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Pending on Art

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Pending on Art

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Abstract[1]
Artification is mostly approached from a contextualist perspective where "art" refers to objects that are presented and appreciated within socially recognized art institutions. Artification then means that the notion of art is extended to non-art areas. Yet it can be argued that contextualism is circular, since it starts with an unquestioned assumption about what art is. Another weakness of contextualism is that by privileging theory it tends to downplay the role of creative and appreciative practices. Alternative approaches are possible, and this article explores in a preliminary way what a naturalist approach could mean for how we see art and artification processes. The naturalist approach developed here considers the arts first of all as cultural *practices* that evolve together with discourse, but where discourse is not privileged over practice. As Wittgenstein suggested, understanding (and skillfully practicing) any art is about socially mediated, long-term engagement. By analyzing the evolutionary and onto-genetic origins of art and its function in all human cultures, and by describing the criteria of art as a cluster, naturalism opens the border between art and non-art. With naturalism, we can ask whether some of the changes described as artification allow us to recognize art outside institutionally legitimized art worlds. It allows us to ask to what extent something is art; it provides a perspective where phenomena can be studied case by case; and it re-introduces the relevance of evaluative criteria in the process of identifying or recognizing art.

Key Words
artification, contextualism, naturalism, theories of art, Wittgenstein

1. Introduction

'Artification' suggests that things that have formerly not been regarded as art have recently started to be seen as art. As a descriptive term, it thematizes cultural change of a kind that is closely related to aestheticization, described by Wolfgang Welsch as processes whereby "the unaesthetic is made, or understood to be, aesthetic." Welsch points out that this means different things in different contexts: beautification, stylization, virtualization and, in the epistemic sphere, giving up the search for firm foundations and accepting the relative and hermeneutic nature of our life-world.[2] Artification does not claim quite so much in terms of changes in world-views, yet it opens a wealth of questions. Some of them are about the drivers behind this development: are they commercial, educational, critical, artistic, or related to well-being and quality of life? Others are about the main areas of artification and its boundaries, if these can be identified, since a central feature of artification is that it spreads to ever new non-art areas like business, healthcare, politics, education, everyday

life, and virtually every sector of society.

The central question of this article is simpler but perhaps more fundamental: Is artification ultimately about *extending* the notion of art to non-art areas, thereby transfiguring certain objects and practices into art; or can at least some of these changes be better described as *recognizing* art in areas outside the institutionally legitimized art worlds?[3] How we answer the question has consequences for how we see art in its wider contexts of human culture and society. In contemporary theory of art, there are two main alternatives. One is contextualist and historicist, that art is a historical phenomenon that evolved in the West, and the concept cannot be applied to objects and practices of other cultures and times without distorting them. The other is naturalist, that art is a universal and central human practice though it takes different forms in different cultures.

The two alternatives differ fundamentally in how they understand art and explain its existence, while there is overlap, not unexpectedly, in the identification of what counts as art. Nonetheless, they constitute two alternative perspectives on what goes on in artification. It seems that it is the constructionist-contextualist view that has the upper hand at the moment. I am interested, however, in exploring the naturalist perspective for at least two reasons. One is to analyze the suggestion that in artification non-art is made into art or made art-like. Can this be taken for granted and what does it imply? The other is to explore what a naturalist approach means for how we see art and artification processes. That said, the exploration of the naturalist approach can only be preliminary.

As a central resource for the critical analysis and naturalist exploration I use Ludwig Wittgenstein's late work, which had a key role in Anglo-American aesthetic theory in the second half of the twentieth century. Its effect on philosophy at large is aptly called the "linguistic turn," but the overall effect on aesthetics could better be termed contextualist. It inspired philosophers and theorists to turn their attention from works of art to the networks that surround and maintain art, whether linguistic, pragmatic or institutional, past or present. Yet the full implications of Wittgenstein's thinking for aesthetics and art may not have been realized.

Two points in particular are relevant. One is that whereas Wittgenstein emphasized both how linguistic meaning is embedded in life-world contexts and language use is itself a practice, the aesthetic and artistic practices of art makers and audiences have not received enough attention. In other words, if essentialist theories made the mistake of "staring at an object,"[4] contextualist theories may have made the mistake of looking away from the object and its micro-contexts, from how artists and audiences actually engage with art. The other point is that Wittgenstein's suggestion to look at ordinary language has been somewhat neglected. There is not much reflection on what "art" means for amateur art lovers, people who have a keen interest in art without being *professionally* involved in its production or evaluation. If they emphasized the aesthetic dimension of contemporary art, what conclusions should be drawn from this? Could one say that

they have not grasped what is essential for art today? But what are the grounds of such a claim? It seems that the primacy of a certain kind of art – conceptual – has been taken for granted, and theory is dependent upon it: pending on art.

I start by introducing some distinctions that help to characterize the assumptions, perspectives, and ambitions of different types of theories of art and sketch their historical context. I then read the *Philosophical Investigations* in the spirit of an appreciative and critical dialogue and with a view to its implications for art theory. Following this, I make some points about contextualist theories, focusing on Arthur C. Danto's "artworld." Finally, I suggest how naturalism might approach contemporary artistic, art educational, and artification processes.

2. Approaching art: some rough distinctions

Artification is described as referring to "situations and processes in which something that is not regarded as art *in the traditional sense of the word* is changed into art or into something art-like."[5] Cultural change of the sort described certainly takes place in many Western societies. Nonetheless, the description of artification as an extension of art into non-art areas is also puzzling since it seems to take for granted, rather than analyze, the difference between art and non-art. One way to highlight this is to focus on the expression "traditional sense of the word." It suggests that art is a social construct consisting of a group of phenomena which members of a particular culture just *call* "art." But if this is the case, there should be no problem if they start calling something that resembles art "art." The extension of the concept grows wider and the concept itself may undergo some change, but it is a question of degree rather than of new categories. Nothing dramatic happens; there is just more art.

