectures be abandoned? I think that something of value can be retrieved here, but it involves substantial modification and rereading on both sides of the ledger.

Let us start with the analysis of historical narration. According to Danto, an historical narrative proper is about the significance of an event at time t^1 relative to an event at time t^2 as told by the historian at time t^2+n (somewhere in the future of time t^2). You cannot narrate the history of D-Day on June 6, 1944; a proper history of D-Day can only be given long after the event, when the consequences of the event have come to light, thereby throwing retrospective illumination on the doings on Omaha Beach.

This is certainly the structure of one sort of historical narrative. But is it the only legitimate form of historical narration? For convenience, let us

label it the *scientific* (in the broad European sense of the term) historical narrative—a narrative concerned exclusively with knowledge. But is there not also another quite common and legitimate form of historical narrative—the instrumental or deliberative or orientational narrative? This is a historical narrative that is given with the aim of answering a question about what is to be done. The history of U.S. defense policies from the Cold War to the present might be given in order to reassess the course of future weapons development and deployment. Or, for a less bellicose example, such a narrative might be given about public housing. Historical narratives like these have a deliberative dimension. They are at least as concerned with *phronesis* as they are with *sophia*. They are intended to organize our understanding of the past in a way that points to decisions about the future.

Such narratives, ideally, must adhere to the objectively ascertainable facts, since policy recommendations rooted in falsehoods are apt to go badly. But such historical narratives go beyond the present. They attempt to pith emerging tendencies that are pertinent to future possibilities in order to indicate a scenario for action in the present, which scenario grows out of the relevant past. Instrumental narratives serve to orient the pertinent audience to the future by narrating the past and the present in a way that selects and emphasizes courses of events whose trajectory recommends the next step in the story.

One encounters historical narratives like this quite frequently. Undoubtedly, they evolve quite seamlessly from the type of deliberative narratives we often tell in the course of our own lives. Confronted with the possibility of a new line of work in a new city, it is natural for us and the friends we consult to sketch scenarios of each alternative choice in order to compare them. We consider each future-oriented narrative with an eye to how well it incorporates what we value as the best parts of our previous life narrative, as that pertains to the decision in question.

The narrative we choose, in the standard case, should make substantial sense of our past in a way that connects with our anticipated future as we imagine that to unfold on the basis of our life history. All things being equal, we will choose the narrative that not only promises success but maximizes the narrative continuity of our lives. A narrative that is, for the most part, disconnected to our past would be ill-advised, save in special circumstances, because it would not typically be sustainable. In order to be serviceable, an instrumental narrative roots its recommended scenario for the future in the past.

We use these kinds of narratives not only to deliberate individually but corporately—this is one use of historical narratives—indeed, I would speculate that the production of these kinds of narratives is a major factor contributing to society's interest in supporting history as an academic pursuit. Perhaps this is not the kind of history that most academic historians pursue.

But their scientific narratives are certainly valued socially, to an appreciable degree, because they supply the basis for instrumental historical narratives. Scientific narratives of Islam make possible the sort of deliberative historical narratives that are discussed on talk shows because of the present need people have to understand and orient themselves to the threat of Muslim fundamentalism. Books about the history of government violations of the first amendment appear in times when the authors wish to warn us that it may be endangered again.

It is undeniable that many historical narratives are instrumental—that they are given to organize our understanding of the past and the present in order to orient us toward the future. Such historical narratives are not scientific—not concerned solely with the production of knowledge. But it would be strange to deny that they are legitimate. They represent an ineliminable form of human thought and deliberation. On what plausible grounds could it be recommended that the past plays no role in our contemplation of the future? And, in any event, it would be impossible to do so. The instrumental use of history to orient us to the future just is part and parcel of the way we think.

Furthermore, the notion of orienting historical narratives may be relevant to the cognitive status of at least some end-of-history narratives. Some of them, suitably reinterpreted, may be instrumental historical narratives given in the present to orient action toward the future. Surely that is true of the most famous end-of-history narrative of modern times—Marx's story of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the subsequent withering away of the state. Danto is certainly right that it is not a scientific narrative of the kind he is at pains to analyze in his book on the philosophy of history. But reread charitably, it represents another easily recognizable sort of historical narrative—a sort that is well precedented and indispensable. It was an orientational narrative, first and foremost, for the working class and its allies.

