

therefore disposes of is the belief that Kant, as a harbinger of abstract formalism, rated wallpaper patterns more highly aesthetically than great works of art.

The volume, *Pleasure, Preference and Value: Studies in Philosophical Aesthetics*, edited by Eva Schaper and published by Cambridge University Press in 1983, grew out of the meetings held by the Thyssen-Foundation-sponsored group of philosophers when it turned its attention to aesthetics. The volume is interesting for what sophisticated analytic philosophers can do with aesthetics. Eva Schaper's own contribution, 'The Pleasures of Taste', offers an account of the aesthetic judgement which includes an impressive account of the 'antimony of taste' and an acute characterization of the distinction between Hume's approach to the topic of aesthetic judgement and Kant's.

The Spring 1985 number of this journal was a special issue to celebrate the occasion of Harold Osborne's eightieth birthday. Eva offered a paper, 'Towards the Aesthetic: A Journey with Friedrich Schiller', in which she drew a distinction between a 'pure' and an alternative tradition in aesthetics, a distinction which I, and my students, find illuminating and useful, particularly at this time when what the subject-matter of aesthetics is supposed to be is the subject of intense debate.

Many of us have cause to be grateful to Eva Schaper for acts of personal kindness but also for the intellectual enrichment which she brought to our lives. In her death we have as individuals and as a Society lost a good friend and a wise philosopher.

THE NATURE AND LIMITS OF ANALYTIC AESTHETICS

Lars-Olof Åhlberg

INTRODUCTION

THE EXPRESSION 'analytic aesthetics' elicits two questions: 'What does "analytic" mean in this case?' and 'What is aesthetics?'. Since the nature of *analytic* aesthetics is the main topic of my paper, I will content myself with a few introductory remarks about the scope of the term 'aesthetics'. There seem to be, roughly speaking, two main usages of the term prevalent in the artworld today. In the wide sense of the term, 'aesthetics' refers to all theoretical study of the arts; in a narrower usage, 'aesthetics' is used synonymously with 'philosophy of art'. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, for example, which has a pronounced philosophical and analytic profile, uses the term 'aesthetics' in the wide sense. It includes 'all studies of the arts and related types of experience from a philosophic, scientific, or other theoretical standpoint, including those of psychology, sociology, anthropology, cultural history, art criticism, and education'.

Many philosophers, on the other hand, tend to identify aesthetics with the philosophy of art. To take a recent example, Anne Sheppard has entitled her introduction to the philosophy of art, *Aesthetics: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Art* (1987); and Joseph Margolis speaks in the introduction to his anthology *Philosophy Looks at the Arts* (1987) of 'the philosophy of art—or aesthetics'.² I think it is preferable to distinguish between aesthetics and the philosophy of art and *not* to use the expressions 'aesthetics' and 'philosophy of art' synonymously. According to this view the philosophy of art, or philosophical aesthetics, belongs to the wider field aesthetics but is not identical with it.

Since many of the writers I wish to discuss use 'aesthetics' and 'philosophy of art' synonymously, I will, for the sake of convenience, conform to their usage although I believe one should make a distinction between aesthetics and the philosophy of art.

My paper divides into two parts: in the first part I shall discuss the nature of analytic philosophy; the second part is devoted to two recent discussions of the nature of analytic aesthetics.

CONCEPTIONS OF PHILOSOPHY

Since analytical aesthetics, or analytical philosophy of art, is a form of analytical philosophy, the answer to the question what analytical aesthetics is depends on how we characterize analytical philosophy. There is, however, no unanimity about the nature of analytical philosophy, nor of course about the nature of philosophy. All these concepts are philosophically controversial; it would therefore be a mistake to regard them as innocuous labels. It is of course easy to give a stipulative definition of these terms, but that would be beside the point here.