Art "in the traditional sense" is a vague notion with regard to the plural, even heterogeneous, character of what art has been in the last centuries, even within Western culture. Research on the history of aesthetics and the arts shows that both the boundaries of art – what objects and practices count as art at a particular time – and the suggestions about what is central to art or the arts have varied.[6] Even "the modern system of the arts"[7] contains a multitude of artistic practices and theories that sometimes conflict. Admittedly a terminological change took place in the eighteenth century from arts in the plural to art in the singular. Larry Shiner suggests that despite the variety of practices and internal differences between the "art worlds and subworlds" of the modern fine arts system, there are shared "underlying concepts and ideals."[8] Yet within the system there are strong tendencies to broaden the field, to challenge values, concepts and ideals; to change practices and go outside institutions. In fact the very roots of modernism are more multifarious than the term "modern fine arts system" suggests.[9] One can see "artification" within that system, especially within the tradition of the *avant-garde*, where one strong tendency was to claim as art things not formerly considered art.

In many ways, actual works of art, even of art "in the traditional sense," form a group that is plural rather than

singular. There are several traditional senses rather than one, not least from the perspective of how art has been construed in discourse. Whether we want to say that the modern system of fine art is singular or plural is perhaps more a question of emphasis and perspective than of fact, since facts can be interpreted in more than one way. However, if we put a stronger emphasis on practices than has generally been done, our conclusions might be different. I explore this later on.

Let me now turn to the plurality of art theories.[10] I suggest that we can make some gross distinctions between theories with regard to their structure and aims, that is, *how* they articulate the question about what art is. What follows is meant as a helpful perspective on Western art discourse of the last quarter millennium. I suggest that theories differ not only in the characteristics and functions they claim are central to art – whether as a totality, or system, as works of art, or activities – but that they also have different epistemic bases and aims.[11] In the past two hundred and fifty years, three ways of approaching the question of what art is can be distinguished: essentialism, contextualism, and naturalism.

First, by essentialism I mean theory that seeks the key, distinguishing characteristics of art: its essence.[12] This could refer to its necessary and sufficient properties, terms used in analytic philosophy, but essentialism does not operate according to that logic. Essentialist theories of art are historically linked to the modern fine arts system, since it is here that the question of what art is arises. I suggest that while some of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century theories set out to *describe* the essential characteristics of art, as of a newly discovered species, there are also theories whose aim was to *establish* and *defend* art as a cultural practice in bourgeois society. Essentialism takes for granted that art exists and has key properties and functions which may or may not be specific to a time. The question is one of finding and naming them, not of giving a logical definition of art. Furthermore, the normative character of these theories does not result from a naïve conflation between the classificatory and evaluative sense of 'art,' since art is here as a value concept throughout.

Contextualist theories of art evolved in the second half of the twentieth century and were preoccupied with *defining* art through finding its necessary and sufficient properties. There was a new emphasis on the historical, time- and place-specific character of art: art can be defined only relative to and in a certain situation. As theorists agreed that essentialism had failed to specify the distinguishing properties of works of art, proponents of contextualist theories turned their eyes, on the one hand, to discourses and thinking about art, exemplified by Arthur C. Danto, and, on the other hand, to practices of making, presenting and appreciating art, exemplified by George Dickie. The dominant view was that art is a culturally constructed phenomenon the existence of which is contingent. The definition of art was also disconnected from evaluation.[13] Despite this, contextualist theories often take the existence of art for granted in ways that I try to indicate in section 4, below.

Finally, the third approach is *naturalism*. It is connected to a

scientific worldview that places humans within the context of nature, natural sciences, and the philosophy of nature. Naturalist theories of art are found in the early twentieth century and, with new impulses from evolutionary, cognitive, and infant research, in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.[14] They typically see art as fulfilling evolutionary and cultural functions that are necessary for a thriving society and a good life. The approach claims that art is a universal and not a uniquely Western phenomenon.[15] That art exists in all human cultures and has biological roots, as well as existential and social import, does not however mean that all art is alike, any more than cultures or languages are. The aim of naturalist theories is often *explanation*: whether of how art evolved in human prehistory; of its ontogenesis in early childhood; or of its cognitive and communicative functions. Naturalist theories are typically not naïve about the existence of art; on the contrary they are sensitive to the border areas where art arises from or touches non-art.[16] As they tend to discuss the function of art, there is an inherent normativity to the concept of art, much like in essentialism.

A further distinction will be useful as I proceed. This is one between approaching art as *objects* on the one hand and as *activities or practices*, whether productive or receptive, on the other.[17] Although essentialist theory did not exclude activities, for example, the artist in Romantic art theory, in the course of the twentieth century it increasingly focused on objects or works of art. Contextualist definitions of art discuss both artworks (objects) and the institutional practices that surround art but tend to overlook human agency at work in making and experiencing art.[18] Naturalism, in comparison, shows considerable interest in the activity of making art and the experience of art probably because it is interested in the role of art in human life.

3. Practicing language, practicing art

Wittgenstein's statement that in order to understand the meaning of a word we should look at how it is used, emphasizes how language is embedded in practices. This evidently means that the meaning of words arises in the practice of language but, in addition, Wittgenstein suggested that the practice of language (speaking) is part of other activities or life-forms.[19] This dimension has not been fully developed in contextualist or other theories of art.[20] In my view, it contributes to naturalist theory. I shall now discuss implications of Wittgenstein's thinking for our understanding of art from two angles: the idea that language is in some sense an environment or space that we inhabit; and the somewhat overlooked dimension of "play" in *Spiel*, which has usually been translated as "game."