Admittedly, taken at face value, end-of-history narratives make claims that are impossible to substantiate in the here and now. Talk of the end of history is obviously extravagant. But many of these narratives can be reinterpreted—demythologized, we might say—without much strain such that the result is a reasonable orientational narrative. For example, Fukuyama's end-of-history narrative was given in order to prepare readers and policy makers for life in the world after the Cold War. At present, it appears that Fukuyama's diagnosis was premature or worse, but it was not utterly ill-founded when it was first suggested, nor is historically grounded speculation of this sort illegitimate.

So, some end-of-history narratives may be reinterpreted, and reinstated, as orienting narratives. End-of-history narratives are not necessarily history *manqué*. The upshot of this for Danto's thesis is twofold: (1) his end-of-art history thesis may not be, in principle, an illegitimate exercise in historical

thinking, since (2) it might be reread as an orientational narrative. If Danto concedes that there are genuine historical narratives that are deliberative or instrumental narratives and are intended to orient action in the future, then he may sidestep his own argument against substantive historical narratives just in case his end-of-art thesis is such a narrative. Of course, whether that thesis can be intelligibly recuperated as an instrumental narrative depends upon the plausibility of our account of the reorientation Danto hoped it would afford.

Part of Danto's end-of-art thesis can be glossed as the saga of the end of Modernism, as conceived by critics like Greenberg. For modernists, the alleged project was to reveal the essential, discernible conditions of the fine arts—particularly painting and sculpture—by means of the artworks themselves. Putatively, their goal was to locate the metaphysical differentia that set visual artworks off from real things. Warhol, and others, supposedly brought this project to a close by showing that art status resided in the indiscernible properties of artworks, beyond the reach of the paintbrush, the chisel, or the blow torch.

Whether or not Modernism was overthrown by the theoretical perplexities presumably spun by Pop artists and minimalists, or whether it died from other causes, such as exhaustion, is a task for future art historians to clarify. However, we are, I believe, in a position to agree that Greenbergian Modernism is a thing of the past. That is one reason why so many speak of postmodernism.

Of course, if all Danto wants to say under the rubric of the end of art is that the modernist moment is over, then few will bridle and some may even yawn. Indeed, if that is the whole of the story, then the end-of-art thesis is really a specimen of ordinary scientific history, since we are now at a sufficient historical remove to declare that the modernist movement is down for the count and that it has been effectively pushed off the stage of living history by various successors. Danto is aware of this, yet he persists in speaking of the end of art history, not merely the end of Modernism. Why?

It is interesting to note that Danto published "The End of Art" in the middle of 1984; in October of that year, he became an art critic for the *Nation*.[6] It is my conjecture that Danto's end-of-art thesis is an orientational narrative that Danto gave in order to prepare himself for the kind of art critic that he would be. Read in this way "The End of Art" is a manifesto for a new kind of criticism, viz., Danto's kind of criticism.

Greenberg was not only influential for his articulation of the modernist canon. He also popularized a style of criticism that was imitated by subsequent critics, including many who rejected many of his assessments of art. Greenberg presupposed that artworks were involved in some form of critique and that the role of the *serious* critic was to chart how far the next work of art moved that critique forward. Critics following Greenberg hailed artists for advancing the critique begun by modernists. Criticism

of minimalism then dragooned phenomenology in order to broaden the alleged critique, claiming that artworks not only explored the conditions of the object but, in tandem, the nature of the perceptual relation between the spectator and the work. Next, critics smitten by semiotics found artists who unmasked the nature of the artwork as a system of signs, while even later critics commended artists who interrogated the institutional/economic conditions of the art world.

This was the brief of the serious art critics after Greenberg. Critics such as Michael Fried, Leo Steinberg, Rosalind Krauss, and Douglas Crimp approximate this model in their own ways. But they all practice their criticism as if they were writing the history of the present. Just as Greenberg characterizes Cézanne as bringing art to the verge of the abstract, Krauss connects minimalists, like Serra, to Rodin and, more recently, Cindy Sherman and Mike Kelly to Pollock. David Carrier calls this style of criticism "philosophical art criticism."[7] The hallmark of philosophical art criticism is that it situates the work at hand in some sort of developmental narrative. However, though a philosopher, this is not the way in which Danto intended to ply his craft.

The brunt of the end-of-art thesis is the claim that posthistorical art—the pluralist art of the present—is not in fact susceptible to this kind of criticism. Thus, criticism à la Danto would be different. It would be pluralistic in a way that coincided with the unruly diversity of posthistorical art. A pluralistic art world, in other words, requires a pluralistic critic.