A few years back, some students and teachers of philosophy at Oxford, dissatisfied with analytic philosophy as it is practised in England and America, decided to form a discussion group. The nature of analytic philosophy was naturally an important theme for them. Although they met regularly for three years they were—as they write in the preface to their book *The Need for Interpretation* (1983)—‘unable to reach any consensus about just what analytical philosophy is’.³ The lack of consensus was certainly not owing to any inability on their part to use the standard techniques of definition; they were unable to reach unanimity because the question about the nature of analytical philosophy is itself a philosophical issue.

Since the problem of the nature of philosophy is itself a philosophical problem, different approaches, activities and theories qualify or pass as philosophy. Consider, for example, Quine's remarks about the status of philosophy: ‘Philosophy enjoys less firmness and conclusiveness than astrophysics, so that there is some lack of professional consensus as to what even qualifies as responsible philosophy. The astrologer's counterpart in philosophy can enjoy a professional standing such as the astrologer cannot.’⁴ Quine obviously distinguishes between rational science and irrational pseudo-science and seems to think that an analogous distinction between rational scientific philosophy and irrational pseudo-scientific philosophy can be drawn, although, apparently irrational and pseudo-scientific philosophy often passes for philosophy. I think Quine underestimates the significance of this lack of consensus. I would also take exception to his view that there is a scientific philosophy that can neatly be distinguished from pseudo-scientific philosophy. Indeed the very idea of a scientific philosophy seems to me deeply problematic.

One way of characterizing a philosophical trend or tradition is to contrast it with a different trend or tradition. The French philosopher Pascal Engel, in the article ‘Continental Insularity: Contemporary French Analytical Philosophy’ (1987), describes the differences between analytical philosophy, conceived as a tradition and an attitude, and contemporary French philosophy as follows: Analytical philosophers believe that philosophy like science is a common enterprise, and that therefore philosophical theses are discussable and criticizable. Secondly, analytical philosophers are convinced that there can be prog-

ress in philosophy, although not in the same sense as in science. The third characteristic of analytical philosophy is, according to Engel, the belief that philosophy can and should be conducted as a professional and specialized discipline. In sum, one can make worthwhile contributions to philosophy without being a genius. These beliefs and attitudes which resemble what rather loosely could be called ‘the academic and scientific attitude’, Engel regards as ‘rationalistic’ in a wide sense. Not all analytical philosophers share this rationalistic attitude, but most of them accept it as a regulative idea, Engel claims.⁵ In contemporary French philosophy the dominant attitudes towards philosophy are very different. They are often, Engel says, ‘the very reverse of the analytical attitude’.⁶ Philosophy is viewed as a solitary enterprise; secondly there is the conviction that progress in philosophy is impossible, since philosophy resembles literature more than science, ‘and the use of argument is more a matter of rhetoric and eloquence than a matter of logic and truth’, as he puts it.⁷ And finally there is the belief, that ‘[t]here can only be geniuses in philosophy, giants of thought’.⁸ If this latter attitude is as widespread as Engel says it is, many French philosophers have reason to worry. A consequence of these attitudes is that French philosophers think that ‘it is better to have a great number of confused ideas than to have a small number of clear ideas’,⁹ as Engel puts it a little maliciously.

This characterization is obviously not exhaustive or very exact. It might even be thought, as Engel himself realizes, that he has given a malevolent caricature of French philosophy. Although he admits that ‘the expression of those beliefs is far more subtle and sophisticated’, he insists that ‘[a]s a matter of fact, many prominent French philosophers have held such beliefs quite literally, and far from being ashamed of them, they are quite proud of these opinions, which are for them the expression of their passionate fight against what they take to be the tyranny of reason itself’.¹⁰ Be that as it may, the general picture he draws of the philosophical climate in France is, as far as I can see, not entirely off the mark. He gives a vivid picture of the difference in atmospheric pressure between the traditions of analytical philosophy and French philosophy.

The rationalistic attitude in a wide sense implies an openness to criticism and a willingness to revise one's opinions and theories in the face of justified criticism. This attitude coupled with the conviction that the construction of a philosophical system is very risky, if not altogether impossible, accounts partly for the analytical philosophers' predilection for piecemeal analyses. In consequence the philosophical paper or essay has become the analytical genre *par excellence*. In the world of analytical philosophy the journals play as important a role as book-length studies.

