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# **The Wake of Art, Criticism, Philosophy, and the Ends of Taste**

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## SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

Modern art criticism is a mongrelized activity. It is a strange hybrid of several different practices that are all, even when considered individually, themselves paradoxical. Critics offer public reports of private experiences; they strive to offer objectively valid reasons for subjective judgments; they bring knowledge of the traditions of art to bear on contemporary art, which is often hostile to tradition; they write in journals of popular opinion but on the basis of imputed expertise. Art criticism is clearly central to the modern artworld, yet, suspended as it is within and between these incompatible aims and norms, it is also, intellectually, vaguely disreputable. It should thus be no surprise that critics who believe themselves to be doing something intellectually respectable and culturally significant are driven to theoretical self-reflection. Denis Diderot, Charles Baudelaire, and Clement Greenberg, as well as contemporary writers such as Michael Fried, Rosalind Kraus, Thomas Crow, and Lucy Lippard, have been impelled to offer philosophical and historical justifications for practices of criticism which, as those defenses testify symptomatically, seem unable to justify themselves.

To this list of reflective critics must not be added the name of Arthur Danto. Since 1984, when he became the regular art critic for *The Nation* and an occasional commentator in other art and general publications, Danto has accumulated a dossier of writings impressive both for its range of artistic subjects and for the wealth of cultural, historical, and philosophical information it brings to bear on them. Over that time, Danto has cultivated a singular taste and a critical style which are peculiarly well-suited to the radically fractured contemporary artworld. Equally significantly, Danto has engaged in theoretical and methodological reflections in such a system manner that he has fashioned a unique philosophy of art history with internal connections to his taste and his practice as a critic. However, unlike the exemplary figures named above, Danto's philosophical reflections did not arise after or as a response to his cultivation of an artistic taste and a critical practice. Rather, those reflections for the most part took shape much earlier, during his distinguished career as an academic philosopher at Columbia University. His influential article "The Artworld" was published twenty years before he was invited to write for *The Nation*, and by the time Danto started his new career as a critic, he had worked out fully elaborated philosophies of art (*The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*) and history (*Analytical Philosophy of History*).

This twist on the typical relation of criticism and philosophy has significance for both activities. Because his theoretical reflections were not motivated by the pressing problems of ongoing critical engagement, Danto's philosophies of art and history were not shaped by immediate instrumental concerns. His philosophy aimed to clarify and resolve problems in philosophy, not in art criticism. By contrast, the theoretical arguments of, for example, Greenberg were motivated by the shifting dilemmas of everyday critical practice. Thus, while they did not always add up to a consistent set of positions, it is also true that theoretical consistency was not Greenberg's highest aim; the notorious questions of whether the great articles of the late 1930s are of a piece with those of the early 1960s cannot even be made intelligible without reference to the different

kinds of art he was wrestling with at those times. Such is not the case for Danto, for whom, as a philosopher, theoretical consistency is a highest virtue. However, this contrast is not meant to suggest invidiously that Danto's philosophy was crafted in ignorance of art and art criticism. (Indeed, "The Artworld" was motivated by his having seen Andy Warhol's *Brillo Box* at the Stable Gallery in 1964.) The essential point is that it was not intended as a service to those fields and so was not informed by their quotidian demands. In operating at a more abstract and detached level, Danto the theoretician was able to attend more assiduously to considerations of internal consistency and general validity. This is, of course, another way of saying that Danto was, at first, exclusively a philosopher.

To be sure, excessive attention to issues of merely philosophical concern generates its own dangers, the foremost of which is pedantry. The insistence that art and criticism must adhere to criteria determined entirely extrinsically—by philosophy, political theory, or some other cognitive enterprise—is a bit of cultural imperialism not unfamiliar in the history of art theory. However, this is a sin Danto does not commit, and it is here, above all, that his uniqueness as a reflective art critic is to be located. Indeed, it is part of his thinking—his philosophical thinking—that the developments in the history of art that have made his (or any) suitably detached and general philosophy of art possible also make possible a contemporary critical practice largely immune from philosophical concerns. Danto's critical practice, which is to say his taste and his form of writing, is deeply informed by philosophical theory, and in this respect he joins the long line of critics for whom a philosophical pedigree is required to establish art criticism's intellectual credentials. However, rather than that criticism's thereby being a philosophy of art pursued by other means (or vice versa), Danto's philosophy licenses criticism to cut its ties from philosophy, to proceed as liberated from general and abstract concerns, to embrace, in short, its mongrelization. Establish that this is the case requires, of course, *philosophical* demonstration, but now more nearly to protect criticism from philosophical theory rather than to use one to solve the problems of the other. This is a theme we propose both to examine in depth in our critical commentary as well as to use to orient readers toward Danto's criticism.

The form of philosophical reflection through which Danto separates philosophy proper from the art-critical enterprise is a fascinating yet at times slippery amalgam of historical and theoretical elements. Achieving the desired liberation of criticism from philosophy on the terrain of philosophy—where, of course, the battle must be fought if its aim is genuine liberation rather than a mere gesture of evasion—requires a philosophy neither of art nor criticism alone, but rather of the two as together in their difference. It is perhaps the mark of any theory of differentiation that it must first embrace its disparate elements before it distinguishes them; however, the special burden of a *rigorous and consistent philosophy* aims to liberate criticism from, precisely, a too-light philosophical embrace, is that it also must be self critically aware of its own cognitive and discursive privileges and limits. It must, in other words, be a philosophy of art and criticism and, simultaneously, a philosophy of philosophy, a metaphilosophy. As Danto says, " ... There is an incentive in philosophically curing art of philosophy: we by just that procedure cure philosophy of a paralysis it began its long history by infecting its great enemy with." As this quote indicates, the medium through which Danto achieves metaphilosophical

critical awareness is historical reconstruction. The relation among art, philosophy and history is a matter we shall explore later. For now, though, let us note that Danto regards the internal connections between art and its philosophy, connections which have hitherto given criticism its mission, as historically unfolding artifacts; as such, those connections can only be clarified and explained from a point of view that is external to the history in question. Thus, the prising apart of criticism and philosophy can only be accomplished once the history of art has given birth to a position outside of its internal development. This, Danto thinks, has happened in contemporary art, hence his well-known thesis that the history of art, understood as the striving for a quasi-philosophical self-consciousness, is over. Danto's metaphilosophy of art, philosophy, and criticism is nothing but the explication of the theoretical perspective from which this thesis can be seen to be true.

By developing cogent philosophies of art, art history, and art criticism, yet still becoming neither a philosophical pedant nor a philosophical peddler, Danto has marked out a novel position in the history of reflective art criticism. And this position yields dividends for his own critical practice. Most notably, it underlies his capacity to respond dynamically to the pluralist artworld that has emerged since the 1970s. With no theoretical ax to grind, Danto has cultivated a catholic taste which ranges over the multiple, or, depending on one's preferences, disordered array of recent art practices. For this very reason, it is perhaps logically impossible to present a representative sample of his subjects and pleasures. Yet even a short list indicates how far Danto's eyes roam: Robert Mangold and Cindy Sherman, Jennifer Harriett and Tom Wesselmann, Arakawa and Mark Tansey, and, of course, his great hero Warhol. One of the defining challenges of the contemporary artworld has been to figure out a way to move among its fragments while nonetheless maintaining a reflectively coherent position. In having developed a philosophical history of contemporary art, which has as a consequence that art need no longer pursue one goal, and so, also, that critics need no longer judge in accord with art's movement toward or away from that goal—in having crafted, in short, a philosophy of pluralism—no one has met that challenge more directly than Danto.

Yet, at the same time that he has drawn critical and aesthetic benefits from his dialectical segregation of philosophy and criticism, Danto has opened a conceptual hole in the practice of criticism—and not just in his own practice. While a rigorous, philosophically grounded, separation of critical judgments of taste from theoretical dogmatism grants more room for taste to play; it does so at the cost of rendering the exercise of it strictly aimless. Perhaps we should say that Danto has reopened this hole, since worrying about the point of taste and criticism is nothing new; it has been an anxiety central to art criticism since the problem of taste entered modern art discourse in the eighteenth century. Indeed, it might even be deemed *the* central anxiety insofar as the modern problem of aesthetic judgment—of why and how to undertake criticism at all—takes shape in the question. What is a judgment of taste about, other than mere subjective pleasure? It is some form of this question that has motivated the art critics referred to earlier to turn to philosophical reflection in order to ground their practices, to provide them with a legitimacy greater than what might be afforded by the mere fact that they authentically report personal preferences. The answer to this question of taste has characteristically been offered in terms of the broader significance—the cultural, political, historical or philosophical significance—of the taste being proffered. But it is precisely

that kind of answer that Danto debars through his "liberating" dialectical history of art, criticism, and philosophy. Thus, unlike Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, his predecessor and model in the historical segregation of art from philosophy, Danto cannot argue that criticism has a coherent philosophy in view. In light of the unavailability of such an argument, the freeing of criticism from extrinsic purposiveness—criticism's becoming "unwarranted"—threatens to become a mythology of unbridled taste. Needless to say, this is a theme we shall dwell on.

Of course, if Danto's philosophy is right, then not just his criticism but all criticism would *and should* lose the comfort of having a warranted point and anchor. Danto has argued that the error of earlier philosophies of art was in making premature generalizations about art as such from analyses of particular kinds of art. Further, he has argued that this error proceeded from the effort to pursue a critical, normative enterprise—the determination of the direction art should take—in the guise of a theoretical, descriptive one—the definition of what art is. That is, earlier critical perspectives aspired to becoming warranted by adopting philosophic masks. It is this masking that Danto aims to disrupt; as he says, his philosophy, if true at all, is true of all art, and so no particular critical perspective logically follows from it. Theoretical truth and critical insight must go their separate ways. This theoretical insight, however, is itself made possible by developments in the history of art. On Danto's view, earlier philosophies committed the error of premature generalization because the (largely modernist) schools of art they reflected on were themselves critical perspectives which had donned artistic masks. Contemporary art, or what Danto calls "posthistorical" art, hits stripped itself of this hidden agenda, and has thereby made possible a validly generalizable philosophy of art with no particular critical consequences. Art has been freed of its hidden agendas. Philosophy of its role as warrant for aesthetic norms—and so, too, has criticism been liberated by leaving behind its hunt for the truth in art. But if the liberation of criticism resides in its being deprived of its philosophical kernel, then it is not even entitled to dream of outcomes with more than particular, nongeneralizable significance. Thus, Danto's philosophy of art and criticism displays a space within which his taste may flourish, and it also contains an implicit critique of all critical perspectives that might claim for themselves the capacity to warrant taste more soundly. The space of taste's freedom becomes a reiterated space of pure self-determination, which it remains to critics to claim, it is no wonder then that Danto is an exemplary critic for a pluralistic age, for he is perhaps the first reflective critic to have crafted a philosophical defense of the *philosophical painlessness* of taste and aesthetic judgment.

Any measure of Danto's exemplarity, however, must take account of a peculiar fact; despite his being possibly the only contemporary American writer to have both worked within and made theoretical sense of the pluralistic artworld and despite his having developed arguments that lend to deprive criticism in general of its theoretical warrants, Danto's ideas have been little discussed by other leading critics. This is a trend we hope this volume will begin to reverse. Danto's essays are published regularly in *The Nation*, a fairly widely read journal of opinion, as well as in more specialized art and aesthetics journals; he also regularly reviews the writings of other critics and theorists and appears at public symposia. Yet, generally and for the most part, his arguments have remained unaddressed by other art critics, whether they are reflectively inclined or not

(although the same cannot be said of philosophical aestheticians, for whom Danto's arguments have been at the very center of several key debates since the mid-1960s). And this despite the fact that if his thinking is correct, those other critics would need to fundamentally alter their own practices. Some of this neglect can be explained purely sociologically, in virtue of the strained relations between academic and nonacademic writers and, within the academy, between philosophers and other humanists. This tension has led to a distrust by non-philosophers of the ascetic and analytical style of thinking Danto exhibits—a style which, in lesser hands, can lead to imperiousness. But there is another factor at work as well, one which, in odd fact, inverts the relation implicit in the disciplinary tension. While Danto brings with him to art criticism the prestige and privilege of detached philosophical reflection, he uses it to subtly undermine the cognitive and historical grounding criticism has attempted to afford itself. Because Danto's philosophy is not in the service of any particular critical orientation, because, even more strongly, on his view no coherent philosophy of art could underwrite any particular orientation, that same philosophy entails that no particular orientation can be grounded in the ways reflective critics have hoped. Whereas Krauss can criticize Greenberg and Fried can criticize T. J. Clark for having the wrong theoretical or historical underpinnings, Danto's implicit critique of that whole style of intracritical argumentation is that no such singular underpinning will ever, anymore, be located. While, from Danto's point of view, recognizing that criticism has no warrant is the key to its becoming free, such a recognition also threatens the standard conception of what it means to have an art-critical position at all.