Each artwork would be analyzed in order to determine what it is about, and then Danto would go on to explain how its mode of embodiment, its form, is appropriate to or expressive of what it is about. No artwork would be forced into the march of history. Matthew Barney's work is examined in terms of the theme of sexual indeterminacy, and Paul McCarthy's with reference to abjection. They are not enlisted as poster boys for the party of history. That kind of criticism does not suit the kind of wide-open variety of the art scene that Danto entered in 1984 and which, on his view, continues to proliferate in every direction even today.

Danto claimed that art has come to an end. No one could know that in the sense of scientific history. It is even likely that Danto, the philosopher, knows that he cannot know that art has come to an end. But Danto the critic has surmised that a certain sort of criticism—the history of the present variety—no longer suits the post-Warhol art world. In this respect, the end-of-art thesis may be reread as a recommendation for a moratorium on the kind of criticism that spends most of its energies embedding artworks in the sweep of momentous historical patterns. Danto entitled his thesis "the end of art," perhaps hyperbolically overstating the case for dramatic purposes. But what I think he was really getting at was a call for an end to one kind of art criticism in order to prepare for another kind—his own,

which, of course, Danto feels better fits the unpredictable, pluralistic art world he believes we inhabit.

Danto likes to refer to these big Hegelian end-of-*x* stories as *Bildungsromane* in honor of the German coming-of-age novel in which the protagonist comes to self-understanding. Perhaps we can read between the lines of Danto's end-of-art thesis and interpret it as the *Bildungsroman* of an art writer orienting himself to the contemporary art world, deliberating about what had to be done and about the kind of critic he would be. Taken literally, the end-of-art thesis is insupportable. And yet, reinterpreted sympathetically and in context, it does seem to make a point that it would be a shame to ignore. The history-of-the-present model of art criticism does appear obsolete, given the challenges of the contemporary art world. The kind of criticism Danto practices is far more profitable. Read as a scientific historical narrative, the end-of-art thesis falters. But reinterpreted as an orientational narrative advocating a new direction for criticism in the contemporary art world, it is quite astute. Although, of course, whether this is an acceptable rereading of Danto's thesis or is merely a matter of putting words in his mouth is a question for Arthur Danto to answer.

NOËL CARROLL
THE PHILOSOPHY PROGRAM
THE GRADUATE CENTER
THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
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NOTES

1. Arthur C. Danto, "The End of Art," in *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1986), 81–115.

2. This definition, and its relation to Hegel, is repeated several times in Arthur C. Danto, *After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1997). I criticize this theory in my "Danto's New Definition of Art and the Problem of Art Theories," in *British Journal of Aesthetics* 37 (Oct. 1997): 386–92.

3. Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," in *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism*, ed. John O'Brian, vol. 4: *Modernism with a Vengeance 1957–1969* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1995), 85–93.

4. See Arthur C. Danto, "Approaching the End of Art," in *The State of the Art* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1987), 216. I discuss this argument in my "The End of Art?" in *History and Theory*, Theme Issue 37, no. 4 (Dec. 1998): 17–29.

5. Arthur C. Danto, *Narration and Knowledge: Including the Integral Text of Analytical Philosophy of History* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1985), 8–9.

6. Arthur C. Danto, *Unnatural Wonders: Essays from the Gap between Art and Life* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005), 3.

7. David Carrier, *Rosalind Krauss and American Philosophical Art Criticism* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002).

REPLY TO NOËL CARROLL

From the time I published my first essay on the end of art in 1984, through the systematic development I gave to the idea in *After the End of Art* in 1997, I had occasion to present my views to various art world audiences, bit by bit modifying and adjusting the overall argument, and gradually getting used to the way, season after season, the art being made seemed increasingly to fit my conception of it. Artists told me that they came prepared by the titles of my talks to have a fight, but as I laid out the evidence, they began to feel that there really was a change in artistic production, and that it was not altogether a bad thing for the history of art to be over. They saw that I was not hostile to the art of my time, that I was not one of those intemperate critics with an axe to grind, and that we really were in a period of a radical artistic pluralism so deep that the idea of a single direction for art made no sense. Originally, there was a certain melancholy associated in my mind with the developmental history of art being over. There had been something heroic in pressing against the frontiers of art, with the next season—or the season after that—showing the new face of art. I concluded my first essay with the sentence: "It has been an immense privilege to live in history." A revolutionary in one of Malraux's novels, listening to his comrades speak about the society about to emerge, realizes that as a revolutionary, he had no interest in living in that society, that his entire interest lay in achieving social change by violent means. I don't think anyone yearned for the state of the art I saw emerge, the way political warriors yearned for the classless society and the withering away of the state. It took us by surprise. Everyone supposed that creativity was inextinguishable, and that it was the engine of developmental change. And then, if I was right, that was all over. What would be the point of making art if there were to be no more history?

