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Graham McFee
mcfee-usa@earthlink.net

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The Friends of Jones' Paintings: A Case of Explanation in the Republic of Art

Graham McFee

Abstract

All too often the agenda for discussion of institutional accounts of art has been set by George Dickie's (putative) institutional definition of art. To offer a new beginning, the paper addresses the question of explanation with an institutional framework modeled as Terry Diffey's *Republic of Art*. In exploring the argumentative resources here, it meets the objection that institutionalism cannot explore the case of so-called 'first art': objects created before the concept art came into being. In particular, the paper uses an example to consider how disputes within the Republic might be resolved through rational means, while still maintaining the institutional character of such discussions. For we need not assume that institutionalism has no mechanisms for rational self-correction nor that one, timeless resolution is always possible. Instead, we can find rational activity in the disputes among art critics, as well as contrasting their (broadly contemporary) perspective on the case with the detachment of the (philosophical) aesthetician.

Key Words

authoritative body, institutional decisions, Institutionalism, institutional reasons, other-acclamation, Republic of Art, self-election, Terry Diffey

1. Introduction

Consider what might be thought the worst outcomes for any account of art — hence the worst for any plausible institutional account. Any *satisfactory* account of art must preclude:

- the case where '*wishing makes it so*,' where such-and-such is an work of art, or of artistic value, just because I say it is — where, for example, my wanting to be an artist is all there is to it. What makes this case such a disaster is that — if even possible — it precludes ascribing any stability or objectivity to artistic judgment. And this case *seems* to thrive if an institutional account stresses self-election to the institutional structure: that is, to the Republic of Art.^[1]
- *the case of the 'unintended artist'* where (say) an 'object' made in a society with no concept of art is nonetheless taken as art. This case is a disaster because it breaks the tie between the 'artworks' themselves and wanting or trying to make art (and hence being responsible if one succeeds). And this case seems to thrive where other-acclamation by the Republic of Art is crucial for art-status.

So these are just the features institutional theories of art are supposed (by their critics) to permit or encourage. But, as an advocate of a (broadly) institutional account of art,^[2] it has long seemed to me that one strength of my position lay in its permitting an appropriate response to these issues. And being rendered more plausible in the bargain!

- Moreover, an attractive thought for philosophical aesthetics is that any account of art should give weight to the context or background of specific artmaking and art-understanding. Such

accounts assume a body of human beings interested in art and also in practices which (while not themselves artmaking) bear on it — for instance, practices of *learning* artmaking, and acquiring and developing skills one might then use in art-making, as well as concerns with displaying, restoring and discussing artworks.[3] Further, at least for performing arts, there will also be training in performance, as we might say, in *art-instantiating!* [4] Moreover, there are traditions of performance and venues (of various sorts) for its presentation, and institutionalism will stress such features.

Unfortunately, the prospects for an institutional account of art have become entangled with the fortunes of George Dickie's (putative) institutional *definition* of art. For the literature on institutional accounts of art typically accepts the features of Dickie's version as identifying all (or anyway most) of the requirements for institutionalism about art.

A full treatment of that argument would require us to broach complex issues concerning what precisely Dickie said and meant (and, perhaps, when). We could begin with the version that Dickie put forward in his book *Art and the Aesthetic* (1974)[5] — although he has other, more recent versions (especially that from his book *The Art Circle* (1984))[6] and he took much discussion of the 1974 version to be misconceived.[7] Here, instead, I briefly motivate the project of an institutional account of art before commenting on some typical lines of criticism (including some discussion of the 'unintended art' case). Then, via commentary on a published criticism of institutionalism, I confront a *very* serious objection concerning the rationality of the decision-making in the institution. I will deal with it primarily via a worked example (the case of the Friends of Jones' Painting) which shows such an account in action.