Perhaps, in the end, Danto's strict limitation of the power of criticism—which is also, on his account, its liberation—is the proper posture in the "posthistorical artworld. In any case, that is the proposition we intend to probe and test in this commentary, and the proposition we believe will be fruitfully entertained by the readers of the Danto essays collected here. Our goal in arranging the essays is to make as vivid as possible the thematic interconnections between Danto's philosophies of art and history and his taste and critical practice. Thus, we begin with an essay on the Whitney Museum's attempt to exhibit the moment of pop and minimalism, an essay which brings out the role of the philosophy of art history in the making of judgments about art. In the next section, we collect four theoretical essays, one on the relation of art and philosophy and three on Danto's best known and most controversial thesis: that we now live in a posthistorical, pluralistic art-world in which art is, in some essential sense, at an end. In the third section, we offer six essays of art criticism that bring to the fore some of the central elements of Danto's taste and reasoning. Finally, we conclude with an essay on Warhol and abstract expressionism in the course of which the theme of liberation, within and from both art and history, is movingly displayed.

## SECTION TWO: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF POP

The themes that have governed Danto's art criticism are already present in his early review of the Whitney Museum's exhibition, *BLAM! The Explosion of Pop, Minimalism and Performance, 1958-1964*. As it is a brief essay, the themes remain compressed, yet for that same reason they are especially vivid. The interrelations of art, philosophy, and

everyday life, the narrative structure of art history, the end of art, and the exercise of taste in a pluralistic age: all these themes find pointed and economical expression in this concise discussion of the significance of the art of the early 1960s; indeed, they begin to find expression in the very first sentence.

Danto opens his review with a trope common in art criticism: he asserts, in promissory fashion, an explanatory relation between the subject under discussion and the historical movement out of which it emerged. Typically, one would expect the spelling out of this promise to form the work of the review—one would expect, in other words, that the historical explanation would be the medium through which Danto would clarify and judge the artworks in the exhibition. In this case, however, while such a relation is asserted and, indeed, does mediate the criticism after a fashion, its scope is startling!'), even audaciously, sweeping. "It is possible." Danto begins, "to view the history of painting in the present century as a sequence of revolutionizing questions of increasing scope." The background relevant to explaining the significance of pop and minimalism thus seems to be not some particular historical context but rather the entirety in fact, the totality—of modernist painting. Just behind a familiar and unremarkable trope lurks a grander, less familiar perspective.

In order to bring this other perspective into focus, we first need to note that this kind of promissory assertion seems especially familiar because it is the standard opening gambit of one particular project predominant in modern art criticism: the defining of specifically modernist art by means of an explication of the revolutionary questions it addresses to itself about its own status as painting or art. Approached in this fashion, the defining feature of various modernisms is not merely that they are innovative, in the sense that they aim at novelties (which is, after all, a feature of art wherever there is competition among artists), but, more importantly, that they are revolutionary, entailing that the novelties are in the service of some more deeply ramifying purpose. On this view, the innovations of modernist art means, not ends, toward the crafting of self-conscious responses to the place of that art or movement in the tradition or traditions of art. As such, a modernist movement is not simply *typified by*, but further, *defines itself through* the stance it adopts toward its own history; whether implicitly (think of Jackson Pollock's drips as a critique and continuation of earlier surrealisms) or explicitly (as in Marcel Broodthaers' installations), any given modernist movement depicts the movements out of which it arose as having posed questions they did not, or, more strongly, could not resolve, questions the nature of which is made visible only through the achievements of this, the later, movement. The very identity of a modernist movement is thus essentially historical. A standard tracking of this historically self-aware moment of self-definition seems indeed to be the aim with which Danto begins his review. However, in approaching the significance of pop and minimalism, he invokes not just the immediately preceding movements—indeed, not any *particular* preceding movements at all—but the *entire* self-revolutionizing history of modern art. That is, the revolutionary self-definition of these particular "styles" presumes consciousness of not just this past movement or that one, but the very fact of there having been movements, the logic of movement as such called "history." The familiarity of the initial explanatory trope is thus a mask through which is introduced a theme of specifically metahistorical significance.



It should not be thought, however, that Danto is merely playing a rhetorical trick in order to slip in a second point of view surreptitiously. In making a historical and metahistorical claim simultaneously, his introductory sentence is a microcosm of the double-edged argument he makes, both here and elsewhere, about the art of the early 1960s. On the one hand, pop and minimalism, like the movements they followed, need to be located historically insofar as they address issues left hanging by their predecessors. To understand them one must understand the historically self-conscious projects they embody; in this sense they raise questions of interpretation and judgment, for which the proper medium of explanation is history, and which therefore are the daily bread of modernist art criticism. On the other hand, something in these two movements addresses the entirety of the history from which they flowed—addresses, that is, its very structure as a narratable history, and so brings up the question of how to locate them at all. In this way pop and minimalism are beyond the explanatory reach of their own specific histories or, to put it another way, are related to those histories in a contradictory, rather than continuous, fashion. Danto's double characterization alerts us that we are in the presence of his Hegelianism, wherein historical reconstruction narrates not simply progress but also an *Aufhebung* (overcoming) in which earlier historical events are taken up only to be transcended by later ones. Danto thus interprets *BLAM!*, the Roy Lichtenstein painting from which the title of the show was taken, as "embod[ying] all the revolutions that preceded it and made it possible by holding them at a distance." In this second sense, pop and minimalism challenge the very possibility of the kind of art-critical explanation the opening trope, interpreted as a historical claim, also promises. They are historical art movements which seem to mark a mutation in the historical nature of art itself. Explaining what this means and how it is possible are the burdens of Danto's interpretation of the significance of pop and minimalism, but however that may turn out, it is no wonder that an essay claiming to approach them critically would begin by disrupting, by means of an ambiguity, its own introduction of the standard tools of art criticism.

Resolving this ambiguity about historical explanation is a central theme in much of Danto's theoretical thinking. In the review of *BLAMU* the exhibition, the project of disambiguation begins at the conclusion of this very opening paragraph. Broken down into its component claims, the equivocal trope suggests—first—that the art of the two movements exhibited at the Whitney takes its place in historical sequence after abstract expressionism by challenging "the formal boundaries that segregated painting from sculpture, from dance, from poetry or music or drama." Since these were the boundaries, the delimitation and policing of which was thought by certain artists and critics to be a signal achievement of abstract expressionism, and since transgressing boundaries is the revolutionary mechanism of historical progress, pop and minimalism were the next historical thing. But pop and minimalism were not just about mixing media; something about the unique way in which they assailed the parameters of genuine art established by their predecessors—something about their theatricality, their dalliance with figuration, their use of everyday images and forms, as well as, to be sure, their mixing of media—was also an assault on the very idea of delimitation and policing. Although this, too, might be looked at as a kind of historical progress, the perspective that would permit such a judgment would be, in light of pop and minimalism themselves, problematic. After all,

the advent of an art defined by its lack of borders would undermine the very possibility of placing it within a sequence of revolutionizing movements, since in its overturning of the delimitations it inherits it would leave no future revolutionary boundary crossing for art to accomplish. To the extent that any later art defined itself in terms of its putatively revolutionary transgressions, its self-consciousness would be unhistorical, hence false, since pop and minimalism had brought the history of art understood as progressive movement to an end. Hence, Danto concludes the paragraph by referring to pop and minimalism as "the final revolution" which "sought to erase even ... the deeper boundaries between art and philosophy on the one side, and art and life on the other." Thus—second—the promise of the opening trope, of an art-critical explanation of pop and minimalism by means of historical placement, will not, because it cannot and so *ought* not, be fulfilled. The force of the art of the early 1960s is therefore properly deemed "an explosion/" an explosion within art and therefore also within art criticism. In revolutionizing the revolutionary impulses of modernism, pop and minimalism destabilized the relation between art and history and so also rendered inadequate the kind of narrative appropriate for interpreting and judging them. It is just here, where a different kind of "historical" criticism is called for, that Danto joins the ranks of the reflective art critics.

The most perspicuous way to bring out this alternative kind of historical criticism is by noting a second debt Danto owes to Hegel: his conception of the symbol as an "embodied meaning." for instance, shortly after having described Lichtenstein's *BLAM!* as an embodiment, Danto contends that it "is a perfect emblem of the spirit of its time." As emblem and embodiment, an artwork makes visible something—say, a spirit—that would otherwise be simply vaporous and ghostly. Symbolization, we might say, is a form of incarnation, but at the same time, since it is a giver of form to what it is not, the symbol points past itself to something not of its own flesh. To be a symbol is thus to fail to live up to the belief in incarnation to which it gives rise. It is out of this constitutive inadequacy of the symbol that the historical nature of art arises, for art is, on the symbolist view, always trying to make good on claims about what it symbolizes—which it can never, in fact, make good on. And it is out of this inadequacy that the philosophical compulsion to supplement the symbol with a fulfilling interpretation—an interpretation that will bring the experience of the artwork closer to what the artwork falls short of—also arises. Thus, in the same breath in which he calls *BLAM!* an emblem. Danto also asserts: "Pop and Minimalism were in effect philosophical exercises, for each was groping toward something that had finally to be recognized by philosophy itself: whatever was to distinguish art from reality was not going to be something evident to the eye."

In an important way, Danto understates his view here. After all, the ability to see something as an emblem is not an ability of the eye alone, since it is not eyes but minds that perceive symbols. Thus, not only did philosophy, always on the hunt to discover art's hidden nature, need to recognize the nonperceptual nature of art's difference from reality; more deeply, only philosophy, as the discipline concerned with the various borders between reality and its alternatives, could "recognize" the nature of that difference. This is the truth made visible in pop and minimalism, since in those movements objects and images perceptually indistinct from non-art were negotiated into the artworld. But for precisely that reason pop and minimalism once and for all gave up the ghost that had

always haunted the artistic symbol, and gave it up to philosophy. This is why Danto labels pop and minimalism as already "philosophical exercises." for him the priority of the philosophical aspect of pop and minimalist works extrudes them from the exclusive register of the visual. Hence, Danto's ability to discern the significance of pop and minimalism is an ability that depends upon looking away from the work, and toward not just one or another historic or philosophic significance evoked by the work, but toward the significance of the history and philosophy of art as such. Indeed, by appropriating the Lichtenstein title (which was already expropriated as the title of the exhibition under review), Danto attempts to complete—via the abstraction and transcendence of the symbol—the work of both philosophy *and* history. He thus likewise attempts to complete, by bringing full circle, the process of deretinalization begun by Lichtenstein's having painted in *BLAM!* not even a sound, but the comic book name for one. Such artworks lift themselves from the dustbin of the perceptual by taking on a philosophical project—perhaps *the* philosophical project—of boundless, which is to say visually nonfinite, symbolization. And philosophy repays the favor by acknowledging—noticing, recognizing, and respecting—this aspiration.

Danto's alternative form of historical criticism—alternative, that is, to the standard self-revolutionizing history of modernism—takes shape in light of philosophy's unburdening art of its aspiration for any future historical development. The sheer nonretinality of pop and minimalism means philosophically that now the idea of art can no longer secrete itself in an as-yet-unmade future revolution. They thus bring art's history to an *etui* in such a way that, in the wake I of that end, the idea of art's historicity can itself be historicized. Hot surprisingly, though, pop's and minimalism's liberation from the perceptual, which makes them the self-symbolizing emblems of the end, exacts a dialectical price: the price is the fullness of life *outside* the precise historical moment Danto has claimed it emblemizes. "But in a way this is true of almost everything (in the Whitney exhibition): in almost every instance ephemerality is given permanence by artificial infusion—a kind of esthetic taxidermy."

Danto's distaste for aesthetic taxidermy wafts off the page, for in its fantastic externalization taxidermy insists on the necessary co-presence of history and artifact. But it is important to note that there are really two related, and perhaps competitive, taxidermists implied here. The first and most obvious is the museum, in its both literally preserving a made-to-decay artwork (Robert Rauschenberg's stuffed goat is the example at hand, which, peculiarly, Danto fails to count as the initial taxidermy) and intellectually preserving a moment in the history of art by presenting historical exhibitions. This museal preservation seems particularly ghoulish to Danto because the pop symbol (as opposed, in this instance, to the minimalist work) in its aesthetic insouciance is so utterly set against the gravity of historical responsibility. Pop "drew its energy in part from the fact that it allowed itself everything that had been repudiated as extrinsic to painting by earlier revolutions"; put differently, in a moment of renewed naïveté, pop threw off "the giant presences of Abstract Impressionism" and the whole weight of symbolic history it carried with it. Against the spirit of pop's pure contemporaneity with itself, the museum exhibition transmutes the works it showcases into historical symbols pleading across time to be reanimated. It is the pathos of this plea that Danto rejects as artificial, as, that is, an artifice preserved by the museum. But it is just here that the second taxidermy threatens;

the work of philosophy which, by attributing to pop works the failed aspiration to become timeless, would stuff taut with purported transcendence their ephemeral skins. Philosophy then is the second "artificial infusion" that aims to give permanence to that which truly is only of the moment.

It is this momentariness, as well as the momentousness of being of the moment, that Danto, standing in the Whitney, wills art to return to against the museum's historicization and philosophy's transcendence. It is in so willing that Danto reveals how, for him, historical criticism and the liberation from history go together, for what he is willing is that art cease seeking transcendence outside its present. But art can only achieve this return to itself if it first shrugs off the mission of philosophy by, oddly enough, having philosophy arise of its own, within and *by means* of art. Art, according to Danto, liberates itself by becoming philosophy, but with the following proviso: this liberated art/philosophy is not the philosophy of this or that, ethics or language, say—it is not philosophical *reflection*—but is instead that art which tenders its own significance. The motion of a transcendence circumscribed by its own present has nowhere to turn except toward its own ground. But even within this return to itself, the pop or minimalist artwork remains a symbol, indeed an especially saturated and determined one: in symbolizing itself it thereby symbolizes its historic achievement as well as its nascent posthistorical status. In pop and minimalism, art no longer needs—indeed it even looks ugly in the light of—a philosophical supplement. And with the transcendence of that need pop and minimalism produced art's last real historical symbols. And yet these last symbols, freighted with the entire history of art, appear to Danto as nearly transparent, as if by shrugging off the mission of philosophy they also shed all the opacity of the history that gave rise to them. But how then do they *appear* at all?

