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LANGUAGE AND THE DEFINITION OF ART  
/ Analytic and Continental Discussion of the Nature of Art /

by Ewa Lech-Piwowarczyk

Thesis presented to the School of Graduate Studies  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree of Ph.D. in Philosophy

UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA

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## ABSTRACT

Art has a definite place in our culture and it plays a significant role there. Yet all the continuing efforts in analytic aesthetics to define art have failed, leading to an impasse. So, we still do not know how to define art. In order to overcome the impasse I argue that a change of philosophical perspective is necessary and I suggest a confrontation between Continental and analytic perspectives on defining art.

In Part One I deal with analytic aesthetics. I single out Danto's theory of art as the paradigmatic analytic theory of art. I call attention to the fact that Danto defines art by means of language, a theory of art which is a discourse on the language of art. I show the impact of Danto's theory on the rest of analytic aesthetics. First, I present Dickie's theory of art and show how he draws from Danto but departs from him later on. Then, I present Tilghman's critique of Danto, and I stress the point that in Tilghman's view the problem with Danto's theory is linguistic in nature. I identify Danto's understanding of language as the source of the problems recent analytic aesthetics has with the definition of art. In this way I locate the current impasse in

analytic aesthetics and I claim that the underlying analytic understanding of language is too narrow in order to define art. I show the evolution of Danto's views and I discuss his attempt to enlarge his understanding of language with history.

In Part Two I try to suggest a way out of the impasse. I shift the perspective and turn to phenomenology and Ingarden's theory of art. I call attention to the role of language in his philosophy and present his approach as quasi-analytical. Specifically, I interpret Ingarden as the continuator of Twardowski and not of Husserl in his understanding of language. I point to the fact that Ingarden's non-phenomenological view of language is a view that allows of seeing language not only as a container of ideas but also their shaper. I show that Ingarden attributes to language an intentional mode of being, and that he treats it as a means of communication. He exposes its cultural nature and enlarges its understanding with the notion of society. I claim that such a broader understanding of language may help analytic aesthetics overcome the present impasse.

In Conclusion, I argue that supplementing the notion of language with the notion of history, as Danto does, or society, as Ingarden does, provides a fuller understanding of language, and consequently of art. Hence, it makes possible the overcoming of

the impasse in analytic aesthetics. At the same time, however, I show that the very project of defining art has to be relativized in terms of understanding and responding to the significance of art.

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# INTRODUCTION

## INTRODUCTION

The increasing tendency to accept anything as art is the best sign of the confusion reigning in the present state of our knowledge about art. Needless to say, the uncertainty about what is art and what is not, distorts our traditional ways of living with art.

The task of defining art aims at clearing out this confusion. It assumes that the clear view on art will help to preserve art's traditional role. Hence, the sequence of continuing efforts to find a definition of art still present in our times.

Historically speaking the quest for the art-making features and the attempts to define art have been going on since the times of Plato. Since then, a number of definitions have been proposed, each of them purporting to give a complete statement on art and to expose the most prominent feature of art. Yet, the revolution that took place in the arts in the twentieth century made the so far available definitions inadequate to account for the changes. In this way it dissolved the pattern of the traditional definition

oriented towards finding the essence of art. But the problem of the definition of art still remained as an important problem for aesthetics. Moreover, it shifted from the marginal position it occupied in the course of the history of aesthetics to that of its focus.

No other school of thought has preoccupied itself more with that problem than Anglo-American aesthetics. This theme has become a basic one there, and has persisted as such for more than thirty years. First, around 1950, aestheticians like W. Gallie, P.Ziff, W.Kennick and M.Weitz under the influence of the philosophy of Wittgenstein questioned the very possibility of finding an essence of art and consequently of defining art.<sup>1</sup> Since then, it has become popular to stigmatize any attempt to find a definition of art as essentialism. Such a search was held to be mistaken on several grounds. The programme as presented by Weitz, the most influential of the group, was considered to be a "death knell" of aesthetic theory.<sup>2</sup>

Yet, in the sixties the anti-theorists were severely criticized by such philosophers as M.Mandelbaum, M.C.Beardsley, J.Margolis and T.J.Diffey.<sup>3</sup> Their criticism weakened the anti-theorists' doubts and reservations as to defining art. They advised caution in theorizing rather than abstention from

definition and a theory. As a result, the search for a definition has resumed; moreover, it has become the most persistent theme in that tradition. It has had such an impact on the mainstream Anglo-American aesthetics that it is true to say that defining art occupies a "strategic place" in theorizing about art there.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, answering the question "what is art?" has acquired there the reputation of "the most vexing, the most widely and constantly worried question."<sup>5</sup> The most recent situation with defining art in analytic philosophy, however, is a number of theories of art which, each in its own way, fails to account for the nature of art. This entitles one to speak of an impasse.<sup>6</sup>

Traditionally analytic philosophy as Anglo-American philosophy has been kept in contrast to Continental philosophy and they have often been declared opposite poles among contemporary philosophical movements. Still today to some philosophers the contrast between phenomenology, for instance, and analytic philosophy assumes such large proportions that this contrast is taken to constitute "the most important controversy in contemporary philosophy."<sup>7</sup> As a reason for a clash these philosophers mention the controversy between realism and nominalism, rationalism and empiricism, idealism and pragmatism, subjectivism and objectivism and finally transcendentalism and linguistic philosophy. They

speaking about four ways in which phenomenology and analysis are mostly at odds: the question of intentionality, the concept of meaning, behaviourism and the existential dimension. The European, Tranoy, writing in an American journal, emphasizes the problem of the lack of understanding on both sides, doubting a peaceful coexistence is possible unless Continental philosophy attains analytic clarity.<sup>8</sup> Occasionally, the differences between phenomenology and analytic philosophy are attributed to differences in mentality and traditions and presented as insurmountable because determined geographically.

However, sometimes phenomenology and analytical philosophy deviate from those very traditional portrayals and seem to overcome them. Starting from the sixties analytic philosophers have been tracing the possibility of some *rapprochement* between these two trends by checking various components of both of them for parallels and the chance for a fruitful dialogue. Thus, looking at them historically they put the emphasis on the analogical beginning of these two trends: discontent with the existing philosophical systems, especially dissatisfaction with overspeculative philosophy.<sup>9</sup> What they see, above all, as the major task is the overcoming of the existing simplifications. Occasionally they claim that there exists the radical similarity of the methods employed by these schools so that one can notice a correlation in

all their major stages. This tendency to spot mutual closeness visible mostly on the part of the Anglo-American philosophers results in the fact that, statistically speaking, among the voices on the subject of resemblance one will find more often an attempt to demonstrate the phenomenological ingredient in analysis than the analytical nature of phenomenology.

In this particular context Ingarden's phenomenology comes to mind as one where the analytic-phenomenological convergence comes to play. What constitutes the link between analytic aesthetics and Ingarden's aesthetics is the fact that Ingarden's theory of art can be presented, just like analytic theories, in terms of the central role of language.<sup>10</sup> This means that one can glance at it from a vantage point rather different from that of orthodox phenomenology. One can adopt a linguistic perspective on Ingarden's views and claim that his phenomenological theory of art is to some degree analytical. One can try to demonstrate that his descriptions show a great measure of agreement with those of analytical philosophy and that his analyses for the most part are akin to analytical analyses. In other words, one can interpret Ingarden as a figure who occupies a position between Continental and Anglo-American schools of thinking.

In this thesis I am preoccupied with the linguistic side of

the issue of the definition of art which I take to establish the proximity between Continental and Anglo-American philosophy. I acknowledge the valuable insights of the linguistic mode of investigation but at the same time, I criticize the reductive impact of a purely linguistic approach and the limitations of the explanatory value of the theories construed in this spirit alone.

In addition to showing Ingarden as a person whose ideas build a bridge between phenomenology and analytical philosophy, I also show that his view on language contrasts with that of the analytic philosophers. It contains a reference to society which advances the understanding of the nature of language by placing it in a cultural context, closer to the situations of life, and allows us to see it in more realistic terms. I claim that such a broader understanding of language helps us better to understand the nature of art and therefore may help analytic aesthetics overcome the present impasse. The basic idea of the thesis is that no major contribution to contemporary aesthetics can be made by sticking to any purely linguistic method and that, therefore, the theoretical framework of aesthetics has to be expanded to deal adequately with the central question of "What is art?"

## NOTES

1

W.Gallie, "Art as an Essentially Contested Concept," Philosophical Quarterly VI (1956): 97-114; P. Ziff, "The Task of Defining a Work of Art," Philosophical Review 62 (1953): 58-78; W.Kennick, "Does Traditional Aesthetics Rest on a Mistake?," Mind 67, (1958): 317-334; M.Weitz, "The Role of Theory in Aesthetics," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 15 (1956): 27-35. For this influential position in analytic aesthetics, the opposition to any attempt to state the defining properties of art, see M.Mothersill, the chapter on "The Anti-Theorists," Beauty Restored (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986) .

2

J.Fisher, "Against Theory, Again," Journal of Aesthetic Education 20 (1986): 50.

3

The most widely known objection questions the art-game parallel as given by Wittgenstein and indicates the possibility of some invisible relational property common to all works of art. M.Mandelbaum, who does not undertake the attempt to define art argues this in "Family Resemblances and Generalizations Concerning the Arts," American Philosophical Quarterly 2 (1965): 219-228.

4

J.Margolis, rev. of Art and the Aesthetic, by G.Dickie, Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 33 (1975): 341.

5

M.C.Beardsley, The Aesthetic Point of View (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982) 298.

6

R.Shusterman, introduction, Analytic Aesthetics (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1989).

7

C.Van Peursen, Phenomenology and Analytical Philosophy (Pittsburgh, PA.: Duquesne University Press, 1972) 12.

8

E.Tranoy, "Contemporary Philosophy - Analytic and Continental," Philosophy Today 8 (1964): 161.

9

Van Peursen 180.

10

It was the hyper-conscious attitude towards language in the Polish philosophy of the twenties that provided a possible link with the entire analytic movement. See H.Skolimowski, Polish Analytical Philosophy (New York: The Humanities Press, 1967) X.

# PART ONE

DEFINING ART: AN ANALYTIC IMPASSE ?

## INTRODUCTION TO PART ONE

In Part One, over the course of four chapters, I outline the most recent debate in Anglo-American aesthetics on the definition of art. I conceive of this debate as revealing the differences of opinion on this issue.

In Chapter 1 I introduce Danto's theory of art, which covers much more than the problem of the definition of art. I sketch its chronological development and I discuss in some detail such issues as the ontology of art, its representational nature, its semantic function and its historical nature.

In the following two chapters, Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, I focus on Danto's opponents and consider two critical stances towards his views on the nature of art. First, in Chapter 2, I turn to Dickie. After acknowledging Dickie's initial indebtedness to Danto I concentrate on the points where he deviates from Danto. In this way I bring to light the existing divergence between Danto's and Dickie's theories. Then, in Chapter 3, with the same critical attitude, I present Tilghman's attack on Danto's theory. Thus I achieve a complete picture of the block of objections raised from within Anglo-American aesthetics by two analytic philosophers against the theories of a third analytic philosopher.

The last chapter of Part One, Chapter 4, contains the discussion of the points of disagreement and of the conflicting implications of the views of Danto, Dickie and Tilghman. I argue that the situation within analytic aesthetics is that of an impasse and I identify this impasse as linguistic in nature. In other words, I locate the conflict on the matters of art in the concept of language held by Danto. The chapter closes with a passage on a turn of Danto's thought caused by his reference to history as an attempt to gain a fuller understanding of language. I take the presence of this theme in analytic philosophy as a manifestation of some sort of readiness to embrace other philosophical traditions in order to tackle more adequately the problem of the nature of art.

# CHAPTER ONE

## CHAPTER 1

## DANTO'S THEORY OF ART

In this chapter I intend to summarize Arthur Danto's views on the nature of art. I am going to do it in three steps. My first aim is to specify the conditions put forward by Danto as necessary for arthood. My second aim is to explicate Danto's main thesis concerning the semantic character of art. My third aim is to present Danto's speculations about the history of art and the end of art. I reserve the criticism of Danto's views on art for a later part of the thesis.

1. Danto's Account of the Nature of Art

Arthur Danto represents the most current line of reflection on art in analytic aesthetics. Contrary to the anti-theorists, he has a strong belief in theorizing about art. Following Mandelbaum he believes in the possibility of art's being some relational property and aims at discovering some common characteristics of works of art.<sup>1</sup> The formulation of a definition of art is not

itself a main target for Danto. As a matter of fact, nowhere does he provide it in an explicit way. Instead, as he himself puts it, he constructs "a philosophical stairway" towards the understanding of art "as it really is."<sup>2</sup>

Danto develops his theory in several steps in a series of articles. The most influential of them are "The Artworld," "Artworks and Real Things" and "The Transfiguration of the Commonplace".<sup>3</sup> Danto makes in them a number of moves which are all oriented towards the elucidation of the nature of art. Yet, he abandons some of these moves in the course of his reflection. His philosophical position on the nature of art emerges gradually: he supplements his argumentation with new elements until finally he is on the right track.

It is in The Transfiguration of the Commonplace that Danto puts together some of his previous thoughts on art and makes of them a meaningful whole.<sup>4</sup> His goal is to find a classificatory notion of art. To suggest a value free descriptive notion, he replaces throughout the term "work of art" with the term "artwork".<sup>5</sup> Danto admits that he does not see much value in theorizing about the central cases of art in the present state of art. He focuses on the borderline cases of art and he makes it a must for any recent theory of art to encompass dubious cases

accepted as art. That is why Warhol's *Brillo Box* becomes a favourite point of reference for Danto when he formulates his thoughts about art in general.

Danto launches his project to explain the nature of art by means of his discussion of the notion of "the artworld". He introduces this notion with a phrase that "to see something as art requires something the eye cannot descry - an atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of the history of art: an artworld."<sup>6</sup> "The artworld" is a cover term that Danto uses in the sense of the necessary background for art. By referring to the background he gives his theory right away a contextual frame.<sup>7</sup>

Danto locates the central interest of his theory in the problem of the transfiguration of real objects into artworks. In order to illustrate the problem he uses the "argument from indiscernibles."<sup>8</sup> This argument exploits the fact that there are lookalike objects of which only one is an artwork. This fact furnishes for Danto the basis to revive the theorizing about art, and it constitutes a founding intuition of Danto's entire philosophy of art. Danto sees this fact not only as essential to a modern discussion of art, but more generally also as a *locus* of all philosophical questions.<sup>9</sup>

Danto's favourite argument about indistinguishable objects serves to strengthen his claim that arthood is a property relational to the setting. Yet, this argument does not reveal the nature of the setting needed for objects to be art. In order to do that Danto performs what he calls "a counter-phenomenological turn"<sup>10</sup> which, as he says, consists in "averting our eyes from the objects themselves" and concentrating on their environment.<sup>11</sup> As a result of this operation Danto comes to the conclusion that the term "art" is a designation which can be made sensible only within specific contexts of art theory and art history. He adds, by means of explanation, that art theories "take an object into the world of art and keep it from collapsing into a real object which it is."<sup>12</sup>

Saying this he makes at least two claims at once: one epistemological and the other ontological.<sup>13</sup> The first one suggests that theories help identify works of art. The second implies that a theory is absolutely necessary for something to be art. Danto explains that by a theory he means an interpretation. He says: "to interpret a work is to offer a theory as to what the work is about, what its subject is."<sup>14</sup> Danto maintains that before interpretation an object is only a candidate for a structure and remains unavailable as an artwork.<sup>15</sup> In addition, Danto believes that two identical objects can have two different interpretations,

and consequently, different structures. This amounts to saying that two identical objects may in fact be two different artworks.

By interpretation Danto does not mean some external operation on the work of art: interpretation is for him an activity that decides about the structure of the object and which is, therefore, constitutive in character. Danto makes of interpretation a crucial art-making agency. He treats interpretation as a device which locates objects ontologically and which, therefore, determines arthood. In other words, he says about art that its "*esse is interpretari*."<sup>16</sup>

Danto designates as the most exemplary interpretation the artist's interpretation of his own work. He sees the artist to be in the best position to set limits to interpretation. He differentiates between surface and deep interpretation, the first being "what author might have meant," and the second "going past the work into something else."<sup>17</sup> He suggests that interpretation introduces an element of reflection into art: it ties artworks with culture and saves them from banality. Danto pays particular attention to theoretical revisions when the changes in interpretations take place and new objects become artistically enfranchised. Theory shifts and revisions expand the boundaries of

art and let in borderline cases. In this way, on Danto's theory, the artworld which produces theories-interpretations does, in fact, produce art.

By making interpretation responsible for the structure of an artwork Danto draws attention to the ontological peculiarity of artworks. He is sure that artworks are "not as real" as other objects are, and that they belong to "altogether different orders of things."<sup>18</sup> He formulates explicitly his standpoint on the question of the ontology of artworks. He speaks clearly against the physicality of artworks: to him artworks are more than physical objects, they are also a rhetoric. He puts forward a thesis that art's ontology is "of a piece with that of language."<sup>19</sup> Danto's position is dualistic: he insists on distinguishing between the thing we perceive and the thing we take as an artwork. He admits that he is a realist about objects and an idealist about artworks and he compares artworks and real objects to soul and body. He talks about "ontological improvement" of real objects becoming artworks.

In Danto's view the most essential feature of artworks, one he calls a necessary quality for art, is representationality.<sup>20</sup> Bringing into the discussion on art the notion of representationality, he continues along a well known line in the

history of aesthetics. To some, Danto's insistence on representationality looks like a continuation of a Platonic project. Danto admits that the mimetic theory of art is "an exceedingly powerful theory" and he insists that for something to be art this something must mirror reality.<sup>21</sup>

Yet, Danto phrases representationality in different terms than those of visual resemblance and likeness. By mirroring reality he means something else than just providing visual identity. He distinguishes between two senses of representation: an internal sense, one which has to do with the content of an imitation, and an external sense, one which has to do with what an imitation denotes. Thus he supplies the traditional concept of representation with the requirement that the work be about that of which it is a representation. He adds that in contrast to artworks, things as a class lack "aboutness".

Danto considers also the very special case of art representing itself. By this he means art which refers not to reality but to itself. Danto holds that such self-referential art has as its content the concept of art. Hence, in Danto's view, all art, without exception, is at least minimally "about".

Danto holds that an object is construed as an artwork when it

acquires "aboutness", i.e. when it is interpreted. By saying this, he focuses on the fact that all art has a content and a subject matter, but essentially he links "aboutness" with meaning. He holds that art both designates and means, and that an artwork may represent one thing in the first sense and something quite different in the second sense. It is quite possible in his view that two artworks will be identical, and will yet have a different meaning. In Danto's words identical artworks may vary in their interpretations from emptiness to "the abysses of meaning."<sup>22</sup>

## 2. Danto's Thesis about the Semantic Nature of Art and His Attempt at a Definition

Danto's most characteristic idea about art is that it is a non-perceptual factor that provides the principal differentia between art and non-art. In other words, Danto denies that there are any visible, specifically artistic properties that identify artworks and guide our contacts with art. He rejects the thesis that artworks form a unique class of entities distinguished by certain intrinsic aesthetic properties, and he eliminates sensory enjoyment from the experience of art. In his opinion objects may become art independently of the directly perceived qualities they have. Language present in artworks is not detectable in them and so arthood, according to Danto, does not depend on looking and

seeing: Danto makes arthood a function of something unnoticeable. Danto's principal thesis about art is that aesthetics does not pertain to the essence of art.