In *Philosophical Investigations,* Wittgenstein compared language to a landscape or an old city.[21] It is obvious that these metaphors do not refer to landscape as a view or picture that we inspect but to a space in which the "draughtsman" moves. Similarly, when learning deictic terms, such as "there" or "this," what is realized is not only spatial relations outside language but a spatiality within language.[22] Therefore, we do not primarily *use* language as a tool to describe our

thoughts and our world; language rather articulates where we stand, what we are, and what we think on a more basic level. Further, as language is inseparable from our life-world at large, it articulates our world *together* with other practices or life-forms, in a relationship of co-constitution.

Regarding language as a practice, Wittgenstein observed that a child learns a language by training, not through explanation.[23] Verbal meaning is intimate; we rely on language, even live it.[24] This is not to say that linguistic meaning is innate or non-arbitrary; languages are different and words have different connotations for different people. Our mother tongue is "second nature" to us, something we trust and that is inseparable from our world, articulating it and enabling us to articulate ourselves.[25] Yet while our thoughts are dependent on language, Wittgenstein showed that they are not identical with it. We can cope with language even when concepts are not exactly defined, and there are cases when we can alter the rules "as we go along."[26] Such uncertainty could hardly be tolerable if language itself were the only ground of verbal communication.

Also the vocal gestures that are part of speech foreground the intimate relation between agency and meaning.[27] Wittgenstein showed us a line of nonsensical scribble and asked the reader to read it out loud as if it were a sentence. When we "read" the scribble, he suggested, we do not feel that the sounds we produce are caused by the line in the way we do when we read a normal sentence.[28] However, one might say that we establish the connection when reading the scribble. The sounds are initially contingent but, in retrospect, their connection to the scribble is constituted through our agency as we playact reading.

I now come to the second theme, namely Wittgenstein's use of *Spiel*. It can be translated as either play or game but has no single equivalent in English. Wittgenstein's original *Spiel* is translated and discussed in the English-language secondary literature mainly as game. Yet, in some passages of the *Investigations,* the aspect of play is evident. My suggestion is not that we should replace 'game' with 'play'; rather, it is important to keep the full semantic field in mind and see which meaning fits case by case. To start, there are significant differences between game and play. Play allows for more spontaneity, it is less controlled by rules, and less rational. When we play games, we do more than perform according to rules. Also, play, in general, is less competitive than games, and there is a deeper degree of interaction in play as compared to games.[29] Finally, while 'game' suggests an entity with clear borders, an object of sorts, play is more dynamic and open-ended. Play suggests *playing*: an activity.

Spiele are the central examples in Wittgenstein's exposition of family resemblances.[30] He suggested that while different games have no single shared property, there is a connecting network of properties, each of which is shared by some games rather than by all. One of his examples is a child who throws a ball against the wall. Clearly this is more about playing than a game; the activity, not a set of rules, is foregrounded. But we could think similarly of the other examples, bearing in mind Wittgenstein's emphasis on the *social* constitution of

language. If "[s]hared human behavior is the system of reference by means of which we interpret an unknown language,"[31] then language-games and life-forms can hardly be understood from a third-person perspective. Our participatory experience is crucial for understanding what is common to different *Spiele*. It is not enough, after all, to just "look and see."[32]

The dimension of *shared* human behavior may need to be better articulated if we are to fully realize the social character of meaning.[33] My suggestion is that meaning is confirmed but also established and changed in actual situations of exchange, where a certain fuzziness or flexibility of words and concepts is even necessary for new insights to arise. Intentions need to be recognized in order to become real, much like humor, the existence of which depends on its being appreciated by others. To understand a joke, we cannot just look and see; we have to share and participate in a situation. In his observations on aesthetic matters, Wittgenstein often brought up this dimension of intersubjectivity. The suggestion that "custom and upbringing have a hand in" why a style of painting is understood by some but not by all points to the importance of growing into aesthetic and artistic practices.[34]

A consequence of Wittgenstein's thought is that what something is cannot be understood by verbal means only. Language is, and has to be, in touch with a world. It is highly doubtful that we could explain what art is to someone who had no experience of similar practices. It is the participatory knowledge of life practices and agency that makes verbal communication possible. Furthermore, it must be emphasized that learning a language and becoming familiar with practices and life-foms are social processes. Language is initially shared. Even in talking to oneself "we" are involved. "How should I think" implies "how should one think," which implies "how should we think." And the meaning of utterances shifts only relative to a group of speakers; meaning has to be recognized in order to exist.

The main implication for art is that the language-game of art is much more intimately embedded in actual life-forms and practices than most contextualist theories recognize. Another thing to note is that Wittgenstein privileged actual, ordinary language use. This suggests that, in studying the language-games and life-forms of art, we should take a broad rather than a narrow view, including how the word 'art' circulates in the worlds of non-professional audiences and amateur artists rather than focusing merely on critics, theorists, professional artists' and other insiders' discourse. Much of today's theory and philosophy of art is a rather narrowly specialized language-game. 'Art' may mean something different within this game than outside it. This again actualizes the question of on what grounds we can decide which view is right, if it is only a question of discourse.

Wittgenstein's philosophy gave important impulses to aesthetics and art theory from the 1950s onwards. While theorists influenced by him may disagree on many issues, in general the linguistic turn has led to a situation where contextualism is dominant; furthermore, it is a contextualism that emphasizes discourses and thinking rather than

practices. In theorizing, art is looked upon from an observer's rather than a participant's perspective.[35]

4. The philosophy game of art

During the first half of the twentieth century essentialist theories of art turned increasingly towards the work of art, thus marginalizing production and reception in their attempts to find out what distinguishes art from non-art. But this kind of theory reached an impasse as various art movements seemed to constantly challenge and even falsify the definitions that had been proposed. This prepared the ground for turning the attention from the art objects towards their contexts. Wittgenstein's late philosophy was of crucial importance in this development.[36] The general outcome was that philosophers interested in how art can be defined turned from works of art towards contexts and tradition. This way of approaching art has since been dominant.