Consider Danto's summation that "the Whitney has given the art world of today a glimpse, shattering in its innocence, of its marvelous, irrecoverable childhood." This statement, in revealing Danto's philosophy of history, is rife with implications for his theory of art. Today's artworld is, relative to the glimpsed childhood, a mature one, but only in the sense that it has grown up to become the fragmented and undirected plurality with which we are familiar. It is not, in other words, a broadened maturity, one which we might well have expected for ourselves had we only followed the model of the history of art as a "sequence of revolutionizing questions of increasing scope." It is instead the maturity of resigned retrospection, of having witnessed the heroic age of a striving achieving its aim and thus also seeing now, with wise melancholy, that the possibility of not just future heroism but of future striving is gone. It is, in short, a maturity based only on the loss of that innocent aspiration that drives historical drama. In Danto's assessment, "There was no question in artistic practice (after the end of the nineteenth century) but that a certain idea of painting, in place since about 1300, had come to an end. The issue as what was painting now to be, and this in the end could only be answered with a philosophical theory which I saw the painting movements of the twentieth century as a massive effort to furnish. And I thought in fact that it had found what it sought by the 1960s, and that art now had to be understood as one with its own philosophy." The historical drama of modern art is over and art now, after pop, has no more historical or philosophical secrets to protect. This mature wisdom that Danto proffers he shares with Gustave Flaubert's Frédéric Moreau who, like us, suffered a sentimental education in the

success we might name the loss of unattained ideals, an education into the knowledge which is posthistory.

Described thus, this form of maturity sounds like the exhausted oldness experienced in look back on one's childish exuberances. However, according to Danto, sentimental education need not generate melancholy. From the point of view of philosophical wisdom, which is always retrospective, the end of a previous form of life casts shadows on the present, but there is another point of view, that of art stripped of its philosophical mission, from which sentimental education is a saga of liberation. Indeed, Danto writes that the coming of the posthistorical artworld was consistent with everyone living happily ever after, since "happiness almost meant that there were no more stores to tell." The unburdening of art from its historical responsibilities leaves art free to finally become itself, to arrive at an identity such that it no longer needs masks or supplements. With the advent of the last symbol, the symbol of the pointlessness of the symbol, art comes into its own.

As we shall see, though, art's symbolic status, its constitutive inadequacy, will come back to haunt Danto even in posthistory. Perhaps this already seems inevitable, since if art has indeed become one with its philosophy, which it no longer dons as a mere mask, then there must be another sense of philosophy spooking art, one which is not fully visible from the post historical perspective of retrospection. We will make this thought explicit in section four of this essay, but for now let us simply observe that Danto's scruples nag at him even in his most triumphally liberatory pronouncements, as in the "almost" that interrupt the definition of happiness offered above. In the review of the Whitney exhibition, Danto shrugs off the taxidermic shroud in order to propose that while the moment of art's self-liberation has been presented as merely ideal in the museum, "It would be nice to believe that the spirit of liberation might live on in society." But this locution betrays itself: though it might indeed be "nice" to believe in ongoing social liberation, the very term "nice," especially presented in the subjunctive mood, disavows the belief's viability. It is as if Danto knows better than to believe in the freedom that the art proclaims, or at least exhibits, but now as history. Danto's knowledge is the knowledge of untenability of belief, belief not just in liberation but so too in effect in the art that heralds it. And with the establishment of the disjunction between the belief art might provoke and the art that, after pop, does not provoke it, we are nearly prepared to understand Danto's approach to criticism.

### **SECTION THREE: ART, PHILOSOPHY, LIFE**

To describe the full bloom of Danto's critical position, it will be useful to recall the point made in section one that one of Danto's distinctions among reflective art critics is his not having come to philosophy in order to service the needs of criticism. For both professional and intellectual reasons, Danto has never regarded philosophy as the appropriate discipline in which to resolve the paradoxes arising from engagement with art. The reason for this is not hard to find: whereas an art critic must come to grips with specific artworks in their specificity, a philosophy of art, if true at all, is true for all art and so will be unable to guide our responses to the specificity of works. To respond to an artwork properly is to respond to it as an individual, as something other than the mere

instance of a type. Thus, the critic cannot look to philosophy, with its concern for generality and logical consistency, to dis- the proper experience of an artwork. The critic who might turn to philosophy must always be returned to the extraphilosophical experience of art.

That this extraphilosophical experience, in the sense of an experience unmediated by philosophical reflection on what art ought to be, is normative is familiar from the history of art and its criticism. Indeed, it is embodied in a slew of artworld practices. From the uninformativeness of the wall plaques in already sterilized display spaces, to the blind studio visit, to the ideal of openness to novel techniques, the proper experience of art is materially and psychically protected from what it might otherwise have to defend itself against, actively and reflectively. The appropriate experience of art is, in this standard view, proposed to be an experience in the moment, however long lasting, before reflection occurs. According to Danto, however, this prereflective stance is impossible to achieve within the history of art because that history is itself founded on an actively adversarial relation to philosophy. The historically developed conditions that have made the extrareflective experience possible embody a reflective comportment and so, also, make it impossible. Indeed, art's history begins with its being infected already by its enemy, philosophy, as Danto asserts in the opening passages of his essay, "The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art": "the history of philosophy itself might almost be regarded as a massive collaborative effort to neutralize [the] activity [of art]." Danto thus paints the relation between the activities of art and philosophy as immemorially antagonistic. Philosophical belief, or better, philosophical theory, has "disenfranchised" the activity, and substance, of art in such a way as to shape both antagonists. And this disenfranchisement occurs not as a result of the particular or even peculiar content of theories *about* art, but rather as the product of philosophical theory *per se*. Danto aims to advocate for art in this struggle by putting philosophy back in its proper place.

Danto's strategy is to reverse the traditional rhetorical schema which, by positing nature as originary, posits art as artifice. Art and art making, for Danto, are—at least ideally—free, while it is the artifice of philosophy that attempts to encroach upon, control, perhaps even usurp the free play of art. Thus Danto's favored metaphor for philosophy's relation to art is "disenfranchisement," which means precisely to take away the capacity to exercise freedom. Philosophy disenfranchises art by picturing the latter's difference from philosophical reflection as a deficit of self-consciousness: a deficit, that is, of philosophy, without which art cannot control its own practice. This philosophical disenfranchisement thus makes art into an aspirant to a mode of activity foisted on it by its most intimate interlocutor. But the disenfranchisement has done its dirty work, since, as Danto observes, art evidences a historical trajectory of increasing "insubstantiation," a tendency to meld with the theory that infects it. Art has, in short, identified with its own disenfranchisement and, in identifying itself with a nature it cannot achieve, has acquired a history. One way, then, to construe Danto's critical aim after the end of art's history is as an effort to allow art to speak for itself, to speak without the mediation of philosophical reflection.

Before exploring the implications of this view, we should note that it is here, at the juncture of philosophy and the history of art, that we will challenge Danto. For while we agree with him that (Western) art has exhibited a history of loss of substance, we think it

not necessary therefore to concur that the responsibility for this desubstantiation, and subsequent loss of identity, should be laid at the door of philosophy. We think, in short, that Danto is right to locate a disenfranchising moment in the history of art, but disagree that this moment occurs in or as philosophy. We will argue that such disenfranchisement is instead central to taste and judgment, and is indeed a constitutive feature of both. Further, Danto's readiness to blame philosophy for art's having a history and his concomitant unwillingness to examine the share held by taste keeps him from examining the not insignificant part played, in his own theorizing, by his personal taste and judgment.

For us to assert that judgments of taste are themselves disenfranchising is to place ourselves within the tradition of Kantian critical aesthetics. No doubt our alternative perspective will reveal itself in due time. For now, though, we will follow Danto's arguments, for his tradition is the platonic one, which is where he locates the origins of philosophy's adversarial relation to art, as well as the origin of philosophy itself: "... since Plato's theory of art is his philosophy, and since philosophy down the ages has consisted in placing codicils to the platonic testament, philosophy itself may just be the disenfranchisement of art." For Danto, the very existence of philosophy is art's disenfranchisement. The emphatic singularity of this definition of philosophy, wherein it is nothing but its generalizing account of its difference from art, is preserved by Danto in his platonic conviction that aesthetics, the genre of philosophy in which reflection on art takes place, is itself a singular and unified quest. Just as, in Danto's view, philosophy has sought to force art into a singular history from which art seeks to escape, so too has it sought to squeeze aesthetic reflection into the role of art's singular antagonist. Danto cites Marcel Duchamp as support. "I owe to Duchamp the thought that from the perspective of art aesthetics is a danger, since from the perspective of philosophy art is a danger and aesthetics the agency for dealing with it." Now, in speaking through Duchamp, Danto may seem at first to be permitting art to pass its own judgment on philosophy's enforcer. However, it is important to see that art is not in the position to simply refuse philosophy, for in so doing it would need first to accede to philosophy's view of it as an inarticulate version of itself. Danto is interested not in art's rejection, but rather in its ejection of philosophy. Thus, the artist Danto cites, Duchamp, is famously a philosopher manqué, who in effect increased the rate at which philosophy infected art and to whom Danto credits not an artistic achievement but a "thought." Duchamp's achievement was to recognize that for art to be re-enfranchised, returned to itself in its freedom, it will have had to overcome its philosophical infection by philosophically saturating itself. Pop and minimalism are, for Danto, the oddly delayed homeopathic remedy for both art and philosophy. Art will have fulfilled and liberated itself only in depriving philosophy of its singular and singularizing power over it.

Danto proposes pluralism as the rejoinder to the false monotheism of art history and aesthetics. Pluralism is the name Danto gives to the condition of the contemporary artworld such that no kind of art is truer or more advanced than any other. It is, in short, the condition of the artworld after art has ejected philosophy. Strictly speaking, pluralism is, we might note, not a theory at all; it is rather a device whereby critical judgment is to be freed from the constraining demands of theoretical reflection, from, that is, servitude to the search for philosophical and historical significance. Critical judgment must itself be

freed from aesthetics in order to grapple properly with the condition pluralism names: art has returned to itself, though not by means of any theory of art, which would require art's becoming something other in order to fulfill itself but as an historical outcome of the tightening of the constraints which have been internal to it since the time of the ancient Greeks. It is not thinking that liberated art, but rather the overwhelming cumulative weight of the thoughtful expectations regarding it. Art is re-enfranchised by way of, but not by means of theoretical reflection, Danto's pluralism is really then even less a device than an *acknowledgement* of art having liberated and returned itself to its original, free and *unhistoric* state. As the title of one of Danto's essays says, pluralism is something we must learn to live with.

In order to grasp the consequences of pluralism for the practice of criticism, we will tarry for a while at the stage in the history of art's fulfillment and self-liberation at which it recognizes its philosophical disenfranchisement. As Danto puts it, "When art internalizes its own history, when it becomes self-conscious of its history as it has come to be in our own time, so that its consciousness of its history forms part of its nature, it is perhaps unavoidable that it should turn into philosophy at last. And when it does so, well, in an important sense, art comes to an end."

The thesis that art comes to an end is a thesis about the art historically constituted by philosophy as a self-imposed resistance to activity. The end of this desubstantiated art, what Danto also calls the end of historical art, is the beginning (better, arrival or even return.) of art without the burden and constraints of theory, belief, or the history of its own—though imposed—activity. The ending of historical art, however, is construed by Danto as accompanied at first not by the disappearance of theory, belief, and history but rather as in Lichtenstein's *BLAM!*, by the becoming *visible* of just these theoretical commitments. Indeed, this is what Danto means by self-consciousness.

How can art reach its historical culmination in virtue of rendering its theoretical commitments visible? The answer to that question depends on the story one tells both of the driving force of the history in question and of the meaning of "making visible." "Pop drew its energy in part from the fact that it allowed itself everything that had been repudiated as extrinsic to painting by earlier revolutions ...," writes Danto in the review of *BLAM!*, the exhibition, Mere, as discussed before, we see pop characterized as a revolutionary movement, but in its turning against the logic of repudiation of earlier revolutions, it is also, at least apparently, counterrevolutionary. From the point of view of Danto's characterization of the organizing logic of revolutionary modernism as the logic of repudiation, pop seems about as progressive as the alcoholic who, once dried out, progresses to the next glass of whiskey. But yet, in another sense, pop is nonetheless the historical and logical culmination of the renunciatory modernisms which preceded it. Thus, there must be some other logic operating inside the logic of renunciation, some logic shielded from view by the renunciatory one, which can make of pop, even in its counterrevolutionary appearance, a final step forward. What is this other logic governing the movement(s) of modernism relative to which the renunciatory one will thus stand revealed as a superficial appearance?