Danto opposes aestheticism mostly because he considers it an element that trivializes art and moves it to the margin of human interests as a matter of fancy. He qualifies as a "barbaric taste" the demand that the beauty of the visible material counterpart would have anything to do with the beauty of the work.

He allows for the problem of the aesthetic quality to enter into focus only after an object has been identified as an artwork. To make this point he says: "learning that an object is an artwork means that it has qualities to attend to."<sup>23</sup> He also indicates that the role of art is not to provide aesthetic pleasure. To him art is essentially cognitive and requires a different kind of attention than aesthetic appreciation.

Making interpretation a part of the concept of art, Danto evokes some sort of a verbal reaction as a necessary part of the concept of art. His theory explicitly says that the only way for objects to be turned into artworks is by means of language. He stresses the fact that art "presupposes a body of sayers and interpreters."<sup>24</sup> He suggests also that "there is no art without

those who speak the language of the artworld."<sup>25</sup> In this way he manifests a tendency to make of language a vital element in questions about arthood.

Danto has his own, particular reason for bringing language into the discussion on art. He holds a theory about the relation of language and art which focuses on the concept of reality. Danto believes that language casts light on art because both art and language stand at the same remove from reality. He claims that both language and art perform the same representative function. By pointing to this common feature of art and language, he implies that they are close to each other in nature. He suggests that art represents in the way language represents, and that there is an ontological bond between them.

According to Danto artworks are statements. Danto claims that the basic function of art is to talk: to provide a distinctive type of discourse. Saying this Danto does not tie art and language in a metaphorical way, but he equates artistic products with linguistic ones literally. When he says that "art is a language of sorts" he means that there is not a simple analogy between the two, but an identity. He connects art and language in such a way as to imply that there is an internal connection between these two. He talks of art as if the art-making tradition were similar to

speaking, and he treats words as if they played the role of the artistic material. Generally speaking, he treats art as if it were a comment and as if every artist were a critic. Consequently, he believes artworks to be more a manner of speaking than objects. His artworld consists mainly of speakers, and his artworks are literally infused with language.

Having rejected the aesthetic nature of art Danto draws a conclusion that artworks are linguistic to the extent of admitting semantical assessment. For that reason he mostly preoccupies himself with the problem of how art represents subjects who have a message to convey. One may presume that he is convinced that silent objects would not play the same role in our culture as artworks do now. He thinks that it seems to be a condition for the possibility of having artworks in our culture that they talk, and that consequently, there develops a certain way of talking about them. Therefore he approaches art in terms of its efficacy to perform the semantic function. Danto sees linguistic conventions involved in speech act activity of art as the same sort of material as artistic and social conventions involved in art making.

The presentation of the nature of art as predominantly semantic is partially grounded in Danto's interpretation of Duchamp. Danto sees Duchamp as the one who made "pictorial speech

acts" with his ready-mades and used them in the function of statements, assertions, protests and the like.<sup>26</sup> Consequently, he wants one to understand all modern art according to this pattern. He wants one to see art as having the capacity to do some of the things one usually employs language to do. He presses the point that artworks are preeminently like literature: explicit statements, speech acts "of some sort or other," at least puns or jokes.<sup>27</sup> In the light of the above it seems that in such a vision of art, even more than Duchamp, it is conceptual art that inspires Danto's conception of art: conceptual art is predominantly the art of the statement which exploits almost exclusively the spoken aspect of the work of art.

Danto applies the idea about the speech-act character of artworks not only to characterize the nature of art in general, but, above all, to explain the difference between old art and new art. He suggests that old art is art in that it performs the speech-act role, and imitates real-life illocutionary acts about things other than art. He stresses the imitation element of this act and implies that the speech-act performed has a quasi-speech act character. He suggests also that new art is art in that it does the same thing but mostly by commenting on itself. It is this change of the subject in performing the speech-acts that, in Danto's view, distinguishes modern art from old. Thus, Danto

believes that he contributes to the understanding of the new art by showing "how a much remarked feature of many works at many times, their quasi speech-act capacity, finds a new mode of expression."<sup>28</sup>

Danto combines his concepts of representation and "aboutness" with those of theory and interpretation. His basic thesis about the nature of artworks is that artworks are representations that demand theory-interpretation.

He distinguishes artworks from other representations by claiming that in contrast to maps or graphs, artworks represent not only reality or themselves, but also their own way of representing. He states that the appeal to content leads nowhere in solving the question of the nature of art. He maintains, therefore, that "works of art, in categorical contrast with mere representations, use the means of representation in a way that is not exhaustively specified when one has exhaustively specified what is being represented."<sup>29</sup> In this way, Danto introduces a sharp dichotomy between manner and content. He focuses on the manner of presentation of the content as most significant feature which determines arthood. In a way, he abandons his so far cognitivist approach to art by emphasizing the subjective element of art, i.e. the way the artist sees the content. He points at art as a phenomenon endowed with special capacity to display the

idiosyncratic ways of taking in the world.

Danto indicates metaphor, expression and style as the vehicles most apt to capture these idiosyncratic attitudes, and discusses the ability of each of them to handle the subjective element of art. He explains that metaphor does it by getting one to think about the subject through the mediation of symbols of representational devices with their own connotations and resonances. He holds that expression occurs in art because every artwork contains a metaphor, and what is expressed is the view about the subject that one gets with the help of the metaphor. He points out that style includes everything that remains of representation when content is subtracted: it embraces metaphor and expression, and is the means to express the artist's idiosyncratic structure of the mind. Together, metaphor, expression and style constitute a surplus to the artwork's content and are, according to Danto, "referentially opaque": they invite one to see beyond the content. In other words, Danto propagates the view that art essentially works by calling attention to what is subjective in it.

Having indicated that expressive, metaphoric and stylistic calling attention to itself is one of the main offices of art, Danto realizes that he may be "at the threshold of the definition of art."<sup>30</sup> Yet, he never explicitly formulates it. He leaves his study of the nature of art at the point when he states four

things about it: first, that artworks are meaningful representations; second, that they represent not only reality but also their own ways of representing; third, that they need interpretation; and fourth, that their basic function is semantic.

Danto devotes a part of his considerations to the problem of artistic identification. He suggests that there exists a special sense of the "is" of artistic identification. By this he means that when talking about artworks one does not make statements about reality, but one applies a special form of make believe identification. In this sense the "is" of artistic identification is synonymous with "represents".<sup>31</sup> Danto alludes at this point to a quasi-illocutionary character of all statements about art, and implies that competent speakers and interpreters of art understand art as a quasi-reality. He calls attention to the specificity of the language game played by the speakers of the artworld. They must possess the mastery of the form of language the use of which manifests that something has become a work of art.<sup>32</sup>

In other words, Danto reduces the difference between artworks and real things to the difference between the language used to describe artworks and the language used to talk about mere real things. He stresses the fact that one has to know whether something is a work of art or a real object before one decides what

kind of language to use to describe it.<sup>33</sup>

### 3. Danto's Thesis about the Historical Nature of Art

Danto's view of art exploits the fact that the artistic enfranchisement of objects is historically changeable. His insight is that the nature of art lies in the dynamics of human life. He realizes that if interpretation is the key to the nature of art, its historical reformulations need to be taken into consideration. Hence, he converts the issue of art into an historical issue, and establishes the claim that something is an artwork at a given time, and not at any time. In this way, time becomes an important factor in his concept of art.<sup>34</sup> He indicates that artworks are temporal entities which are artworks because of a certain location in time. By referring to the fact that part of the response to the problem of the arthood of a given object depends on what is known about the relevant period of time, Danto accomplishes two things: he aligns art with history and moves the investigation of the nature of art in the direction of concrete events in the life-world. His critical practice contains this historical refinement and reflects the grasp of art as a purely historical notion.<sup>35</sup> He demonstrates there how historical framework contributes to identification and canonization of objects into art. He shows how the beliefs that mediate the decisions about the arthood of objects very specifically focus on objects' histories.

This historical refinement of Danto's theory of art makes him realize that a definite relativism reigns in the realm of art. He stresses the fact that there is no fixed line between art and non-art since the boundary of art shifts in time. Yet, the historical relativism of art is not a major worry for Danto. The historical nature of art does not constitute a challenge to his ambition of capturing art's transhistoric nature. The reason for this lies in the peculiar version of the history of art that Danto holds.

Danto fully reveals the range of his concerns about art in The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art, a book characterized as "clearly very remote from analytic aesthetics as typically practised and ordinarily understood."<sup>36</sup> He undertakes to show there how the concept of art is affected by the changes in the world of facts. Danto studies the history of art, in particular of modernism, and suggests his own reading of this period. He interprets it as an ongoing series of challenges directed by artworks against attempts at their codification. He suggests a reading of modernism that sees this period as a collective quest for the true nature of art. In this, he comes close to seeing each artwork produced at this time as an insight into the nature of art. It is a "dazzling succession of art movements" with a definite

sense of direction that constitutes Danto's vision of that period.<sup>37</sup>

Danto presents his own version of art's development and rationalizes the forces that have led to the present situation. His suggestion is that art had its own teleology and was all along realizing its goal. The goal in question consisted in attaining consciousness of its own. Danto demonstrates how to read the history of art in order to see the stages of self-realization of art. For that he presents the history of visual arts understood in terms of the progress made in rendering perceptual reality. He singles out the year 1905 as the moment when art had to be redefined. He stops at the beginning of the seventies when, in his view, art came to a halt. He claims that this awareness of its own nature constitutes part of the concept of art.

Danto's historicism leads him quite untypically for an analytic philosopher to Hegel, and to the philosophy of the history of art. After Hegel, he repeats the motif about the death of art. By this he does not mean art coming to an absolute stop but art attaining its historical end. His argument that the end of art has come rests on the proposition that its history as a progressive form of representation has been stopped: linked with technical innovations, art has been put into a kind of permanent limbo.

Danto believes that at the present moment art has become conceptually exhausted, and has reached its historical mission of acquiring a consciousness of its own.

Danto comes up with a claim that art equals philosophy.<sup>38</sup> He maintains that art now raises the philosophical question of the philosophical nature of art from within art. He interprets this particular state of art as the sign of its own end. He blames philosophy for carrying on the same type of discourse as art. He puts forward a thesis about the oppressive nature of philosophy. Such a vision of the situation makes him say that a definition of art cannot now avoid being at the same time a definition of philosophy. According to Danto philosophy causes the cultural redundancy of art. Danto is convinced that art is a form of life that has grown old and has become entirely irrelevant in our culture. Because of this aging of art he maintains that art "can make nothing happen."<sup>39</sup>

Yet, somewhat later Danto takes another turn in his philosophizing about art, and comes up with a claim that in the era of post-modernism art has lost its sense of direction. He sees post-modernist art as completely irrelevant to art's historical ends. This makes him abandon the goal of constructing a theory of art altogether. Danto finds that historical guarantees of

continuity are not significant for much of contemporary art, and he sees no sense to philosophize over insignificant cases of art. He analyses "disturbatory art" - one of those radical movements whose interest lies in disturbing the boundaries between art and reality. He discovers that it goes in the direction of life. He realizes that it destabilizes the continuity of earlier traditions and goes against his vision of the history of art. He finds it to be atavistic, primitive and to exhibit a regressive posture. In other words, he finds it to go counter-history.

Having found out that representational art has really come to an end and no longer is consequential to the history of art, and having found out that new art is more like a random freak than a purposeful and meaningful development, Danto comes to the conclusion that now art has nowhere to go. He abandons, therefore, his deterministic historical thinking about art, and presents art as a phenomenon that has entered the stage of cultural entropy.

Danto's apocalyptic model of art's development makes him aware that under these circumstances the present state of art cannot provide a basis for the theory of art. It is for that reason that he abandons the project of constructing a definition of art. He declares the end of the Platonic programme and decides to give up searching for a definition of art which he calls a

philosophic aspiration of all ages.

He proposes to analyze art's post-historical stage, and to seek art's disenfranchisement from philosophy in order to force a division between philosophy and art. This decision is grounded in the claim that in the post-historical era a definition of art will have to be replaced with a recognition of the pluralism of art forms, already irrelevant to art-historical ends and to the logic of art's development.

Thus, the addition of the historical dimension to art results for Danto both in the idea of the death of art and in the end of the defining activity. These two are linked, because Danto believes in the internal connection that on his view exists between "the way we define art and the way we think of history of art."<sup>40</sup>

In this way, by enlarging the understanding of art with history, Danto moves from the position of the leader of the revival of defining art to the position of the advocate to end this activity. So, it seems that in spite of the valuable insight that Danto has with the idea of bringing history into the concept of art, he finds himself in a dead end. He does not have a full account of art to give, and he leaves us "wanting to hear more."<sup>41</sup>

In this chapter I have presented a list of conditions that

Danto thinks necessary for something to attain the status of art. I have stressed that he proposes to see artworks as some kind of statements and emphasizes the semantic function of art. I have also introduced Danto's original ideas about the historical process of art development and art's entering now a post-historical phase.

## NOTES

1

M.Mandelbaum, "Family Resemblances and Generalization Concerning the Arts," American Philosophical Quarterly 2 (1965): 219-228.

2

A. Danto, The State of the Art (New York: Prentice Hall, 1987) 5.

3

These first articles were published by Danto successively in 1964, 1973 and 1975: A. Danto, "The Artworld," Journal of Philosophy 61 (1964): 571-584; "Artworks and Real Things," Theoria 39 (1973): 1-17; and "The Transfiguration of the Commonplace," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 33 (1975): 139-149.

4

A. Danto, The Transfiguration of the Commonplace (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981).

5

F. Sparshott, The Theory of the Arts (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982) 573.

6

A. Danto, "The Artworld," Journal of Philosophy 61 (1964): 580.

7

Osborne traces Danto's "artworld" to the concept of the "republic of art" from T. Diffey's article "The Republic of Art," British Journal of Aesthetics 9 (1969) and finds Danto's concept to be more pedestrian. H. Osborne, "What Is a Work of Art?," British Journal of Aesthetics 21 (1981): 4.

8

Term used by D. Novitz in his review of The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art, by A. Danto, Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 46 (1987). Because of the use of this argument Danto is called "the grand master of the no-difference that makes a difference". See A. Nehamas, rev. of The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art, by A. Danto, Journal of Philosophy 85 (1988): 215.

9

A. Danto, The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986) 151.

- 10 A.Danto, "Artworks and Real Things," Theoria 39 (1973-74): 6.
- 11 Danto, "Artworks" 5.
- 12 Danto, "Artworld" 581.
- 13 There are many more interpretations of this claim possible. The scrutiny of five such interpretations by Kennick shows that they are either truistic or false. See W. Kennick, "Theories of Art and the Artworld," Journal of Philosophy 61 (1964): 585-587.
- 14 Danto, Transfiguration 119.
- 15 Eaton suggests that by referring to interpretation Danto involuntarily lets into his theory an evaluative element: in deciding that a given object is worth interpreting, we evaluate. M. Eaton, Art and Nonart (London: Associated University Presses, Inc., 1983) 31. Tilghman focuses on the intentional ingredient of interpretation. B. Tilghman, But Is It Art? (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Inc., 1984) 99.
- 16 Danto, Transfiguration 125.
- 17 See the chapter on "Deep Interpretation" in Danto's The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art 47-67. Danto explains there that in case of deep interpretation the interpreter knows things the author does not.
- 18 Danto, Transfiguration 99.
- 19 Danto, Transfiguration 83.
- 20 Representation implies intentionality: artist's intention to represent something. Danto models his theory on painting which is representation in which most attention is given to what it represents beyond itself. One may suspect that attention to music might have changed Danto's understanding of art. See M. Eaton, rev.of

The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, by A. Danto, Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 40 (1982): 208.

- 21 Danto, "The Artworld" 572.
- 22 Danto, Transfiguration 105.
- 23 Danto, Transfiguration 99.
- 24 Danto, "Artworks" 15.
- 25 Danto, "Artworks" 15.
- 26 P. Humble, "Duchamp's Ready-Mades: Art and Anti-Art," British Journal of Aesthetics 22 (1982): 59.
- 27 Cohen sees Danto referring to the speech act character of art because Danto allows for making a new work of art not by altering the object but by adding to the set of artwork relevant predicate pairs a pair already sensibly applicable to the object. For that interpretation of the illocutionary nature of art as described by Danto in "The Artworld" see T. Cohen, "The Possibility of Art," Philosophical Review 82 (1973): 80.
- 28 C. Lyas, "Dickie and Danto on Art," Culture and Art ed. L. Aagaard-Mogensen (Atlantic Highlands, N.Y.: Humanities Press, 1976) 179.
- 29 Danto, Transfiguration 147-8.
- 30 Danto, Transfiguration 147.
- 31 See Danto's description of Bruegel's *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus* : in saying "this is Icarus" and pointing to a blob of paint one does not refer to the real Icarus nor to the paint but to the Icarus that appears in the painting. Quinn comments at this point that "perhaps it is true that he (Danto) means to say something relevant to aesthetics" but he does not agree that all artistic descriptions have this special aesthetic sense. W. Quinn, rev. of The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, by A. Danto,

Philosophical Review 92 (1983): 483.

32

The notion of the "is" of artistic identification appears in "The Artworld". This notion however is left unanalyzed there; See Danto "Artworld" 576. See also J.Margolis, "Ontology Down and Out in Art and Science," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 46 (1988): 451.

The mastery of a form of language indicating that an object is an artwork suggests an intentional act, yet Danto does not make use of this theme.

33

There is a circularity here: language is constitutive of the artwork but we have first to recognize it as an artwork before we can talk about it.

34

Only Sartwell reproaches Danto with a neglect of the time factor: he reasons that when time is taken into consideration then one and the same object can gain various properties without becoming something else. This way of looking at it solves the problem of the difference between artworks and common things in a different way than Danto does it: no appeal to some miraculous transforming power is necessary at all. See C.Sartwell, "Aesthetic Dualism and the Transfiguration of the Commonplace," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 46 (1988): 463.

35

See Danto's critical articles appearing in "The Nation."

36

R. Shusterman, "Analytic Aesthetics: Retrospect and Prospect," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 46 Special Issue (1987): 121.

37

Danto, Disenfranchisement 108.

38

For the motif of art becoming philosophy see Danto's "Artworks and Real Things," Theoria 39 (1973-74); the chapter on "Philosophy and Art" in Transfiguration 54-90, and the chapter on "The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art" in Disenfranchisement 1-23.

39

A. Danto, "The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art," in The Reasons of Art, ed. P.McCormick, (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1985) 103.