The most influential theoretical contribution was Arthur C. Danto's introduction of the artworld.[37] Danto's own understanding of this concept is basically philosophical and historical. 'Artworld' refers to the prevailing way of understanding art in a particular epoch. The artworld is inseparably part of art and is an explanatory concept:

> To see something as art at all demands nothing less than this, an atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of the history of art. Art is the kind of thing that depends for its existence upon theories … the artworld is logically dependent upon theory.[38]

In distinction to Wittgenstein's model, where language and other practices are interdependent, works of art are here unidirectionally dependent on theory. As B. R. Tilghman wrote, Danto's artworld "is entirely a linguistic entity made up of all the things we say, the theories, interpretations, and descriptions of art available to us."[39] Although what exactly "theory" means may to some extent be open, the emphasis seems to be on disciplinary expertise and conscious reflection. The "*art* world" is different from the ordinary one; it is a world of "*interpreted things.*"[40] Another notable feature is that the question of what art is is formulated as a question about which *objects,* or things, should be included in the category. This makes the definition exclusive; artworks are strictly separated from non-art objects. With respect to the tradition of artistic and aesthetic theory, this strategy narrows the approach by neglecting theories that have focused on creation or reception. Mimesis or expression, to name but two traditional core concepts of essentialist approaches, are ambiguous in this respect; they can refer to production, the object, or appreciation.

Danto's constructionist theory singles out reflection as a central feature of contemporary art. But, at the same time, it operates on the assumption of a certain kind of art typical of the art scene and markets of international metropoles, most notably New York. In this respect, there is a lack of reflection. The claim that "the definition of art has become part of the nature of art in a very explicit way"[41] makes sense against the background of dominant art discourses of the visual arts of the twentieth century. But does this yield a representative

image of all the art even of that time? More importantly, does the theory even address this matter? Problems that need more thorough discussion are related to discourse: to the discrepancies between the dominant art discourse and art practices; to the sometimes polemical character of art discourse; and to the circularity of art theory.[42]

Another problem is related to the aesthetic dimension of art. Danto deemed aesthetic properties irrelevant for whether a thing is art or not, which is slightly paradoxical as he also emphasized that a work of art "embodies its meaning."[43] Yet aesthetic considerations remain paramount in discussions and decisions about admissions to art schools, in art criticism, and in decisions about funding and acquisition of works to collections. This is true for all art forms and in professional and amateur contexts alike. Assessed within this larger frame, there is circularity and limitations to how well contextualist theory reflects practice.[44]

There exists yet another interpretation of the artworld that, on the face of it, deals exactly with practices. This is the sociologically inclined tradition inspired by Danto but developed by George Dickie and others.[45] Here, the art world (or worlds) is understood as a set of institutions that organize the production and reception of art. However, this research does not look very much into what actually takes place in individual and social processes of making and appreciating art.

The linguistic turn in aesthetics meant a departure from essentialist definitions and their alleged focus on the properties of a work of art towards the way we speak about art, but not towards the practices whereby we engage with it. On the whole, it seems that contextualist theory is unable to answer in a more holistic way questions about the role and character of art in contemporary society. Perhaps it does not aim to do so, its context being limited in advance. In a discussion about artification, this limitation is a weakness since artification draws attention precisely to wider contexts. My hunch is that a naturalist theory can better account for present changes in the arts; at least it does not *prima facie* deny the artistic relevance of phenomena outside the established art world.

5. The naturalist perspective: art and non-art in the borderland

What if art is not just a culturally contingent set of traditions but has a natural basis as well? I am not claiming that it is *only* natural; rather, I suggest that a contextualist and relativist understanding is insufficient. I would now like to suggest how naturalism can engage with practices that exist on the fringes of established art institutions and what it means for our interpretation of artification. But first I want to make some additional theoretical points.

As mentioned above, the naturalist approach is connected to a scientific and broadly evolutionary worldview. Rather than deciding in detail the contents of any theory, this is the frame within which human culture, including art, is seen, much as a Christian worldview framed classical German aesthetics. In the naturalist perspective, the creation of art, not just culture in the broad sense, is typical for human beings. Evolutionary

naturalism argues that aesthetic and artistic, or proto-artistic, activities added to the chances of survival of individuals and groups, and the existence of art in all human cultures is therefore no coincidence.[46] This argument about the centrality of art in human life does not implicate reductionism.[47] Aesthetic inquiry becomes reductionist only when experimental research or evolutionary hypotheses are presented as all that can and needs to be said about the topic.[48] In any naturalist or evolutionary theory of art worthy of that name, art itself must hold the center stage.

Broad naturalism, or "naturalism of second nature,"[49] is congruent with the views of thinkers such as John Dewey and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Neither considered nature as opposed to humankind or culture, and both emphasized the continuity between life and mind, psychology and philosophy, and pleasure and value.[50] As for Wittgenstein, his emphasis on the difference between natural science, on the one hand, and philosophy, morality, and the arts, on the other, seemingly makes it difficult to connect him to naturalism. Yet he is also an important resource in any effort to naturalize art without reducing its meaning and complexity. Wittgenstein showed how grasping the meaning and nuances of art involves a tacit knowing that we grow into through participating in a culture.[51] In this understanding, art and the aesthetic are areas where many things are shared and pointed to through language, but essential qualities and meanings escape prosaic formulation.