It is in answering this question that Danto locates the historical and artistic significance of the newly visible, reflective dimension of—the appearance of reflection within—art. It is, to be sure, not a point of universal agreement that the logic of



modernism really is renunciatory at all. Michael Fried, famously and ferociously, took T. J. Clark to task for defending such a view and thereby neglecting the positive achievements of modernist art (a charge Clark denied). But what unites even these two opponents, and indeed makes them both heirs of Greenberg despite (more properly: *because of*) their disagreements, is the belief that the art of modern life is somehow difficult, uniquely or merely newly, in virtue of the changed fate modernity ordains for it. For both, as again, for Greenberg, specifically modernist art is born out of the imperative to continue to make good art in an age when art no longer has any proper job to do. Having lost its religious, political, domestic, and mnemonic functions to Protestantism, democracy, kitsch, and photography, art also lost its proper criteria for self-evaluation. Hence, by desperate force of history, the question of what art is became a question internal to the practice itself, a question every artist who wished to be good had to ask herself. The defining of art became something that artists themselves began to worry about, and, as with all rigorous pursuits of definition (especially when undertaken in the search for practical criteria), what fell outside the definition as merely accidental was purged from the conception and the practice. Hence, leaving aside the question between Clark and Fried of whether the artworks themselves are renunciatory, the logic of modernist art, driven by the need to know what it was for, was deeply ascetic.

All good philosophy is ascetic and all genuine asceticism is philosophical, for both are obsessed with definition. In this sense, modernist art took a philosophical problem up into itself. However, at the same time that the internal dynamic of modernism—to discover what it is and is for *as art* and not as an auxiliary to some other social practice that no longer needs it anyway—made it philosophical (in the sense of absorbed with its own differentia), it also made it antiphilosophical (in the sense that it wanted to be itself, not philosophy). The apparent repudiations of modernism were philosophical efforts undertaken in an alienated medium to uncover the nonphilosophical nature of art. What together drove philosophy and modernist art also drove them apart.

Or, at least, that is how it looked from within modernist art practices that identified artistic self-determination with the creation of visual objects. Art's self-definition, and its entrenchment within that definition, seemed oriented toward discovering what made art a "purely" visual practice. With this as its aim, art's internalized philosophical imperative demanded works densely impenetrable, because purely and opaquely visual, by philosophical reflection. The ancient quarrel thus grew increasingly hostile not just between philosophy and art but also inside that art now driven from within by its own philosophical anxieties. However, certain figures within the history of modernism stand out as apparent counterexamples to this story of war and mutual disenfranchisement. Duchamp (again) ironically yet fiercely rejected the "retinal" nature of art, in this case painting. For him, the drive toward self-definition as visual was a masturbatory one since it wanted to keep a practice alive in the absence of any proper partners in consummation. Such antiretinality, which Duchamp shares with Warhol among others, does not entail that Duchamp was uninterested in the question of self-definition, as some interpretations of him as a trickster propose; to the contrary, it suggests that he furthered the project of self-definition by revealing it to be a matter of something other than the self-entrenchment in a visual register appointed as the fateful locus of art. In other words, Duchamp saw that the logic of self-definition was operating

at a level deeper than the renouncing of everything extrinsic to what the eye can see, everything standing as an obstacle to the achievement of visibility. Visual self-definition, he recognized, was a cipher for a more encompassing desire.

Looked at from this angle, Duchamp's inventions were not truly counter examples to the modernist drive, for, appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, in their heightened self-consciousness they showed—made visible—that the drive for self-definition was being hobbled by the very constraints imposed on (and accepted by) art, precisely by its philosophical disenfranchisement. The bathetic aspiration of modernism for self-determining self-consciousness was an essentially philosophical one which would never be achieved by the creation of an art stripped bare of its inessential components, since in light of that aspiration *every* component of art was inessential. Art needed only to have its own lack of a visual essence revealed to it to see that its historical drive for self-definition in visual form had been all along a delaying of its rendezvous with its historical end. In Duchamp, the elements of artistic visibility became vehicles for their own insubstantiation. Thus, we can understand why the revelation of modernism's philosophical achievement, which was also its aesthetic failure, had to adopt the guise of philosophical saturation; at its historical end, art eliminated the distance between its own "nature" and the ruse through which it became convinced it had one.

Duchamp, we might say, brought art to its historical culmination by rendering its theoretical commitments visible, by, that is, making visible (not visual) the dialectic of the demand for visibility. Since this is the project of self-consciousness historically arrogated to itself by philosophical reflection (which, remember, lives through its denial of self-awareness to art, according to Danto), Duchamp also thereby disenfranchised the alien power of philosophy over art's historical inner workings. (Indeed, in the face of the readymades, philosophy has been reduced to the autistic repetition of art's own question: Is it art?) After Duchamp, art was stripped of its misplaced philosophical drive and thus could begin.

Why, though, if Duchamp successfully raised philosophy's question within art, did art's history not end with an immediate advent of pluralism? Why, instead, did the great age of abstraction intervene between Duchamp's Fountain and art's real end? Although Danto never addresses this question directly, we suspect it is because Duchamp's inventions still whirled about within the ascetic space mapped out by the art/philosophy doublet. Because Duchamp's philosophical machines were still haunted by questions of self-determination, the historical culmination he brought about was *premature*. The popular belief that Duchamp had given up making art in favor of elaborate philosophical jokes could not yet be revealed as the canard it always was. For Danto it is pop and minimalism that finally achieve art's *mature* historical culmination by moving beyond the dynamics of renunciation altogether. And it is just this movement that he characterizes as the authentic end of art. Indeed, he celebrates this end of (historical) art by pop and minimalism because what they thereby reveal to us—whose mature reflections now depend, as Danto showed, on the *innocence* of pop and minimalism—is the entire history of art as the beginning of art, continuously forestalled by philosophy. What Danto says of Lichtenstein's *BLAM!* is, according to him, implicitly true of pop and minimalism in general: they embody all previous revolutions by holding them at a distance. And by holding off the ascetic revolutionary imperative, art thereby begins.

Thus, at the end of Danto's story, art truly begins in a pluralism, and only in a pluralism, that escapes from the ascetic imperatives of monism. The blunting of these imperatives may seem like a vanquishing of monism, since an imperative is, as a matter of definition, nothing but a command one ignores at one's peril; the historical possibility of pluralism in art, though, occurs not as the overthrowing of monism per se but only as the overcoming of its hegemony as theory—only, that is, as a mature disregard for its claim to final aesthetic judgment. The overcoming of the imperatives of monism is the overcoming of the monism of imperatives. When historical art's theoretical commitments become visible, they no longer have the power to compel art to give itself over to the asceticism of philosophy. Pluralism after the end of art is the mature holding off of the demand for self-definition issued by art's disenfranchisers.

Where, then, does the end of historical art and the beginning of pluralism leave criticism? The most straightforward way to track Danto's thought is by asking what there is left for art to do when, as he writes in "Learning to Live with Pluralism," "Artists no longer needed to be philosophers. They were liberated, having handed the problem of the nature of art over to philosophy, to do what they wanted to, and at this precise historical moment Pluralism became the objective historical truth."

So the answer is, what is left for art to do is whatever it wants. When art was still in the grip of its philosophical mania, such that it was possible to think there was a single goal it ought to aim at, it was also possible to rank artistic virtues in a hierarchy that had the judgment, "contributes to art's self-definition" at its pinnacle. Such a hierarchy would also entail a critical agenda, with artworks rendered intelligible and judged better or worse in accord with their relative instantiations of this virtue. But if art has awakened from this disenfranchising fever dream by becoming self-aware, no artwork can any longer be evaluated in this way. Art is now free in the sense that all of its historically accumulated techniques, as well as any new ones it may develop, can be used for any end at all. It would be ridiculous, of course, to try to spell out exhaustively what that means, but that's Danto's point: art can now do ... whatever, which is perhaps Danto's definition of freedom. And once this pluralistic state of liberty has been attained, the critics job is to judge art by first figuring out what it has in mind—what it is about—and how well it embodies that end. The critic must bring art back to life. In the essay just cited, Danto concludes:

Recently I thought about the artists I like best, and how little they have in common with one another. What has Cindy Sherman to do with Mark Tansey, or he with Dorothea Rockburne, or she with Red Grooms, or he with Robert Mangold, or he with Boggs, or he with David Reed, or David Reed with Arakawa, or Arakawa with David Sawin, or David Sawin with Mel Bochner? These are no closer to my philosophy of art than anyone else. I have sometimes been asked how I can be a critic if I seriously believe art has come to an end. The answer is that I can be the kind of critic I am only because I believe that. I have no grounds for excluding anything, like Jennifer Bartlett, I can like it all.

This narrative Danto weaves of art's enfranchisement, disenfranchisement, and re-enfranchisement, is a powerfully unifying one, but important questions still linger. Is the monotheism cultivated in the philosophy of art nothing more, as Danto's Hegelian historicist narrative suggests, than an enabling condition for the end of historical art and the onset of pluralism in Western art of the 1970s, which is to say, the return of art to its free state? Or, does it instead indicate, as a more ironic Hegelianism might suppose, another dimension of art—a historical remainder, we might say—that still needs reflection? Further, since this return of art to its freedom is also the true beginning of art, which in turn both signals and ignites a new beginning of taste, what, if anything, are we to make of a taste now constituted without commitment to doctrine, belief, or history? (We will return to this second question in section five.) These questions force themselves on us because, even on his own terms, Danto's conclusion that the end of art and the end of the logic of self-definition are synonymous is a non sequitur. It strikes us that the overcoming of philosophical monism yields not an end to the logic of self-definition, but rather an end to its origin in anything else but art.

Danto's narrative identifies the end of the imposed pursuit of self-definition with the end of the pursuit of self-definition as such and then identifies both with art's maturity. However, a quite different alternative presents itself, that the end of this imposition sparks a pervasive proliferation of self-definition in each and every art practice and that it is this proliferation which Danto has in his sights when he refers to posthistorical pluralism. Perhaps an analogy will clarify these alternatives. An individual human life has a structure much like the one Danto detects in the history of art. The child develops a personality—a self-definition, so to speak—in response to adult impositions that pass themselves off as rooted in the child's own needs; the child is encouraged and expected to identify with the impositions, although, given the child's immaturity, the line between imposed and self-generated needs is initially not fully formed enough to properly distinguish the two. In adolescence the child throws off the impositions as arbitrary demands for inauthenticity and begins to pursue genuine self-definition. Adolescence is thus a period of both thoroughgoing skepticism and unyielding idealism, for it rejects all impositions in the name of a fully achieved authentic personality. It appears to the adolescent that what she wants most of all is to escape the dialectical logic of development altogether and become her own person, but this appearance is a mask, and maybe even a necessary mask, for the work of throwing off the impositions of the adult world. The idea of the completed end of the pursuit of self-definition is a cover for the difficult entry into the adult world where, contrary to adolescent expectations, the pursuit does not end but, more grievously, loses its scapegoat. The dialectic of self-definition passes through the privileged relation to the family and proliferates into all modes of social interaction. What, then, is maturity? While from the point of view of adolescent struggles it may appear as the promised (post-developmental) land of full self-definition, from the postadolescent point of view it is, instead, the regrounding of the pursuit of self-definition within the person herself. At that point the pursuit does not end but rather penetrates more deeply into diverse life activities. The end of the imposed pursuit of self-definition, far from being the end of the pursuit as such, may well be its real beginning.

Let us pursue this analogy one step further. From the simultaneously sullen and hopeful perspective of the adolescent, maturity promises to provide relief from teenage

torments because it appears as the cessation of struggles W self- definition. As we (grown-ups) know, though, this dream of achieving a completed sense of self is a fruitful spur to development despite its unattainability. But only from within that dream does continued development appear to depend on the hope of completeness. Maturity, perhaps, is really no more nor less than the recognition that as the dialectic of self-definition is discovered to reside within, so too are the sources of its incompletenesses. It would be a prolongation of adolescence to believe that one's sense of self remains obscure only because of external obstacles to its transparency. The shift in the origin of the logic of self-definition achieved in personal development—and also in the history of art, if the analogy is apt—signals neither the end of development/history nor the beginning of transparency, neither the overcoming of illusion nor the attainment of self-identity. However, in identifying the end of art's imposed pursuit of self-definition with the end, rather than the beginning, of an active pursuit of self-definition, Danto suggests that it does. This belief, as we shall see, informs not just Danto's view of the activity of art but also of life itself.

Our question here, then, is whether the seamless monism of art theory, coupled with art's dynamic of self-definition having been imposed upon it, both of which descend from Plato until the very recent past, might instead be the indication of something more than art's prehistory. Might it be instead that the history of aesthetics, the discipline of disenfranchisement according to Danto, is the guardian of art's incessantly thwarted desire? Might there be something art aims for but fails to attain such that its disappointment gives rise, as the need for consolation often does, to philosophical reflection? Our suspicion is aroused because the core of Danto's complaint against the history of art theory—that it has served primarily, if not solely, to emasculate art—is instead a complaint against the structure and dynamic of taste. Recall Danto's avowal, at the conclusion of “Learning to Live with Pluralism,” that he has “no grounds for excluding anything ... I can like it all.” The implication here seems to be that what Danto would really like his theory of pluralist art to overcome is taste itself, though ironically, for the sake of taste. The history of art theory has many moments in which the taste for one thing or another has been confronted and combatted, but we know of no art theory prior to Danto's that actually suggests overcoming taste tout court. Perhaps there is something in the movement of taste itself, something which gets expressed in philosophy's historical nagging at art, which Danto finds distasteful and wishes to see overcome. And perhaps this something is taste's own power to enfranchise and disenfranchise, to glorify and abase.