Critics of analytical philosophy often claim that the rationalistic attitude characteristic of analytical philosophy precludes philosophical visions and creative thinking. Analytical philosophers are consequently preoccupied with

trivialities and pseudo-problems. The Polish—American philosopher Henryk Skolimowski, for example, who has been converted from analytical philosophy to something he calls ‘eco-philosophy’, a metaphysically and religiously grounded worldview, maintains that ‘[p]resent analytical philosophy is an embodiment of the positivist ethos, which is based on the cult of technique and the avoidance of problems’.¹¹ Skolimowski thinks that the problems contemporary analytical philosophy concerns itself with such as the problem of ‘sense’ and ‘reference’, were once real and interesting. With Frege, Russell, Lesniewski and Tarski, however, ‘the creative aspects of the problem have been explored and exhausted’, he says.¹² Skolimowski takes, I think, an unduly narrow view of analytical philosophy. Formal semantics and analysis based on the calculus conception of language is just one trend, albeit an influential one, in contemporary analytical philosophy.

Respect for clarity and consistency do not preclude visionary and rhetorical power, as is shown in the work of philosophers such as Wittgenstein, Austin, Quine and Popper, or Goodman, Wollheim and Danto. It could be objected that Wittgenstein is not a typical analytical philosopher or that he is not an analytical philosopher at all. The problems and questions with which he struggled in both his early and his late philosophy stem from the analytical tradition. Moreover, Wittgenstein’s thinking is closer to the analytical tradition than to any other contemporary movement.

Respect for logic and argument and the high value set on clarity are perhaps the most general features of analytical philosophy. The very possibility of a philosophy based on these attitudes or principles is denied by many contemporary philosophers and theorists outside the analytical tradition. Consider, for example, the following résumé of Gianni Vattimo’s thinking given by his English translator:

[N]ihilism attacks rationality wherever it is encountered, whether in science, philosophy or art, since the concepts of ‘reason’ and ‘truth’ are entirely interdependent in the tradition of Western metaphysical thought. The project of nihilism is to unmask all systems of reason as systems of persuasion, and to show that logic—the very basis of rational metaphysical thought—is in fact only a kind of rhetoric.¹³

Vattimo, who is regarded by some as one of the most important post-modernist thinkers, opposes his own so called ‘weak thought’ to metaphysical thinking.

The view that philosophy as a rational enterprise is impossible today is widespread among post-modernist theorists. This belief is usually based on the conviction that philosophy proper is and remains metaphysics. And since metaphysical and foundational thinking has lost all credibility and legitimacy, philosophy is impossible, according to this conception.

Here is an example of this attitude to philosophy and philosophizing. The tradition of philosophy is closed, declares the French philosopher Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe. He asserts that,

after the thesis of being, in which philosophizing has its essence, had irreversibly become a thesis on being as thesis, all the theses which succeeded it . . . have been engulfed in the will to a thesis in which has more and more clearly manifested itself the impossibility of any thesis other than the thesis, thus condemning the will to desire nothing other than its own thesis.¹⁴

Not surprisingly Lacoue-Labarthe arrives at the conclusion that ‘[p]hilosophy is finished/finite (*La philosophie est finie*); its limit is uncrossable’; that means, he says, that ‘we can no longer—and we can only—do philosophy, possessing as we do no other language and having not the slightest notion of what “thinking” might mean outside of “philosophizing”’.¹⁵ If philosophy in some sense is impossible it has apparently been so for a long time, since Lacoue-Labarthe claims that ‘Husserl’s [work is] in spite of—or rather because of—its claim to be a “science”, doubtless . . . not, properly speaking, a philosophy’.¹⁶ What is and what is not a philosophy according to this writer is not easy to determine; in any case I am sure all analytical philosophy, since it cannot be said to concern itself with being as thesis, however conceived, would not be regarded as philosophy. Those who think that philosophy is impossible and proclaim the end of philosophy think that philosophy worthy of the name must be systematic and metaphysical. ✓