The naturalist approach gives equal attention to artistic activities and works of art, and it starts by looking at art in the contexts of human life rather than within an art world that is separate from the everyday life-world. Contemporary naturalist theories also emphasize the difference between the arts in different cultures. The main idea is that art exists in all cultures, not that it is always of a particular form. Dutton gave a list of twelve criteria that, taken together, indicate that something is art or close to art.[52] Some of these are qualities of works, whether physical pieces or performances; some characterize the reception of art (criticism, traditions, and institutions); others indicate the possibility of a particular kind of experience that is pleasurable and imaginative and holds intellectual challenge. Dissanayake emphasized the emotional, social, and transcendental functions of art.[53] Contemporary naturalist theories of art thus emphasize rather than downplay art's reflective, existential, and social dimensions.

A major asset of naturalism is that it enables us to handle the question of whether something is art in a non-exclusive way. Instead of a separating borderline between art and non-art, it establishes a border area that is open on each side and mediates the relationship between things that are clearly art and those that are clearly not art. It allows the existence of a large group of phenomena with art-typical properties and non-art properties. In a naturalist perspective, the phenomena of artification belong primarily in this borderland.

Let me now briefly sketch how naturalism might deal with some areas of artification, starting with tendencies in contemporary art and then moving to areas that are primarily

not art but where art has been introduced either in the form of practices or as a concept. As these areas are primarily about bringing art into social contexts or transforming processes through art, my emphasis will be on the quality of engagement and the level of participation rather than on properties of art objects. This emphasis on embeddedness and relationships, whether of art to contexts or of audiences and artists to art, is in line with Wittgenstein's idea that forms of expression are intrinsically linked with life-forms, with specific cultural contexts.

There is a wide range of phenomena and practices of art in the present, ranging from traditional art forms, such as the novel, oil painting, and classical music, to more recent and often performance- rather than object-centered art forms, such as performance art, community art, or improvisation theater, to name just a few. The latter have challenged earlier views of art in many ways. Activist, environmental, and community art have extended the domain of art by introducing art in non-art contexts and merging it with activities that are not art. What has been radical is not the conquering of new physical spaces so much as the way art has touched upon everyday life and work. In dialogical or relational art, the artist may invite the audience into a process where the responsibility and authorship of the work is shared, one consequence being that the work is more of a process, performance, or duration than a fixed object. Art may take on a political role in new ways and also operate from within the institutional spaces of politics. In a discussion of artification, it is important to remember that these tendencies have evolved over time and from within the art world, already beginning in the avant-garde of the early twentieth century.[54] Probably because of this their status as art, although discussed and seen by some as problematic, has not been seriously challenged by theorists.[55]

Art education, in many of its present forms, comes close to process-oriented or relational art. Today art education comprises not just educating people into practicing the arts or appreciating art but also the use of artistic or arts-based methods in various contexts of education, social work, healthcare, or business, sometimes but not always with predefined therapeutic or educational goals and often not only with people who are socially marginalized or have special needs.[56] Artists are often involved in these projects but similar methods are used by persons who are not professional artists. Whenever we speak about art education, it seems evident that the object of that activity is art, whether the activity is teaching appreciation or making art. This leaves open the question how valuable it is as art. Here we can note that, since the naturalist cluster criteria of art are evaluative, naturalism brings back normativity and aesthetics into the center of art theory.[57] Similar criteria can be used in discussing how to look at and analyze instances of artification. The procedure would be to start by looking closely at the phenomenon: what it is and how it functions in its context, and then reflect upon whether it is a weak or strong case of art or perhaps not art at all.

Before looking more closely at some cases, it should be noted that institutional criteria no longer apply. First, the question of

whether the maker of art is a professional or an amateur is not relevant. Art can be made by people who have not been part of the publicly recognized art worlds, such as theaters, the film industry, music production, or art schools. On the other hand, naturalism emphasizes that art is a social, historical, collective enterprise, and in this it differs from the romantic idea of art as springing directly from the expressive needs of an individual. While naturalism broadens the sphere of art-making outside a circle of professionals, it does not suggest that anyone can become an artist instantly, without some training and context. Yet if humans have an inclination to make art, we can expect that it evolves in different places and various ways, including outside the institutional art worlds.

Health care and social work are areas where several art projects have been launched in the Nordic countries in recent decades. Art and culture are believed to have good effects on well-being and empowerment, and there is research to support this.[58] The best way to understand the potential of art in such contexts might be to highlight individual projects. The Finnish actor Jussi Lehtonen toured with a play based on Shakespeare's sonnets of love to social and healthcare institutions during 2006–2010.[59] The reception was mostly warm, the identification strong, and the response direct even when some of the audience did not understand the play. This indicates that the capacity to communicate through art, to share feelings, and to respond is partly independent of our rational capacities, which is what naturalism would suggest. The universal and recognizable theme of love made it easy to relate to the play, which met the existential challenge of dealing with central human themes.[60] In addition, the performance was a means for some members of the audience to reactivate their earlier relationship to art.

There is a wealth of other projects introducing art in healthcare institutions, from concerts to story-crafting and hospital clowns. Qualities that seem to be present in such situations include the sharing and articulation of feeling (individual or collective); possibilities of individual expression, recognition, and achievement; imaginative experience; and even transcendence. It is useful to remember that for the most part we do not know what goes on in the audience's mind. However, the naturalist recognition of proto-aesthetic and -artistic agency in early childhood, and the claim that art is deeply embedded in our mental structure gives more weight to such experiences than an intellectual understanding of art which assumes that the route to art necessarily passes through theory.