A clue to this gripe with taste as such can be found in Danto's account of *his* experience of the advent of pop:

Pop redeemed the world in an intoxicating way. I have the most vivid recollection of standing at an intersection in some American city, waiting to be picked up. There were used-car lots on two corners, with swags of plastic pennants fluttering in the breeze and brash signs proclaiming unbeatable deals, crazy prices, insane bargains. There was a huge self-service gas station on a third corner, and a supermarket on the fourth, with signs on the window announcing sales of Del Monte, Cheerios, Land O Lakes butter, Long Island ducklings, Velveeta, Sealtest, Chicken of the

Sea ... I was educated to all this. I would have found it intolerably crass and tacky when I was up an aesthete ... But I thought, Good heavens. This is just remarkable!

Here Danto's personal disavowal of the taste he was educated toward parallels the historical disavowal of abstract expressionism by pop and minimalism. Danto arrives at what is taken finally to be his own taste not simply by a disavowal of his history but also by transfiguring his experience into a symbol of the *world*. The possibility of a future history likewise expires once the coincidence between experience and world is *felt*. But this feeling is one of intoxication and redemption, of not recognizing one's experience as having been made *symbol* for the world. Taste's feral capacity to disenfranchise is felt to expire in a symbolic binding together of world and experience in which one feels as if one is embracing the world as such. This experience of binding, though, can only be sustained by refusing to criticize the intoxicating means of representation through which one experiences the world. (Mere, it will no doubt be noticed, our Kantian commitments are showing.) It is the structure of this experience we turn to next.

#### SECTION FOUR: ART IN A POSTHISTORICAL AGE

The sense of wonder Danto experienced standing on that anonymous street corner must have been a rush, literally. Having grown up an aesthete, Danto had become practiced in feeling distaste for what presented itself crassly, what presented itself as a source of easy gratification. Where pleasure is at its readiest, there the aesthete refuses to respond. But since what is rejected is, precisely, an offer of pleasure, the aesthete must have experienced the pleasure somehow already, albeit not as pleasure. The aesthete is thus a kind of antihedonic refusenik who stiffens himself against a pleasure which is too open, too obscene; he cultivates a vacancy just where pleasure insists it should be. Into the affective space that Danto the youthful aesthete had emptied of everything other than the power to resist roared the advertisements and promises of the American landscape, the unauthored stuff of everyday life. Indeed, the experience Danto recalls must have had something of the sublime about it, since the pleasure that colored it was a counterforce to the resistance offered by the subjective self-consciousness of the aesthete.

Pop was like this. It, too, reopened the gates that had been closed against the everyday by the aesthetic consciousness of the art that preceded it. As we have seen, pop is for Danto that movement in which the repudiations that drove art's revolutionizing history were themselves repudiated; it welcomed advertising images and the forms of commodities and the whole realm of the popular as a counterforce to the "sullen" force of abstract expressionism. Pop was redemptive not because it allowed the everyday to be seen aesthetically, but rather because it embraced the anti-aesthetic qualities of the everyday—we might even say its anti-aesthetic "pleasures"—in their very crossness. Danto does not describe the blighted landscape he is taken by as beautiful, but rather as remarkable. It is its mere being *thus*, the sheer contingency of its configuration, that his experience registers. So, too, with pop, which did not so much transfigure the commonplace as transform the aesthetic consciousness that demanded in the first place that the commonplace be transfigured. Pop sanctified the vulgar.

To say this is not of course to say that pop was itself vulgar, as T. J. Clark has recently argued of much abstract expressionism. For Clark, the self-assertive nature of abstract expressionism and its melodramatic insistence on its expressive identity made it tend toward crossness. Although Clark exempts several artists of that time from his criticism, his historical irony highlights the unintentional imitation of the everyday's despised and debased loudness performed by abstract expressionism's paint handling, coloration and stale. Pop was not aesthetically vulgar in this way; in Danto's view, pop's impulse to sanctify the vulgar pushed it away from the posturing that Clark criticizes in abstract expressionism and toward an acceptance of the power of the everyday. If anything, pop aimed to erase the boundary between the vulgar and the artistic, between the crass and the authentic.

There is a deep truth in Danto's assigning crucial importance in the art of the 1960s to the renewed role of the previously despised everyday. Insofar as the everyday is just another name for what had been renounced, in both the aesthete's subjective self-consciousness and the rigorism of abstraction, its renewal is the end of renunciation. This is why Danto sees the reawakening of the everyday in art as the end of art's history, since through it art wins the struggle to achieve self-definition and self-determination by means of giving up the pursuit of a visible distinction between itself and the rest of the world. With the everyday no longer the "other" of art, art neutralizes its philosophical mission and, as Danto says, anything goes. What follows is pluralism.

However, there is an ambiguity as deep as this truth in Danto's account of pop's embrace of the everyday—and of his own embrace of it, too. Think of the kinds of epochal pop works Danto has in mind: Rauschenberg's Combines, Jasper Johns's bronzed paintbrush-holding Savarin cans, Allan Kaprow's Happenings, Warhol's *Brillo Box*, and so on. It is obvious, which is to say completely obvious, that the nonartistic world plays a role in them. But acknowledging this still leaves open whether to consider that role to be a return *of* the everyday in art or a return *to* the everyday *by* art.

Such a distinction is not just hairsplitting. For Danto to see pop as redeeming the everyday world from its alienation from aesthetic consciousness, he would need to hold that the everyday returns in art as itself, he would need, in other words, to see pop as the return *of* the everyday in all its "remarkable" glory, for to see it as returned and transformed in art would be to deem it as, in itself, still fallen. The alternative, the return *to* the everyday (as, say, possible subject matter or material), would still involve a distant regard for the world as the horizon of artmaking, a horizon, alienation from which would constitute the space in which art works. If pop redeemed the world as the world, in the manner suggested by Danto's street corner analogy, then the world would merge with our experience of it, leaving no space for the specific experience of art. This must be what Danto has in mind in seeing art, as a specifically charged practice, as having ended and been succeeded by an infinite plurality of artistic practices. But we must ask two questions: Is it the case that pop was the return *of* and not *to* the everyday? And if pop was the return *to* the everyday, then isn't the space of experience which Danto claims has been redemptively closed, the space between aspiration and the artistic symbol that fails to embody it, still open? If the answer to the second question is yes, then art in the wake of pop might not be quite as posthistorical as Danto argues.

Any full answer to the question of the role of the everyday in pop would, of course, require a separate study. Perhaps it would require several, since one would need to be sensitive to the differences between artists: between, say\* Oldenburg's use of "subaesthetic" materials, Lichtenstein's use of comic-book images, and Johns's use of instantly recognizable icons. But keeping these differences in mind, we can understand why Warhol has first place in Danto's pop pantheon, for with *Brillo Box* Warhol presented a commodity package in a barely transformed slate (so barely, indeed, that the question whether the transformation mattered is raised within the experience of the work). It is of Warhol that it seems most correct to say that the everyday appealed in art as itself. Of all the pop artists, Warhol raised most vividly the question of his position as an artist in regard to the objects and images he made, since nowhere in them can the onlooker locate a familiar and undeniable mark of expressiveness. Warhol was the coolest of artists, since he remained unflappably aloof from the art he presented. But this is only a matter of degree. One can say similarly of all the pop artists that the return of the everyday was a way to preserve their cool, to not get so hot about self-expression that the demands of it would appear—visibly and undeniably—as in conflict with the materials of art.

Looked at in this way, pop cool can be seen as a return of the everyday in art, but the everydayness that returns continues to serve a distancing function by preserving the artist from overheated self-exposure. The everyday becomes, in a sense, a hiding place, especially in its loud, self-advertising forwardness. This does not imply, of course, that it isn't also a means of expression, since how an artist conceals, as much as how he discloses, is a central issue in the making and interpretation of all art. The everyday is remarkable, as Danto says, due to its being utterly there, but for just this reason its impersonality is a splendid tool for cool artmaking. In pop, then, the everyday is a means toward a reconfiguration of artistic expressiveness, a way of withdrawing from, rather than aiming at, immediate, visible presence. But if the role of the everyday in pop is to enable an alternative mode of expression, then pop was indeed a return to, but not of, the everyday.

Despite using the everyday as artistic material, pop artists nonetheless maintained a studied distance from it. The redemption of the world was thus a redemption for art, in the sense that art's distance *from it* could best be preserved in proximity *to it*. This preservation of distance is characteristic, though, not only of pop art's redemptivism but also of Danto's own epiphanic experience of the everyday. Recall his street corner reawakening. What does he remember so vividly? The cacophonous liveliness of the intersection saturated with and maximally proximal to its own everydayness, but also that he was "waiting to be picked up." Why this peculiar detail of the context in which the redemption happened? Perhaps because, as with the pop artists who also engaged in it, the redemption of the everyday is only possible in the moment when, in a slight delay, one feels oneself, knows oneself, to be leaving it behind. To have a taste for the everyday requires sensing that one will be safely removed from it.

The anticipation of being elsewhere is the innocent detail of Danto's recollection which, we suspect, announces the essential condition for having a taste for the everyday, for where one happens to find oneself. This is doubly poignant. On the one hand, it suggests that the overcoming of the inadequacy of the symbol which, on Danto's account, pop achieved, was another episode in art's dream of self-sufficiency, but otherwise, even



in pop the everyday resists its redemption and continues to beckon. On the other hand, the waiting to be elsewhere points to the (light from the everyday that the taste for it depended on. Where was Danto going when the world struck him as remarkable? He does not tell us but, perhaps presumptuously, we can guess from his identification with the spirit of the times that he was going to the same place as tin: pop redeemers: New York City.

Pop and New York: no two movements of the imagination have mirrored one another more completely. One can hardly conceive of pop without the New York it happened in, the New York of diamonds and trash (of diamonds as trash and trash as diamonds), of forms of life barely mediated by tradition, or mediated by their loss or rejection of it, slapping up against one another, of cold-water apartments shared, happily or not, by seekers heading they knew not where and leaving behind what they did not speak of or, if they did, told lies about. The inextricability of pop and its place is more thorough in kind, not just degree, than that of even the New York school, its name notwithstanding, and its place. One would miss some amusing and illuminating stories, but still one can imagine Pollock and Willem DeKooning, Mark Rothko and Hans Hofmann, out of New York, fleeing it to go someplace—Long Island, say—where something like everyday life existed. But the same is not true of pop, which, one might say, even shared with the New York of its time a motto: "anything goes." And "anything goes," in its Utopian evisceration of habitude, is the opposite of the everyday. In New York, as in pop, something uniquely American finally happened: one could be at home yet be in flight from the everyday at the same time.

As just suggested, the New York of pop was almost a cunning realization of a certain Utopia. As a place where the escape from used-car lots on every other corner (no one needed a car!) could be lived out, New York practically made real the ambition that had been maintained only ideally in art: to choose one's own way of being. Needless to say, the Utopian New York was an imaginary one (not, it is important to add, in the sense of being false, but rather in the sense of being mythical). This ideal place was a space in which taste could jump its imposed bounds, the bounds of the picture frame and the gallery wall, to imagine for itself a remaking of life. In the 1960s New York went from being the new center of modern art to being cool. Taste, as we would say now, *ruled*.

This Utopian achievement—"You must change your life", says the torso of Apollo, but now as advice rather than reproach—really must have seemed the end of history. With taste's overcoming of the everyday, the everyday was stripped of the alienating power it had (and might have continued to have if that ride never came) and so could enter art. One might even go further and flip this formula over: the everyday, in no longer existing as the everyday, became the domain in which art could occur. Art thus no longer needed repudiation as a central gesture, no longer required the rigorous avoidance of whatever would make it suffer a loss of its identity. In art as in life, anything goes.

However, if our speculation is right that only in the escape from the everyday can a taste for it be cultivated, then the psychogeographical conditions for pop would need to stay in place for history to remain finished. At this point, though, we must remember the other New York motto that marches side-by-side with "anything goes," and that is, "nothing works." Of course, we need to be careful in assessing this motto, for the fact that nothing works might be just another way to experience anything going, especially for

someone escaping from a place where everything is made to work smoothly and systematically. But even if nothing working is also a name for Utopia, it cannot sustain Utopia for very long. Things will unravel, including the conditions for "anything goes," and as they do we should expect a renewed outbreak of distaste—for the "unworkingness" of everyday life—and of taste—for art that points symbolically toward a reality distant from the distasteful present. In the era after history, art ought to become historical again.