In fact, as it turned out, there was a great deal to be said for the new period we had entered. There was no longer some special way art had to be made, no imperatives of historical or aesthetic correctness to fight for or against. If one had an idea, one could pursue it and not fear that some critical expert would say that what you had done was not really art. The definition of art—that art both has and embodies its meaning—that went

with the new period was extremely accommodating. Art could be made in any way one wanted, and about anything at all. Before the idea of the end of art occurred to me, a colleague had told me about his son, who wanted to be an artist. He had hit on the idea of making tall, thin monochrome panels, and leaning them against a wall. The question he kept facing was whether these were original—was he the first to make paintings of this sort? If he could establish that, everyone would be interested in them. He would have moved art history forward, and his work would have belonged to a canonical narrative. I thought at the time that the works had very little interest beyond that. Why would anyone want to go on making such paintings? By contrast, artists can concern themselves with less anemic fulfillments today—with political and cultural concerns, for example, helping awaken consciousness to injustices, changing the world or trying to. "Making art history" is no longer the only goal. In a way, it is like literature. How many writers are seriously interested in driving forward the history of the novel? Most, I would think, are interested in telling stories that matter to them and to their readers, helping shape the way they look out on life.

Noël Carroll has raised an important question in asking whether, really, the end of art has application outside the domain of the visual arts. What about the other arts—literature, music, dance? Here is a rough answer. What got me to think of the end of art was the fact that there now were works of art so like what I called "mere real things"—objects that are not works of art but are indiscernible from objects that are—that one could no longer tell the difference between them. Hence the importance for me of Warhol's *Brillo Boxes*, and in some degree of Duchamp's readymades. My overall strategy was to see if I could not find instances of indiscernibility in the other arts, and insofar as I could, there was some reason for thinking that at some deep level, there were structural parities between the arts. John Cage felt that there was no ultimate auditory difference between musical sounds and the sounds of life being lived, and composed a famous work to demonstrate this. The Judson Dance Company raised the question of the difference between a bodily movement and a dance step—whether it could still be dance if someone just walked across the stage or sat in a chair. Carroll has himself written a wonderful essay on the history of dance which parallels the history of visual art in terms of culminating in something equivalent to the *Brillo Box*-Brillo carton indiscernibility. In *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace,* I offered the example of an avant-garde novel called *Manhattan* which was indiscernible from the Manhattan telephone directory (which in the age of the Internet is probably headed for oblivion). There could certainly be a concrete poem that was indiscernible from the Long Island Railroad schedule. Read aloud in the tone of the stationmaster in Penn Station, called "Montauk and Back" it evokes a journey. There is no way a poem has to be or look.

Suppose someone argued that the history of the novel began and ended with *Don Quixote*? It does not have to be a long history. A form of expression emerged in the sixteenth century that could be applied to narratives of every sort. The novel tells us stories in which the hero or heroine become metaphors for our own lives, as I tried to argue in my address, "Philosophy as/and/of Literature." The story is about the reader, and applies metaphorically to his or her life. It may have particular application to certain readers more than others. Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* may have special meaning for black females, but at a metaphorical level it is about all of us. In any case, my interest was in the visual arts, and it was enough for me to feel that if it *could* be shown that the other arts were like the visual arts in the conceptual respects that concerned me, there was no special reason for going further. But it seems to me that the novel in fact was a good example of what it is like to live in an end-of-art situation. Novelists can tell the stories they want to tell, in whatever way they want to tell them, and are not worried that someone will tell them they are not writing novels. And they seem to find readers who want to read their novels. Since gay liberation, there is interest on the part of gay readers in reading novels with gay characters in the kinds of situations they have or may have to face. Straight readers may find it interesting to find out what it is like to be gay. Of course, there are literary reasons why this or that novel is better than another. Criticism always applies. But the basic philosophical issues are clear.