40

Danto, Disenfranchisement 106.

41

P.Guyer, rev.of The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art, by A.Danto, New York Times Book Review 1 Feb. 1987: 23.

## CHAPTER TWO

## CHAPTER 2

## FIRST APPROACH TO DANTO'S THEORY:

## DICKIE'S THEORY OF ART

This chapter has three goals. First, I want to present Dickie's theory of art as an independent account of the nature of art. Second, I want to show to what degree Dickie is indebted to Danto for his ideas on art, while at the same time showing how much he distances himself from Danto. Finally, I want to hint at some difficulties faced by Dickie's Institutional Theory of Art.

1. Dickie's Definition of Art

Danto's theory of art, while in its initial stage, received attention from another analytic philosopher, George Dickie.<sup>1</sup> Following Danto, Dickie took up the question "what is art?" and there found an impetus for a new sort of answer. The "danto-esque" notion which, as a result, lies at the root of Dickie's Institutional Theory of Art and which gives the sense of direction to Dickie's thinking about art is the notion of the artworld. This concept is what gives Dickie the main source of ideas about art as

an institution. Dickie first borrows this concept from Danto's paper "The Artworld". He calls this paper "provocative" and adopts it for his own purposes.<sup>2</sup> The notion of the artworld is, therefore, the key notion of Dickie's theory of art, one that links him with Danto. Dickie's and Danto's theories are thus both artworld theories. At this moment, both Dickie and Danto stand together against the tradition that sees an artwork as standing alone. They start a new line of thinking about art in analytic aesthetics, one which promotes seeing artworks in their settings. Rather than discovering intrinsic properties of artworks, they both look for external, relational properties. For that reason Dickie and Danto are often lumped together and treated collectively as being both institutionalists or neo-theorists. This is especially so since, at the very start, Dickie follows Danto's indication concerning the way in which the nature of art is to be elucidated with a very positive disposition.

Like Danto, Dickie takes special pains to make his definition free of all evaluative considerations and to provide a descriptive notion of art. He admits that a purely classificatory notion of art is a fundamental concept of art, and therefore his theory is about both valuable and worthless objects. In this way, Danto finds in Dickie a propounder of his insight into the nature of art, one who draws support from him for his own ideas on the subject. Hence,

Danto's ideas about art prove influential for another analytic philosopher and Danto's theory acquires a historical significance for analytic aesthetics.

Yet, in spite of this common initial approach, Dickie has a different view of the notions he shares with Danto and he fills these notions with a different content. One should not be misled, then, by the existing affinities between Danto's and Dickie's views on art. They should be presented as related but distinct individual theorists.<sup>3</sup>

Dickie arrives at his definition of art by means of a truly Socratic method: he makes it clear that his definition aims to capture the use of the word "art" as it occurs in today's discourse on art. Engaged in a precise definitional operation, he immediately defines art in the following way: "A work of art in the classificatory sense is 1) an artifact 2) a set of the aspects of which has had conferred upon it the status of a candidate for appreciation by some person or persons acting on behalf of a certain social institution (the artworld.)" <sup>4</sup> Each of 1) and 2) are necessary, jointly they are sufficient for something's being a work of art. It is in this form, as it occurs in Art and the Aesthetic, that Dickie's definition is best known and most widely scrutinized and commented upon.<sup>5</sup> It is also this version of the

definition that is considered Dickie's "classic definition of art" and that constitutes Dickie's permanent contribution to aesthetics.<sup>6</sup>

## 2. Dickie's Understanding of the Notions He Shares with Danto

Like Danto, Dickie sees the role of the artworld as a necessary framework for works of art. The basic idea that Dickie borrows from Danto is to refer to the background of art in order to suggest that objects are art as a result of a position they occupy within a certain framework. It becomes a core of Dickie's argument, like that of Danto, that it is the relation to the artworld that is the desired common property that bestows unity on all works of art and that can therefore constitute the base of the concept of art.

As a matter of fact, Dickie speaks about the artworld in more than one sense. Sometimes he takes it to mean an established social structure that can exercise some social powers, "a broad social institution in which works of art have their place."<sup>7</sup> In other instances, Dickie refers to the artworld in terms of "established practice" and implies that he has some formalized action in mind.<sup>8</sup>

At other times, Dickie discusses the artworld by focussing on its agents - "a core personnel" - artists, philosophers of art, art

historians, art theoreticians and so on.<sup>9</sup> On yet other occasions, he simply gives paradigm examples: he mentions theatre, sculpture, literature and so on without explaining how this conglomeration functions. None of the lists of the components of the artworld that Dickie gives is exhaustive. Dickie maintains that each culture has its own artworld and that, therefore, there exist many artworlds, not just one artworld on the Earth.<sup>10</sup> Generally speaking, there is no doubt that it is Dickie, and not Danto, that is more helpful in drawing the characterization of the artworld as a background for art and giving a fuller description of it.<sup>11</sup>

Unlike Danto Dickie insists that the artworld is an institution. He claims that all the artworld roles are institutionalized and require learning. But he also claims that every person who sees himself as a member of the artworld is in fact its member. And he makes no attempt to delineate the limits of the artworld or to specify its distinctiveness from other institutions. As a result, his artworld is a very democratic body which has no criteria for distinguishing members from non-members. Dickie nonetheless firmly believes that the status of art depends entirely on the decisions coming from the artworld. In his view it takes only an agent carrying an artworld licence to confer the status of art on objects which are candidates for arthood. The decisions about arthood in Dickie's version are then more

unconstrained than in the case of Danto, and what finally matters is the verdict of the artworld.

Dickie's other requirement as to the objects-to-be-art, one that is not found in Danto's theory, is that they be artifacts. Dickie puts forward artifactuality as a *genus* of art and qualifies it as a very simple quality of works of art.<sup>12</sup> The artifactuality condition seems to him to be virtually self-evident and for that reason he does not define "artifact" or "artifactuality" and does not offer much discussion of it in Art and the Aesthetic. His idea is that artistic creativity requires that some kind of artifact be produced. He takes artifactuality to be the key to creativity and he believes that artifactuality, as such, can expand the scope and variety of art.

In contrast to Danto, who speaks of the ontological difference between artworks and real objects and introduces the artwork / physical thing distinction, Dickie avoids ontological issues; in his theory artworks are physically identical to real objects.<sup>13</sup> He does not follow, then, Danto's thinking about artworks as "not as real as real objects," although he admits that he considers Danto's argument about indistinguishable objects "a solid contribution to the philosophy of art."<sup>14</sup> The condition of artifactuality as a necessary condition for art persists through

all the reformulations of Dickie's theory. One may suspect that Dickie thinks that Danto also takes artworks to be artifacts and does not elaborate this feature of artworks only because he takes it for granted. Because of this view of Danto's theory Dickie somehow loses sight of the fact that Danto's approach is not as traditional in this respect as his own, and that Danto's analyses do not fixate on objects as much as his do.

Dickie's artifactuality condition seems pretty elementary indeed, until he brings in the driftwood example and gives a controversial account of a piece of driftwood as an artifact. Dickie claims that driftwood can be a work of art in the classificatory sense of the term; this can be achieved through artifactualization. He holds that a natural object can become an artifact "without the use of tools" by having its artifactuality conferred upon it.<sup>15</sup> Thus, for Dickie, there exist two distinct ways of being an artifact: by having been made and by having had the status of artifactuality conferred upon it.

This account of artifactuality shows that Dickie does not treat artifacts as a natural class of objects. Rather, it suggests that artifactuality has to do with some special practices performed within an institution. On this view, the artifactual aspect of works of art is presented as their institutional aspect. Dickie

holds that the act of the conferral of artifactuality is similar to that of the conferral of the status of the candidate for appreciation. Conferral of artifactuality may take place at the same time as conferral of status of candidate for appreciation, although independently of what makes an object a candidate for appreciation. In both cases, however, human intervention is necessary and thus, on Dickie's account, works of art turn out to be man-made objects, the products of a conscious human activity.<sup>16</sup>

Dickie's account of artifactuality departs from the usual meaning of artifactuality, which contains the idea of modification by work or craftsmanship. Such a treatment of artifactuality is due, it seems, to his attempt to give legitimacy to ready-mades and to give permission to artists to produce as work of art whatever they might like. In this way, Dickie, more than Danto, sanctions absolute absence of restraints and turns out to be excessively liberal.

Dickie says that he rejects the aesthetic account of art. In that, one might think that he just wants to follow Danto's opinion. Unlike Danto, however, he makes a reference to appreciation in his definition: an artifact has to be a candidate for appreciation before it can become a work of art. Yet he does not specify what kind of appreciation he has in mind and defines it to mean "in

experiencing the qualities of a thing one finds them worthy or valuable." <sup>17</sup> Any attempt to fill out Dickie's formula by specifying the nature of appreciation leads to difficulties. One would ordinarily read appreciation as "aesthetic appreciation", although Dickie himself denies that he specifically means aesthetic appreciation. He insists throughout that his position on the nature of art is like Danto's, i.e. anti-aesthetic. It therefore seems to be against Dickie's intentions to call the appreciation he has in mind the "aesthetic appreciation". Indeed, for some time now, Dickie has been trying to do away with the idea of the aesthetic and he succeeded in discrediting the influential aesthetic notions of aesthetic experience and aesthetic attitude.<sup>18</sup> He even once suggested that "aesthetic" is a vacuous term, yet, in spite of this reservation, he seems to mean "the aesthetic appreciation".<sup>19</sup> Under the influence of his discussion with Cohen Dickie agrees that an object to be made a candidate for appreciation must be potentially appreciable.<sup>20</sup> The very fact that an artifact is set for appreciation provides the artworld member with a reason to make a decision about the arthood of the object. In so doing, Dickie builds a constraint on the object into his definition. He agrees that the aesthetic value is a prerequisite for making an object art. He appears to maintain that the presentation of objects for appreciation is baseless unless there is an intrinsic quality in the object which justifies this

presentation.

Yet, he seems to be confused on the subject of appreciation. He sometimes feels that "if something cannot be appreciated it cannot be art", while at other times he claims that the existence of objects that cannot be appreciated seems unlikely.<sup>21</sup> In other words, he renders the appreciability condition vacuous. Altogether Dickie treats the problem of appreciation rather superficially and the notion of appreciation becomes a problematic element in his theory.

Dickie does not require that the object be actually appreciated; in fact he maintains that being unappreciated does not deprive the object of the possibility of becoming art. The requirement of actual appreciation in the definition of art would, according to him, spoil his project of giving a classificatory definition: "it would make impossible to speak of unappreciated works of art," which is something we do.<sup>22</sup> All that Dickie requires for an object to be defined as art is the state of candidacy for appreciation. In other words, he presents appreciation as such as a factor of secondary importance; status conferral being much more significant.

Dickie connects the problem of candidacy for appreciation

with the question of those aspects of the object which are included and those which are excluded from appreciation. This leads to the notion of the aesthetic object and its relation to the work of art. On Dickie's view, the aesthetic object of the work of art is an entity constituted by conventions and not by the criterion of perceptibility.<sup>23</sup> This entity does not comprise all the aspects of the work of art. It comprises only those singled out for appreciation by conventions operating in a society.<sup>24</sup> Thus, for Dickie, conventions as they exist in the particular cultural context are what define the boundary between the aesthetic and the non-aesthetic.

Dickie attempts to distinguish art artifacts from all other artifacts in the second part of his definition. He comes up there with the idea of the conferral of the status of the candidate for appreciation. This is to be the looked for *differentia* of art. While Danto speaks about the function of art and discusses the point of art, Dickie puts the emphasis on the action of conferring the status of the candidate for appreciation. Actually, this particular procedure interests him more than anything else. He believes that it is the procedure, as opposed to Danto's function, which gives rise to the concept of art and which has to become a part of the definition of art.

Dickie talks about the procedure because he uses Duchamp's case of conferring the status of art as a common denominator for all cases of artistic conferring. He believes that in the case of Duchamp's ready-mades it is, indeed, what was done to the objects that matters most in their becoming works of art. He is convinced that he is quite right to look for insight into the nature of art by studying what it was that Duchamp did to the plumbing fixture to transform it into *Fountain*. He declares that dadaism most easily reveals the institutional essence of art and he is obviously indebted to Duchamp for his insight on the tie of art and institution. In that, he differs greatly from Danto.

For Dickie, ready-mades bring out the established practice of the artworld, that of performing conferrals.<sup>25</sup> Out of the multiplicity of existing interpretations of ready-mades he chooses the one that says that they are examples of the conferral of the art status. Dickie believes that by presenting *Fountain*, Duchamp performed a certain action on the plumbing fixture, that of conferring the status of a candidate for appreciation on it. He thinks that by referring to this action he is only reinforcing the point made by Duchamp who, in his turn, only revealed what had, all along, been a common practice in the world of art but which had, so far, passed unnoticed. He therefore feels entitled to elaborate the principle of status conferring into a universal device for making works of art. He presents the creation of art as a certain

action and stresses the *milieu* that allows it to be without referring to the function of art and its significance in people's lives. His method is to analyze the artistic conferral by invoking the conferrals carried on outside the artistic context. Thus, Dickie likens art making to christening; his conception is that artistic conferral and christening are perfectly equivalent situations in which a requisite status is received by an object. He sees the analogy in the fact that neither needs a ceremony and yet both must take place within a certain framework.

Dickie believes that the action performed by Duchamp is basically a verbal act and he seems convinced that *Fountain* is an example of a work being made art by simply being called "art". He believes that Duchamp's action is a declaration, an uttering of certain words - calling something art. He construes it as an Austinian illocution, an ordinary illocution, i.e. a speech act, with performative force.<sup>26</sup> However, Dickie's opponents, for the most part, refer to Duchamp's action as pseudo-performative, a quasi-speech act which lacks the force of ordinary illocution and which only sounds "as though the act of calling a thing art makes it art."<sup>27</sup> Notwithstanding these critiques, Dickie presents Duchamp's action and the status conferring as purely verbal behaviour, merely dubbing an object a work of art, some sort of a language game. He holds the view that calling something "art"

makes it art and that a verbal gesture can increase the number of artworks in the world. Since he does not mention any constraints, his statement, that objects become art simply by the act of status conferral, becomes a more sophisticated way of saying that artmaking consists in saying that something is art.

Dickie divorces the act of status conferral from Duchamp's knowledge about the artworld of his time, especially his readiness for innovations, and from Duchamp's necessary familiarity with the history of European art. However, he stresses the importance of the background against which this act is performed. This can be seen most clearly by Dickie's treatment of Duchamp and that of a salesman of plumbing devices: he reduces the difference between them to the difference of settings in which they work. Dickie stresses that one setting may be much more congenial to art than the other. He does not deny the arbitrariness involved in the procedure of the status conferral. In his view, it is a positive feature because it admits and even encourages frivolity and caprice of art and yet it does not lose the serious purpose of art.

Dickie insists that his conferral only makes sense when it is done "on behalf of the artworld" but he does not go into sufficient details to explain what he exactly means by this. He allows conferral to be bestowed by anybody who "considers himself to be a

member of the artworld" and he seems to reduce it to one person's act of will. It seems that in fact he thinks that everybody is empowered to make art. In this sense, Dickie's theory endorses in a camouflaged way the opinion that everybody can be an artist and that everything can be art. His insistence, however, that the conferral be done on behalf of the artworld, hence by a body of people, makes of artmaking a social, institutional act.

Dickie, like Danto, is explicit on the fact that Dada works and ready-mades especially are extremely valuable for the theory of art, regardless of their worth as works of art. When trying to grasp the nature of art Dickie focuses his attention on ready-mades and Duchamp's *Fountain* becomes his favourite example of the work of art. Just as Warhol's *Brillo Box* plays the same role for Danto. In doing so, Dickie assumes, without any hesitation, that anything modernist avant-garde put forward in the name of art is art. This premise, in the same manner as it did for Danto, becomes the point of departure of his theorizing. Furthermore, he understands his philosophical task to be the demonstration of how it is so. Along with Danto he agrees that Dada, which encouraged some theoreticians to abandon defining art altogether, in his case serves as an incentive to pursue it; albeit in a particular direction. Thus, Dada serves to support two different theories of art. Dickie shows an awareness of the ambiguous nature of ready-mades and of

Duchamp's declarations, which hold them sometimes to be art and sometimes to be non-art. He is not, however, discouraged by this slippery character of ready-mades, nor by the contradictory content of Duchamp's statements. He knows that ready-mades are objects with which "something strange happened", and that Duchamp's remarks are the sort of remarks "to be expected from a dadaist."<sup>28</sup> In the light of this knowledge he admits, rather hastily, modernist works as art. Not only does Dickie make recurrent references to the notorious *Fountain*, he actually recognizes *Fountain* as a central case of art. Dickie therefore assumes quite a permissive and overly tolerant attitude toward the most controversial phenomena of modern art. The interpretation he accords Duchamp and his ready-mades varies from Danto's. Yet, it does not change the fact that, following Danto in his acceptance of Duchamp, Dickie is erecting his theory on very unsafe foundations.

There is a circularity in Dickie's theory of art, although it is of a different sort than in Danto's theory. Dickie attempts to define art by referring to the artworld while the artworld exists only because works of art exist. Logically, works of art exist prior to the artworld and they constitute the only reason for its development: the institution is said to grow around them. Yet, Dickie does not explain how the artworld comes to exist prior to the existence of works of art. If the existence of works of art is

dependant on the artworld, Dickie does not explain how the first work of art could have come into being since there would have been no artworld to do the conferring of the status. He seems to be well aware of the circularity involved but he does not consider it a serious vice. He holds that his definition is nevertheless informative and not viciously circular. Besides, he suspects circularity to be unavoidable "when institutional concepts are dealt with."<sup>29</sup>

### 3. The Shortcomings of Dickie's Definition of Art

The vast amount of criticism that has followed Dickie's theory undermines Dickie's attempt to follow Danto and to offer a new definition of art. The critique of Dickie's theory shows that following Danto and tailoring a definition of art to avant-garde objects is a risky undertaking and harmful to aesthetic theory. Dickie's definition of art fits *Fountain* very comfortably but that is taken to be a drawback.<sup>30</sup> Dickie responds that he might abandon modelling his theory on ready-mades. He points out that he could drop ready-mades and still have his theory going but this does not seem likely. The will to enfranchise anti-art into a theory of art inherited from Danto makes Dickie's theory turn out to be a disappointment. The objections raised against it count powerfully against it and against its source of inspiration, Danto's theory of

art. To a great degree, Dickie's indebtedness to Danto is the reason his account is open to so much controversy. Of course, the critique also shows that Dickie's theory is lacking in several other respects. It tries to prove that Dickie's argumentation is flawed, that he is mistaken in his opinions, that, in other words, his theory has troubles of its own nature. In some cases those inadequacies are due to gaps in the definition which could perhaps be remedied. However, in other instances, Dickie seems to be confused and his account would have to be modified to meet the objections raised.