2. The Contours of Institutional Theories of Art

First, as a general characterization, vague enough to accommodate the variety of theories or accounts plausibly called "institutional," consider a picture from Anthony Quinton

"Institutional concepts ... are those that apply to the fruits of human contrivance. First and foremost artefacts (tools, machines, houses, furnishings); then institutions proper (marriage, property, the state); the social roles associated with them (king, priest, creditor); customs and practices (manners, games, meals)." [8]

This is suggestive of what it means to talk of art as institutional: roughly, that something *is* art if the right people say it is; that what is and is not a work of art is determined by humans and, arguably, for humans, or that art-status is a product of some kind of human consensus. Moreover, my account is stronger than Quinton's in recognizing that, with respect to genuine institutional concepts (in this sense),[9] not all human beings have a say. In (other) rule-governed concepts — for instance, *language* — (give or take a few qualifications) correctness of usage is the province of all native

speakers and typified by Mr. or Ms. Everyone, the person on the Clapham omnibus (as we say in the UK). By contrast, the normativity of an established institutional concept like *art* requires that some, but not others, can pronounce on its normativity.^[10] It is the activity of this 'institution' that marks out the concept as institutional. So institutional concepts in my sense (as, arguably, in Kuhn's)^[11] require an *authoritative body*^[12] — although perhaps of an unstructured kind.

Here we see a further reason for insisting that, in the relevant sense, the concept *art* is institutional. It would mean that points such as these (concerning the practical workings of the concept) are parts of the *philosophy* of art, not (merely) the sociology of art. For the idea of an institutional concept in this sense gives due weight to such factors. If there are institutional concepts in this strong sense — in particular, if *art* is one of them — matters of these sorts will be relevant to the explanation (the 'analysis') of such concepts.

3. Two Issues for Institutionalism

Let us turn from exposition to the meeting of criticisms. In his book on the philosophy of music,^[13] Bob Sharpe identifies what he takes to be the "... two difficulties ... that are most often aired" in respect of institutionalism — although he introduces them as problems for *proceduralism*, which he says "... differs little from what was previously called 'institutionalism'."^[14]

The first difficulty concerns *circularity*. Sharpe says that "... it is hard to see how we can get the notion of the art-world off the ground without reference to art." But once the thought that our project is to formally *define* 'art' (say, by the offering of conditions individually necessary and jointly sufficient) is put aside, then the issue of *circularity* connects directly and positively to ideas behind institutionalism as a position in philosophical aesthetics. For the default position for philosophical aesthetics is to accept as art (roughly) the "catalogue" of artworks from the "canon" of art. That is, roughly, we accept the extension of the concept 'art' from the doings and sayings of the artworld. As aestheticians, we do not, in general, decide what is and what is not art, except perhaps that our endeavors have an implicit reference to the world outside, and to the (changing) catalogue of artworks it endorses. This 'failure' to extract ourselves from artworld practice would be (or, anyway, might be) a problem for an attempted *definition* of art, but not here. So *circularity* need not concern us.

Sharpe characterizes his second difficulty as '*first art*.' He considers "... those artefacts that were created before anybody possessed anything like our concept of art." [Note in passing that I take it the expression "our concept of art" just means *art* or *fine art* — the "our concept" is not here doing work; it is not as though the makers of the Altamira cave paintings had some *other* concept of art.] Of these 'first art' cases, Sharpe comments: "We count these as art"

It is worth noting, though, that the issue concerning so-called 'first art' closely resembles that in respect of the "unintended art" noted initially. In both, we have objects which, on the face of it, are not made as *artworks* or not made *under the concept*

'art' and yet find their ways into our museums and art galleries. And the received wisdom here seems to be that such cases prove especially problematic for institutional accounts.

What should we say about these issues? On the issue of "first art," I am not inclined simply to *grant* that the objects at issue are *obviously* artworks. For it is not obvious that every thing we display in an art-gallery is art. We might well display, for instance, objects that had stimulated artworks, and this seems even more likely when we turn from galleries to museums. Further, these "first-art" objects do not suggest ways for a current artist to make art (except perhaps as kitsch). The discussion really falls into three related parts.

To begin, we can put aside one *conception* of "first art." For it might seem that there *must* be a 'first art', a set of objects initially considered in the way artworks are. But how on an institutionalist view could that be? For what *institution* (what artworld or Republic of Art) licenses their art-status? But that question arises from a misconception, like those involved in looking for language and pre-language, or asking how one can acquire the concepts concerning the external world needed for the experience that those concepts then mediate, if concept-acquisition has an experiential base. This is an example of what Wittgenstein rightly called trying "to go further back" (OC §471) than is possible. So the problem of 'first art' is not the problem of "art prior to the artworld."