This presupposition comes out clearly in Fredric Jameson’s thoughts on what he calls ‘contemporary theory’. Jameson thinks that the dissolution of previously unquestioned boundaries and taxonomies is manifest not only in the arts but also in the field of theory. In his article ‘Postmodernism and Consumer Society’ (1983) Jameson is primarily concerned with the nature of the so-called ‘postmodern condition’ and the role of theory. ✓ A generation ago’, he says, ‘there was still a technical discourse of professional philosophy . . . alongside which one could still distinguish that quite different discourse of the other academic disciplines—of political science, for example, or sociology or literary criticism’.¹⁷ Things have changed, he maintains, and today ‘we have a kind of writing simply called “theory” which is all or none of those things at once’.¹⁸ This new kind of theoretical discourse ‘is becoming widespread and marks the end of philosophy as such’, Jameson concludes.¹⁹

If we are to believe Jameson, most if not all, social and human sciences as well as philosophy, have merged into so-called ‘theoretical discourse’. It is of course true that there are ‘discourses’ that consciously attempt to transcend the customary and partly conventional barriers between various intellectual disciplines. These discourses can indeed be seen as manifestations of post-modernism. But Jameson’s belief that this is a dominant or even a widespread tendency is mistaken. What is true of some humanities departments in

America and some British literature departments is certainly not true of all universities in Western and Eastern Europe. Moreover, Jameson is guilty of a curious equivocation when he speaks of 'the end of philosophy'. For the technical discourses of professional philosophy include according to him 'the great systems of Sartre or the phenomenologists, the work of Wittgenstein or analytical or common language philosophy'.²⁰ When he claims that the new theoretical discourse 'marks the end of philosophy as such' he obviously thinks that 'the great systems of Sartre', etc., are philosophy as such—a quite indefensible view. There is no philosophy as such and when Jameson implies that there is no analytical philosophy any more, this is wishful thinking on his part.

Because of these fundamental misconceptions and confusions about both the nature of analytical philosophy and the philosophical situation at large a fruitful exchange or even a confrontation with the proponents of this new theoretical discourse is difficult, if not impossible. Equally indefensible is the view expressed by the American deconstructionist literary theorist Hillis Miller that '[i]t's a manifest fact that a great deal of the real philosophy that's been taught recently has been taught out of Philosophy departments'.²¹ In view of this it is easy to understand why recent anthologies in the theory of literature, claiming to cover contemporary work and contemporary positions in the theory of literature, do not contain any contributions from analytical aestheticians and philosophers of literature.²² This also explains why there is so little exchange between literary theorists and analytical aestheticians. As a final example of the lack of communication between continentally inspired 'theory' and analytical aesthetics I quote the characterization of aesthetics given by David Carroll in his book *Paraesthetics* (1987). He asserts that 'aesthetics implies the establishment of a theory of art and literature or the application of a general theory to the area of art'.²³ The objectives of much analytical aesthetics have in fact been the very opposite to this.

In a number of articles Richard Shusterman discusses post-structuralist and deconstructionist theory and tries to find some common ground between the concerns of analytical aesthetics and deconstruction. To my knowledge there has been no response from the other side.²⁴

THE NATURE OF ANALYTIC AESTHETICS

The remainder of my paper centres on two publications, whose theme is the nature and limits of analytic aesthetics. They are the collection of essays, *Analytic Aesthetics* (1989), edited by Shusterman, and the book, *Analytische Philosophie der Kunst* (Analytic Philosophy of Art) (1988), by the German philosopher Karlheinz Lüdeking.²⁵

The question Shusterman attempts to answer is whether there is 'a distinctive analytic movement, method, or even style in aesthetics'.²⁶ Shusterman thinks, not surprisingly, that we can legitimately speak of 'analytic aesthetics' although it is not so easy to say what it is. One reason for this difficulty is that

'it remains a developing and valued tradition of thought, and as such its very nature . . . will be essentially contested'.²⁷ One might say that characterizing analytic aesthetics is not a purely descriptive task; there is a normative aspect to it as well.