In addition, the critique also shows that the kind of theory Dickie tries to present, i.e. that art is institutional, is impossible to defend. While agreeing that art is inextricably bound with social institutions Wieand, for instance, denies that any of them would be so crucial as to determine the nature of art.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, Morton reduces Dickie's notion of the institution to mean just any cultural context. In his sense belonging to an institution would mean participating in a culture, which is pretty shallow.<sup>32</sup> The anti-institutional argument is found also in Beardsley who, exploring whether art is essentially or only contingently institutional, decides in favour of contingency. He believes that art would be truly institutional if the possession of aesthetic qualities were shown to depend directly on the

existence of an institution. If art is only contingently institutional, this is not, in Beardsley's opinion, of philosophical importance in questions of the nature of art.<sup>33</sup> The heaviest blow for Dickie's theory however, comes from Wollheim, who formulates a powerful dilemma: he wonders whether the work is presented by the artist to the artworld public for some good reasons or for no good reasons at all. In his opinion, to accept that there is no reason is to accept that the object is art before any institutional action, which means that Dickie's theory is not institutional. To consent to the absence of reasons implies lack of importance of art as a cultural phenomenon and puts in doubt the enterprise of constructing a theory of art.<sup>34</sup> It is not without reason therefore that McFee sees in Wollheim's argument "the potential to undermine institutional theories of all stripes".<sup>35</sup>

Thus, Dickie's version of Danto's concept of the artworld seems questionable and inadequate to be used interchangeably with the concept of the institution. Dickie's Institutional Theory of Art not only proves to be faulty in its account of art's nature but it also fails to enlighten us to what a theory of art should be like. The question is whether Dickie has any theory to offer at all should his institutional account of the nature of art turn out to be implausible. This need not mean, of course, that Dickie's

theory is entirely without interest or significance. One could possibly think about some ways of "repairing" it and saving Dickie against some of the criticisms that his account has raised. While some critics admit that Dickie is right in his insight and that his work "is one of the most salubrious of recent efforts to say what art is," hardly anybody has undertaken to defend the Institutional Theory of Art.<sup>36</sup> In any case, the number of such attempts remains out of proportion to the number of papers refuting Dickie's theory.<sup>37</sup>

It will, it seems, be legitimate to conclude that Dickie's example demonstrates that defining art is not a very revelatory activity and that probably too much has been expected from it.

In this chapter I believe I have shown in what way Dickie disagrees with Danto's version of the character of art and how he reveals conferral of the status of art to be the crucial element of arthood. I have also tried to point out how Dickie fails to characterize art as an institution and consequently invites objections to his theory of art.

## NOTES

1

Dickie took interest in Danto's definition still before the publication of Danto's The Transfiguration of the Commonplace.

2

G.Dickie, Art and the Aesthetic (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974) 28.

3

Danto and Dickie themselves have taken pains to distance themselves from each other. Dickie discusses Danto's three articles and points to the elements where their theories diverge. G.Dickie, The Art Circle (New York: Haven Publications, 1984) 17-27. Danto also devotes some pages to Dickie's theory and says that it would be wrong to regard his theory as another version of the Institutional Theory of Art. A.Danto, The Transfiguration of the Commonplace (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981) 91-95.

4

Dickie, Art and the Aesthetic 34. I will make this definition of art a core of the discussion on Dickie's idea of the nature of art since most critics agree that Dickie's theory of art is what he says in Art and the Aesthetic.

5

Dickie works out his account of art in a series of articles and books published over a number of years. As a result, there exist two formulations of Dickie's definition of art prior to the version from Art and the Aesthetic

1) "A work of art in the descriptive sense is 1. an artifact 2. upon which some society or some subgroup of a society has conferred the status of candidate for appreciation. G.Dickie, "Defining Art," American Philosophical Quarterly 6 (1969): 254.

2) "A work of art in the classificatory sense is 1. an artifact 2. upon which some person acting on behalf of certain social institution (the artworld) has conferred the status of the candidate for appreciation / G.Dickie, Aesthetics: An Introduction (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1971) 101.

6

Still another definition appears in Dickie, The Art Circle 80-82. Dickie responds there to his critics and erases crucial flaws in his previous arguments. The new account consists of a sequence of five linked definitions arranged in a non-linear order of which the second corresponds to the definition from Art and the Aesthetic. The definition from The Art Circle is

treated here as a most recent reformulation and a fresh articulation of Dickie's theory from Art and the Aesthetic, and not as Dickie's theory proper.

7

Dickie, Art and the Aesthetic 29. It seems that Dickie conceives of the artworld as a subclass in a society. Emphasizing that art is a function of a social context Dickie directs aesthetic considerations on the sociological path.

8

Dickie, Art and the Aesthetic 31.

9

Dickie, Art and the Aesthetic 35.

10

G. Dickie, "Why Not Both?," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 45 (1987): 297.

11

As a matter of fact, Dickie considers the vagueness of his concept of the artworld a virtue and wants to keep it the way it is. He believes that it allows better for "radical creativity, adventuresomeness and exuberance of art." Dickie, Art and the Aesthetic 33.

12

Dickie opposes his view on artifactuality to that of Weitz. M. Weitz, "The Role of Theory in Aesthetics," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 15 (1956). Weitz argues there that an object need not be an artifact to be considered an artwork. He argues it against most philosophers who used to take this feature of art for granted. Most attempts to give analysis of the concept "work of art" are "artifact plus" analyses. See G. Iseminger, "The Work of Art as Artifact," British Journal of Aesthetics 13 (1973): 3.

13

Ontologically speaking one could say that Dickie seeks the principle of the ontological difference between artworks and ordinary things in an institution.

14

Dickie, The Art Circle 25.

15

Dickie, Art and the Aesthetic 45. The notion of status conferral appears in Dickie's theory in three contexts: Dickie speaks about the conferring of the status of artifactuality, the conferring of the status of the candidate for appreciation,

and finally about the conferring of the status of art. However, as Margolis remarks, the differences between these three notions are not sorted out in Art and the Aesthetic. See, J.Margolis, rev.of Art and the Aesthetic, by G.Dickie, Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 33 (1975): 342. The situation becomes clear only in The Art Circle where the first two notions are dropped and only the conferring of the status of art remains.

- 16 This human intervention proves decisive in the case of monkey paintings or children's paintings: their possible status as art is relative to what a representative of the artworld does with them. Such a presentation of art making as decision taking involves the concept of intentionality. It implies a conscious human activity, a creator's intention to make art.
- 17 Dickie, Art and the Aesthetic 41.
- 18 R.McGregor, "Dickie's Institutionalized Aesthetic," British Journal of Aesthetics 17 (1977): 3.
- 19 G.Dickie, "Art Narrowly and Broadly Speaking," American Philosophical Quarterly 5 (1968): 72.
- 20 T.Cohen, "The Possibility of Art," Philosophical Review 82 (1973): 69-82. Cohen believes that there are certain objects that cannot be appreciated and that consequently there are certain constraints on being an art object in the object itself.
- 21 Dickie, Art and the Aesthetic 42.
- 22 Dickie, Art and the Aesthetic 40.
- 23 Lord sees convention as the notion central to Dickie's theory. She associates conventions with oppression which, in her view, stands in opposition to the traditional thinking of art as involving freedom, originality and spontaneity. See, C. Lord, "Convention and Dickie's Institutional Theory of Art," British Journal of Aesthetics 20 (1980): 322-328.
- 24 The example given of this is the Chinese theatre. Generally speaking, Dickie's theory is modelled on theatre, whereas Danto's is modelled on painting or, as some want it, on New

York painting of 1961-69.

25

This is not the only possible interpretation of Duchamp's ready-mades. Some see them as a protest against machine age, e.g. R.Nash, "Dickie: Defining Art and Falsifying Dada," Journal of Aesthetic Education 15 (1981); as a protest to ridicule the way society values art, e.g. P. Crowther. "Art and Autonomy," British Journal of Aesthetics 21 (1981); as expressing a panaesthetic idea that beauty is to be found everywhere, e.g. S. Goldsmith, "The Ready-Mades of Marcel Duchamp," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 42 (1983).

26

Eaton stresses the connection between speech acts and intentions. M.Eaton, Art and Nonart (London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1983) 102.

27

M.C.Beardsley, The Aesthetic Point of View (New York: Cornell University Press, 1982) 313.

28

G. Dickie, "What Is Anti-Art?," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 33 (1975): 420.

29

Dickie, Art and the Aesthetic 44. Dickie acknowledges the circularity of his definition but plays down its harmfulness. He appeals to the fact that his definition is informative and that it communicates quite a lot about the artworld. What matters for Dickie is the distance the information travels and it is the length of this route that in his opinion prevents his definition from being discarded for being viciously circular.

Lord argues that the circularity in Dickie's definition is a cover-up for indexicality. She claims that the artworld can be pointed at ostensibly as "this" artworld and that "thisness" can break the circle. C.Lord, "Indexicality, Not Circularity: Dickie's New Definition of Art," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 47 (1987).

30

Cohen 79.

31

J.Wieand, "Can There Be an Institutional Theory of Art?," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 39 (1981): 416. Wieand agrees to talk about art as institution but only in the sense of an established and characteristic feature of our society. He considers it a theoretically uninteresting notion which

does not advance our understanding of the nature of art.

- 32 B.Morton, "George Dickie: Aesthetics - a Review," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 32 (1973): 117.
- 33 M.C.Beardsley, "Is Art Essentially Institutional?," Culture and Art, ed. L.Aagaard-Mogensen (Atlantic Highlands, N.Y.: Humanities Press, 1976) 194-209.
- 34 R.Wollheim, "The Institutional Theory of Art," Art and Its Objects 2nd. edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980) 157-166.
- 35 G.McFee, rev. of The Art Circle, by George Dickie, British Journal of Aesthetics 26 (1986): 74.
- 36 Cohen 69. Remark made on an early proposal of Dickie's definition as it appears in Dickie's "Defining Art".
- 37 For the defence of the institutional theory of art see C.Donnell-Kotrozo, "In Defence of G.Dickie," Journal of Aesthetic Education 16 (1982): 55-64.

## CHAPTER THREE

## CHAPTER 3

## SECOND THOUGHTS ABOUT DANTO'S THEORY:

## TILGHMAN'S CRITIQUE

In this chapter I discuss Tilghman's Wittgensteinian critique of Danto's theory of art. My purpose is to present Tilghman's reading of the question "what is art?" as "but is it art?" i.e. as a question about how to approach an object already classified as art. In addition, I want to accentuate Tilghman's position that it is the aesthetic that decides about the nature of art.

1. Tilghman's Attack on Danto's Theory of Art

Apart from Dickie, who showed deep interest in Danto's ideas, Danto's articles received little critical attention in the beginning. It seems that their philosophical significance had been, in a way, overlooked. Despite novel implications for a theory of art, only a handful of commentators paid any attention to Danto's publications.<sup>1</sup> The commentators focused mostly on three notions: that of the artworld, that of a theory of art, and that of "aboutness". There were scattered remarks on the notion of a statement and the "is" of artistic identification as well. There

was a general consensus among Danto's critics at this stage that these notions should have been explained in a more thorough way to bear the burden that he placed upon them. But after the publication of The Transfiguration of the Commonplace this charge was less heard. Yet the feeling remained that "his theory is as remarkable for the questions it doesn't ask as for those it asks and answers."<sup>2</sup>

Benjamin Tilghman's book But Is It Art ? attacks the essence of Danto's view as it is expressed in The Transfiguration of the Commonplace.<sup>3</sup> It is a devastating attack since it questions Danto's theory all along the line starting with Danto's very point of departure, his methodology and his point of arrival. In other words, it is a total critique of Danto's theory. Point by point, every opinion of Danto's is subjected to critical scrutiny. This book goes, however, beyond discussing Danto's theory and Tilghman appears in it to be more than a critic of Danto. He promotes his own view on the nature of art, which is a typically Wittgensteinian one. He does more than follow Wittgenstein, however. He reconstructs Wittgenstein's views to the degree that his book may claim "interpretive novelty".<sup>4</sup>

Danto is criticised by Tilghman along five major lines. These are: Danto's endeavour to construct a theory of art ; Danto's

ontology of art and the transfiguration metaphor; Danto's use of the classificatory / evaluative dichotomy ; Danto's failure to give an account of the aesthetic and Danto's thesis about the semantic nature of art.

Danto believes in the possibility and purposefulness of constructing a theory of art.<sup>5</sup> But Tilghman is one who finds the endeavour to construct a theory of art pointless. Like most anti-theorists Tilghman thinks that traditional and contemporary theories of art bring no solutions to aesthetic problems at all. He is against this urge that pushes aestheticians to construct theories, formulate definitions or give any other systematic accounts of art. Tilghman, however, does not consider defining art unfeasible, e.g. logically impossible, but tries to argue that "the very idea of a theory or a definition is a confused one."<sup>6</sup> He is ready to see any such attempt as nonsensical.

In order to explain his own aversion towards theorizing he appeals to Wittgenstein's analysis of the concept of "a game". This concept served in the classic interpretation of Wittgenstein as a paradigm of "art" and its exegesis gave reasons to refuse art theorizing altogether. Tilghman shows that the interpretation of game as a parallel for art is mistaken. He points out that it is not that games cannot reveal their common properties but that

the very idea of "a common property" is confused. If discussed out of context, Tilghman holds, the idea is ambiguous for it does not state the conditions of any purposeful comparison. And if, as Wittgenstein wants it, this "something in common" is to be asserted by looking and seeing, then Tilghman demands that we make exact the purpose of looking. He says that to decide about an object that it is art "we must have something in mind, some point to make, some contrast to mark, some job to do."<sup>7</sup> Tilghman maintains that, just as in the case of "game" we do not teach "game" by describing a game, we do not teach "art" by describing works of art. In his opinion we teach "art" by teaching the appreciation of art. Enjoying art, appreciating and understanding it all have a conceptual importance for him.

Tilghman thus takes a pragmatic approach in which the problem of the nature of art is seen as a practical one, one that is bred by real life situations. He thinks that if we approach this problem otherwise than Wittgenstein's "look and see" can only be taken metaphorically.

Tilghman discredits Kennick's "warehouse experiment".<sup>8</sup> He takes it to be an example of "language gone on holiday", an experiment that worked only by mere chance. Demonstrating his commitment to praxis, Tilghman turns against Danto because Danto

does not take into consideration either the ways of dealing with works of art or the attitudes connected with them, which is an implicit rejection of "the look and see" directive.

It is from this anti-theoretical position that Tilghman demands that one's knowledge of art be directly applied to help understand and appreciate works of art and not just explain the nature of the concept of art. But, strangely enough, in objecting to Danto's theorizing, Tilghman does not object to all "cravings for generality" that may urge philosophers to make generalizations. In fact, he comes up with his own definition of a "theory". He takes "theory" to be the name for the various ways people have tried to stand outside practice, and not for the attempt to lay down the necessary and sufficient conditions for art or to explain the meaning of the word "art".<sup>9</sup>

Tilghman believes that Danto's argument misses the point not only by being purely theoretical but by being badly constructed. He challenges the initial step of Danto's theory of art. He disagrees strongly with Danto's strategy and consequently with the rest that follows from it.

His first objection is to Danto's assumption that the set of examples of artworks he considers is in fact a set of works of art.

In other words, he does not accept the idea of a theory of art to accept as art questionable items that may not be art at all. Admitting that *Fountain* or *Brillo Box* is a work of art when there is no consensus on it is to Tilghman question begging. He sees it as too hasty of a decision and one that has grave consequences for the theory. He thus disputes Danto's starting point.<sup>10</sup>

Tilghman discusses all the confusion involved in the eventuality of taking all the controversial, dubious items which Danto presents as being undoubtedly artworks, for *bona fide* specimens of art. For Tilghman, and not for Danto, Duchamp's ready-mades and conceptual art should be treated rather as "cultural bombs placed in the networks of art world."<sup>11</sup>

In Tilghman's opinion dematerialization of the art object and its deaesthetization are among the greatest dangers that modernist art poses to all art. That is why Tilghman does not hesitate to contrast modernist art with "real art".<sup>12</sup> He insists that Danto's initial move needs an argument which Danto does not provide; for him Danto clearly takes too much for granted.<sup>13</sup>

Having challenged Danto's point of departure, Tilghman then refuses the rest of Danto's strategy too. He presents it as a method relying upon first identifying an object as a work of art and then describing it by reading off its characteristics. And to

vindicate the artistic status of the initial set of objects by showing that they possess artistic ingredients isolated from the initial group by means of a theory is, to Tilghman, question begging. He calls such a method "a natural history method," as he sees here a similarity between the treating of works of art and the study of biological species.<sup>14</sup>

After having questioned both Danto's starting point and his strategy Tilghman, naturally enough, has problems in accepting his conclusion. To see *Brillo Box* as a metaphor, in the way that Danto's theory demands, requires seeing it first as art and it is at this point that Tilghman is at a loss. For he has difficulties with seeing artness in it. He cannot make the connections with what he knows to be art. Here, his opinions really diverge from Danto's and Tilghman comes close to denying arthood to objects of the *Brillo Box* kind. And although he offers no-knockdown argument to the conclusion that the objects that Danto considers artistic are not really art - nobody else really does - he brings to light the fact that it is far from certain that they are art. He appeals to the use of common sense and urges us to be critical about bizarre works of art. His proposal is to eliminate the most doubtful cases on a case by case basis. Tilghman directs this appeal not only to Danto but to "many other natives of the artworld" who have also called these objects art. He claims that

philosophers of art in general should not accept with tranquillity what he would be willing to call "the jokes" perpetrated by those who act on behalf of the artworld.<sup>15</sup> In the same spirit he condemns the humility of critics and their readiness to accept anything as art. In other words, he demands resistance in face of the dubious doings of the artworld. He prefers the sceptical attitude, although he realizes that a convincing argument that some such objects are not art cannot be provided.

. Danto believes that the major problem in philosophy of art consists in identifying the difference between a work of art and a mere thing. He refuses to "flatten" an artwork into its material base and so he concentrates on ontological investigations. The Wittgensteinians, of course, dismiss the idea that there are ontological issues involved in deciding what is art. They do not think that the distinction that Danto draws between artworks and real things can be a clue to the nature of art. Danto's central claim is that identical looking objects may be ontologically different. But Tilghman fails to understand this "anti-egalitarian attitude" and treats Danto's argument as misconceived and irrelevant. At one place he proposes to consider one object only where Danto obviously discusses two and wonders about the difference between analyzing one and analyzing two.<sup>16</sup> It is clear that Tilghman is inclined to see Danto's method as some

"ontological manoeuvre".<sup>17</sup> At any rate, he calls Danto's examples "curiosities".<sup>18</sup> He comes close to qualifying as a joke or nonsense what Danto takes to be a serious philosophical problem.<sup>19</sup>

Tilghman sees in Danto's approach the heritage of Cartesian dualism and refuses to accept that the difference between a work and its material base is like that between soul and body.<sup>20</sup> In order to dismiss the value of the ontological approach to art Tilghman destroys the basic idea underlying Danto's insight for his ontological orientation. To do this, he reinterprets Wittgenstein's subtractionistic query, so as to say, that the parallel from the philosophy of action that likens actions and bodily movements on the one hand, and artworks and real things on the other, does not work. Specifically, he attempts to show that it does not yield the ontological remainder. Tilghman believes Danto to be wrong in presupposing that Wittgenstein's answer to this subtraction- that nothing is left over - was wrong. He thinks that Danto's attempt to put Wittgenstein right is a trap for Danto: it only leads Danto to believe that there is an ontological issue involved in the question of what constitutes a work of art. Tilghman considers it a bogus issue and would like to solve the problem of the nature of art by reference to understanding and appreciation. He is sure that there is no need at all to raise ontological questions and no reason to examine the use of such terms as "a bodily movement"

and "an action". He demonstrates that both of these terms, when used in a context, leave no room for the problem of the ontological remainder to arise.