Then granting *that* point reinforces the connection of candidate 'first art' works, and hence of the 'first art' problem, to objects arising (so anthropologists tell us) from societies lacking the concept *art*. Where it is clear or granted that the society lacks the concept 'art,' the examples seem to be of two types. For one type, the most common, we should accept that the objects are *not* art, despite their decorative appeal or their similarity to objects we otherwise regard as artworks (such as some frescos and murals). For such works, having no place in the narrative of art history, cannot imply strategies for contemporary art-making. This tough line is surely consistent with the thought (not dependent on institutionalism) that, in order to make art, one must *intend* to make art, although we might want to reconsider some peripheral cases, such as those sketches not intended as art which are later seen as part of the artist's *oeuvre*. The guiding thought here is a perfectly general one: that one is responsible for one's actions. And, notice, we are importing considerations of the *extent* of the object itself. We take just the painting to be an artwork. Hence we think of that painting as constituting a single, complete "thing" not including the wall on which it hangs, as we recognize a pair of spectacles as one thing divorced from the case containing them or the surroundings. And we do something similar for the cave paintings because genuine *artworks* are typically circumscribed in roughly this way. So we treat the cave paintings as one "object," but the other walls of cave as another, and so on. Yet there is no need to think that this was how their makers viewed these objects. Perhaps they thought that the whole cave was to be considered for their (ritual) purposes; or the whole cave including some of the surrounding area. So we do not know what, for their makers, constituted a *unity* here, we do not know what *the object* is! It makes sense to deny art-status to such cases.

The other type of example from societies lacking the concept 'art' concerns objects treated as art *by extension or by convention*. Here, we should note that these are highly *peculiar* cases of art, for instance in lacking authors and not just as when the author is unknown. Rather, since these objects were not made as art, there cannot be any artist as *author* of them. But we decide to treat them as art by drawing explicitly on what we know of the *past* of art, that is, on the institution.

It is clear, then, that there are no difficulties for institutionalism flowing from either of these types of cases — the objects are either not art *really*, despite their similarities to artworks or the words we might sometimes use of them, or are art only by extension from the current artworld. So, as long as it is *given* that the society in question lacked the concept 'art,' there is really no problem.

Then, finally, suppose we are *unsure* of the status of some other candidate 'first art' objects, since we do not know their function or enough about the societies from which they originate to assume that these societies do or do not have the concept 'art.' Note that this is how Sharpe initially treats 'first art.' He says, "there is certainly no reason to suppose that ... [their creators] thought of them as 'works of art'." But also no reason for confidence they did not. Where this is the situation, we can look to anthropologists and historians for help, of course. Still, when that help is exhausted,^[15] we have two cases to consider. If the most plausible reading suggests that the relevant society *lacked* the concept 'art,' the objects can be treated in either of the ways outlined previously. For they too will now originate from societies *uncontentiously* lacking the concept 'art.' And we have seen that these pose no threat to institutionalism. When, to the contrary, that reading suggests there *was*, after all, a conception of *art* in the society under consideration, it implicitly acknowledges an artworld. Hence it too poses no threat to institutionalism.

Moreover, we have here exactly the resources needed to deal both with those 'unintended artists' whose work, produced in a social setting where art flourishes, we *do* regard as artists, despite their avowed denials; and with those whose denials, if they could be made, we would readily accept. For, in the first case, we have plausible *artists*, that is, art-makers who do not see their own work as art, although they could have! In effect, we are re-assigning the category-ascription here to another our (now) artists *might* have selected. (One explanation might be that some activities were not, at the time, valued as artworks were valued, but we see that they can be.)^[16] Yet there is no need to do that for the other category. We may want to preserve various objects — and especially decorative objects — in our museums and perhaps galleries; but that does not require our other-acclaiming them as art.

4. The Place of Reasons in an Institutional Account of Art

I turn now to another objection, that will occupy the rest of this paper. This objection can be put by asking, "Can an institutional account of art accommodate the place of reason; and, in particular, the *normative* force of the reasoning?" For it might seem that to appeal to what *does* go on in the Republic

of Art is precisely to lose the ability to debate what *should* happen, so that, say, institutional decisions can never be contested nor argued against. For instance, Tiffany Sutton[17] claims that an institutional account of art "... can only explain why Warhol's *Brillo Box* was taken up into the canon of art history, not whether it should have been."