In educational contexts, such as schools and museums, art may be introduced for its own sake to give people access to art but also in order to increase social well-being or improve learning.[61] It seems that when the instrumental function becomes dominant, there is a risk that the artistic part diminishes. This may not be intentional. Rather, it might be caused by streamlining the arts-based methods with the result that they can no longer fully address the individual and contextual complexity of a situation. The more fixed the method is, the less it gives room for participating individuals to influence and actively form what takes place. Although the

uses of art are manifold, its potential in institutional settings seems to be linked to its very strangeness, the fact that it represents a different way of thinking and being as compared to the ordinary. In addition, the duration and continuity of projects are also important, as reflective and creative engagement takes time to develop.

The audiences of art have not been much discussed by art theory. Yet the ultimate reason why art institutions exist in contemporary society is that people enjoy art: they visit exhibitions, buy books, go to the cinema, and dwell on their experiences.[62] This fundamental human interest in the arts gives private and public funders reason to support the arts. Art is not maintained arbitrarily; there are active art audiences with appreciative skills. One consequence of the cross-over from art to non-art contexts is that the audience increasingly encounters works that are made by artists but do not wear the label art. This may lower the threshold for considering works that do not come from the art world to be art. The naturalist perspective permits us to think that in encountering an arresting piece of graffiti or a virtuoso storyteller, we may legitimately recognize this as an instance of art, or almost art, as a skillful, imaginatively rich achievement that calls for a reflective response that may be rewarding. In pondering whether something is art, we usually do not invoke theories of the art world; rather, we recall our previous experiences of art and dwell on the aesthetic qualities of the object. Such a response may arise in any context, and the outcome can be positive or negative. In either case, we rely on aesthetic judgment and argument that are informed by a socially and pragmatically constituted understanding of art rather than just a discursive one. For naturalism, the difference between seeing something as art and giving it the status of art is not crucial. If an artifact is worth seeing as art, then we may have good reason to say that it is art.

My intention in the foregoing has not been to deny that artification, or the open borderland between art and non-art, can be problematic for art. Applying the term 'art' without caution can backfire on art by suggesting that it is everywhere and something anyone can do. This is not the naturalist view. In addition, art is sometimes introduced in inappropriate contexts or for inappropriate reasons, as when a company planning to fire part of the staff invites an improvisation theater group in order to make things more pleasant.[63]
 This is worlds apart from the potentially positive effects of long-term engagement with the arts for fostering creative thinking in business or science.[64] In addition to its obvious unethical character, the problem with the example is that the project remained separate, even positively irrelevant to its context, disconnected in a way that would rather hinder engagement and experience. The question of whether we should call something art is, however, also political. Often to grant a piece the status of art or a person the status of artist is to increase their cultural standing. On the other hand, the reasons to keep the gates of the art world shut do not always stem from a concern for quality; they may also arise from a concern about prestige and money.[65]

Naturalism does not offer a univocal answer to what 'artification' means. It suggests that, among the phenomena

covered by this term, some may indeed be cases of calling non-art art. In other cases, introducing art may lead to a situation where it takes hold and starts to grow. This does not transform a non-art practice into art but it may secure a space for art or something art-like within that practice. In a third group of cases, there might be recognition that art of some kind is already in place. Naturalism suggests that, however we want to see these cases, they are about more than a change of terminology. The understanding of what art is may always be in a state of change if novelty and creativity are among its central features.[66] The fear that art dissolves into the everyday is unfounded from a naturalist understanding, since its starting point is that the specificity of art is a given, although at the same time relative to culture. Art is not independent of economic pressure, political decisions, social structures and educational resources, but it is resistant to them.

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Endnotes

[1] A first version of this paper was presented in the Philosophy seminar at the NUI Galway in September 2011. I thank participants of the seminar and especially Paul Crowther for comments and suggestions, and the Academy of Finland for a two-month grant that helped me to focus on this research.

[2] Wolfgang Welsch, *Undoing Aesthetics*, trans. Andrew Inkpin (London: Sage, 1997), pp. 7-8. German original: *Grenzgänge der Ästhetik* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1996); pp. 20-21.

[3] On the recognition of art, see Denis Dutton, "A Naturalist Definition of Art," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 64, 3 (2006), 367-377; ref. on 368 and *passim*.

[4] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophische Untersuchungen. Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, P. M. S. Hacker and Joachim Schulte; revised fourth edition by P. M. S. Hacker and Joachim Schulte (Malden, Oxford and Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2009); ref. I § 38. References are henceforth given with the abbreviation PI and paragraph. I used the German original but made comparisons to the English translation when needed.

[5] See the webpage *Artification and its impact on art*; *About

artification, http://www.artification.fi/artification.html; italics added.

[6] See, for example, Larry Shiner, *The Invention of Art: A Cultural History* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2001).

[7] This notion was coined by P. O. Kristeller, "The Modern System of the Arts: A Study in the History of Aesthetics," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 12 (1951), 496-527 and 13 (1952), 17-46.

[8] Shiner, *Invention*, 11. The "artist" is one example of an underlying idea.

[9] Tom Sandqvist, *Ett svunnet Europa: Om modernismens glömda rötter* [A lost Europe: On the forgotten roots of Modernism]; (Stockholm: Symposion, 2009).

[10] Not all of them are theories in any strong sense of the term, but they do suggest what the key characteristics of art are and what distinguishes art from non-art. For a discussion of the status of aesthetic theory and an analysis of the debate, see B. R. Tilghman, *But is it Art?: The Value of Art and the Temptation of Theory* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell,1984), ref. chapters 1 and 2.

[11] They are, in other words, different ways of ordering the world. See Michel Foucault, *Les mots et les choses: Une archéologie des sciences humaines* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966) and *L'archéologie du savoir* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1969). As the types I describe are ideal, actual theories can share features with more than one type, and there is overlap in what they see as central to art.