Besides, he shows Danto is wrong on his attempt to answer Wittgenstein's subtractionistic query. In Tilghman's opinion this question was never meant for an answer. He attributes the temptation to answer it to the ignoring of the context and sees it as another instance of Danto's Cartesian syndrome. In sum, he thinks that ontological investigations arise from mixing up critical questions about interpretation with questions about identifying objects and distinguishing them.<sup>21</sup>

Danto's transfiguration metaphor is also a problem for Tilghman. Tilghman thinks that it is futile to talk about the agency of transfiguration which, according to Danto, transforms real objects into artworks. While Danto writes pages in the effort to inquire into the logic of such a feat, Tilghman states that "there is no feat to inquire into."<sup>22</sup> Again, Tilghman makes context central and shows that when considered contextually real objects do not undergo any such translation: they just remain real objects. In this way, Tilghman tries to prove that Danto's attempt to account with his theory for ready-mades and to accommodate into art the apparently transfigured objects by means of a special

agency is a failure. He holds that when we treat objects contextually, there is no need for transfiguration or any other power that would change the ontological status of objects.<sup>3</sup> He also claims that art occupies a clear and distinct place in life just because art is a distinct stuff.

Tilghman fails to understand the idea behind Danto's attempt to enlarge the range of objects considered art. He holds to the area demarcated by the concept of the aesthetic which occupies a separate fragment of reality and melts with the rest of it only to the extent in which reality is aesthetic itself. Besides, he demonstrates the vagueness of the concept of the "real thing" by pointing to several possible readings of the term. He shows that if by "real thing" we mean "physical thing", then it is not adequate, for, as in case of *Fountain*, even its physical base is culturally informed. Notably, Tilghman admits that he does not understand Danto's strategy and that he takes his preoccupation with ambiguous cases of art for the weakness of his theory. For him, Danto's theory absorbs what is not fit to be included in a theory of art. In Tilghman's opinion, instead of engaging in a border dispute, the responsibility of a philosopher should be to exclude the cases that could mar the distinctions. When Danto insists that "art makes nothing happen," Tilghman makes repeated claims that art is important, that its significance has not waned

and that it makes sense to continue talking about its classic examples. In other words, he questions the principle of selectivity of evidence on which Danto draws.

## 2. Tilghman's Interpretation of the Question

### "What Is Art?"

Danto's primary objective in studying the nature of art is to give the classificatory notion of an artwork. He rejects all the evaluative connotations this term might suggest and engages in an abstract, descriptive search. This contrasts firmly with Tilghman's approach. The very title of his book changes the traditional question, "what is art?", into the question, "but is it art?", a question that requires answering by referring to particular, concrete situations, where the artistic and aesthetic values are at work. This represents a change to Danto's major question "why is this art when something else is not?".<sup>24</sup> Tilghman attributes the motivation to reflect upon art to a misunderstanding concerning an object that is already classified art. His starting point lies, then, already beyond the framework of classification which is the main object of Danto's definitional endeavours. Hence, Tilghman does not accept Danto's classificatory /evaluative division and disagrees with his neutral notion of art.

Tilghman seems to be advocating that only aesthetically successful objects be considered works of art and that those that are defective be eliminated. Discriminating in this way between works of art, he lets in evaluative considerations. He wants a theory of art to accommodate the appreciative questions and he links definition and value. He looks, then, in the direction that Danto eliminated straight off.

For Tilghman pure classification is not sufficient to dispense with the plain man's puzzlement confronting in a museum an object that has already been classified a work of art. He proposes a third possibility which collapses the classificatory and evaluative notions. He claims that the question is not whether the object has been classified properly as art, or whether it is good art. He believes that only the analysis of people's reactions to art can provide the key to conceptual problems concerning the nature of art. In his opinion, even the artworld theories which stress the role of a background knowledge are of no help: in a plain man's situation in a museum it is just his background knowledge that deepens his astonishment and brings about even more confusion. Tilghman holds that the background knowledge about the work of art is vastly insufficient to show what is relevant in the object to its being a work of art.

Holding to his position that an account of art should draw attention to the formal features of the art object, Tilghman does not pay much attention to Danto's notion of the artworld. He considers it not only irrelevant but also extremely vague.<sup>25</sup> Thus, he ignores what lies at the heart of Danto's approach to art.

Tilghman licences his anti-definitional position and his aversion to produce theories of art by charging Wittgenstein with having misleadingly suggested that we can teach the concept of "a game" by describing paradigms of games and by appealing to the family resemblance among them. He maintains that Wittgenstein never meant to use the family resemblance criterion to justify the use of the concept of art. According to Tilghman, this notion has nothing to do with the nature of the properties of things and cannot be used as "a criterion for identifying individuals as members of a class."<sup>26</sup> Hence, he is convinced that, in the light of this interpretation, one will never arrive at the definition of art by appealing to the family resemblances among the works of art. One can discover the nature of art, however, by learning to play games, i.e. by acquiring a certain practice about how to deal with art. Tilghman is convinced that people basically agree in their practices with art. He does not regard these practices as merely conventional but much more deeply rooted into the human nature. He sees them as universal, natural human reactions. He

suggests that art is accessible to everybody. Danto, by contrast, cuts most people away from art. He does it by saying that artistic accessibility is a matter of theoretical knowledge and by equating aesthetic response with a cognitive process. In this way, he "perpetuates an elite academy," opening art to only those scholarly few.<sup>27</sup>

### 3. Tilghman's Aesthetic Versus Danto's Semantic Account of Art

Danto takes both conceptual art and Duchamp's ready-mades to provide strong grounds for rejecting the aesthetic analysis of art and for abandoning talking in terms of the aesthetic conception of art. He says that they engender in him the feeling of insecurity about the significance of the sense data for the concept of art. This raises objections as to the correctness of Danto's reading of modernist art. Danto's pro anti-aesthetic art position entails criticism on the grounds that he had simply misunderstood it.<sup>28</sup> The observation that the transformation of the urinal is, after all, dependent upon an "astute visual manoeuvre" deprives, of course, Danto's theory of art of its most important piece of evidence.<sup>29</sup>

Tilghman demands discussion on *Fountain's* arthood because, for him, the aesthetic is the most essential component of art and

it cannot be replaced with anything else. To him art is generically aesthetic. He says that "it is pointless to try to conceive of art apart from any possible aesthetic character."<sup>30</sup> In spite of the strength of his conviction about the link between art and the aesthetic, he offers no definite account of the aesthetic and it seems that the notion he has in mind is narrow: it comes close to meaning "visual appearance".

Maintaining that the aesthetic qualities are a *sine qua non* condition of art, Tilghman sounds like an "addicted essentialist" who might like to build a theory around this notion. But he rushes to add that it is "not even remotely possible" to construct a theory *via* aspects and secondary uses of words for they are not the "stuff of which theories are wont to be made."<sup>31</sup>

This however, does not change the fact that his aesthetic account contrasts strongly with Danto's anti-aesthetic account and that it puts in relief the major difference between them. Tilghman sees Danto's disconnecting art from the aesthetic as a "disaster" and he totally disagrees that "having a sense of beauty" may not be the same as "having the nose for art."<sup>32</sup>

In his view it is the aesthetic that links art and life and it is in this connection that he locates the function of art and

its meaning. There, he locates the source for appreciation and continuity of the concept of art, of aesthetic pleasure and enjoyment. For Tilghman, the history of art is an illustration of a steady development of the formal element in art, a development without particular ups and downs. He also approaches the art of today as if one were dealing with a period of artistic stability. No wonder that he considers Danto's semantic thesis about the nature of art to have ruined that unity.

Tilghman insists on keeping the link between modern and traditional art. He draws attention to the paradigmatic works of art of the old tradition and points to the existing connections of the formal type. He encourages one to look for the likenesses and similarities with the new art in order to link the puzzling with the familiar. The account of art which accepts that art can do without the aesthetic is bound to destroy, in his view, our contacts with art in general. Danto does not compare *Fountain* with high art (nor with other fountains or urinals), but whenever he talks about great art there is an air of excellence around it. This makes some speculate that it is paradigmatic art of the past that is the source of the transfiguring power in Danto.<sup>33</sup> Tilghman would like to see Danto interpret modern art as asking itself how it can possibly stand up against the aesthetic quality of its great predecessors. It seems that he would rather see Danto

speak of art today as undergoing a crisis of sensibility rather than being anti-aesthetic by programme.<sup>34</sup>

Tilghman is convinced that it is mainly due to the aesthetic element in art that we know how to react to it, and to use, among other things, the artistic vocabulary. Tilghman shows himself to be in favour of Wittgenstein's "look and see" approach, which Danto's approach, insensitive to sensory experiences, ruins. Danto's theory leaves no room for an aesthetic appreciation of an object before giving it an interpretation while Tilghman believes that aesthetic appreciation is the most direct and basic way to approach an art object.

Danto declares that art is interesting for the same reasons that language is and that there is an ontological relationship between these two. Yet, the general feeling is that Danto exaggerates this relationship and that, as a result, his semantic account of the nature of art is reductionistic and distorts the true nature of art.<sup>35</sup>

Tilghman, for instance, gives a qualified approval of Danto's account of the predominantly semantic nature of art. He remains completely indifferent to the "aboutness" factor, which he considers a vague notion of the family resemblance type, and

almost ignores it in his account of Danto's theory.<sup>36</sup>

Tilghman has nothing against locating philosophical problems about art in language. In a typically analytic way, he himself wants to get clear about language before doing aesthetics. He believes that linguistic analysis may illuminate a lot and his own analysis of the aesthetic qualities is itself linguistic in nature. When examining aesthetic qualities he appeals to the habit of using words in their secondary senses. He introduces the notion of the specific art language and speaks about the transfer of "the entire package of language" to a new domain. But there is an indication that Danto's art language is a private language which would mean that the language of the art critic is, therefore, equally as private. Needless to say, such an opinion diminishes the respectability of art criticism in general. In particular, it undermines Danto's idea of placing the key to arthood in the discourse on art.

Crudely put, Tilghman thinks that Danto has gone too far in equating art with language.<sup>37</sup> He believes that with his semantic theses Danto reduced art to words, and thus, distorted its image. He also believes that Danto has corrupted the regular meaning of the word "art", which we know how to use only when "art" implies the aesthetic. He objects to focusing so much interest in the

speech-act quality of art *qua* art. Tilghman refuses to accept the fact that talk about art is all that there is to art. He thinks there is something more to art, but Danto's artworld is constituted only of theories and interpretations and it does not go beyond words.<sup>38</sup>

Moreover, Tilghman questions the validity of Danto's use of such terms as "theory" and "interpretation" to describe what the artworld does with works of art.<sup>39</sup> He challenges Danto's conviction that to talk about art is to give a theory of art, as if to talk about the world, meant to give a theory of the world. He suspects that Danto must have his own notion of a theory. The very fact that Danto's theory explains *Brillo* boxes better than any other kind of art suggests to him that Danto's theory is very much different from any "ordinary theory". Tilghman does not think that all talking is theoretical and that the entirety of language is theoretical.<sup>40</sup> In regard to Mandelbaum's discussion of Ziff's "The Task of Defining Art" he condemns the assumption that there must necessarily be an appeal to theory in whatever we say about art. Thus, he plays down the role the theory has in aesthetics, which is just the opposite of what Danto does. Similarly, he reduces Danto's "interpretation" to a mere description of works of art and advises us to pay attention rather to what we do with them than to their depictions.

In spite of the fact that Tilghman is aware that apart from the aesthetic qualities "there are many different particulars that characterize art", he demonstrates a one-sided approach and may be rightly accused of providing "a set of variations on outdated theories," and of pledging allegiance to some traditional account.<sup>41</sup>

Paradoxically, the very same fault of one-sidedness can also be attributed to Danto. For his rejection of the aesthetic as the essential part of the concept of art in favour of the semantic nature of art produces another reductionistic theory. As a result, moreover, his theory embraces that same sort of essentialism.<sup>42</sup> So, in sum, it is qualified as "undue".<sup>43</sup> This is considered a drawback, especially since, having rejected traditional theories, Danto does not provide an answer to the question how art is to affect us and engage us, if it is not by aesthetic response.<sup>44</sup>

On the whole, for Tilghman it is Danto's declaration that art is a species of language that is most controversial. This linking of art and language makes one want to examine Danto's understanding of language and his vision of the way that language casts light on the nature of art. The suspicion is that the source of critics' troubles with Danto's theory lies in his particular conception of

this relationship. There is a need for a more thorough look at Danto's idea of language in order to explain why he sees art the way he does.

By presenting Tilghman's critique of Danto's theory, I have shown that Danto's theory does not answer all the questions that an observer genuinely interested in art might have. I have tried to direct attention to the fact that there is a problem with Danto's seeing the function of art as predominantly semantic. I have contrasted such an account of art with Tilghman's aesthetic account of art and have pointed out the fact that Danto's semantic vision of art fails to explain the specific place art has in human lives.

## NOTES

1

The first comments on Danto's articles are to be found in: R. Sclafani, "Artworks, Art Theory and the Artworld," Theoria 39 (1973): 18-34 ; F.Sparshott, "Some Questions for Danto," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 35 (1976):79-80; W.Kennick, "Theories of Art and the Artworld," Journal of Philosophy 61 (1964): 585-587.

2

J.Hoaglund, "Some Institutional Theories of Art," Journal of Aesthetic Education 20 (1986): 23.

3

B.Tilghman, But Is It Art? (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, Inc., 1984).

4

G.Iseminger, rev. of But Is It Art?, by B.Tilghman, Journal of Aesthetic Education 20 (1986): 115.

5

At some point Danto also becomes sceptical about constructing theories of art. This brings him closer to Tilghman.

6

Tilghman 187.

7

Tilghman 69.

8

W.Kennick, "Does Traditional Aesthetics Rest on a Mistake?," Mind 67 (1958): 1-21. Tilghman 49-50.

9

This will lead Tilghman to finally yield to "the temptation of theory" (which is a subtitle of But Is It Art?) and to come quite close to Danto and all other theoreticians of art.

10

In expressing this doubt, Tilghman is joined by a number of others who do not consider Danto's examples as ideal examples of artworks and who frown at his being "so willing to enfranchise into art the objects and implications of

recent anti-art". G.Wilson, "Distant Connections," rev.of Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art, by A.Danto, Times Literary Supplement, 9 January 1987, 28.

11

Wilson 28.

12

Tilghman 92.

13

Schier states plainly that Danto "has a wrong idea of what could possibly constitute an example of the works of high modernism" and that he "distorts the nature of our concern for these works." F.Schier, rev.of The State of the Art, by A.Danto, New York Times Book Review, 5 April 1987: 21.

14

B. Tilghman, "Artistic Puzzlement," Culture and Art, ed. L. Aagaard-Mogensen (Atlantic Highlands, N.Y.: Humanities Press, 1976) 133.

15

Compare also Sparshott's opinion on the subject in F.Sparshott, "The Contestability of Artworks," Reasons of Art, ed. P.McCormick (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1985) 129.

16

Tilghman, But Is It Art? 135.

17

Tilghman 95. Tilghman is not alone in his critique of Danto's indistinguishable objects argument. Krukowski, for example, says that Danto introduces "quiddities and oddities" of art and that his argument rests on extreme imagination and extravagant interpretation. L.Krukowski, Art and Concept (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1987) 94.

18

Tilghman 94.

19

Tilghman finds support for his objection to Danto's ontology in Sartwell, who calls Danto's interest in indiscernibles "fascination bordering with obsession" and maintains that Danto's ontological claim is a "fallacy", or at least, that it is "questionable." See C.Sartwell, "Aesthetic Dualism and the Transfiguration of the Commonplace,"

Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 46 (1988): 461-467.

20

Sartwell thinks that Danto has made an overstatement in talking about a soul and a body where, as in the case of *Fountain* and a urinal, we just have to do with the use of the same material for a different purpose. According to him, *Fountain* is just an ordinary urinal / and that is where its originality and a revolutionary character lies as an artwork / and not a urinal with a soul. He maintains that "it is astonishing because it is a urinal which has become a work of art" and that in order to understand it, it is enough to say, that "mere real things can be turned to a variety of purposes". See Sartwell 462.

21

Margolis points out that Danto never really explains how artworks or any other cultural objects are constituted. J.Margolis, "Ontology Down and Out in Art and Science," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 46 (1988): 455.

22

Tilghman 98.

23

There is a similar critique on the part of Sartwell, who attributes Danto's search for the transfigurative power to his ignoring of the time factor: at different moments the very same object may simply be put to different uses. Sartwell 463.

24

Danto believes that the question "But is it art?" contains an implicit generalization and cannot be asked of isolated objects. See A.Danto, The State of the Art (New York: Prentice Hall Press, 1987) 60.

25

The vagueness of the concept of the artworld raises doubts also with other critics. Mothersill calls it "a mere figure of speech." See M. Mothersill, the chapter on "The Anti-Theorists," Beauty Restored (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986) 60.

26

Tilghman 45.

27

S.Goldsmith, "The Ready-Mades of M.Duchamp," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 42 (1983): 204.

28

This idea is included in: F.Schier, rev. of The State of the Art, by A.Danto, New York Times Book Review 5 April 1987: 21; P.Guyer, rev.of Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art, by A.Danto, New York Times Book Review 1 Feb 1987: 23; B.Tilghman, rev.of Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art, by A.Danto, Canadian Philosophical Reviews 7 (1987): 99-100; G. Wilson rev. of Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art, by A.Danto, Times Literary Supplement: 28.

29

R.Sowers, letter, "What Art Is," New York Times Book Review 15 March, 1987.

30

Tilghman 120.

31

Tilghman 188.

32

Danto, Transfiguration 96.

33

J. Hoaglund, "Some Institutional Theories of Art," Journal of Aesthetic Education 20(1986): 23.

34

Schier 21.

35

It is plausible to accept that Danto is a victim of the age of information who believes that communication can only take place through language.

36

Other critics find it intriguing to know how to understand Danto's view about art including in its ontology what it is about and making statements about the slice of reality that it presents. They notice that our concern usually lies with the content of the statement and not just with determining the mere fact of having the statement made. And so, the suspicion is that some special meaning of a statement might be involved here. There are doubts also concerning who is capable of making a statement or deciphering one, and concerning stating procedures to identifying one or evaluating its content or type or truth value.