Even putting aside Sutton's reference to a "canon of art history" (as picking up those temporary paradigms a particular narrative tradition employs), her remark precisely misses the point here, in urging that institutionalism does not have, among its resources, a place for rational engagement. As my defense of the artistic/aesthetic contrast illustrates,[18] taking some object as an artwork brings with it a critical vocabulary for works in that category. For the fact that the object before us is or is not an *artwork* is crucial for its appreciation. As Arthur Danto[19] puts it: "The aesthetic [better, *artistic*] difference presupposed the ontological difference." We take from Danto here the *transformative* effect of art-status: that the artwork acquires *artistic* properties — and this distinguishes it from its 'non-art' cousins. In a similar way, a graceful action might simply be my walking (to work), or part of my gymnastic floor work, or part of my dance: but these are not equivalent actions — that it is dance (when it is) *transforms*, or transfigures, that action.

Moreover, when (say) the action of a road sweeper is transfigured to become part of my dance work, there is a clear sense in which it is changed — a set of properties is acquired — and a sense in which it is *not*. The patterns of muscular movement, say, might be the same. This tells us something about the nature of the new properties: roughly, to say that a movement pattern becomes *transfigured* into a part of a dance is to say that we can (and should) now see the movement pattern that way — and this is what its being different consists in! Further, the 'transfiguration' into artwork is important just in bringing with it a critical vocabulary of the kind appropriate to art. For the work now has a place in a 'narrative' of art-history, or in a tradition: a *category of art* now applies. And a different critical discourse follows.

Consider how Carl André's collection of fire bricks, *Equivalent VIII*, might be discussed: in particular, the suggestion that (roughly) André does for texture (as embodied, in this case, in the fire bricks) what Turner did for colour.[20] And, sometimes, the critical possibilities can be revealed through an unexpected comparison. Thus, consider the suggestion that — in order to see the Tracy Emin *Unmade Bed* as an artwork — one see it as though a *painting* of a bed. This brings out the sense in which (one might think) it is really a three-dimensional *depiction* of a bed. This in turn is one way to see it as *other* than a 'real thing', consonant with ideas from Arthur Danto.[21] Moreover, we are familiar (say, from Van Gogh's boots) with the depiction of everyday objects from the artist's life — familiar, that is, with seeing how these might be artistically resonant, such that our discussion might soon be conducted in terms of, say, the revelation (or embodiment) of aspects of the artist's personality.[22] And this is just to integrate these comments with others concerning artworks.

As these cases should illuminate, our discussion does not

depend on the cases being in some way odd or unusual or problematic^[23] — although some of them can seem problematic (the better to put pressure on the philosophical claims). Further, at the center of the discussion of each are features or factors rightly considered of importance in respect of *other* artworks — in particular, of wholly traditional ones, from the center of the artistic canon. So, faced with opponents who insist on general skepticism about the rationality of artistic judgment, I cannot here demonstrate that these procedures are rational. But I have sketched how they embody roughly some of the same rational structures as feature in other discussions in aesthetic appreciation (and philosophical aesthetics more generally).

Hence institutionalism does have among its resources a place for rational engagement, hence (*pace* Sutton) it *can* explain why Warhol's *Brillo Box* had a place in the artworld. For if we ask whether the object should have been recognized as art *after* it has been, we have, in principle, (artistic) reasons why *Brillo Box* should indeed have been taken as an artwork: we have the critical vocabulary its acknowledgement generates. We could use that vocabulary to explain why the Republic did 'the right thing.' In this case, then, Sutton is wrong and the required perspective here is, roughly, that of Feyerabend's *practitioners* rather than that of philosophers.^[24] Further, the practitioners rightly make the judgment from the contemporary viewpoint.