Shusterman singles out no less than ten traits he regards as characteristic of analytic aesthetics. He first reminds us that 'analytic aesthetics is a consequence . . . of the twentieth-century analytic approach to philosophy introduced by Moore and Russell', adding that '[p]robably all analytic philosophers would agree with Russell's claim that analysis rather than the construction of philosophical systems is the major aim of philosophy'.²⁸ If the conception of philosophy as analysis implies that philosophy is exclusively a second-order discipline consisting of logical and conceptual analysis of first-order discourse in science, morals, etc., Shusterman's characterization of Russell and Moore is somewhat misleading. The constructive strain in both Moore and Russell is quite strong.

Russell was probably the first to speak of logical analysis as the method of philosophy, but method is one thing, and what you do with it another. In *The Problems of Philosophy* (1912) Russell wrote that '[t]he knowledge [philosophy] aims at is the kind of knowledge which gives unity and system to the body of the sciences'.²⁹

Although both Russell and Moore were critical of traditional metaphysics, and analytical philosophy generally speaking is hostile to metaphysical thinking, it is not unreasonable to construe some explicitly anti-metaphysical philosophical projects as metaphysical in nature. Hilary Putnam, for example, points out that the 'attempts by Frege, Russell, Carnap, and the early Wittgenstein [which] were called "attacks on metaphysics", . . . were among the most ingenious, profound, and technically brilliant constructions of metaphysical systems ever achieved'.³⁰ Nevertheless, it is true that analytic aesthetics developed in opposition to speculative philosophies of art, in particular to the idealist aesthetics of Croce and Collingwood. It is also true that the notion of aesthetics as a second-order discipline was of paramount importance to pioneers of analytic aesthetics such as Beardsley and Weitz.

Shusterman says that '[a]nti-essentialism about art and the quest for clarity (especially through close concern with language) are perhaps the most common and distinctive features of analytic aesthetics'.³¹ A similar view is expressed in Anita Silvers's contribution to the discussion on the nature of analytic aesthetics.³² Lüdeking goes even further. He takes, wrongly in my opinion, anti-essentialism to be one of the definitional criteria of analytic aesthetics. Traditional aesthetics is essentialist, says Lüdeking; its principal aim is to elucidate the nature of art and of the aesthetic experience. Essentialists believe in the possibility and desirability of general theories and definitions stating the necessary and jointly sufficient properties of the phenomena under investigation. Although anti-essentialism has been widespread among analytic

aestheticians, I don't think anti-essentialism should be regarded as a defining characteristic of analytic aesthetics.

Lüdeking chooses Harold Osborne and Monroe C. Beardsley as representatives of traditional aesthetics and consequently he considers them to be non-analytic aestheticians. Shusterman, who seems to take a similar stand, realizes of course that Beardsley cannot be described as an anti-essentialist in the sense that term has acquired in the philosophy of art. He admits that 'Beardsley . . . might seem an exception to this', that is, to the thesis that analytic aestheticians are anti-essentialists, and he also says that 'Danto . . . seems to embrace some sort of essentialism'.³³ If two of the most well-known analytic aestheticians are not anti-essentialists, analytical aesthetics cannot be anti-essentialist by definition. Shusterman should not have accepted anti-essentialism as a criterion of analytic aesthetics. There are as a matter of fact several other aestheticians than those already referred to, who reject anti-essentialism, but who in spite of this cannot be described as non-analytic. Mary Mothersill, for example, explicitly rejects what she calls the anti-essentialism of the 'anti-theorists',³⁴ but her work is analytic if anything is.