37

Many other critics also wonder why, if we are interested in art *qua* art, we should be interested in the speech-act quality of art and in the semantic aspect of art in general. See C. Lyas, "Dickie and Danto on Art," Culture and Art, ed. L. Aagaard-Mogensen, (Atlantic Highlands, N.Y.: Humanities Press, 1976) 186.

One may suspect that the reason for Danto's loss of proportion in equating art and language lies in his focusing too much attention on painting: painting being visual and non-verbal needs words to explicate its nature much more than any other art.

38

For the view that there are artworks that do not need an interpretation since they are recognized as artworks by conventions, see D. Novitz, rev. of The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art, by A. Danto, Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 46 (1987): 308.

39

Danto's notion of a theory is a target of numerous questions and objections. Critics find it difficult to accept, although for different reasons than Tilghman. It is unclear whether by "theory" Danto means the familiar theory described in histories of aesthetics and anthologized in books on aesthetics or something much looser and much more general. What remains unclear is Danto's method of testing the acceptability of theories in operation, as well as his criterion to eliminate faulty theories or his criterion to decide the artistic quality of a theory. Many critics conclude, because of that, that Danto's theory turns objects too easily into art.

40

Tilghman 60 and 66.

41

D. Carrier, rev. of But Is It Art?, by B. Tilghman, London Times Review of Books 21 March 1985: 14.

42

R. Shusterman, note 7, "Analytic Aesthetics: Retrospect and Prospect," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 46 Special Issue (1987): 123.

43

Guyer 23.

44

Guyer 23.

## CHAPTER FOUR

## CHAPTER 4

## AN IMPASSE: LANGUAGE AND ART

To set up the problem of an impasse in analytic aesthetics I intend to do three things: First, I want to describe Danto as an adherent of linguistic philosophy who mainly develops a series of reflections on language to deal with the problem of the nature of art. Second, I want to demonstrate that his understanding of language differs essentially from that of Dickie and Tilghman, which gives rise to the diversity of views on the nature of art within analytic aesthetics. At the end of this chapter I want to outline Danto's expanded version of language and to emphasize his reference to history as a means of better grasping the nature of art while, at the same time, I want to emphasize his openness towards other philosophical traditions.

1. Danto as Linguistic Philosopher

Danto's theory of art is a paradigmatic analytic theory. In a typically analytic way Danto draws heavily on language and adopts a linguistic mode of investigation for the purpose of discovering

the nature of art. Like most analytic aestheticians Danto changes the question of "what is art?" into "what things are called art?". He sees nothing peculiar in philosophers mounting inquiries into language and probing what it means for something to be called an "artwork." Thus, he proposes to study the foundations of art by studying language and in this way his theory of art "stands on all fours with the approach adopted by the linguistic philosophy."<sup>1</sup> Danto draws so heavily on language that it may be plausible to accept that his argument about indistinguishable artworks may also have a linguistic origin: it is not difficult to imagine graphically indiscernible sentences which mean very different things because they occur in essentially different texts. It is, therefore, not unusual to ask "why this thing is called art when the other one is not?", which is the specific question Danto's theory addresses.

Danto distinguishes between being able to use the word "art," and being able to say what we mean when we say "art". He adheres to the view that on some occasions one may have to be explicit about what the word "art" means and he takes his theory of art to be such an occasion. He begins his theory by referring to a discourse on art - a description of art as given by art criticism understood to include art theory and art history. In referring to such a highly specified art-language Danto is firmly convinced that we can no

longer rely on ordinary language. He opposes the view that we can assume that native speakers know and agree prior to any theorizing how to use the term "art". Danto believes that ordinary language as used by ordinary people may picture reality with distortion, therefore, he advises caution in its use.

Proceeding this way, Danto puts an end to the native speaker's domination in the discourse on art and eliminates from his investigation all those who participate in talk about art merely on the virtue of knowing English. He holds that ordinary speakers of language today are poor guides into the realm of art. He also holds that a mere use of the colloquial term "art" does not guarantee knowledge of the concept covered by this term, nor the ability to set art apart from non-art. Moreover, he admits the possibility that fluent native speakers may be quite incompetent as to the proper use of the term "art".

In particular, Danto attacks the belief that the examination of the *de facto* use of "art" which may happen to be a reflection of the earlier uses of "art" will reveal why certain things are now called "art". He takes into consideration that for the most part the speakers of today are shocked by new candidates for inclusion under the term "art" and they hesitate to make them a part of the concept of art. Hence, some uses of the term "art" by the heirs of

an older view on art may not be instances of the proper use of the recent concept of art. Thus, they may not be able to refer to an entity that is now a member of the class of works of art.

Danto pronounces "philosophical bankruptcy" of ordinary language analysis and of the investigation of the language everybody knows and uses.<sup>2</sup> He makes it obvious that he is not interested in the term "art" in the way he would be interested in any other word from the English language, chosen at random. "Art" is a philosophical term for him, rather, for which there are principles to be mastered and which should only be used by virtue of expertise and background theoretical knowledge of art. For him, the term "art" is worthy of a philosophical analysis not just because it exists in language, but because it is a theory-laden, technical term and occupies an important place in philosophical discourse on art. Danto believes that philosophers are in a position to do more than just record the linguistic behaviour of the speakers of the language : he is convinced that they can also question it.

That is why, facing borderline cases in art, instead of proposing a mere report on the "extension", "ambiguation", or a "linguistic slackening" of the term "art", Danto tries to formulate its meaning anew. What he is specifically interested in is not

just any application of this term but only its competent use. In a way, he engages in the project of the rational reconstruction of language and intends to lay down *a priori* rules for how the term "art" should be used. For that, he isolates a group of people who are masters in the art language. Danto claims that in order to achieve competence in the linguistic domain one must have the knowledge of the master discourse on art, i.e. history of art and the theory of art. This is why Danto's art experts are required to speak the language of the members of the artworld and, in addition, to know art history and art theory, i.e. the rules for the use of the term " artwork". Danto proposes a view stating that to understand the word "artwork" entails knowing that it is a real thing and having a theory-interpretation of it. In this way he initiates the linguistic domination of the informed critic, an expert in art. He sees him in a position of reforming the use of the term, and consequently, of making the discourse on art more illuminating.

Yet, the understanding of "art" that Danto's experts are trying to force, the one that does not contain the aesthetic, does not match the expectations of the vast majority of the users of the language. The general feeling is that Danto stipulates an entirely new usage of "art", that he creates a neologism that strays too far from the paradigm cases of the use of "art". Actually, Danto's

semantic concept of art, the idea that language is the central factor that decides about arthood and that art is interesting for the same reason as language, is difficult to accept.

2. The Flaws in Danto's Concept of Language and the  
Impasse within Analytic Aesthetics

Not everyone within the analytic school shares Danto's standpoint on language. Actually, he seems to be quite isolated from other analytic philosophers. The drive to locate philosophical problems about art in language also runs throughout Dickie's and Tilghman's theories, however they deviate considerably from Danto in their views on language.

Comparing the views of himself and Danto on the nature of art Dickie makes "aboutness" the crucial notion distinguishing his picture of art most firmly from Danto's.<sup>3</sup> He says that he considers the claim about all art being representational as "false".<sup>4</sup> While Danto analyses the relationship of art and reality, Dickie talks about the space separating art from non-art and thus they focus on two different kinds of relations that art may have. For Dickie, Danto should have explained the distance between art and reality "in some other way" and should not have made "aboutness" a necessary condition for art.<sup>5</sup> Yet, a closer

look at Dickie's comment on Danto's theory reveals that it is not "aboutness" in the sense Dickie understands it that is the major difference between Danto and Dickie.<sup>6</sup> It seems that what essentially distinguishes Danto's theory from Dickie's, although it is reduced to "a matter of no consequence," is the fact that Danto portrays the role of language in explaining the nature of art in different terms than Dickie.<sup>7</sup>

In contrast to Danto, Dickie shows confidence in ordinary language. To explain the nature of art Dickie reaches to the commonplace use of "art". He reveals his position of the linguistic philosopher in his explicit remark that "any theory of art must preserve certain central features of the way we talk about art."<sup>8</sup> Thus, he makes it clear that his theory aims to capture the use of the word "art" that persists today in ordinary talk about art. Dickie is positive that making philosophical decisions about art comes to recording the actual use of words in the dominant discourse on art. He sees the philosopher's job in terms of making explicit what is already, in some sense, known. In a Socratic way Dickie believes that among ordinary men and women there exists an agreed use of "art" and he wants to extract from their *de facto* use of this term the principles of its use. Needless to say, quite unlike Danto, he does not intend to question the actual linguistic practice. He believes that language pictures reality without

distortion and that the analysis of ordinary language in its function as the basic human means of communication enables one to understand the extra-linguistic world. This is why the definition of art that he proposes is just a reportive definition.

This difference between Danto's and Dickie's views on the role of language in the concept of art comes clearly to light when they try to specify competent sayers within the artworld population. While Danto restricts them to the qualified few who are experts and authorities in the history and theory of art and are apt to carry on an informed discourse on art, Dickie points to those artworld people who know how to use the word "art" in a colloquial way. Since, however, he denotes no requisite conditions for performing the act of calling something "art", and neither sets rules obtaining in his artworld nor delineates the roles and authorities, he in fact permits art to be anything anybody calls "art".<sup>9</sup> As a result, Dickie's artworld turns out to be just a community involved with artmaking as a language use. His artworld members perform some kind of a social practice where the artistic conventions correspond to the linguistic ones.

While Dickie does not come up with a straightforward critique of Danto's use of language Tilghman, in contrast, elaborates upon this issue.<sup>10</sup> Tilghman admits that Danto's approach through

language is valuable but he strongly disagrees with Danto's narrow understanding of language. At the same time, he provides grounds to think that the way Danto understands language is responsible for the flaws in Danto's account of the nature of art. Tilghman locates the inaccuracy of Danto's theory of art in Danto's view on how language and art match each other. He attacks Danto's view of language from the pragmatic stance: he himself watches how language functions in the world and he criticizes Danto for having neglected the connections that language has with life. He brings the problem of the nature of art down to the practical level of the identification and appreciation of art. It is from this standpoint that he demonstrates that Danto's art-language parallel is far from perfect.

Danto claims that there is only one "theory", i.e. one meaning, of "art" in operation at any one time in ordinary people's discourse on art. This, according to Tilghman, is historically inaccurate and he accuses Danto of holding a one word - one thing theory of meaning. In his opinion, there is always more than one theory, i.e. more uses of "art" than one, at any given moment in time. Danto suggests that competent artworld speakers share the same agreed meaning of "art" but Tilghman questions this as well: he points out that Danto himself gives up the historical meaning of the word which always contained the aesthetic and stretches it to

cover such unusual cases as *Fountain*. Danto's meaning of the word "art" is far from the generally agreed way to use that word. On Tilghman's view, such a distortion of the meaning of the word seems to be a very radical reform of ordinary language. In his opinion, it may even stop the word "art" from serving a useful purpose.

Tilghman recognizes Danto's view of language as the Tractatus view of language, i.e. language conceived as something external to the world which lacks connections with the world and with human activities in particular. According to Tilghman, Danto sees language as a product of some arbitrary process and treats it in abstraction from the actual linguistic practice. Above all, however, Tilghman fears that because of the position Danto takes on language he loses the right perspective on the instrumental character of language. In his opinion, Danto focuses on one function of language, that of representation, and in a very reductionistic manner ignores such a basic function as communication. In addition, it seems to Tilghman that Danto sees language as an instrument shaped once and for all and that he assumes that the rules of language are fixed like the rules of a game.

Besides, Tilghman reproaches Danto for taking language to be merely a vehicle of meaning and neglecting to approach it as a form

of cognition that is moulded by the reality it reflects. What Tilghman misses most in Danto's account of the artworld as a linguistic entity is the human reaction to various linguistic situations, the response to various verbal actions. For Tilghman, one learns about art the way one learns the language, i.e. by participating in social life and by copying things others say or do. It is the lack of this element that makes Danto's artworld distinct from Wittgenstein's form of life. Tilghman insists that a form of life is for sure "something done, a set of activities or proclivities to act."<sup>11</sup> For him, the artworld should be described more in some cultural terms, as art is a complex phenomenon, not just linguistic, and furthermore, to understand language one must refer to culture as a whole. Yet, Danto, when talking about interpretation, a linguistic activity par excellence, has nothing to say about its cultural grounding nor its historical modifications. Tilghman sees, then, some sort of distortion of the real nature of language in Danto's account alongside the exaggeration of its role in art. In brief, Tilghman believes that Danto has first distorted the image of language and then, has gone too far in equating art and language.

From Danto's position on language obviously follow significant consequences for his entire theory of art. His appeal to specialized language proves defective in reflecting the nature

of art and generates conflicts with other analytic philosophers. In consequence, instead of a possible similarity of results, one gets from Danto, Dickie and Tilghman three distinct accounts of the nature of art.

Upon a closer look at Danto's, Dickie's and Tilghman's views one can notice divergencies and an open conflict of opinions marked by tensions, contradictions and incompatibility. There is no question that there exists considerable discrepancy in their theories. The result of this conflict is that Dickie's, Danto's and Tilghman's views differ in their explicatory powers. This amounts to saying that they have different capabilities to explain which objects are art and which are not and why. At the same time, however, all of these theories are deficient: none is able to describe art without relegating to the margin some important features of art or leaving some genres of art unaccounted for. This means that Danto, Dickie and Tilghman fail to explain the complex nature of art. This is a matter of serious concern, for this disagreement in analytic aesthetics about the nature of art has now taken the form of a real impasse.<sup>12</sup> Most surely, these three approaches to art affect our ideas about art in different ways and make different concepts of art emerge.

Right from the beginning Danto, Dickie and Tilghman conflict

sharply over the soundness of theorizing over art: whereas Dickie and Danto strongly support the efforts to give storable conditions for arthood, Tilghman teaches that the search for a general theory of art is "misbegotten and based on a misunderstanding of the nature of the questions it was designed to answer".<sup>13</sup> This difference of opinions causes the tension between idealistic and pragmatic attitudes regarding questions as to the nature of art. Danto engages in an abstract, purely theoretical enterprise with no immediate practical application, if any at all. Dickie tries to infer the nature of art from the concept taken from the living language. Together they maintain that a theory of art cannot be expected to give us a touchstone for recognizing artworks, that it will never enable us to "pick out artworks in the way we pick the bagels out in the bakeshop."<sup>14</sup> Their theories indeed manifest that stating the basis of distinctions does not settle the practical problems of distinguishing and eliminating. Yet, Tilghman, in a realistic posture, demands answers to concrete, practical questions concerning the arthood of objects met in real life situations. And although he finally yields to "a temptation of theory" and comes closer to Dickie and Danto than he realizes, his account of art conflicts with theirs for he struggles to find not only a coherent and satisfying way of distinguishing works of art from other items of the world, but also a practical and convenient one.

Dickie and Danto make the significance of the background crucial for art but Tilghman does not. Both Dickie and Danto abandon the notion of the intrinsic property and look for the determinants of arthood in the artworld. They refer to artworld members as the masters of the term "art". This creates an image of unity in analytic aesthetics and an apparent similarity between Dickie's and Danto's theories. But whereas Dickie sketches an account of the specific institutional structure within which works of art come to exist, Danto refers to art theories. Danto's artworld, as Dickie remarks, could only be institutional in the sense "that a language of sorts would be institutional."<sup>15</sup>

Dickie and Danto show disappointment with their collective treatment and rather than emphasizing their affinities they call attention to the fact that their views "are very different."<sup>16</sup> In contrast to Dickie and Danto, Tilghman, who, in the old way, thinks of art in terms of discovering intrinsic properties of artworks, ignores the concept of the artworld completely. He renders insufficient and insignificant background knowledge, both theoretical and historical as well as any other. He maintains that artworld theories as long as they stay outside practice cannot answer the question as to the nature of art. It is no wonder that Tilghman is not satisfied with any of the answers produced by the analytic school.

Danto stresses the subjective element of art while Dickie emphasizes its communal nature. Dickie does not recognize the specificity of the role of the artist and reduces creativity to status conferring. In order to promote the institutional nature of art Dickie downplays artistic intentions and in a way degrades artists by not paying due attention to them. Dickie says openly "that art is the concept which necessarily involves human intentionality" and his notions of artifactuality and status conferral make reference to intentions.<sup>17</sup> (Artifactuality implies a conscious human activity and deliberate making which contrasts artworks with natural and accidental objects; conferral involves human intention to perform certain action.) Hence, Dickie admits that art as an institutional concept also necessarily involves intentions but he does not make his position on intentionality clear. Conversely, Danto places more emphasis on the role of the artist and acknowledges the determining importance of the artist's statement. He points to the artist's own discourse on art, his comments on his own work, as an exemplary interpretation. He thinks that there exists only one correct interpretation of an artwork, that which was intended by the artist. Although neither Dickie nor Danto renders intentionality completely irrelevant, neither makes an open reference to it. This stands in contrast to Tilghman who emphasizes the fact that the aesthetic nature of art

motivates the artist's intentions and directs the whole of artistic practice.

There is a definite incompatibility between Dickie defining art in terms of a procedure and Danto and Tilghman describing it in terms of its function. Whereas Danto and Tilghman paraphrase the traditional "what is art?" into "what is the function of art?", Dickie changes its meaning to "how do things get to be art?". Dickie's account defends the point of view that art is a product of a certain procedure and it puts the conferral of the status of art over anything else. He believes that above all it is a certain linguistic behaviour that turns works into works of art and he does not concern himself with whether the works meet the point of art or not. He presents the creation of art as a certain action and stresses the *milieu* that allows it without bothering about the function of art and its significance in the lives of people. But Danto and Tilghman think that, regardless of what procedures are followed, only the work that fulfils the function of art can become a work of art. Naturally, in contrast to Dickie they disregard all the acts of the conferral of the artistic status. Instead, they call into question the status of art that is at odds with the function of art and its place in human life. Their position is that works that undermine the point of art cannot qualify as art. They do not go hand in hand very far, however, because they split

on the issue of the function of art. They hold different opinions on what constitutes the potential of the work to fulfil the point of art.

The conflict of the functional versus procedural approach to art is caused by the conflict over the interpretation of Duchamp which is crucial to these three views on the nature of art. Actually, Dickie, Danto and Tilghman use dadaism in order to support three different theories of art. Dickie and Danto show no hesitation accepting Dada and they make consideration of Duchamp a must for any modern aesthetic theory. But while Danto uses ready-mades to confirm the anti-aesthetic nature of art, Dickie uses them to endorse the art-making procedure. Some think that Danto is closer in his treatment of dadaism to Duchamp's own conception of art, that Dickie falsifies the nature of ready-mades and that, therefore, Danto is more accurate although, perhaps, more conservative than Dickie.<sup>18</sup> In contrast to them both, Tilghman thinks that Duchamp's works are questionable as works of art. He demands a discussion on their status as art before admitting them as examples of art into a theory of art. Tilghman desires to exclude *Fountain* and other doubtful pieces from theorizing until they are proven art.