This leaves the major question that Carroll raises, namely, am I not making an illegitimate claim on the future in speaking of the end of art, and indeed one that I had already explicitly analyzed in my first book, *Analytical Philosophy of History*? I think the answer is yes and no. In that book, I argued against a certain teleological reading of history as a whole, having in mind as a paradigm Marx and Engels's vision of the classless society, the dictatorship of the proletariat, and then the withering away of the state. This was to happen because of certain forces working with "iron necessity," which they believed they had discovered and seen exemplified in the history of class struggles in which all of history has consisted. It was the scientism of the Marxian account that made it seem as though it were a matter of scientific truth that history would inevitably end in foreseeable ways. I suppose an end-of-the-world forecast based on some sort of Aesopian reading of the book of Revelation would amount to the same thing, save for the difference between the scientific assurance of laws of history that Marx and Engels boasted of, and the hidden method of reading between the lines of the book of Revelation. I submitted this form of thought to what I had learned of the philosophy of science and of scientific explanation, in which explanation and prediction were considered essentially of a piece, and concluded that historical teleology was fallacious. And I then set about showing that historical explanation itself, if it appeals to laws, does not

yield predictions that verge on prophecy. The core of my argument rests on the analysis of narrative sentences, which I like to think of as a genuine discovery. Narrative sentences are logically indispensable to the practice of history, and these depend upon anticipating the interest in the present that future individuals are likely to have. And these, it seemed to me, could not be known until the future became present.

Now the end of art is not really teleological at all. It does not even claim that there will be no more art. It just says that a certain way of seeing the history of art has lost its validity. Let me pause and describe what I was thinking at the time. The insight, if it was that, came from an experience I had with one of the Whitney Biennials in the early 1980s. I remember some of the work in it very vividly—Leon Golub's paintings of mercenaries excited me greatly, and I found myself somewhat repelled by the work of Jonathan Borofsky, an artist much admired by curators of that time. But what mainly happened was the appearance in my mind of a thought that this was *not what was supposed to happen next.* Like Socrates, I am given to internal dialogues. The next thought was, well, what *was* supposed to happen next? And then the thought came: *Nothing* was supposed to happen next. The era of next things was over with.

Here is the way I had been thinking about art history. Like many philosophers, I had been greatly impressed by Paul Grice's William James Lectures, in which he worked out the logic of conversations. He was interested in what holds a conversation together, and he proposed that there was a kind of logical relationship between what A says and what B then says, when they are having a conversation. He called this *conversational implicature.* It was not an implication, as that was understood in symbolic logic. It was, though, implicational. A says "Bill and Ellen have fallen in love," and B, realizing that a conversation has been launched, directs it one way or another. B might ask for evidence. Or he might say, "Bad news for Ellen's husband." And, depending upon which of these (or other things), A says why he thinks they have fallen in love, or what is likely to happen to Ellen's marriage. If, however, B were to say "Isn't the wind sharp for April?" or some such *non sequitur,* A has the option of thinking he has not been understood, or B does not want to have that conversation. Grice seemed to have opened up a very interesting and fecund area, much under discussion at the time. I just had the thought that there might be some kind of *historical implicature,* where a sequence of events might have a conversation-like structure.

In fact I thought that the history of art was like that. That the "next thing" had to relate to a stylistic move in something like the way a next move in a conversation does. No one would know in advance what it would be—there might be an indeterminately wide range of options, as there are with conversational moves—but one would really be able to say if the chronologically next thing fell within the range. And my feeling was that none of the things in that biennial really did that. Admittedly, I jumped to conclusions. But I felt that if the structure of history were like the structure of conversations, then, just as conversations can end or break off, a historical structure could end or break off. But I did not explore historical implicature at the time, though it did come up in various lectures I gave but did not publish. In any case, if history were implicative, we were dealing with something different from physical sequences, but also different from the kind of teleological connections against which *Analytical Philosophy of History* inveighed. There was enough of a difference that I felt the end-of-art thesis really was not that inconsistent with my philosophy of history, and though any philosophical system is likely to be a fairly leaky vessel, my boat was not stove with a contradiction wide enough to sink it. I could continue to tinker with it *en plein mer,* the way philosophers of science, adopting a metaphor from Otto Neurath, said science must always be prepared to do. So no—I don't know what the future practice of art will bring forth. But I do feel the conversation is irreparably broken. We are in for a fairly sustained period like the present one in which the old quarrels about how art has to be will simply be a quaint residue of something long *Vorbei.* It is a period without movements, without ideology, without manifestos, in which anything goes. What I will say only is that no one now can describe what the next era will be like.