If, on the other hand, we ask *before* the object has been "taken up" (and on the assumption that its "taking up" is problematic), the question itself has no clear sense, at least, for *us* and for two related reasons. Let us call such problematic examples "disputable cases" for short. Then, first, the concepts by which we, *after* the "taking up" understand 'art' are different from those before the "disputable case" is acknowledged, if only subtly so. Indeed, in this case, the properties of *Brillo Box* are differentially inflected by its being or not being an artwork. For we can truly say different things of it in each case. Indeed, this is just a moral from Danto's gallery of indiscernibles: artworks and 'real things' may have different properties, even when we might mistake one for the other.^[25] So the question of whether it should be an artwork cannot, in the imagined, problematic case, simply be resolved say, by reference to the properties of the object since the precise nature of these properties is simultaneously up for grabs. Second, the 'dispute,' however brief, in respect of our "disputable case" should be seen as a clash of views of what art is, of what counts as art. It is rather like the disputes among scientists during a periods of *revolutionary science*,^[26] when no single paradigm for scientificity is in place. Once a resolution is reached, then the question is clear — but so is the answer! Before, we can only repeat that these are disputable cases and join in the dispute, which will be centrally a dispute in art-criticism. If a philosopher of art viewed this process from some imaginary "outside," she might conclude that the two positions were actually incommensurable, passing one another by.^[27] But this is one limit on abstract modeling, for this case *is* resolved in practice and we would be foolish to dismiss the resolution as somehow *irrational* when this is all the rationality there is here! A parallel with legal cases might be informative too. They arrive at resolutions but, since full

evidence is lacking, the conclusion is not compelled in the manner imagined by some scientists and some logicians.[\[28\]](#)

Can institutional judgments — those of the Republic of Art — be wrong? To reply, we should first clarify where such a question fits into our more general picture. We saw that one concern was that our account of art avoid the ‘unintended artist.’ Following Terry Diffey, our response here required that being an artist involves *self-election* to the Republic of Art; or, if this is different, a *self-election* process of one’s work as an artwork. Our other concern must avoid “wishing makes it so,” and (as we have seen) our strategy here stressed the activity of the Republic of Art that putative artworks must be *other-acclaimed* by the Republic.

5. Rationality and Institutional Debate

In this context, can the Republic of Art be wrong? Now such a question will not usually arise for self-election: there, something is *presented* to the Republic. But what of the other kind of case, and especially in its strongest form, one denying art-status? Well, a particular judgment of the Republic of Art, say, one which fails to other-acclaim work **Y**, can indeed be taken by art critics at some later time to be wrong, and correctly. This is as we expect from the practitioners’ perspective on works. Similarly, philosophers of art will recognize that, at the earlier time, the judgment on work **Y** was right: it was the judgment of the Republic of Art on that work. If events or changes in artistic concepts or artistic sensibility reverse the conclusion *later*, that is formally irrelevant *now*. For, now, we have only the reasons, concepts, insights, traditions, and so on of *now*.

It is worth expanding this case a little to sketch a simplified example in more detail. For the Republic of Art is not *unitary* and, at a particular time, there might be those waiting for *posterity’s* “judgment” on their artworks, and those actively engaged in the Public Relations exercise to change taste. So there are lots of voices here, not necessarily in agreement. Notice, though, that such cases will be the exception rather than the rule: that most judgments of the Republic of Art are never (seriously) challenged in this way in practice.

Imagine, therefore, a revolutionary style of easel painting, which is self-elected by a particular painter, Jones, and her colleagues, but rejected by the Republic of Painting. Jones’ work is turned down by all the major galleries. It is even rejected from the Radicals Exhibition of that year and, when seen in a small gallery, roundly panned by art critics. Jones herself is aggrieved at this treatment. What galls her especially is that, being a keen historian of art, Jones knows that similar fates have befallen Monet, Van Gogh, and so on. Further, Jones knows of cases where judgments of the Republic of Painting, especially its positive judgments on some of her peers, have been bizarre and eventually exposed as such. She is convinced that the Republic of Painting is wrong about her work, but she decides to wait for the judgment of posterity.

Now Jones is here a member of the Republic of Painting under one heading — as an art historian — but not (presently) as a artist. So her case already recognizes diversity within the Republic of Painting. Then Jones thinks that the “final”

judgment is mistaken, that the specific judgments are wrong. And that really means what reflection on Monet, van Gogh, and so on has taught her: that even great art, which theirs undoubtedly is (and she takes hers to be), can remain unacclaimed. So she waits for posterity to right the wrong (as she sees it), as it did in these other cases!

Her position here grants the force of the judgments of the Republic of Painting in *other cases*, in particular, in respect of Monet and van Gogh. So she is not here disputing the *mechanism* but thinking that it operated in a faulty way in her case. Perhaps, thinking of legal parallels, she takes this to be a travesty of justice.