Since this is the crux of our argument in this section, it would not hurt to spell out this conundrum slowly. Danto has argued that art's history is at an end since it has, to put it in the Hegelian idiom, realized its concept. The mystery' that drove art's history, the mystery of what it is that makes it essentially distinct from the rest of the work, has been resolved by art, and it therefore no longer needs to pursue the project of self-definition. In no longer having an historico-philosophical mission, art's implicit denigration of the everyday from which, in order to know itself, it sought to distinguish itself, maybe abandoned. This is the sense in which pop and pop-ish experience redeemed the everyday. Now, after the end of history, anything may be art

This victory by art, however, could only be sustained by an atmosphere of "anything goes," and not just in art but in everyday life as well. This is why Danto says that the world itself is redeemed by pop, for if the world remained fallen, especially in the way it had seemed to be before pop, it would continue to threaten art. Put simply, if art and the world remained mutually defining antagonists, art would need to struggle to avoid becoming mere world. Thus, the reopening of art to the possibilities thrown up by the embrace of the everyday must be met by a world itself opened up to the possibilities of art, a world cleansed of its "intolerably crass" hostility to art (for otherwise, as a matter, perhaps, of mere definition, the world would remain dangerously unredeemed). Hence, for history to remain ended, for the self-sufficiency of the pop symbol to continue to be indifferent to history, the everyday world in which art is made must not offer resistance to art. If it did, and art did not respond, then the claim to having realized its concept, to being self-conscious, would be false. The search for self-knowledge would have to be renewed, and art's history would begin again.

So: is art in the wake of pop truly posthistorical? Rather than immediately offering our own proposal, we will allow Danto's criticism to carry us toward an answer. Now, in an important sense any of Danto's critical essays ought to serve for addressing the question since, if he is correct that the contemporary art world is pluralistic, then no artist is any more representative of it than any other. Still, taking a cue from our hypothesis that the end of art depended on pop's connection to New York, we will use two artists whom Danto has reviewed, both of whom have taken New York as their subject matter: Hans Haacke and Red Grooms. On any conceivable spectrum, they arc at opposite ends of it, such that their coexistence in a single artworld is almost a demonstration of pluralism (Danto reviewed museum retrospectives for both artists in 1987, and the works central to his reviews are from 1971 and 1974-76). Further, insofar as neither Haacke nor Grooms is especially concerned with establishing his artistic identity by means of a withdrawal from the everyday into a visibly separate world of uniquely artistic values, they are both clearly post-pop artists. Are they therefore posthistorical artists, in the sense of having transcended art's agonistic pursuit of its self-realization? Do they exhibit a posthistorical redemption of the everyday world?

Let us start with Haacke. At first glance he seems resolutely, indeed humorlessly, opposed to any claiming of specific aesthetic qualities by or for art. In his review, Danto focuses on *Shapolsky et al. Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, A Real-Time Social System, as of May 1, 1971*, Haacke's documentary, which was famously banned from the Guggenheim Museum, of the real estate dealings of the eponymous group. *Shapolsky et al.*, like most of Haacke's work, has no visual attributes one couldn't also find in a Shapolsky Company dossier of its business affairs. In its flat-footed use of maps, photographs, and sheets of statistics, the work conveys a "bureaucratic fidelity to fact" such that "it would be a resolute aesthete indeed who sought in Haacke the pleasures one ordinarily hopes to find at the Guggenheim." Rather than invent an original artistic style, or borrow some previous one, Haacke's technique is taken straight and untransformed from the everyday world that is his subject matter. In this saturation by the world it is about, Haacke's technique can be seen as a descendant of pop.

In noting the way *Shapolsky et al.* lacks the potential to produce the pleasure expected by the aesthete, Danto points to the feature of Haacke's technique that makes him a candidate for the title of "posthistorical artist." In Haacke's work there is no effort to visually differentiate it from the everyday and thus no scent of the historico-philosophical necessity to strive for self-knowledge, which is characteristic of historical art. Yet here we must ask: is this "anti-style" a mark of Haacke's reconciliation with the everyday from which it takes its subject matter and technique? Is it a sign that his art is now no longer in need at all of differentiating itself from the world?

Oddly, Danto's own answer seems to be no. In a dialectically astute account of Haacke's goals, Danto argues that through his technique Haacke is attacking the "spiritual authority" of the museum, its capacity to turn dirty money into cultural achievement. This attack is pursued by denying in content and form the spiritual separation of art from the world. If art looks like an office manager's file on the company's earnings from his slum properties, it cannot very well enable those earnings to be culturally redeemed. Put more generally: if art acquires value as a redeemer of ill-gotten gains by not looking like a commodity—by looking, instead, like something money just can't buy—then the way to combat art's commodification is by making it look like the world it thereby refuses to spiritualize. If this is an accurate account of *Shapolsky et al.* (and we think it is), then even though Haacke is like Warhol in not painting over the everyday world, his art moves in exactly the opposite direction from the redemption of the everyday. It takes its mission from the demand that art differentiate itself from the world, albeit with the twist that it refuses to heed it.

Far from redeeming the everyday world or taking that world as already sacralized, Haacke refuses to even imagine the possibility. Of course, this requires us to acknowledge that the artistic symbol, in Haacke's hands, does merge with the everyday in a sense. But the merging is perverse, for in merely holding a mirror up to the aspirations of real estate capital to be purged of its bad conscience, Haacke both refuses to add anything aesthetically novel to the world *and* simultaneously allows the world to see its own aspirations, its own unfulfilled needs (one experiences one's desires as desires when they are frustrated). This is why Danto calls Haacke's work "often crude and heavy-handed"; in systematically adding nothing to the world even though the Guggenheim is a space intended for just such additions, it is as crude and heavy-handed as the unredeemed

world it rudely invites into art's precinct. Haacke's symbols remain undifferentiated from the everyday not in virtue of being full of the world but rather in virtue of being as unfulfilled as the world itself.

*Shapolsky et al.*, we can say, is absorbed with the problem of determining what art does if not precisely what art is. In this respect, Haacke's driving anxieties about art's Status are different from, my, those attributed by Greenberg to pre-pop abstractionism. Nonetheless, those anxieties are no less historical, no less expressive of a concern for the proper and the improper in art. Again, Danto says almost as much: "It is as though [Haacke] misunderstood the Modernist imperative that art should be about art. It is just that what Haacke says about art was not that dimension of art on which Modernism had its eye." Insofar as Haacke has his eye on real estate, Danto is right that he is concerned with a matter of no detectable consequence within the art of the modernists. But why should this different concern lead to the judgment that Haacke has "misunderstood" the imperative of modernism? Times have changed, and so, too, must art—if it cares for its proper functioning. If the modernist imperative is, as Danto supposes, that art should steadily unveil itself to itself, then Haacke has understood it all too well.

Times have indeed changed, and the condition in which anything goes had turned, by 1971, in New York, into the condition in which nothing works. This is what Haacke had in his sights in *Shapolsky et al.*, along with the ideology of art, which would have it that art could work even if nothing else did. In a context in which art's museal values were instrumentalized and so rendered hypocritical, the only way Haacke would honor the spirit of art was by refusing those values under those circumstances, in the name of art he expressed the need to hold out for changed circumstances. Although it would grant Haacke a kind of foresight he did not strive for, to focus on the connection between real estate and the avant-garde tradition in New York was prophetic. Danto writes wittily about how, from the point of view of the booming real estate market that by 1987 had driven rents through the roof, *Shapolsky et al.* could not help but incite in viewers a longing for the heady days when roomy apartments went for a song. But what is this longing really a longing for, other than the days when people short on money but long on hopes came to New York? It is a longing for the conditions in which one could say "anything goes," a longing, perhaps, for the days when one could make art—or life, even—that wouldn't serve the purpose of laundering money. It is a longing back, through 1971 to 1964.

No one, it is likely, longs for the New York of 1971, the New York of *Shapolsky et al.* As Danto writes in his review of Grooms, "The New York of the early 1970s was a sour, shabby, hopeless, decaying agglomeration of failing neighborhoods, on the edge of receivership, and one had the sense that in whatever way it is appropriate to speak of a social fabric, ours had unraveled. The city Grooms addressed was the shaken metropolis whose emblem was the graffiti-scorched subway, evidence that things had gone altogether out of control."

This depressing account of New York serves as the background for Danto's interpretation of Groom's *Ruckus Manhattan*, in which he emphasizes the wacky, crowd-pleasing qualities of Grooms's technique. If the sound of pop was "BLAM!", the sound of *Ruckus Manhattan* was "BOING!", an even more cartoonish explosion of meaning detonated in the midst of an urban miasma. Precisely because of how distasteful New

York had become when Grooms fabricated his work, how completely it had stopped working as a place, Danto labels Grooms a clown, a clown being someone who sacrifices himself by making himself goofy "in order that others should be lifted up." And, indeed, so well did Grooms's clowning do its job that Danto "date[s] the turnaround of New York from *Ruckus Manhattan*."

What makes Grooms an exemplary posthistorical artist for Danto is the nature of the sacrifice made in becoming an artistic clown. If a defining feature of historical art is its pursuit of an identity between art's essence and its appearance—or, put otherwise, the guiding of the making of visual artifacts by a solicitousness about art's essence—then Grooms' art could be made only after historical art had ended. "Grooms, as an artist," explains Danto, "has a theatrical identity just because his aim is the transformation of his viewers rather than the production of an interesting visual object. To treat him as though he were the latter kind of artist, someone for whom visual delectation were primary, is altogether to misrepresent his virtues and his fallings-off."

On this view, Grooms is entirely unconcerned with art's art-historical fate. What, then, is Grooms concerned with? As a clown, defined in Danto's manner, Grooms sacrifices art's dignity for the sake of a "healing intervention" into the depressed states of minds of New Yorkers. How, though—and here is our central question—does Grooms accomplish this intervention? It cannot be simply by sacrificing visual delectation, for Haacke, too, does that and no one would accuse him of contributing to the healing process. The answer, we suspect, must be that Grooms sacrifices his artistic dignity in order to reignite the doused imaginations of the gallery visitors about life outside the gallery walls. It is as if Grooms were instructing the visitors to the putatively segregated space of art that they had better stop expecting art to redeem the world if they want the world to be changed. If there is a clownish sacrifice in Grooms, then it is a sacrifice imposed by the yawning discrepancy between art and the world in which it arises, *Ruckus Manhattan* delivers a message that can be received only when one has compared it to the world from which it keeps its distance,

In his effort to interpret Grooms as a post historical artist, Danto\* it seems to us, reveals a conflict at the heart of his view. For Grooms, in stark contrast to Haacke, it really does seem as if, artistically, anything goes, but for that really to be the case then it must also be true that anything goes in general, that the everyday world poses no threat to art's being art. Danto tries to get the shaggy spirit of the everyday of the early 1960s back into the picture by claiming that the "looseness and genial anarchy (of *Ruckus Manhattan*) reflect the chaos of New York itself." This description of New York, though, is an unsettling contrast to the depressed one which, as Danto also argues, gives the impetus for Grooms' sacrifice. If the chaotic everyday life of New York were really carefree, then there would be no healing for Grooms to attempt. Thus, according to Danto's own argument, Grooms' aesthetic of anything goes is a deliberate response to everything grinding to a halt. It's meaning is constituted by its difference from the world it inhabits. *Ruckus Manhattan* worked only because New York did not.

The claim that *Ruckus Manhattan* "reflects" the real Manhattan is Danto's strategy for locating it in posthistory, since if its aesthetic were reflective then its content and technique would be a return of the everyday as itself in art. Yet, as we have pointed out, that claim can only be offered halfheartedly because it is incompatible with the

interpretation of Grooms as a healing clown. Grooms's work, no less than Haacke's, depends on a distance from the reality which threatens it, albeit with this difference: whereas Haacke thinks that the museum is the wrong place to imagine an alternative everyday world, Grooms invites that imagination. In neither case, though, is the world in which a transfigured everyday is to be found located in art. In short, the conflict between art and the everyday operates for both artists.

Danto, perhaps, senses this. After attributing to *Ruckus Manhattan* the initiation of New York's recovery (half in jest, no doubt, since it would be a magical artwork indeed that increased the capital budget of the city's transit system), Danto takes it back. The Marlborough Gallery, where the work was displayed in 1976, was the scene, he says, of New York's "symbolic revival." This is an ambiguous phrase. "Symbolic" can mean the opposite of "real", as in "a merely symbolic gesture," a phrase uttered when dismissing a false apology. But Danto cannot mean that, since, in his view, New York underwent a real turnaround. We must infer, therefore, that by "symbolic" he means "promised," as in "a symbol of good will" with which negotiations are opened. On that interpretation of "symbolic revival," Danto is saying that Grooms made a promise and imagined an alternative, which the everyday world later fulfilled. Whether the promise was fulfilled is, for the moment, neither here nor there, since it depends on one's beliefs about the comparative "betterness" of present-day New York. However, if that is the kind of interpretation Danto is offering, then it depends on treating Grooms as pointing to another world, a different everyday, to which *Ruckus Manhattan* would be reconciled *if it existed*. And with this kind of interpretation we find ourselves back in historical art, with its essential distance—the distance referred to in the concept of "symbol"—from the everyday,

Let us sum up these preceding arguments. Danto argues that art in the wake of pop is posthistorical because, pop having won art its self-knowledge, art no longer has a future history. This interpretation of the end of history, however, presumes that art has made peace with its ontological competitor—the everyday—such that the everyday may return as itself in art. Using Haacke and Grooms as artists who, if anyone, would exemplify this vision of posthistory, we have argued that they do not and—in the case of Grooms in particular—that Danto's interpretation depends on the continuing relevance of art's struggle for its symbolic relation to the world. It might be true, to be sure, that oilier artists would better exemplify posthistorical art, but since it is the artworld as such, the totality of present art practices, to which Danto applies the label "pluralistic," such counterexamples would not blunt our critique.