There are grave difficulties in analysing analytical philosophy and a fortiori analytical aesthetics in terms of common doctrines or theses. Some analytic philosophers are realists about knowledge, others espouse some kind of anti-realism. There are relativists as well as anti-relativists in the theory of knowledge. In the philosophy of science both methodological monism and pluralism have their defenders. In moral philosophy the variety of doctrines espoused by analytic philosophers is equally great: there are the classical emotivists, the prescriptivists and the cognitivists. In aesthetics there are intentionalists as well as anti-intentionalists, formalists as well as anti-formalists. In spite of the diversity of theoretical commitments and attitudes among analytic philosophers, there could, of course, still be a common denominator uniting all analytical philosophers and aestheticians, although this common element could not be found at the level of theories and doctrines. The methods used and a certain philosophical style might be the common elements we are looking for.

Whatever analytic aesthetics is, it is analysis of some kind, and the purpose of analysis is to achieve clarity. Shusterman goes on to distinguish between two kinds of conceptual analysis in aesthetics. In constructive analysis the objective is to reshape vague and ambiguous concepts and to reconstruct them. The foremost representative of this brand of analysis is Nelson Goodman. The second form of analysis wants to be faithful to the actual use of concepts in the aesthetic field and aims at a clarificatory overview. Rather than improve our concepts, the goal is to clarify through description. The second kind of analysis could be called 'descriptive' and 'pragmatic'. Morris Weitz is perhaps the best known practitioner of this approach.

Most analytic aestheticians share the quest for clarity and the belief that the

methods of conceptual and linguistic analysis will achieve this end. But what is clarity? In 1954 Nelson Goodman wrote that 'in the absence of any convenient and reliable criterion of what is clear, the individual thinker can only search his philosophic conscience'.³⁵ And consider what the American aesthetician Arnold Isenberg said in the programmatic article 'Analytical Philosophy and the Study of Art', published in 1950: '[N]obody has a clear idea of what an analysis is'.³⁶ He further claimed that '[e]very feature of the [analytic] method has become controversial'.³⁷ In particular it is not clear what the object of a philosophical analysis is. Is it, Isenberg asks, words, thoughts, meanings, judgements or propositions? Many other questions could be asked about the objects and objectives of analysis. It is, however, quite evident that the lack of consensus regarding the goals and methods of philosophical analysis is as great today as ever. A consequence of this is that many methods and techniques that differ considerably from one another are all rightly called 'analytic'.

I have already said that Lüdeking's criteria of analytic aesthetics lead to the absurdity of regarding Osborne and Beardsley as non-analytic aestheticians. Beardsley's *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism* (1958) is one of the first sustained efforts, on the part of an analytic philosopher, to cover systematically philosophical problems in the arts and like Osborne, who served as editor of *The British Journal of Aesthetics* from 1960 to 1977, he pursued the analysis of art and the aesthetic in the spirit of the classical tradition of analytic philosophy. Göran Hermerén's view that analytic aesthetics consists of 'several broad contemporary traditions, drawing inspiration from as diverse sources as Husserl, Frege, Russell, Moore, Wittgenstein, Austin and others, including Beardsley, Goodman, Sibley and Weitz seems to me reasonable. I also agree that Beardsley and Weitz are among the 'main figures in this tradition',³⁹ the tradition of analytic aesthetics.

According to Lüdeking analytic aestheticians, in addition to being anti-essentialists, believe that the concept of art is a purely descriptive concept, or rather that there is a descriptive use of the term 'art' which it is the task of the aesthetician to analyse and describe. No analytic aesthetician can, according to him, both be an anti-essentialist and also believe that the concept of art is primarily an evaluative concept. Yet there are philosophers who have thought so, and they cannot be regarded as other than analytical aestheticians. In the essay 'Are Bad Works of Art "Works of Art"?' (1973) Cyril Barrett defends the view that the concept of art is basically an evaluative concept and so does W. B. Gallie in his paper 'Art as an Essentially Contested Concept' (1956).⁴⁰ Gallie maintains that the history of the concept of art 'discloses a growing recognition of the fact that the word "art" is most usefully employed, not as a descriptive term standing for certain indicatable properties, but as an appraisive term accrediting a certain kind of achievement'.⁴¹