However, the Friends of Jones (her official support group) take a more aggressive line here. They are the ones who, in the model, argued *for* the art-status of Jones' easel paintings, but who lost the argument. And, like many cases in law,^[29] the substance of the conclusion then was a *fact* — that so-and-so did the murder, or that Jones' painting is not an artwork.^[30] But the Friends of Jones think there has been a miscarriage of justice in this case. They think that the Republic of Painting is presently dominated by a bunch of fogies with no real artistic sensibility. So they set out to change the taste of the Republic of Painting or, what may come to the same thing, to change its contemporary membership. They use their influence to get Jones' work seen (speaking privately to friendly gallery-owners just before Jones arrives with her work, and so on). They write articles for learned journals praising Jones' virtuosity, creativity, mastery of the brush-stroke. And, while many of the articles are turned down (most editors are consenting members of the Republic of Painting), enough are published to cause a bit of a stir. The Friends of Jones even manage to get a painting by Jones a "product placement" in the background in a major motion picture; and, as a result, a small arts television programme is made about Jones' painting.

If the Friends of Jones achieve that much, it seems right to say that the Republic of Painting is now in conflict about the status of Jones' work: that work can no longer simply be shrugged off. So now we have a version of the Republic of Art "coming to a conclusion," here, two conclusions, with as yet no resolution. For we can also imagine articles, television programs, and the like mounted to show that Jones is no artist at all but, perhaps, just a jumped-up graphic designer. Still, at this stage it seems more likely that a "new vote" in the Republic of Painting might acknowledge Jones as a minor artist. At the least, such a case is arguable in ways the Friends of Jones know how to deploy.

As a third voice, consider the perspective from another Republic: in particular, from the Republic of Film. Suppose Smith, the director who ultimately chose or agreed to put Jones' painting in his movie, decides to write about the case, extolling the virtues of at least that one work. Now this is another kind of conflict. Smith has a voice all right, but not in the Republic of Painting. (He is not, as Derek Jarman was, a member of both Republics.) His ideas are taken up vociferously by film fans but, in the nature of the beast, only a few of those primarily interested in painting read the learned journal to which Smith contributes. So there is another kind of

conflict here, still within the greater Republic of Art, but, as it were, between constituent Republics with the Republic of Film clashing with that of Painting. Again, perhaps this intervention leads yet more people to look at paintings by Jones. And guided by the writings of the Friends of Jones and of Smith, the film director, some learn both to see and to value her works. That is, they come to see her works as valuable, at least as minimally valuable in ways required for art-status.^[31] For they come to see (a) how her work is both put forward as art worthy of appreciation and not time-wasting for that audience for art and (b) how it has been self-elected by Jones and other-acclaimed by members of the Republic of Painting (such as the Friends of Jones) and by members of other Republics, such as the Republic of Film. Some of these, of course, now want to say that Jones' work, while art, is *bad* art. But in that eventuality, they do so by drawing on the other published articles; they give reasons why the normal presumption of artistic *value* fails in this case. Yet others, realizing that the Republic of Painting is in conflict, deny that Jones' work is art since, as they point out, it fails the crucial test here by lacking the appropriate institutional action. As this last group might put it, all the institutional action described so far is still not sufficient.

Now we could begin to describe, say, the *tone* of the critical articles written about Jones. Perhaps it was because the negative ones were so hugely negative while the positive ones were only lukewarm that the last group mentioned were able to deny the art-status of Jones' work. But further elaboration is unnecessary. We have illustrated the plurality of voices, together with one way (among many) in which they might be resolved.

6. Conclusion

As this extended example shows, the resolution here is one for rational debate. But the outcome is unclear, thus *institutional action* should not be seen as an unproblematic notion. In particular, whether or not the Republic of Art has other-acclaimed a particular work may sometimes (although less often than its critics assume) be difficult to resolve in practice, as it was for Jones' work by the end of the example. But this does nothing to impugn the *logical* model of institutionalism here. As with an account of the logical role of *competent judges*,^[32] the structure of the argument here reflects the contours without requiring 'all-or-nothing' compliance.

First, the sorts of changes for which Jones waited (patiently?) and the Friends of Jones initiated should be seen as a small change in artistic sensibility, which is one reason they are contentious. For what is suggested is, roughly, a re-writing of the history of easel painting, as the original fogies had it, in such a way as to find a place, however humble, for Jones. This is best understood as modifying, however slightly, the connections between key concepts. Now we can see **X** as a precursor of Jones and, perhaps that will even allow us to say something different about the work of **X**.^[33] As that view of the history of easel painting becomes more widespread, to the extent it does, others will readily or immediately see Jones' works a certain way in line with that history and as art, although that will be one realization, not two!