Nonetheless, to return to the issue with which we began this discussion, Danto has hold of a deep truth about contemporary art when he focuses on its newly visible relation to the everyday. We will close this section with an effort to redescribe that truth.

Pop initiated a new stage in art's self-reflection, and it did so by means of a specific relation to the everyday. Rather than thinking of that relation as a return *of* the everyday as itself in art, however, we might instead think of it as art's return *to* the everyday. Pop invited the everyday to disfigure artistic form and to dismantle thereby the aestheticized and sacrificial withdrawal from the everyday in which art had taken shelter in its search for self-determination. To see how this might be so, we will digress (very briefly) into a reflection on the dialectic of artistic form and the everyday.

Needless to say, no full-blown account of artistic form will be given here, but let us note, even if dogmatically, that all efforts to give a positive account of it, in terms of the features it possesses inherently that non-artistic form lacks, have been philosophically hapless. At best, "form" becomes synonymous with less metaphysically freighted concepts like "symmetry" or "design" (which precisely because less freighted are too narrow to encompass all instances), or else it becomes vacuous, a synonym for whatever anyone finds resonant in a work of art. This is a point that Danto, with his acute awareness that the difference between art and non-art is not a perceptual one, would endorse. By contrast, those accounts of form which have been most fruitful—Kant's, for instance, or Greenberg's or Theodor Adorno's—have been essentially negative: they have defined form in terms of the work the art does to transform the materials with which, and about which, it works. Approached negatively, form can be seen to have no inherent properties at all. Instead, it is the residue of the artistic struggle to transform what, from the point of view of that struggle, is raw, untransfigured, resistant matter. Form is the aftermath of a power struggle.

It would be false to say that the matter against which form struggles is simply and always the everyday. What counts as raw and as calling for transfiguration differs historically and culturally. The very notion of "raw material," in fact, is itself more raw material for a philosophy of form than a determinate concept. Historically we have seen the notion of the untransfigured spelled out as "nature," "physical matter," "emotions," "desires," "needs," and so on—each, in its own way, also a historical cipher. We might even go so far as to say that what counts as raw material is whatever appears as the moment of resistance to the will to form, as the formally unredeemed. The everyday, thus, becomes the "other" of form at the very moment that it first makes its appearance as a threat to works of art in a contest over their meaning. This moment is marked by the historically specific circumstances in which the ordinariness of social life has become alienated and the pleasures of the most familiar have melded with the uncanniness of the least. Under such circumstances, the everyday and the ordinary are not the same and the everyday becomes strangely noticeable. One can then (now) easily imagine an experience of the everyday yielding the judgment "This is remarkable." The paradoxes of such a condition are deep and perhaps philosophically unresolvable, since in it art becomes a social struggle against social life, becomes, that is, socially antisocial.

When we call art under the conditions of the alienation of the everyday "socially antisocial," that is, needless to say, *our* description. Artists have given other descriptions to the struggle in their art to achieve technical mastery over the everyday, just as they have offered various accounts of the everydayness against which it struggles. The struggle has been variously described as aiming at originality, purity, flatness, all-overness, expressiveness, self-representation, poetic resonance, and so on (not all compatible); the everydayness has been described as formula, decorativeness, illusion, ideology, misrepresentation, and so on (again, not all compatible). What our description adds to this mix is its illumination of the poignant paradox of the struggle against the everyday: it always fails just where it most succeeds. Mere we concur entirely with Danto that the withdrawal by art into whatever purportedly perceptually differentiates it from the world is bound to fail, except in yielding what Danto thinks of as the sullen disposition of the aesthete. But this point can be generalized, for it is a hard truth that the more rigorous its

struggle, the more revolutionary its repudiation of the everyday, the more embroiled does art become in what it seeks to deny. It is with art as with human personalities: steeling oneself against what is perceived as perpetually threatening requires keeping that threat alive in one's consciousness of oneself. Nowhere has this dynamic been clearer than at the end of the great period of painting in the 1940s and 50s when, as Greenberg discerned, painting was in danger of collapsing back into the wall just because it was the wall it was trying to avoid decorating.

It is Greenberg, we think, who was the best diagnostician of the paradox of artistic form. In his great early essays at least, he saw clearly that the goal of self-determination in modernist art was underwritten by a historical necessity it could never shake. He tracked the dialectic of form and the everyday while striving not to lose sight of the negativity of form, its being constituted by its combat with the world. But what Greenberg did not see, and ended up steeling himself against, were the ways in which the antagonism in question could be played out inside works of art in a visible manner in addition to the abstractive manner to which he was more attuned. Perhaps the seeds of this insensitivity were always there in Greenberg, in his distaste for surrealism, for instance, but certainly by the 1960s it had coagulated into something like a reflex of disgust. The interpretation of art's return to its most intimate, ejected other—its return to the everyday—had to await a theorist more open to the intoxicating pleasures of the everyday world. This, for us, locates Danto's achievement.

Yet, to conclude, we still think Danto overplays his insight in claiming that with pop, art has ended in its vanquishing of its imposed missionary obsession with the everyday. Art's relation to the everyday is still a symbolic one, and so art still cleaves to its struggle to know itself as other than the world it inhabits. That it will never finally win that struggle is the guarantee of its continued historicity. But why is it that we maintain that the artistic symbol will never slip its historical bonds? To establish that point we must turn to the issue of taste.

## SECTION FIVE: TASTE IN A PLURALISTIC AGE

And what about taste? Has it too, like art, reached its end only to begin anew in posthistory? Is the world indeed plural for taste, or better, is taste truly *pluralistic*? Taste, lest we forget, is the exercise of the power of judgment. And though Danto finds art-historical support for advocating that art theory ought—on arts behalf—to give up claiming any power over art, is taste willing, or able, to do the same? The crux of this dynamic for us is not in regard to how, or whether, art (history) could liberate itself from the imposed powers of art theory, but only whether a ceding of the power of taste is at all desirable, let alone possible. For us, the consequences of such a sacrifice would entail a perhaps impossible self-destruction of the faculty of taste, of the means and activity of judgment per se. We believe instead that taste can never be pluralistic; indeed, that it can at most barely muster a pretense of tolerance.

Artworks have no power, just as they have no beauty, at least as objective characteristics. As Kant argued unforgettably, artworks (but so too, many other objects) serve as occasions for the exercise of taste, the power of judgment. Taste successfully exercises its power on and about such objects. It is nonetheless a profound mistake—



though a mistake taste systematically and necessarily makes—to ascribe its power to the objects that but serve as its occasions. Because artworks appear powerful when we feel ourselves moved by them, it is just the persistent inability to specify how those objects come to have such power that sets in motion the entire critical project—within which we began by locating Danto—of attempting to justify aesthetic judgments.

Danto nonetheless continues the glorious tradition, beginning with Plato, of mistaking the judgment for its object. Yet Danto adds a curious codicil to the tradition by theorizing that it is not judgment but philosophy that mistakenly ascribes power to art. Judgment indeed ascribes power to artworks, but this ascription, even though it becomes manifest as philosophical belief, is a result of something that inheres in the dynamic of taste itself. That is, it is the faculty of judgment, which is to say taste, that powers the ascription of power. We will spell out this argument shortly, but first we must see how Danto veers away from it.

As we witnessed in Danto's account of pop, the historic liberation of art entails for him that artworks are henceforth self-determining. Thus, even if it was the case that artworks had historical power over one another (which is why art had a history), posthistorical artworks exercise power only over themselves. Yet what about us? Do artworks continue to exercise any power over us? In saying that he has no grounds for excluding anything from the domain of the things he likes, Danto seems to say no. Hence, in this fateful, posthistorical liberation of artworks from the determinations of the past, we still do not know for sure about the fate of taste's power.

If we seek in Danto's account of art's history a clue to the fate of taste, we immediately encounter an obstacle. Danto often starts off sounding like a critical Kantian who wants to formulate a critique of the origin and boundaries of the faculty of ascribing power (Danto is no mere historian of art, nor merely a philosopher of art). Whence, Danto asks, does this power arise, and is it legitimate? Danto's "Kantianism" becomes still more apparent if we regard his notion of "posthistory" as a critical tool used to curb the influence of objects over us by ascertaining the source and character of their power. Thus, we imagine we will get a solution to the question of taste. The limits of his Kantianism, however, become apparent in his locating the power of (posthistorical) artworks not within the dynamic of judgment but instead within the artworks themselves. That is, Danto believes that some such power (namely the power of self-determination) does indeed reside in objects, at least so far as they have escaped historical determination. And, in this respect, by asserting a power of self-determination to artworks, Danto appears a precritical metaphysician of art. So though Danto starts by questioning the source of {he ostensible power of certain objects over each other and us, he nonetheless finishes by ascribing this power to things themselves. Thus, what begins as Kantian criticism turns over into Hegelian idealism.

We are now in a better position to understand why Danto positions philosophy and the theory of art as his primary targets. Given the metaphysics of art with which he finishes off his critical inquiry into art's historical imperatives, Danto sees philosophy and theory as striving to strip art of an inherent power. This approach, though, enables him to avoid the origin in taste of the power of art which philosophy, in seeking to contain that power, also makes manifest. Without history, without philosophy, and without taste, posthistorical art is wholly without external determination.

It is just here that Danto's Hegelianism most obviously obtrudes. By attributing to art freedom from determination, what he is arguing in effect is that art has become subjectivity. Indeed, in this respect Danto's position goes beyond even Hegel in arguing that art has overcome its status as means or vehicle of subjectivity, and has finally arrived as subjectivity. Art then is no mediated and mediating *organon*, but pure and simple—if it can ever be that—subjectivity. For Danto, posthistorical art is neither subjectivity unfolding and coming to know itself, nor a means for the further unfolding of human subjectivity; rather, it is subjectivity arrived and in full flower (though arrival from we know not where, and in blossoms no longer capable of being judged beautiful).

Thus, the power of art that flows from its purported subjectivity displaces the power of taste in Danto's metaphysics. This is also why his diagnosis of contemporary art as the product of a self-liberation from the confines of philosophy and history bears an implicit prognosis for the formulation of his own taste: in practice Danto allows himself no opportunity to interrogate his taste because his taste is (theoretically) assigned a posthistorical position also. With no grounds to exclude anything, he can like it all. Now, this makes it sound as if Danto's taste is as freely self-determining as contemporary art, as if there is no precedent for it outside Danto's own freedom. But, as we hope to demonstrate, there is a misalignment between his theory of a plural artworld and his purportedly *pluralistic* taste.

We readily acknowledge that taste is self-determining, in the sense that it is constituted as *my* taste only on the basis of this implicit claim. However, even though this claim is true, it is also opaque. Taste's foundation and origination within each person is confirmed by the conviction that every instance of taste is indeed one's own, yet it remains a genuine question whether the interrogation of even one of our judgments of taste will ever yield its origins. This is why modern philosophical aesthetics begins with the paradox that despite the obvious truth that there is no disputing about taste, we do it all the time. Though Danto clearly has strong tastes and, as a working critic, *buttresses* the judgments of his own taste, he stops work prematurely by assuming that it is just his taste that requires no accounting. It's his metaphysical philosophy of pluralist art that functions as a deflecting support for his contention that his own taste is pluralistic, free, and self-determined. In short: in lieu of an investigation of the faculty of taste Danto offers us the objects upon which his taste is exercised. So here it becomes important to investigate how his taste is regularly drawn to objects that are all characterized by him in a particular way as symbols.

The centrality of the symbol to Danto's taste is best reconstructed by way of his writings on what makes certain artworks successful, and, more specifically, by the central role played in those artworks by the transfiguring effect of embodiment. By transfiguration Danto means that we find ourselves, by means of an embodiment—as he puts it in “*Tilted Arc* and Public Art”—“in the medium of artistic transformation.” It is in other words embodiment which lends itself to the motion of transformation. Consider the passage Danto cites, with approval, from Henry James's *American Scene*, in which Grant's Tomb is favorably compared to that of Napoleon's in Paris, after which he concludes: “[James's] point is that these two structures project the deepest public values of the societies that built them. ... In these two monuments, the two societies embody themselves.” Implied here is a distinction between embodiment and transfiguration such

that embodiment alone is not transformative, for it is but the public manifesting itself as a body. Hence through embodiment the public becomes merely the means to express something, and not yet expression itself. Monuments, for example, are not merely the product of society embodying itself, but rather of the public having found the monument a suitable occasion for imagining—or rather feeling—itsself transfigured. And indeed as Danto sometimes implies, for example in his review “The Vietnam Veterans Memorial” the public does not know in advance which occasions it will find appropriate as sites for imagining itself transfigured; “[the Memorial] has been accepted by the nation at large, which did not even know it wanted such a memorial.” It is not the case then, even in Danto's account, that embodiment is the result of an abundant welling up of something or other which then spills out and over into appearance. Rather than some abundance, it is instead absence or loss, which functions as the impetus for embodiment. In short, what we've been describing as the constitutive inadequacy of the symbol (for thought) originates in a prior loss or absence.