Lüdeking arrives at the conclusion that analytic philosophy of art, in wishing to analyse a purely descriptive concept of art, has set itself a task that

cannot be solved. He criticizes Morris Weitz for turning 'the respectable maxim that philosophers should come up with a purely descriptive theory of the concept of art' into the quite different maxim that they should 'formulate a theory of a purely descriptive concept of art'.⁴²

If there is no purely descriptive concept of art and no purely descriptive use of the term 'art', then of course the programme is in for trouble. Lüdeking thinks that Weitz has given an analysis of the concept of art that is empirically inadequate, since it is not the case that new works of art are deemed to be works of art in virtue of family resemblances with works that already are works of art. On the contrary, the criteria for deciding whether something is a work of art or not are evaluative according to Lüdeking. I am attracted to this view, but I certainly do not think that accepting it necessitates the rejection of analytical aesthetics as Lüdeking thinks.

It has been argued that the avoidance of evaluative issues and the concentration on the purely descriptive use of the term 'art', if there is such a use, is one of the weaknesses of analytic aesthetics. Other complaints concern the ahistorical character of analytic aesthetics as well as the neglect of the social context of art.⁴³ These criticisms are justified to a certain extent, but I cannot see that the 'isolationist' character of much analytical writing on art is an inherent trait in the analytic approach. An analytical theory, such as George Dickie's institutional theory of art, seems, in fact, to demand that we take the discussions of art occurring in the artworld seriously.

According to Dickie something is an art work if it satisfies the following conditions: It must be an artefact and it must have acquired 'the conferred status of candidate for appreciation'.⁴⁴ This status can be conferred on any object whatsoever by anyone who is a member of the artworld. As critics of the institutional theory such as Terry Diffey and Richard Wollheim have stressed, the interesting question is *why* something is accorded the status of art, *why* something is a work of art.⁴⁵ If we try to answer this question, we must investigate the evaluations prevalent at a certain moment in a certain corner of the artworld. We will then perhaps discover that something becomes a work of art, and is accepted as a work of art by certain sections of the artworld, because the work is believed to have artistic value.

Dickie's discussion of art is rather antiseptic, and the neglect of the real artworld and its problems is obvious. His discussion of Marcel Duchamp's ready-mades is a case in point. Although Duchamp himself wrote about his ready-mades and also had interesting things to say about the concept of art, Dickie does not pay any attention to his writings. Duchamp's ready-mades have fascinated analytic aestheticians perhaps more than any other works of modern art because of the conceptual challenge they seem to present. Very few have shown any interest in the actual circumstances of the production of these ready-mades.

It seems to me that interest in the question of defining art has diminished in

recent years, although it has been at the centre of the discussion for the last two decades. This may be a sign of change in attitude and perspective on the part of analytic aestheticians. I do not know if Richard Wollheim's treatise, *Painting as an Art* (1987), will inspire others to do similar work, but his work is certainly different from much previous work in the analytic tradition.

Aesthetics, construed as meta-aesthetics is, as Nicholas Wolterstorff points out, 'to place it at a remove from the phenomena of art and the aesthetic'.⁴⁶ The excessive interest in the anatomy of the concept of art is a result of this conception and Wolterstorff, whose own writings are not notable for their wit and humour, says with some justice that '[f]or sheer boringness, the results of these endeavors have few peers'.⁴⁷ Boringness, however, is no crime and certainly no criterion of falsehood; think of sex manuals for example. The Cambridge philosopher C. D. Broad said a long time ago, that aesthetics is 'boring and . . . largely bogus'.⁴⁸ If we compare Broad's statement with Wolterstorff's assessment, we might agree that there has been some progress.