Moreover, we could infer something about the state of the artworld prior to the case of Jones if only we knew enough of the detail, if we knew "the lay of the artworld."^[34] For to the degree that the arguments for Jones succeeded in changing taste, there was a 'state of the artworld' which permitted it. Indeed, this is unsurprising. We could expect there to be sociological congruences here. We might reflect on (a) the factors which led Jones to paint as she did and (b) the factors in the artworld that led her work ultimately to be acknowledged, first by the Friends and then more generally. And that will allow others to locate her work within traditions of craftsmanship, of restoration, of presentation, and so on; that is, within the institutional panoply of the Republic of Art.

Endnotes

[1] Compare Diffey, Terry, *The Republic of Art and Other Essays* (New York: Peter Lang, 1991). My exposition follows Terry Diffey's on many points, especially in respect of the two-stage character of institutional action. I expanded my points in a paper "The Republic of Terry Diffey," presently unpublished, to the British Society of Aesthetics national conference, Oxford, Sept. 2003.

[2] See, for instance, McFee, Graham, *Understanding Dance* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 71-86.

[3] At the least, this connects art-making, art-understanding and social forces, which in turn allows what Levinson, Jerrold (*The Pleasures of Aesthetics: Philosophical Essays*. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), p. 152, p. 151) has called "an intentional-historical characterization of art," recognizing an "... intentional connection to preceding art, however provisionally identified."

[4] Compare McFee, *Understanding Dance*, pp. 104-105.

[5] Dickie, George, *Art and The Aesthetic: An Institutional Analysis* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1974).

[6] Dickie, George, *The Art Circle* (New York: Haven Publications, 1984). See also McFee, Graham, review of Dickie, *The Art Circle*, *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 26, 1 (1986), 72-74.

[7] See Dickie, George, "A Tale of Two Artworlds" ed. Rollins, Mark, *Danto and His Critics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), pp. 73-78; "An Artistic Misunderstanding," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 51, 1 (1993), 69-70; "Wollheim's Dilemma," *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 38, 2 (1998), 127-135; "Art and Value," *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 40, 2(2000), 228-241; "The Institutional Theory of Art," ed. Carroll, Noël, *Theories of Art Today* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000), pp. 93-108.

[8] Quinton, Anthony, "Tragedy" in his *Thoughts and Thinkers* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1982), p. 98.

[9] It might be thought, though, that there is another place already well-established within the philosophical literature where institutional concepts are appealed to, namely in moral philosophy, where (for instance) both G. E. M. Anscombe ("On Brute Facts," in her *Ethics, Religion and Politics: Collected*

Philosophical Papers, Vol. III. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1981), p. 24) and John Searle, (*Speech Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), pp. 50-52; 190) have deployed the thought that, say, *promising* is an institutional concept. My concept differs from theirs precisely in requiring an *authoritative body*, see below.

[10] There is a close parallel with the concept 'machine,' for what we say are machines, for example, just are machines, at least if we can tell a convincing story. But it is generally accepted that not every Tom, Dick or Harriette is competent to judge on matters mechanical. See, for example, Storer, T., "Miniac: World's Smallest Electronic Brain," *Analysis*, 22, (1962), 151-152, where a penny with "Yes" written on paper glued to one face and "No" on paper on the other face is argued to be an electric computer.

[11] One way to formulate, say, Thomas Kuhn's philosophy of science would then be that Kuhn insists both that central scientific properties are institutional and that such institutional properties are genuine; they are not to be dismissed as merely reflecting "mob psychology" (Kuhn, Thomas, *The Essential Tension*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 321). Here, my case amounts to saying that an understanding of institutional concepts *from aesthetics* may then allow us to consider the status of other cases, and to highlight Kuhn as someone whose work suggests such a reading.

[12] See Baker, Gordon & Hacker, Peter, *Language, Sense and Nonsense* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), pp. 272-273, especially note.

[13] Sharpe, R. A., *Philosophy of Music: An Introduction* (Chesham: Acumen, 2004), pp. 36-37.

[14] Sharpe explains institutionalism as follows: "*A work of art is an artefact presented to the public for their appreciation by a representative of the art-world or an agent for it,*" p. 36 (original italics) This seems to me at least a first approximation to an acceptable institutionalist account of art.