[12] G. W. F. Hegel, Arthur Schopenhauer, Friedrich Nietzsche, Benetto Croce, R. G. Collingwood, Clive Bell all belong in this group. Essentialism is often taken to imply a belief in the *unchanging* essence of phenomena such as woman, art, or nature. But essentialism need not imply this; see, for example, Christine Battersby, *The Phenomenal Woman: Feminist Metaphysics and the Pattern of Identity* (London: Polity Press and New York: Routledge, 1998).

[13] As George Dickie observed, the classificatory sense of 'art' is different from the evaluative one. For an update of Dickie's theory, see "The Institutional Theory of Art," in Noël Carroll, ed., *Theories of Art Today* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press 2000), pp. 93-108, ref. p. 97.

[14] In this group we find David Hume, Yrjö Hirn, John Dewey, Ellen Dissanayake, Denis Dutton and others. For the relevance of infant research, see Steven Malloch and Colwyn Trevarthen, eds., *Communicative Musicality: Exploring the Basis of Human Companionship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

[15] See, for example, Denis Dutton, "But They Don't Have Our Concept of Art," in Noël Carroll, ed., *Theories of Art Today* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press 2000), pp. 217-238.

[16] See Dutton, "Naturalist Definition," pp. 375-376.

[17] I do not suggest that these are opposed. In fact, I believe art characteristically involves producing a work, only such works need not have tangible, static form; see Pauline von Bonsdorff, "Aesthetics and *Bildung,*" forthcoming in *Diogenes*; or, on "aesthetic agency," "Aesthetics of childhood – phenomenology and beyond," Fabian Dorsch, ed., *Proceedings of the European Society for Aesthetics*, 1 (2009), http://proceedings.eurosa.org/?p=12.

[18] This is even somewhat paradoxical, given the widespread awareness that aesthetic and artistic properties emerge only when works of art are perceived.

[19] PI I, § 23.

[20] There are exceptions, such as Tilghman, *But Is It Art?*; or Simo Säätelä, *Aesthetics as Grammar: Wittgenstein and Post-Analytic Philosophy of Art* (Uppsala: Uppsala University, Department of Aesthetics 1998).

[21] PI I, pp. 3-4 and § 18.

[22] PI I, § 9.

[23] PI I, § 5.

[24] This is closely related to our "perceptual faith" in the world of perception. See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception* (Paris: Gallimard,1992/1945), pp. 343-4; and similar ideas in Wittgenstein; PI I, § 575.

[25] Wittgenstein points to the intimate connection between names and faces, or between reading a word and hearing its sound to oneself, PI I, § 171.

[26] PI I, §§ 71 and 83.

[27] The German expression is "*klangliche Gebärde,*" PI I, § 527 *passim*. Such gestures foreground the aesthetic and affective dimension of language.

[28] PI I, § 169.

[29] When children play there is often no aim of winning (although power may be negotiated), even no pre-articulated aim at all, only a decision to play, and perhaps a theme. For a more developed comparison of children's play and art, see my "Play as Art and Communication: Gadamer and Beyond," in Seppo Knuuttila, Erkki Sevänen and Risto Turunen, eds., *Aesthetic Culture* (Helsinki: Maahenki, 2005), pp. 257-285.

[30] PI I, §§ 66- 67.

[31] PI I, § 206; also § 96.

[32] An expression favored by Wittgenstein. On the importance of participatory experience for understanding, see Béla Szabados, "Wittgenstein the Musical: Notes toward an Appreciation," *Canadian Aesthetics Journal*, 10 (2004).

[33] PI I, § 340 "One cannot guess how a word functions. One has to *look* at its application and learn from that." In § 358 Wittgenstein is at a loss over the senselessness of private

intentions while recognizing them as "a dream of our language."

[34] Painting is mentioned by Wittgenstein in PI II, §168. On music, see Szabados, "Wittgenstein."

[35] Artistic research has challenged this view but has not yet really affected the debate about the definition of art.

[36] For an overview, see Noël Carroll, "Introduction," *Theories of Art Today*, pp. 3-24: ref. pp. 3-15 or Tilghman, *But Is It Art?*, pp. 46-63.

[37] Danto invented the artworld as a response to an exhibition with works by Andy Warhol in the Stable Gallery in New York in 1964, where Warhol showed works that were virtually indistinguishable from their real, non-art counterparts. Danto surmised that what distinguished art were not any perceivable features, but being part of the artworld. See Arthur C. Danto, "The artworld," *The Journal of Philosophy* 61 (1964), 571-584; *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace. A Philosophy of Art* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981).

[38] Danto, *Transfiguration*, p. 135.

[39] Tilghman, *But Is It Art?* p. 63.

[40] Danto, *Transfiguration*, p. 35.

[41] *Ibid.*, p. 56.

[42] Particularly in the philosophy of art the same or similar examples, such as Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* and Andy Warhol's *Brillo boxes*, tend to be used again and again. Danto himself cannot be accused of not knowing the artworld that he writes about, which is that of New York.

[43] Danto, *Transfiguration*, chapter 4. In his later work Danto has mentioned the possibility that aesthetics plays a role after all, but he does not specify how this affects his earlier view, and he still contends that in "the present period" "nothing that meets the eye reveals the difference" between art and non-art. *The Abuse of Beauty: Aesthetics and the Concept of Art* (Chicago and La Salle: Open Court, 2003), p. 17.

[44] Similar problems are attached to Jerrold Levinson's more recent historicist theory, see "Defining Art Historically," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 19 (1979), 232-250; "Refining Art Historically," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 47 (1989), 21-33; "Extending Art Historically," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 51 (1993), 411-423; and *Contemplating Art: Essays in Aesthetics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), pp. 13-26.