In a similar way Dickie, Danto and Tilghman diverge in their

attitudes not only towards Duchamp but towards all the "hard cases" of art. For Dickie they are hard not because their status is in doubt but because they create a tension between the function of art and the actual works of art. For Danto and Tilghman they are hard mainly because their status as art is difficult to determine and it has to be determined if the work is to be declared art. They both examine if these works serve the point of art but contrary to Danto, who finds modern art for the most part worthy of its status, Tilghman finds that it does not serve the aesthetic function any more and is, therefore, unworthy to be art.

There is discrepancy of opinion between Dickie, Danto and Tilghman as to the function of art and the role of this element in the theory of art. Danto sees art "as a language of sorts" and Dickie and Tilghman do not. Danto suggests that all art has the capacity to do some of the things one usually employs language to do, e.g. to make explicit statements. As a result, for him language turns out to be the main key to the specificity of art. In contrast to Dickie, Danto claims that art has a function, that of providing a distinctive type of discourse, and that it occupies a distinct position. He finds also that most modern works serve this purpose and, therefore, they qualify as art in his view. This gives him the certainty to include them in the theory of art. It is only at the moment when he discovers that the same discourse

takes place also in philosophy, i.e. the same function is being realized elsewhere, that he withdraws altogether from theorizing about art. Dickie admits that he fails to understand Danto's thesis that being a statement is a necessary condition for art.<sup>19</sup>

Dickie's theory does not reveal the point of art at all and leaves aside the significance of art. The procedure of status conferral departs from the function of art and Dickie is not interested in showing that works of art are, in any sense, special. This separation of function of art from the procedure permits him to defend the status of art of all those works that do not realize the function of art.

Maintainig that the principal function of art is to talk, Danto disconnects art from its old function, i.e. its aesthetic function. He proposes to use "art" as a term that does not carry any aesthetic relevance. Danto does not deny the aesthetic function to artworks altogether but minimizes its role in art and presents it as secondary, with no direct connection with the arthood. For Tilghman, however, this move seems disastrous because he conceives of art as primarily aesthetic. He sees the aesthetic as the element that ensures the continuity of art and guarantees that it makes sense to talk of art as a form of life. Since he

finds that modern art does not play the aesthetic role, i.e. is not functioning in the proper way, he disqualifies it as art. This gives him the ground to eliminate altogether most of modern art from the theory of art.

Dickie, Danto and Tilghman have different ideas as to what to appreciate in a work of art. Neither Dickie nor Danto has a good theory to offer in this respect. They both declare a nonperceptible nature of art, eliminate sense data from appreciation and put an end to connoisseurship in art but suggest little else instead. Danto does not seem to think that a style can be seen in an artwork and does not treat it as a visual property to be enjoyed. Nor does he think that the appropriateness of content and form that emerges involuntarily from his theory bears the potential to become an aesthetic quality to be appreciated in an artwork. His semantic account handles only that element in art which can be fully articulated and conceptualized. Yet, contrary to what we usually do, Danto does not bother about the content of the statement that the artwork makes. The suggestion that the pleasure derived from contacts with art could in fact be derived from the effect of the discourse can only be seen as an effort to supply Danto's theory with what it is indeed missing. Danto does not elaborate upon this point and leaves his theory open to the objection that it is unable to tackle the problem of enjoyment.

Danto is convinced that although a work may have aesthetic properties prior to its becoming art they do not merit appreciation. Rather, he holds they are there in the work and can be appreciated only when it has attained the status of art.

Dickie sees the problem of the aesthetic worthiness of Duchamp's ready-mades quite differently than Danto. He maintains that in the case of *Fountain* we can appreciate "its gleaming white surface, its pleasing oval shape, its depth revealed when it reflects images of surrounding objects."<sup>20</sup> He clearly takes Dada objects as the kind of objects that acquired their artistic status by being appreciated for their aesthetic qualities. Yet, Dickie plays down any intrinsic element of art in order to save its institutional character. In spite of this, however, Danto, who thinks that Dada provides strong grounds for rejecting the aesthetic analysis, sees Dickie as being still in "the grips of aestheticism".<sup>21</sup> He sees Dickie's analysis as a misunderstanding of the nature of Dada. Danto maintains that no reference to aesthetic appreciation should have been made in Dickie's definition, not even to appreciation as such, if he wished to account for modernist art. This obviously puts him in conflict with Tilghman, who supports the thesis about the perceptual nature of art. For Tilghman the aesthetic as the *raison d'être* for a work of art is the main subject of appreciation and evaluation. In a

consistent way he keeps art and the aesthetic conceptually linked and tries to check every time whether a new item is continuous with the past practices of art appreciation. Dickie seems to be closer to Tilghman than Danto, but rather insecure in his claim that works of art should be appreciated aesthetically. There is a long list of critics who would like to see Dickie appeal to the aesthetic appreciation. Dickie, however, insists on omitting the qualifier "aesthetic" and in this way contributes to confusion. There are too many non-aesthetic qualities to know what he means when he talks about appreciation.

There is a disagreement between Dickie, Danto and Tilghman as to whether the classificatory meaning of "artwork" is essentially descriptive or evaluative. Dickie and Danto seem to stick to the conviction that language is essentially descriptive. In Dickie's institutional account where procedure takes over the merit the classification is purely descriptive. Dickie argues that all the works have to do is meet those descriptive criteria. Danto also holds that his notion of artwork is value free: interpretation is neither classificatory nor evaluative but constitutive. In this case Tilghman maintains the position that language is basically instrumental and, of course, he shows little understanding of the position that insists on the separation of description and evaluation. He simply thinks that both Dickie and Danto by

pressing the division brush away the problem posed by modern art, which is whether the work can function as art. Collapsing classification with evaluation is not a sign of confusion to him but a sign of a correct employment of language and, consequently, the correct approach to art. He feels strongly that Dickie and Danto are overly-cautious in regard to the precision of the words belonging to natural language.

Dickie and Danto disagree with Tilghman as to the connection of nature, art and the aesthetic. While Danto and Dickie think that the relation has been severed and undermine the link, Tilghman emphasizes it and speaks against this divorce. As a result neither Dickie nor Danto is able to account for the intriguing nature of the world and they distance themselves from the analysis of nature. In their version of the account of art, artworks are distinct from natural objects and any link with the world through the aesthetic no longer exists. While Dickie enforces this distinction by holding that artworks are necessarily artifacts and need to have their status conferred by people, Danto insists that artworks are representational and always "about". They support the trend that art has very little to do with aesthetics, and leave unexplained the genesis of the artworld. Tilghman, in turn, gives the notion of the aesthetic priority in his description of the nature of art and presses the point about the aesthetic connection between art

and nature. He presents a persuasive account of the emergence of the world of art as the emergence of a conscious concern for the aesthetic qualities of human productions and actions. On his view, art is seen through the prism of nature and the response to artworks is derivative from the response to nature. To this Danto states that a wider range of aesthetic properties occurs in artworks than in nature and he reverses Tilghman's claim with the argument that nature is viewed through the prism of art. Danto believes that both understanding and appreciation of art - two major forms of our contacts with art according to Tilghman - are aesthetically richer than any other aesthetic encounters with nature.

In both the Danto and Dickie theories the universe is not made up of objects that are art and those that are not, and artworks are not shown to be of a natural kind. Rather, the world turns out to be constituted of "anxious objects" uncertain whether they are works of art or not.<sup>22</sup> In both cases an external "help" is needed - in the form of theory or an institution - to turn reality into art. Danto and Dickie as theoreticians of art force their divisions upon the world. Their theories eliminate as non-existing the empirical fact which Tilghman picks up, namely, that some fragments of the human world call attention to themselves without any outside intervention. Tilghman would rather see

theoreticians not impose divisions upon the world but try to account for the world's natural boundaries. For Dickie and Danto, however, different parts of reality may or may not become art. Thus they present art as a dynamic phenomenon without definite boundaries. Unfortunately, their theories are helpless when it comes to explaining why of all possible objects only certain objects are picked by the artworld and elevated to art status while others are omitted.

*Fountain* seems to be a convenient touchstone helpful in distinguishing these analytic positions:

Tilghman is seriously in doubt whether *Fountain* is indeed a work of art. He contests its arthood because it is in his view "an unaesthetic piece of art". He believes that all such works should be denied arthood and he demands to dismiss the consideration of all putative works of art from the theory of art. He thinks that such special cases as *Fountain* need not be recognized at all by a theory of art, not to mention that they need not be made a central case of art, which is what Dickie and Danto do with ready-mades. Tilghman finds it wrong to display such a permissive and overly tolerant attitude toward the most controversial phenomena of modern art.

Dickie and Danto, however, have no such scruples. Dickie

admits that *Fountain* is a "hard case" of art but has no doubts as to its status as art. In his view, it fulfils all the conditions of art. First, it is an artifact, both as a urinal and as a work of art. And second, it has good credentials as a work: it was created by an artist and an artist with the authority to do the conferring; it had its status conferred by him; it is discussed by critics and is presented in the context of the artworld. Its identification as art is, in Dickie's version, like a classification of the object. All that really matters is its being created in accordance with the rules used to confer the status of art. Its status as art in no way relies on its serving some function of art. Dickie does not deny that it might be rewarding aesthetically and enjoyable when viewed, so that it may be considered as art for the qualities also found in other urinals, but this fact does not play a decisive role in *Fountain's* being art. By maintaining this he shows that *Fountain* has links with high art and the world around and also that its comparison with other urinals makes sense. Dickie, unlike Danto, supposes that Duchamp's work, *Fountain*, is the urinal itself and that the qualities of the plumbing fixture are identical with the qualities of *Fountain*. For Danto *Fountain* has much richer qualities than the urinal as a physical object. On Danto's theory the appreciation of *Fountain* could involve the aptness of its name rather than the appreciation of qualities it shares with countless other urinals

that do not merit art status. Danto insists that it is unique and that it has qualities other urinals lack. As a urinal *Fountain* shares its properties with other porcelainery; as an artwork it shares its properties with marble statues and perhaps could be compared with *Fontana di Trevi*. Danto's identification of the urinal as *Fountain* is not its classification but interpretation. For him, *Fountain* is not simply an object, at any rate it is not a commonplace object just thrust into the world of art. It is a "thought *cum* object"<sup>23</sup>, "a question-object"<sup>24</sup>, and this validates its status as art. Danto focuses on the fact that Duchamp makes a certain statement with *Fountain* and uses it as a semantic device: an object that can be interpreted into an artwork. The transfiguration of the urinal into an artwork results from the question it asks and the message it carries with itself. In Dickie, it is transfigured institutionally. Unfortunately, both Dickie and Danto leave unexplained why *Fountain* was elevated to an artwork while other urinals were not. They do not specify at all the criteria for choosing between two indistinguishable urinals.

Danto and Dickie and Tilghman do not only conflict over *Fountain* or ready - made. There is also no accord among them in accounting for other kinds of art. It means that they differ in respect to the practical implications of their theories and that they diverge over the class of items they admit under the term

"art".

Dickie equates works of art with artifacts and artifacts with objects. Since Dickie's artworld seems to be able to make any object into a work of art it is true to say that Dickie puts the whole universe at the artworld's disposal. With his theory Dickie can turn the whole world into art. Dickie's "art" covers an unusually vast agglomeration of objects, strikingly different, to the effect that the difference between what belongs to it and what does not "does not contribute to the perspicuous view of things."<sup>25</sup> And the concept of art that it leads to is said to be "inelegant, bloated and unwieldy."<sup>26</sup>

Yet, in spite of its openness Dickie's theory explains old art with difficulty. This is so despite the fact that he keeps the notion of an artifact, which links his theory with older theories of art construed to explain the "object art". And also despite the fact that he keeps the notion of appreciation, which allows him to compare the aesthetic qualities of objects and artworks. But he is hesitant about the role of this notion and does not make the possession of the aesthetic qualities essential to arthood. As a result, traditional works of art would have to be considered art on his theory because of some other, "rather uninteresting feature."<sup>27</sup> The notion of conferral of artifactuality allows Dickie to

accommodate all ready-mades as art. What his account leaves out, however, is the conceptual art which is the "idea art" and does not need an object.

In contrast to Dickie, Danto speaks of the ontological difference between artworks and objects and introduces the distinction between an artwork and a physical thing. In his theory artworks may be physically identical to objects, however, they are not real objects, but transfigured objects. Danto's theory is created to encompass any object that can be put into words, that is to say, interpreted, so that his term "art" covers a universe in which objects only serve as "artable things".<sup>28</sup> They get admitted under the term "art" on the basis of the discourse containing ideas about them, i.e. the way they are talked about. So, in fact Danto's theory eliminates only those objects that cannot be articulated and captured by discussion. On Danto's account, traditional works of art are admitted into the realm of art, first of all, by being representational and having a story to tell. In this sense, Danto seems to be more conservative and traditional than Dickie. It is the influence of the mimetic theory of art that makes itself felt when Danto alludes to visual resemblance and likeness, especially at the beginning, before he gets to the idea that "there is more to the story than the story told". Danto's concept of art is particularly esoteric and distanced from Dickie's

for it no longer privileges art as object. As a result, on Danto's view, art collecting is a career with "metaphysical overtones" and the difference between art and non-art becomes a matter of speaking. This may be one of the reasons, perhaps, that in contrast to Dickie, Danto's theory is spoken of as "much more sophisticated, more complicated and more subtle."<sup>29</sup> Generally speaking, the result here is very much the same as with Dickie, because the distance between art and non-art is in both cases perceptually undecidable.

Needless to say, however, Dickie's and Danto's theories are principally compatible with the contemporary art scene. They are both formulated to account for objects that were once thought not to be art but have evolved into it. Danto's transfiguration metaphor and the division into artwork / physical object allow him to provide the philosophical justification for accepting ready-mades as artworks. In addition, Danto is superior in the explanation of conceptual art. His theory is best suited to account for works that are meant to be thought about and talked about, and not to be looked at.

Tilghman challenges Danto's artwork / physical thing distinction and he, like Dickie, dismisses the whole issue of ontology. Yet, whereas Dickie never questions Danto's

distinctions, Tilghman does so primarily because he wants to deny arthood to ready-mades. His analyses focus on objects and he clashes with Danto, whose theory does not concern objects at all. His theory is perfectly tailored to suit traditional art but unable to circumscribe modern art. Classic works of art conceived primarily to serve as objects of aesthetic delectation fit best into his analyses. He speaks in favour of the aesthetic character of art as the only form of the traditional way of living with art. Yet, because of this aesthetic element of his theory there is no way to make connections between new art and familiar art in the case where the realm of the aesthetic in which these connections are made is non-existent. And there is no place for conceptual art in Tilghman's theory either: Tilghman is generally dismissive of art "that seeks to represent the idea of something in divorce from all its possible physical and aesthetic properties."<sup>30</sup> In contrast to the theories of Dickie and Danto, which do not yield a separate class of objects, Tilghman produces a line between art and non-art. His views on art convey a clear message that if something is not aesthetic then it certainly cannot be art. This clue to the nature of art, however, lacks novelty and resembles some old theories of art. Danto's and Dickie's theories on the contrary, although they obliterate the distinctions and by being tolerant and permissive do not provide the desired *fundamentum divisionis*, are yet, strikingly novel.



### 3. Danto's Expanded Version of Art - Language Parallel

Although Danto does not comply with Tilghman's remarks about his distorted image of language and his exaggerated orientation of art, and does not modify his thesis regarding the semantic nature of art, he does recognize narrowness in his project. He realizes that the nature of art cannot be merely a lexical matter and that the picture of language he holds will not suffice for his philosophical needs. That is why, maintaining that artworks are inherently linguistic, he modifies his opinion on what language is and begins to show interest in how it operates in the context of life.

While Danto continues to distrust ordinary language and maintains that it pictures reality with distortion, he nevertheless looks for its connections to the world. It is as if he were saying that in order to understand a language it is not enough to master its theory, i.e. learn its grammar, but that there are also some extra-linguistic factors which have to be taken into consideration if one is to understand a language in its entirety. He begins to amplify his reduced picture of language by showing concern with its historical changeability.

Danto links language and history and holds a diachronic view

: he notices that artworks have to be placed into a historical context. He notices that if interpretation is the clue to the nature of art then the historical changeability of interpretations, i.e. of the language present around artworks, has to be acknowledged and their historical reformulations need to be taken into consideration. In other words, he recognizes the fact that arthood is historically modified and that the word "art" retains a different content now than in the past. When he maintains that *Brillo* boxes could not have been art fifty years ago he is saying that the accepted meanings of art would not have sanctioned someone's using "art" to talk about something like a *Brillo Box*. Unfortunately, he does not specify what causes the readiness of the particular *milieu* to accept a new meaning of the word.

This is why he begins to show concern for the historical changeability of linguistic meanings and stops assuming that the rules of language are fixed like the rules of a game and that the meanings of words are timeless. He envisages the possibility of a "linguistic apoplexy" which may strike unprepared speakers unaware of the change when different meanings may be attached to the same word - "art".<sup>31</sup> Hence, his historical account of art can be read as an account of meaning change: At one time we can understand a statement that might have been made at some other time but at a different moment we may not be able to understand it.

Danto introduces into his analysis of art the habit of looking back and surveying the history of art, and connects art conceptually with the art-historical tradition. He extends his range of concerns with art with the idea that what is essential for turning objects into art is the connection with their historical epoch. He realizes that each artwork has its place in history and part of the response to the subject of its arthood depends on what is known about the relevant time period.

But this historical line in Danto again generates conflict within analytic aesthetics. By referring to history Danto firmly distinguishes his concept of art from Dickie's and Tilghman's. The sense of history which permeates Danto's theory is nowhere to be found in Dickie, and Danto's argument against Dickie is that "an ahistoric theory of art can have no philosophical defense."<sup>32</sup> Yet, contrary to Danto, Dickie remains totally ahistoric and he has nothing to say about the history of art, nor the history of the artworld. Danto's Hegelian vision of the death of art does not apply to his theory because even if art is dead it can be revived, for institutions can always be revived.

Dickie's theory itself, however, does not escape historical determinism: it is visibly centred round the historical notion of a work of art as an artifact and his theory bears the stigma of

history by referring to a notion which crystallized at a certain moment of time.<sup>33</sup> In this respect Dickie's theory does not differentiate the present moment of the state of art from its past and suggests the existence of some constant element in art.

This traditional approach is similar to Tilghman's, who treats the aesthetic as an eternal component of art that has played and will always play the same role through the ages. Tilghman suggests that the same game is being played now as it used to be played in the past and he presents art as a continuing human preoccupation of the same sort that bears no relation to a particular historical moment.