[15] I would also urge some standard epistemic constraints here, in particular, a principle of total evidence: "... [in] a given knowledge situation, the total evidence available must be taken as the basis for determining degrees of confirmation." Carnap, Rudolf, *Logical Foundations of Probability*, (London Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1950), p. 211. This operates theoretically, to identify an "idealization:" "... the requirement of total evidence ... [compels] us to construct all applications of inductive logic in a fictitious simplified form" (p. 208). That is, we introduce the 'fiction' that *we have* all the relevant evidence. But, practically, applying this principle permits a defeasible, grounded working practice: the evidence we have is the relevant evidence — we do not introduce skepticism simply on the basis of the *possibility* of lacking some relevant information. And that permits us to modify our response when this assumption turns out not to be true.

[16] Some feminist writers have rightly suggested that quilt-making, typically the province of women, might be a good example here.

[17] Sutton, Tiffany, *The Classification of Visual Art: A Philosophical Myth and Its History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 4.

[18] See McFee, Graham, "The Artistic and the Aesthetic," *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 45, 4 (2005), 368-387.

[19] Danto, Arthur, *Embodied Meanings: Critical Essays and Aesthetic Meditations* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1994).

[20] This comment was offered in a radio programme in the UK about André: see also André's comment (reported in Peter Fuller, *Beyond the Crisis in Art* (London: Writers & Readers, 1981) p. 115, that his work was " ... in the line of Bernini, Rodin, Brancusi, and then I would put my name at the end of that line". He continues "... the *Venus de Milo* would just be a stone woman if nobody knew about sculpture"(p.117).

[21] Danto, Arthur, *Transfiguration of the Commonplace* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), p. 1, for this use of "real thing."

[22] The case here was suggested to me by comments from Bill Gatherer. I am of course responsible for the cast they are given here.

[23] In contrast, Noël Carroll (*Beyond Aesthetics*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 83) has urged that, say, Dickie's account is primarily explanatory only of a certain class of problem cases: "George Dickie's initial version of the institutional theory of art requires something like the presupposition that Dada is the central form of artistic practice in order for its intuition pumps ... to work."

[24] Feyerabend, Paul K., *Farewell to Reason* (London: New Left Books, 1987), p. 272; also McFee, *Understanding Dance*, p. 307. The parallel here is with (a) the scientists, as practitioners, who say that Einstein is right, Newton wrong on some topic and (b) the philosophers, who find the views incommensurable.

[25] Danto, *Transfiguration of the Commonplace*, pp. 1-2; McFee, *The Artistic and the Aesthetic*, p. 372.

[26] Kuhn, Thomas, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, second edition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), pp. 65-68, pp. 201-204. On p. 84, Kuhn quotes Wolfgang Pauli: "At the moment, physics is again terribly confused. At any rate, it is too difficult for me, and I wish I had been a movie comedian ... and had never heard of physics." This is, of course, before he had in place a "... time-tested and group-licensed way of seeing"(p. 189), that is, a paradigm. Later, though, Pauli came to some framework: "Heisenberg's type of mechanics has again given me hope and joy in life"(p.84).

[27] As, indeed, Feyerabend (*Farewell to Reason*, p. 272) notes, of a parallel case.

[28] Interestingly, the impact here of Rudolf Carnap's *principle of total evidence* (1950), p. 211, is to make us content with what we have, if defeasibly. See also McFee, *Understanding Dance*, pp. 61-63.

[29] Compare Wisdom, John, *Paradox and Discovery* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1965), p. 102; Hampshire, Stuart, *Justice is Conflict* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 13-14.

[30] Note that these are facts with value dimensions!

[31] See McFee, Graham, "The Logic of Appreciation in the Republic of Art," *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 29 (1989), 230-238.

[32] Compare McFee, Graham, "Wittgenstein, Performing Art and Action" in Allen, R. & Turvey, M., eds., *Wittgenstein, Theory and the Arts* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 104-108.

[33] See McFee, Graham, "Art, Understanding and Historical Character: A Contribution to Analytic Aesthetics," ed., Mey, K., *Art in the Making: Aesthetics, Historicity and Practice* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005), pp. 71-93.

[34] Carrol, *Beyond Aesthetics*, p.91.

Graham McFee

mcfee-usa@earthlink.net

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