[45] See for example George Dickie, *Art and the Aesthetic: An Institutional Analysis* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974). Howard Becker adopted the concept art world but started to use it, wisely, in the plural; *Art Worlds* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

[46] See especially Denis Dutton, *The Art Instinct: Beauty, Pleasure, and Human Evolution* (Oxford: Oxford University

Press, 2009); also Ellen Dissanayake, *What is Art For?* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988) and *Homo Aestheticus: Where Art Comes from and Why* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1992).

[47] Reductionist naturalism tends to explain away the aesthetic altogether. As Sami Pihlström points out, one problem is that it conceives "of nature simply as the realm of natural law and seek[s] to reduce human beings' conceptual powers…to this realm." *Naturalizing the Transcendental: A Pragmatic View* (Amherst: Humanity Books, 2003), p. 206. Reductionist naturalism is more common in discussions about beauty and aesthetic values than with art; see, for example, Nancy Etcoff, *The Survival of the Prettiest: The Science of Beauty* (New York: Doubleday, 1999). Also Jay Appleton's approach to landscape verges on reductionism.

See *The Experience of Landscape* (New York: Wiley, 1975). In his discussion of aesthetic naturalism, Lev Kreft warns against the ideological normativity of "Nature" in twentieth century ideology and argues that naturalism often misses the point of contemporary art; "The Second Modernity of Naturalist Aesthetics," *Filozofski vestnik*, 28, 2 (2007), 83-98. This is not, however, a necessary consequence of naturalism.

[48] For a discussion, see Denis Dutton, "Aesthetics and Evolutionary Psychology," *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*, ed. Jerrold Levinson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 693-705; or Ellen Dissanayake, *Art and Intimacy: How the Arts Began* (Seattle and London: The University of Washington Press, 2000), ref. pp. 205-225.

[49] Pihlström, *Naturalizing*, pp. 206-208.

[50] John Dewey, *Art as Experience*, (New York: Perigree Books, 1980/1934); Maurice Merleau-Ponty 2001. *Psychologie et pédogogie de l'enfant: Cours de Sorbonne 1949 – 1952* (Paris: Verdier, 1993/1964); "Le langage indirect et les voix du silence," in *Signes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996/1960), pp. 49–104 ; *L'oeil et l'esprit* (Paris: Gallimard 1993/1964); "Le *doute de Cézanne," in Sens et non-sens* (Paris: Nagel, 1966)*, pp. 15–44.*

[51] The term "tacit" is meant to underline the fact that appreciating art is an educational, long-term process.

[52] Dutton, *Art Instinct*, 2009, pp. 52-59.

[53] Dissanayake, *Homo Aestheticus* and *Art and Intimacy*, pp. 205-225. Dissanayake's theory is more morally normative, as it claims that art should deal with issues that are central in life, whereas Dutton's list is aesthetically but not ethically normative.

[54] See for example *Art and Social Change: A Critical Reader*, eds. Will Bradley and Charles Esche (London: Tate Publishing, 2007). For discussions of more recent developments, see Shiner, pp. 289-307; Suzi Gablik, *The Reenchantment of Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1993/1991); Nicolas Bourriaud, *Esthétique relationelle* (Paris: Les presses du reel, 2001); Grant H. Kester, *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press,

2004); *Artistic Citizenship: A Public Voice for the Arts*, eds. Mary Schmidt Campbell and Randy Martin (New York and Oxon: Routledge, 2006). Recent examples of public, (anti-)monumental art address politics and history in new ways. See, for example, the projects of Jochen Gerz: http://www.gerz.fr.

[55] Bourriaud is interesting precisely because he highlights the artistic, aesthetic and formal features of relational art.

[56] I have learned significantly about what goes on in such processes from graduate and post-graduate students of art education at the University of Jyväskylä, whom I hereby thank collectively.

[57] The main point of Yves Michaud's criticism of relationality in art is that the aesthetic threatens to take over; Yves Michaux, *L'Art à l'état gazeux: Essai sur le triomphe de l'esthétique*, (Paris: Hachette, 2003).

[58] Anne Bamford, *The WOW Factor: Global Research Compendium on the Impact of the Arts in Education* (Münster: Waxmann, 2006); James S. Catterall, *Doing Well and Doing Good by Doing Art* (Los Angeles and London: Imagination Group, 2009).

[59] The institutions included hospitals, prisons, mental health institutions, homes for elderly, and schools. Jussi Lehtonen, *Samassa valossa. Näyttelijäntyö hoitolaitoskiertueella* [In the same light: the actor's work on a tour to institutions] (Helsinki: Avain, 2010). More projects are described in *Taide keskellä elämää* [Art in the midst of life], eds. Marjatta Bardy et. al. (Helsinki: Kiasma, 2007).

[60] Dissanayake, *Homo Aestheticus*.

[61] See Bamford, *Wow Factor*.

[62] Compare Dutton, "Naturalist Definition."

[63] This example comes from Valpuri Tauriainen, *Taiteesta työhyvinvointia? Improvisaatio- ja vuorovaikutuskoulutukset työyhteisöissä* [Well-being at work through art? Improvisation and interaction courses in work communities], (MA thesis, University of Jyväskylä, 2011), https://jyx.jyu.fi/dspace/handle/123456789/36912.

[64] David Edwards, *Artscience: Creativity in the Post-Google Generation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008).

[65] For a critique of the art world on these lines, see Robert C. Morgan, *The End of the Art World* (New York: Allworth Press, 1998).

[66] This view is shared by Dutton (see "But They Don't"; "Naturalist Definition"; *Art Instinct*) and the modern fine arts system.