Here is a rare piece of data. I recently received over a hundred proposals for exhibitions by independent curators, hoping to have them take place in a not-for-profit gallery with which I have a connection. I cannot reveal the proposals here, but I can say that I discovered that there is a curatorial underground, in which the concept of an exhibition has emerged that has almost nothing to do with exhibitions in commercial galleries, which have certain continuities with galleries at the beginning of that institution—say the gallery of Gersaint, for which Watteau painted a wonderful sign. There is no proposition that cannot have a curatorial realization. The proposals as I received them were anonymous, so I knew the names of none of these curators. Nor did the names of the six or seven artists each listed as prepared to show his or her work ring a bell. The works are intended to advance the thesis of the show. So there are six or seven hundred artists, all going in different directions, and at least a hundred different discourses, that bear little relationship to one another. The discourses define the works. One can imagine that there might be some unifying narrative, but one cannot imagine the narrative itself. Yet I am confident that the same definition of embodied meanings can be easily applied to each work in this polymorphous art world.

I published "The End of Art" in 1984. In October of that year I became art critic for the *Nation.* These events are connected only as the events in a chronicle would be—writing "The End of Art" did not lead to my being

asked to write criticism, nor was being an art critic part of my life plan. So I could not have had my future career in mind when I wrote "The End of Art," and Noël Carroll's kindly intended effort to get me off the hook of inconsistency by treating the former as a different order of narrative than an historical narrative cannot be squared with biographical truth. Nevertheless, Carroll's effort is very suggestive to me, and does contain something that would have been invisible at the time I wrote my piece. He juxtaposes two different styles of art criticism, one practiced by Clement Greenberg and his followers, one by me. The former is criticism in which one undertakes to write the art history of the present—singling out those trends that belong to the master narrative of developmental progress—like color field painting in Greenberg's view—and criticism as I practice it, which is to take up each piece of art as it comes along, and to try to understand it in terms of its meaning and how the meaning is embodied. It would be easy, in retrospect, to see "The End of Art" as preparing the way for the kind of criticism I would write—criticism for a pluralistic art world, where art is made to convey meanings rather than to advance a cumulative narrative through which the essence of art emerges stage by stage.

If I had so written "The End of Art" that it ended in something that had not happened when I wrote it, but did happen at a later time—then it would almost have fit the discredited kind of narrative discussed in *Analytical Philosophy of History,* especially since I would have had no way of knowing that that was to be my future and the future of art criticism. The actual causal history certainly would not have been covered by some kind of law. I published *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* in 1981; the art critic of the *Nation* fell terminally ill; the editor who was to hire me returned to the magazine and felt that a new art critic should be found; she consulted several persons, including someone who had admired *The Transfiguration*; she found no one whose writing she liked, but she did like mine; I was astonished by her invitation but decided to accept it. And lo—I found myself working in an art world that was only just beginning to recognize that it was pluralistic. I participated in a panel on pluralism at the School of Visual Arts in 1980, but only published "Learning to Live with Pluralism" in an impossibly obscure venue—*The Journal of the Glass Arts Society*—in 1991. In truth, it was as hard for me to accept the idea of pluralism as it was to swallow the end-of-art thesis in 1984.

But Noël Carroll really opened my eyes with his suggestion. I realize that thinking about the end of art changed the way I looked at and wrote about art. More and more I saw merit in the definition of art as embodied meaning, and my practice as a critic was shaped by my philosophy.

A.C.D.

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Fred Rush

DANTO, HEGEL, AND THE WORK OF ART

Hegel's lectures on aesthetics, delivered at the University of Berlin throughout the 1820s, are surely the most comprehensive philosophical treatment of art we have. Their compass, degree of detail, and sheer optimism in result are not likely ever to be surpassed. Hegel begins the lectures by declaring that philosophy of art, and of natural beauty as well, can no longer be considered "aesthetics" in the strict sense, although he says that he will retain the term for convenience.[1] If Hegel is right, and if we date the historical beginning of philosophical aesthetics with A. G. Baumgarten's designation of it as a separate field of philosophical inquiry in 1735, the philosophical shelf-life of aesthetics was less than a century.[2]

I

Why has philosophical aesthetics come to its end according to Hegel? Hegel holds, quite correctly, that traditional philosophical treatments of the nature of beauty and of art have taken as central to their investigation the concept of sense perception (αἴσθησις) and its relation to pleasure. Hegel contends that the three major lines of development in modern aesthetics—empiricism, rationalism, and Kantianism—share this commitment in one way or another. For Hegel the central aesthetic category is *truth*, not pleasure taken in beauty. This accounts for another shift in emphasis in Hegel's aesthetic theory. Prior thinkers who treat aesthetics as pendant to epistemology were apt to grant