The *fact* of embodiment, rather than its particular content, is itself a sign that something absent needs to come to appearance, as this is just what ignited it. Embodiment then is a kind of symptom, we might say the symptom of a particular blockage. Embodiment is the product of a force of reflection *not yet thought*; it occurs in the expectation of a thinking reflection, thereby providing an occasion for just such reflection to alight. But whatever impetus or power drives the need for an embodied appearance remains unfulfilled as embodiment alone.

The call voiced by embodiment for a reflection it cannot itself complete is taken up by the symbol. The symbol is thus, in Danto's schema, a kind of fully fleshed out embodiment. And yet, ironically, the symbol becomes whole only if it jettisons the embodiment—leaves the flesh—in order to address a thinking reflection. The symbol becomes fully what it is by evacuating the embodiment in order to instead stand in for it. In short, the symbol carries the project of reflection past the boundary of embodiment and toward the disembodied realm of thinking reflection. However, something of embodiment clings still to the symbol, therefore always reminding us of the symbol's determination: the notion that gives rise to the embodied symbol is the incomplete attainment of our self-determination.

What Danto seems to fail to see in his account of symbolic embodiment is this powerful inadequacy it shows back to us. Nonetheless, Danto's implicit recognition of this dynamic shows through in his theory that transfiguration requires that embodiment must be *felt*. In other words, and to pose this dynamic in the widest possible realm, what the public requires from its successful public art is that it not only serve to embody some (public) meaning or another, but more importantly, that it provide an occasion for the feeling that it finds itself transformed. That we find ourselves in and by means of embodiments or symbols is itself a mark of our persistent failure to become self-determining. The symbol marks that failure only negatively, by pointing to the need for a thinking reflection to continue to trace and pursue whatever inadequacy it was that first gave rise to it.

However, Danto repeatedly turns away from the insight that art is also, regardless of whatever meanings it occasions, a symbol of our inadequacy. Danto instead turns toward the compensation afforded that inadequacy by means of the symbol. (It's as if, in

the case of art, only half Hegel's dialectic is in play.) Danto nonetheless formulates the compensation as if to address the unrequited human demand to overcome our own inadequacy. Danto would compensate us with the feeling of a self-generated transfiguration. However, it is just the case that this transfiguration occurs precisely because of the symbol's opacity to thought. The transfiguring feeling of self-recognition is but the feeling of the powerful inadequacy of the Symbol for thinking reflection, heeling transfigured is the symbol's compensation for thought's failure. Hence the function of the symbol is to provide a locus where we/fed complete, even though it fails to be thought. We suspect Danto's embrace of this feeling as the end (*telos*) of art is an embrace of the opacity of symbols to philosophical reflection. Why isn't it the case, instead, that this opacity ignites philosophical reflection on our lack of self-determination—embodied in the symbol—rather than occasioning an affective substitute for it?

Danto's writings on art express a rejection of thoughtful reflection and an enthusiasm for the *feeling* of reflection instead. In order then for a site to remain an appropriate occasion for public transfiguration, its symbolic functioning requires that its opacity to a thinking reflection be maintained. The symbol thus provides the best reflection for feeling by not providing one for thought. In his essay on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Danto suggests that what public art is really supposed to do is give form to feelings. And he concludes the essay by discussing the engraved names on the Memorial in order to contrast the "idea of death" with its "reality": "Be prepared to weep. Tears are the universal experience even if you don't know any of the dead ... Someday, I suppose, visiting it will be like standing before a memorial from the Civil War, where the bearers of the names really have been forgotten and ... the names themselves will have lost their meaning. They will merely remain powerful as names, and there will only be the idea of death to be moved by. Now, however, we are all moved by the reality of death, or moved by the fact that many who stand beside us are moved by its reality."

Public art, especially monuments and memorials, provide richer occasions for giving form to feelings, or at least the idea of feelings, or, let us say, the feeling of feelings.

This is an astute description of people's being moved by public monuments. Yet there is a tension in Danto's formulation here, for what his taste is drawn to in being drawn to symbols is not so much an expression of feelings as it is rather the increased distance from the very feelings which expression allows the public. This distance—which we might also call disavowal—is, in fact, multiply determined. A first distance lies in the act of giving form to feelings, while a second resides at the memorial between the mourner and the visitor witnessing the mourner. There is even a third distance posited by the imposition of time, which by removing living memory inevitably removes both these mourners as well as what might, with suitable qualification, be called the immediacy of feeling. It is this overarching dynamic of loss, removal, and distance which is at the heart of Danto's unformulated taste. What Danto struggles to avoid formulating is the centrality of disavowal to his aesthetic judgment and taste, even though the very dynamic underlying his writings on art, and especially in his formulation of the notion of the symbol, is a pursuit of just such disavowal.

This pursuit is so vigorous that Danto follows it out even in his taste for the art of his favorite artist, Warhol. Warhol, recall, is the artist to whom Danto attributes the achievement of having created art's last real historical symbol in virtue of having

symbolized art's own commitment to symbolization, which is to say, to itself. It was with this that Warhol freed art from extrinsic determination by its own history. The achievement is posed in Danto's retelling of the famous historic anecdote of pop's advent in Warhol's having chosen to discard one of the two six-foot canvases painted with the same Coke bottle as subject. According to Emile di Antonio's account of his fateful visit to Warhol one night in 1960, Warhol showed Di Antonio one Coke painting produced in an abstract expressionist style, replete with painterly drips, next to another painting on which was merely a "pristine black-and-white Coke bottle." Pop then begins when Di Antonio successfully encourages Warhol to discard the abstract expressionist version in favor of exhibiting the other one, which Di Antonio tells Warhol is simply "remarkable."

However, something curious occurs in Danto's description of the final Warhol painting prior to the first pop one: "the Abstract Expressionist *Coca-Cola Bottle*, with its visible tension between two philosophies of art, two philosophies of life, [is] a battleground on which a war between the dear commonplace world and some other exalted, idealized world, begun with Plato in the dawn of metaphysics, continues to be waged."

Note how Danto describes this last painting before pop's triumphal advent as especially appealing to him because of its vitality. Indeed, not only does Danto conclude his "The Abstract Expressionist Coca-Cola Bottle" with the above passage, he also admires the painting so greatly as to rank it first in desirability among all works of this century: "if there were a single work of this century I would like to own, it would be it." Danto's exalted ranking of Warhol's final pre-pop canvas strikes us as all the more curious since it is Danto's own theoretical conclusion, remember, that it is Warhol's very next painting that conclusively wins the historic battle described above. Despite the victory of the "pristine black-and-white Coke bottle" painting, as well as its bearing perhaps the heaviest philosophical burden of any single work in his philosophy of art's history, Danto's own taste is instead drawn to a work situated in a quite precisely determined historical moment. We would like to suggest that what explains Danto's taste here is the historic specificity that determined the embodied appearance of the abstract expressionist Coke bottle. In short: while in theory, as well as through it, Danto ranks as victors the posthistorical self-determining artworks made possible by pop, in practice his taste prefers the determined ongoing battle for history. This is not to say, however, that Danto's taste is for things of the past, but rather that his taste embraces the determinability of objects, and hence of history's tracings. In this way, the movement of his taste concretely mimics the struggles for self-determination that occasioned Warhol's artwork. Hence, despite his theoretical commitments to purportedly self-determined artworks, Danto's taste is here committed to the determination that embodiment affords. Indeed, when he argues that his taste is in fact for the posthistorical—which is to say freely self-determining—works he theoretically champions, we can understand that taste as the pleasure of repeatedly visiting the historically specific moment of victory over being historically determinable. Regardless whether or not artworks reside in a plural world, Danto tacitly recognizes that judgments on them do not.

For Danto the world of the everyday is *not* identical to the world of the symbol, indeed cannot be because symbolization necessarily entails the recognition of the *nonexistence* of a world. The experience of a symbol in this, our everyday world, is

grounded in the felt absence of some other world that the symbol is encouraging us to imagine. This dual characterization of symbolization becomes evident in Danto's essay "Symbolic Expressions and the Self." Regardless of whether it is self-symbolizing or not, the hope expressed in the idea of the *symbolic everyday* world is especially poignant because symbolization is at once both the recognition of the nonexistence of a world as well as the symptomatic expression of the desire for its existence. It is in Danto's distinction between manifestation and expression in this essay that the poignancy is most vivid. We will conclude our commentary by following out the relations between the artistic symbol, embodiment, and the nonexistence of the world as Danto here expresses it.

In "Symbolic Expressions and the Self," Danto defines manifestations as simple, indexical marks of behavior. Hence, in discussing the example of Darwin's treatment of facial expression in animals, Danto writes that "all such 'expressions', in fact, are manifestations, in my usage, being the outward sign of an internal state." Expression, for Danto, is something more complex: the outward manifestation of an internal state mediated through some code or another which the expresser understands. This distinction allows for a further one between sign and symbol. Signs, for Danto, are marks, unmediated representations, perhaps nothing more than what he intends by the term manifestation. But to express something, not merely to manifest it, is to understand a cultural code, such that the sign is invested with feeling and meaning, hence transforming it into a symbol. In short, we might then say that for Danto symbols are necessarily meaningful because they occur only with feeling and understanding. Symbols then are charged signs—charged with feeling and by understanding. They are also thereby charged with the mission of embodying and expressing feeling.

We would be mistaken, however, if we took Danto's account to imply that a symbol is nothing but an elaborated version of a sign. Although clearly there is continuity between them, more important for Danto is the rigid demarcation that keeps them separate: sign and symbol may not coincide. Whether a mark is a sign or a symbol is a matter of whether it is related to its origin externally or internally. "A sign stands for its cause, as a footprint stands forensically for a footstep, or a sigh for sadness, or a scar for a lesion, or clouds for rain. The relationship is external ... but symbols, by contrast, contain their meaning, and so the relationship of a symbol to its content is internal ... [hence] the special power symbols have, as they distill the very reality signs but stand for."

However, in the case of Danto's account of pop we seem to encounter an anomaly: he describes pop as at once both sign and symbol. It is a sign insofar as it is a remarkable, erupting manifestation of everydayness. Yet it is also a symbol, indeed a multiply significant one: pop not only symbolizes—as we've already seen—the end of art's history of symbolization; more strikingly, pop also symbolizes by being an expression of the sacredness of the everyday. How could sign and symbol coincide in pop, but nowhere else? There is more than a whiff of contradiction here. How does Danto seek to dispel it? Or, to formulate our question in line with his equation above: What reality, which the pop sign stands for, is distilled by the pop symbol?

Danto's solution depends on a reversal of symbol and sign, if a symbol were able to be transformed into a sign, then the whole problem of human self-determination would also be overcome. Indeed, even signhood itself would be overcome, since all

determinations would henceforth be only internal, that is, symbolic. And since the work of symbols is to distill the reality that signs only mark, with the overcoming of signs there would be nothing left requiring symbolization. The sign and the symbol thus would collapse together in a world of purely internal meaning. Despite its air of contradiction, herein lies Danto's recognition of what taste wants, what it looks for; internal self-determination. And since it is just this that taste most wants, it is no surprise to find it already inscribed by Danto in the nature of the symbol: "A symbolic expression implies a world in which it instead is a manifestation."

However, since the above world is only implied by the symbol, the world of the symbol is only constituted by and within absence. And this—like the extinction of symbols in the overcoming of mere signs—entails that symbolism per se is never the expression of any part of this or any other existing world, for what motivates the symbol in the first place is the absence it attempts to remedy. The symbol then is the expression of the desire for some other world—the desire, as Danto puts it, for the world in which it *ought* to be the manifestation. The longing for another world embodied by the symbol is, however, circumscribed by the world the symbol actually inhabits, for something "is a *symbol* because it is *only* a fragment. It stands encapsulated in a world against which it bears witness, a living reproach."

So Danto's taste for the symbol, regardless of its content, might also be understood as the taste for an unmotivated, nearly transparent, world of objects that symbolize themselves. Hence his taste for pop, in which art comes closest to liquidating the fractured world composed of a misalignment between sign and symbol, embodiment and transfiguration. Warhol's achievement, according to Danto, is not the liberation of the everyday, but the symbolization of the everyday with everyday objects "themselves." Warhol produces not a liberation but a seeming coincidence between symbol and referent. Put differently: Warhol seems to bring the symbolic mediation of the world closer than ever before to the state of least mediation. Hence it is the art historical achievement of Warhol—representing the everyday by way of the everyday—that Danto most admires. The transfiguration of the everyday occurs by dint of this symbolic, aesthetic achievement and is not the result of the release of some special, but constrained, characteristic of the everyday. It is, as Danto puts it, the "sacramental return of the thing to itself through art."

Despite Danto's philosophy of art apparently relieving him of the task of explaining (his) taste, his philosophy's reliance on the trope of symbolism betrays the continued relevance of the problem of taste. Danto aims to dissolve this problem by means of a nonjudgmental acceptance, which he calls "pluralistic," of the cleansing flood of posthistorical art, which he calls "pluralism." Nonetheless, though Danto has posited philosophy's relation to art as the mendacious, usurping attempt to falsely unify what he instead asserts is a multiplicity of objects and events, the prominence he accords the theoretical, functional and aesthetic status of the symbol goes a long way in reunifying a supposed plurality. The only way for Danto to maintain his taste for symbols is to refuse to allow the other world—the world in which the embodiment of the symbol is *this* one—to come into "being." But this refusal, so admirable in its holding out for what taste has in sight, remains a refuge for aesthetic judgment even after the wake of art.