The clarification of concepts remains an important task for the philosopher of art, but clarity certainly is not enough. I would like to think that clarity, consistency and depth are not mutually exclusive. The best works of analytic aesthetics exhibit these virtues, they increase our understanding of art and enhance our appreciation of works of art, and that, after all should be the goal of the whole endeavour.⁴⁹

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- ³⁶ Arnold Isenberg, 'Analytical Philosophy and the Study of Art' (1950), *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 46 (1987), p. 127.
- ³⁷ Ibid.
- ³⁸ Göran Hermerén, *Aspects of Aesthetics* (Lund: Gleerup, 1983), p. 241.
- ³⁹ Ibid., p. 259.
- ⁴⁰ See Cyril Barrett, 'Are Bad Works of Art "Works of Art"?', in *Philosophy and the Arts* (Royal Institute of Philosophy Lectures 6), ed. A. Phillips Griffiths (London: Macmillan, 1973), pp. 182-193 and W. B. Gallie, 'Art as an Essentially Contested Concept', *The Philosophical Quarterly* 6 (1956), pp. 97-114.
- ⁴¹ W. B. Gallie, 'Art as an Essentially Contested Concept', p. 111.
- ⁴² Karlheinz Lüdeking, *Analytische Philosophie der Kunst*, p. 67 (my translation).
- ⁴³ See R. Shusterman, 'Introduction: Analysing Analytic Aesthetics', pp. 9-11.
- ⁴⁴ George Dickie, *Art and the Aesthetic: An Institutional Analysis* (Ithaca: Cornell U.P., 1974), pp. 33-34.
- ⁴⁵ See Terry Diffey, 'On Defining Art', *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 10 (1979), pp. 15-23, and Richard Wollheim, 'The Institutional Theory of Art', in R. Wollheim, *Art and Its Objects*, 2nd. ed. (Cambridge U.P., 1980), pp. 157-166.
- ⁴⁶ Nicholas Wolterstorff, 'Philosophy of Art after Analysis and Romanticism', in R. Shusterman, *Analytic Aesthetics*, p. 37.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid.
- ⁴⁸ Quoted from William Elton, 'Introduction' to *Aesthetics and Language*, ed. W. Elton (Oxford: Blackwell, 1954), p. 2.
- ⁴⁹ An earlier version of this paper was presented to the Philosophical Society at the University of Sussex in April 1991.

ART HISTORICAL VALUE

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I

BOTH METAPHYSICAL and epistemological issues regarding aesthetic or artistic value centre on the question of objectivity. Metaphysically minded aestheticians want to know the degree to which such value is a function of properties inherent in art works themselves, while epistemologists ask whether evaluations of art works are a matter of pure subjective taste or whether there exist grounds that might generate universal agreement among these evaluations. These questions are related but distinct. Artistic value might reduce to or supervene on relations among art works or between art works and other phenomena without being relative to particular tastes of evaluating subjects. In that case value would not be intrinsic to single works, but there might nevertheless be grounds for agreement in evaluations.

These questions arise in an acute way in regard to a particular kind of artistic value, that which derives from the place of an art work in a historical sequence or set of aesthetic traditions. There can be no doubt that some works are valuable and highly regarded because they strongly influence the development of a style, foreshadow much later developments in art, bring an existing tradition or set of aesthetic ideals to its conclusion or ultimate fruition, or alter the course of art history. Especially when a work is historically important mainly because of its relation to later works, the question immediately arises whether this importance could be determined by properties of the work itself, whether the artists could claim credit for this value of their creations. But, as we shall see, even aesthetic properties that do not themselves appear to consist in or include historical relations, properties such as grace or beauty, generate similar questions when their ascriptions by knowledgeable critics change over the course of time and in the face of later artistic developments.

Those philosophers who have addressed this topic recently tend to conceive it in somewhat different terms. Arthur Danto conceives the issue in epistemic terms, speaking of properties of art works and events that can be known only in retrospect (which he calls 'narrative properties').¹ Anita Silvers thinks in metaphysical terms, claiming that value-relevant properties of art works themselves change over time as later works are created. She uses the example of Rubens's figures, coarse at the time he painted them but later recognized as elegant, after acceptance of figures such as those of Picasso. According to her, we cannot say that critics of Rubens's time mistook