By embracing art history with his theory of art Danto introduces into analytic aesthetics a strain, as historical approach to problems is very remote from analytic aesthetics as "typically practised and ordinarily understood."<sup>34</sup> This theme is rather favoured by Continental philosophy. This fact portrays Danto as a figure "noticeably hospitable to Hegelian and broadly phenomenological currents," and his philosophical strategy as an attempt to marry alien projects.<sup>35</sup> Danto manages to show that by small adjustment the analytic orientation could accommodate the themes always pertinent in the Continental tradition of philosophy. Danto seems to be divided in his heart as to the adequacy of these

two doctrines and this may be the reason, as Margolis suspects, for his failure to resolve the puzzle of the nature of art.<sup>36</sup> Danto's theory of art reveals however, that some such *rapprochement* between Anglo-American and Continental currents might point the way out of the present impasse in analytic aesthetics.

In this chapter I have tried to demonstrate that the nature of the conflict in analytic aesthetics is essentially linguistic. By contrasting Danto's versus Dickie's and Tilghman's concepts of language I believe I have shown how the differences in their views on language cause the differences in their views on art and generate a crisis. In conclusion I have tried to indicate Danto's readiness to turn to some other philosophical tradition and to look there for a more satisfactory account of art.

## NOTES

1

H.Osborne, rev. of Culture and Art, ed.by L.Aagaard-Mogensen, British Journal of Aesthetics 16 (1976 ): 378.

2

Osborne also doubts the value of a theory of art based upon *de facto* linguistic usage. In his view making philosophical decisions about art is not just surveying actual usage of words. Osborne 378.

3

G. Dickie, The Art Circle (New York: Haven Publications, 1984) 25.

4

Dickie 25.

5

Dickie 24.

6

In fact, Dickie's account of Danto's theory cannot be taken as complete for the very reason that Danto's major bibliographic position, The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, is left out from it.

7

It is possible that Dickie thinks that Danto takes artworks to be artifacts and does not talk about this feature of artworks only because, like many others, he takes it for granted. Because of that conviction Dickie loses sight of the fact that Danto's approach is so different from his in the way he treats language.

8

G. Dickie, Art and the Aesthetic (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974) 40.

9

For that view see also T.Binkley, "Deciding About Art," Culture and Art, ed. Aagaard-Mogensen, ( Atlantic Highlands, N.Y.: Humanities Press, 1976).

10

B.Tilghman, But Is It Art? ( Oxford: Basil Blackwell, Inc. 1984). Danto agrees that his understanding of language is reductionistic but he also remarks that "it is far from plain that this reduced picture will not suffice for all our philosophical needs." A.Danto, Connections to the World (New York: Harper and Row, 1989) 82.

- 11  
Tilghman 56.
- 12  
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- 13  
Tilghman X. At a later point of his theorizing on art  
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undertaking.
- 14  
A. Danto, The Transfiguration of the Commonplace  
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- 15  
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- 16  
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- 17  
Dickie, Art and the Aesthetic 46.
- 18  
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- 19  
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- 20  
Dickie, Art and the Aesthetic 42.
- 21  
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- 22  
H. Rosenberg, The Anxious Object (Chicago: The University of  
Chicago Press Ltd., 1982) 17. The term implies lack of  
security for the art object whereas it is a masterpiece or a  
junk.
- 23  
Danto, Disenfranchisement 35.
- 24  
Danto, Disenfranchisement 15.

- 25  
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- 26  
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- 27  
R.Yanal, rev.of Art and the Aesthetic, by G.Dickie,  
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- 28  
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A.Silvers, "The Artworld Discarded," Journal of  
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- 30  
P.Basking, rev.of But Is It Art?, by B.Tilghman, London  
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- 33  
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R.Shusterman, Analytic Aesthetics (New York: Basil  
Blackwell, 1989) 11.
- 35  
J.Margolis, "Eclipse and Recovery," Analytic  
Aesthetics, ed.R.Shusterman, (New York: Basil  
Blackwell,1989) 179.
- 36  
Margolis 181.

## PART TWO

REDEFINING ART: A WAY OUT OF THE IMPASSE ?

## INTRODUCTION TO PART TWO

In this section I claim that a look at another philosophical tradition may help solve the definitional impasse in analytic aesthetics. I turn for that to Continental philosophy. I reach over to phenomenology and I draw attention to the traits it shares with Anglo-American philosophy. I focus on the interest in language as common to both movements.

I devote chapters 5 and 6 to an outline of the role that language plays in phenomenology. In Chapter 5, I discuss in general terms its place in the philosophy of Husserl, Twardowski and Ingarden. At the same time I contrast Husserl's idea of language with that of Twardowski and I locate Ingarden as Twardowski's follower. In Chapter 6 I argue that Ingarden's philosophy can be seen as analytical in method. I make use of his quasi-judgments theory and the notion of concretization to demonstrate his use of language to answer the questions of art.

In Chapter 7 I present Ingarden's theory of art. I stress the typically phenomenological aspects of it and I argue that it goes beyond a purely linguistic framework. I attribute its broader scope to Ingarden's notion of intentionality and his understanding

of language, which invites the consideration of the social context of art.

In the final chapter, Chapter 8, I try to demonstrate that Ingarden's views on art mediate between the conflicting views in analytic aesthetics and provide a means to lessen the existing tension. I show how Ingarden eliminates the discrepancy between language and art by taking language as operating within concrete contexts of the world. I suggest that any approach to art through language understood as an abstract entity is bound to produce problems as art has to be studied in its connection with life.

## CHAPTER FIVE

## CHAPTER 5

## UNDERSTANDING LANGUAGE: TWARDOWSKI VERSUS HUSSERL

The aim of this chapter is two-fold: first to show the interest of phenomenology in language and second to examine the peculiarity of Ingarden's interest in language in relation to the phenomenological background. I intend to achieve the first aim by presenting Husserl's views on language. I plan to realize the second one by situating Ingarden at some distance from Husserl and much closer to Twardowski. In interpreting Ingarden as a follower of Twardowski in questions of language, I am going to emphasize the role that social reality plays in their views about the character of language.

1. A Phenomenological View of Language

Roman Ingarden was not primarily a philosopher of language. His interest in language is rather secondary to his research in ontology, epistemology and aesthetics. He is generally recognized as one of the world's leading phenomenological aestheticians and his reputation as a philosopher is closely connected with that of Edmund Husserl and other members of the phenomenological movement.

In this sense, taking a purely linguistic look at his work means glancing at it from a vantage point essentially different from that assumed by Ingarden himself.

Language has always been an important theme for Husserl's philosophy, and Husserl himself displayed a clear preoccupation with it.<sup>1</sup> Obviously Husserl's concern for language was not guided by an interest in the phenomenon of language as such. He had a special philosophical reason to turn to language: he had to fight psychologism and to defend the objectivity of the content of thought. This problem comes to the fore most clearly when content is seen as attached to language, which is understood intersubjectively. Hence Husserl's motivation to inquire into the nature of language.

At the same time Husserl raised another issue in connection with language, that of a theoretical possibility of language to express in an adequate way the insights claimed by phenomenology. In other words, his problem concerned the role of language in eidetic analysis. Although Husserl did not claim that an insight into language equals fixing essences, he believed that the phenomenological study of essences, when examined in a certain way, looks like the critique of the concept used to describe the entity. He maintained that the best way to clarify the essence is to

clarify the use of words. He meant by this that the essential features of an entity are indeed conveyed by words. He believed that concepts are progressively formed in the course of a phenomenological analysis and he founded his phenomenology on the feeling of "the linguistic oddity"<sup>2</sup> and the method of "free imaginative variation".<sup>3</sup> These were to help discover the possible phenomenological inaccuracy in what a word or a statement says.

Linguistic investigations were of such significance to Husserl because he was aware of the fact that the inadequacy of language to express insights could mean a serious difficulty regarding the very possibility of phenomenological analysis. Therefore, it is legitimate not just to speak about the linguistic component of Husserlian phenomenology but to emphasize the fact that Husserl was concerned with "extraordinarily detailed linguistic and semantical investigations."<sup>4</sup>

This tendency to focus on language is visible in Husserl's critique of the traditional philosophical doctrines on the ground that they misuse ordinary language. Philosophers are, according to Husserl, guilty of using key philosophic terms in "very unusual senses rather than using them in the senses in which we use them ordinarily."<sup>5</sup> Starting from this premise Husserl opposes the standard practice of accepting arbitrarily the meanings of concepts

used. He makes language investigations the central problem of his methodology. In his opinion, not being sufficiently alert to words leads directly to operating with unclear terms and arbitrary definitions. Because of that he demands a more radical approach: "to question all concepts, to assume that none is sufficiently familiar for us to accept."<sup>6</sup> He presents phenomenology as "a philosophical discipline intent, above all, to 'explicate' and clarify."<sup>7</sup>

Husserl's linguistic awareness led him to his own theory of language, which contains two different phases and which is characterized as an attempt "to steer clear of the two extremes of Platonism and Anti-Platonism."<sup>8</sup> In the first phase he held the idea of language as an ideal entity and believed in the existence of the universal grammar. He attributed to language the status of an ideal, abstract and impersonal entity based on *a priori* fundamentals and he believed in ideality both of linguistic expressions and their meanings. At this stage, called "the eidetic phase of his philosophy of language", he saw a linguistic expression as a figure that could be reproduced as such in various acts of speaking regardless of the context of speaking. Grammar was the *a priori* structure common to all languages.<sup>9</sup> It is only in the second phase of his philosophy, called "constitutive", that Husserl attempted to trace language back to the speaking "I" and

interpersonal communication.

Yet his initial Platonistic approach to language made him rather insensitive to any link of language with the thinking mind or empirical circumstances. On the one hand, he rejected the psychologistic view that meanings are mental and strictly private. On the other hand, he neglected the communicative function of language and the fact that an expression is a transitory particular, an acoustic event. Instead, he claimed that meanings are ideal, unreal objects given absolutely independently of any psychological or contextual explanation: they are intersubjectively established ways of focusing on things. Obviously, Husserl attributed these idealistic qualities not to some ideal language, as opposed to empirical languages, but to empirical languages themselves and this fact constitutes the very peculiarity of his thought.

This view of language found a follower in Roman Jakobson, the linguist of structural orientation, concerned with the empirical study of language. Jakobson is said to have found a particularly happy merger with a considerable number of Husserlian themes. Thus, Husserl inspired Jakobson with his anti-psychologism, his conviction as to the intersubjectivity of language, as well as to the existence of invariants in semantics.<sup>10</sup>

For that reason it is justified to say that Husserl provided for him "une impulsion théorique importante" if not "une pensée prédominante" and, thus, made structural linguistics "Husserlian" in spirit.<sup>11</sup> Certain passages from Husserl's writings fit genuinely linguistic contexts "presque terme à terme"<sup>12</sup> and manifest "a remarkable historical duplication".<sup>13</sup> The affinity goes so deep that "there is hardly a basic theoretical and methodological concept of structural linguistics that does not undergo an explicit or implicit phenomenological determination and elaboration by Jakobson."<sup>14</sup> In this sense one can say that Husserl's phenomenology represents "the historical and logical condition of possibility of structuralism."<sup>15</sup>

## 2. Ingarden's Non-Phenomenological View of Language

Ingarden also continued Husserl's interest in language. He studied it both as a phenomenon *per se* and as a tool for philosophy so that various authors locate Ingarden's studies of language in diversified fields: philosophy, philosophy of language and even linguistics. As to the latter, one can demonstrate an Ingarden - Chomsky connection similar to the Husserl - Jakobson link. Szczepańska, for instance, shows Ingarden's philological inclination and proves his views on language to be a phenomenological anticipation of Chomskian generative grammar.<sup>16</sup>

The inspection of Ingarden's bibliography reveals a deep philosophical concern with language and the opinion is that his interest in language is quite remarkable for Continental philosophy and also unique to phenomenology.<sup>17</sup> His works ( from the article "On Essential Questions" through The Literary Work of Art , where he outlines his theory of language, up to the treatise on the art of translation, "On Translations") treat the problems of language extensively and show respect for Husserlian methodology.<sup>18</sup> Ingarden's ideas on language are in many respects a restatement of Husserl's views, but they are also their development.

Thus, continuing to build on Husserl, at the time when ordinary language philosophy did not yet exist, Ingarden states that phenomenology is doing ordinary language philosophy. He explains that it is with the help of ordinary language that phenomenologists select phenomena for analysis, so that language is a starting point for any phenomenological investigation. Ingarden explains that the language which phenomenologists possess before starting the analysis contains "many ordinarily established concepts which concern, among others, the object which we want to analyze in immediate experience."<sup>19</sup> They need language at that point in order to be able to choose which object, or which class of objects, they want to investigate more closely. Thus, in Ingarden's view, experience is preconditioned by language and

perception, clothed in words, clearly depends on language. This fact gives Ingarden a sufficient reason to be interested in language.

Ingarden's ideas on language, however, deserve attention for something besides a mere adoption of Husserl's views. There is still another source of Ingarden's philosophy of language which provides the description of language that might be looked upon as complementary to the school of Husserl. Ingarden did not accept Husserl's heritage uncritically. This led him to a disagreement with Husserl, known as the controversy between idealism and realism.<sup>20</sup> This situation compelled him to develop an independent theory of language where he had to work out his own understanding of language as well as his own philosophy with an individual, idiosyncratic method and style. To some this split with Husserl makes Ingarden a quite unorthodox phenomenologist. They locate him under the heading of "uses of phenomenology".<sup>21</sup>

Another source to consider is Ingarden's affiliation to Kazimierz Twardowski, the philosopher linked with the entire analytical school which gave rise to the analytical movement in Poland.<sup>22</sup> It is from Twardowski that Ingarden inherited the skills and techniques of an analytical philosopher. Under the influence of Twardowski he further strengthened his conviction about the

purposefulness of the examination of language when seeking to acquire any kind of knowledge.<sup>23</sup> Twardowski used to remark repeatedly that "some philosophical problems are formulated in such a blurred way that the possibility of their being clearly communicated is not even visible."<sup>24</sup> In spite of this, he hesitated to deny cognitive value to them but temporarily located them outside the scope of knowledge. He expressed hope in their future clarification and believed in finding solutions to them.

Ingarden learned from him to regard the logical precision of language as a method to achieve philosophical clarity and he acquired the habit to press for precise formulation and accurate description. Because of this hyper-conscious attitude towards language typical of Twardowski but also characteristic of Polish philosophy at the time, Ingarden's phenomenology distinguishes itself by "intelligibility and clarity rather rare among metaphysicians and ontologists."<sup>25</sup> Twardowski, whose philosophy constitutes a link between phenomenology and philosophical analysis, can be seen as a figure that "stands at the point where two of the major streams in philosophy today first divide."<sup>26</sup>

Like Husserl, Twardowski also had his theory of language.<sup>27</sup> He held, quite contrary to Husserl, that language is not an ideal entity. He maintained, however, that it is not psychical either.

He claimed that it is a product of certain acts of consciousness and stressed the connection of language with the speaking subject. He came up first with the idea of language resulting from certain intentional acts which he saw as constituting acts and which led him to ascertain the heteronomous nature of language.<sup>28</sup> At the same time, he maintained that language is strongly rooted in reality and derives from the context. Living language in Twardowski's view is not an abstract construct but belongs to the actual moment and is not separable from reality. Using language, on this view, is different from playing a game with words according to conventional rules because words have their own changeable ways of application. Language usage arises out of a personal situation which is at the same time real and concrete and determined by the factually lived reality. Twardowski pointed to the fact that language is to be understood neither in terms of words nor in terms of operational rules but in terms of its total connection with real facts. He believed that a speaking person is always able, with the use of suitable linguistic media, to adapt language for his immediate purposes, to fix its reference without any ambiguity and to make his proposition clear and precise.

Inspired by Twardowski's ontology and his indication about language being an intentional entity, Ingarden elaborated the ontology of language and thus, according to Szczepanska, filled the

gap left by de Saussure.<sup>29</sup> He picked up from Twardowski his realistic view of language and in this way "betrayed" Husserl. He believed that Husserl was wrong because he did not allow the idea that we can shape language for our purposes and he saw no reason to assume that. Thus, whereas Husserl's idealized version of the nature of language is the result of an "anatomical dissection of a living process," Ingarden's version comes closer to the "physiology of speaking".<sup>30</sup>

Following Twardowski, Ingarden holds that language is neither an ideal nor a real entity but belongs to a third category of objects: intentional objects. In this way Ingarden cuts himself off from the idealistic and physicalistic theories of language. He believes that language is a product of certain acts of consciousness, wholly dependent on human thinking. Yet, in claiming this he manages to escape psychologistic reductionism too. In developing his theory of language Ingarden brings language from the position of an objective, fixed entity into the speaking subject and he roots its existence in the subjective acts of the speaker. In doing this he suggests that the act of intentional pointing towards an object is of equal importance with communication in language.

Ingarden avoids all idealistic conclusions in questions of

language and following Twardowski he gives up the notion of language as "a fixed petrifact". He maintains that the speaker is always able to make all sorts of adjustments in order to make the sense and reference of his utterance precise.<sup>31</sup> He is interested both in individual words and, their combinations into sentences. He splits a word into a word-sound and a word-meaning. He holds that a word-sound may have many versions but that it is essentially unchangable in a given language and functions as a carrier of meaning. In his view the word-meaning is ontically autonomous. Yet a word-meaning as an element of a sentence undergoes modifications as it performs different intentional functions. Thus, according to Ingarden, the meaning of a sentence is not a ready product but a "product of our activities".<sup>32</sup> It is an intentional projection of the act of consciousness. Ingarden believes that the intentional designation contained in the meaning of the word is a reflection of the intentional thinking contained in the meaning bestowing act. He also holds that the act of the formation of a sentence is an intentional act by which the meanings of words are determined as elements of a sentence. For him, every sentence is the product of the subjective operation of the formation of a sentence and can be judged from the point of view of correct employment of words. Yet Ingarden maintains that the meaning of the sentence is able to remain independent of subjective acts and become intersubjective. The intersubjectivity is secured

by the fact that a sentence forming-operation cannot free itself from other cognitive operations and so it is bound up with various objectively existing elements.

Ingarden maintains that at the beginning of the eidetic analysis all concepts or terms must be fluid. He suggests that the reparation of language be done not by forgetting our concepts and becoming "speechless infants" but by suspending their validity and then modifying them according to the result of phenomenological analysis. Voicing Twardowski's opinion he holds that concepts can be moulded and shaped freely and should become rigidly fixed only when we arrive at the phenomenological definition. Breaking away from Husserl's views he makes a strong point against using the petrified language, inadequate and unfit for a given situation, which in his opinion may make experience impossible. He also warns against the "troubles and deceptions" of language which start at the moment when "this auxiliary tool becomes an autonomous factor, when fixed terminology as automatized machinery prevails over live experience."<sup>33</sup> This is the moment when, according to Ingarden, "the machine conquers the man who commands it."<sup>34</sup>

Language, in this view, is "a derivative formation adapted to our activities and perceptually cognitive."<sup>35</sup> Linguistic meanings are entities which can outlive the mental act with which they come

into being but are not timeless and can become modified in the course of their "life" or even lost. Ingarden formulates this point of view in the following way: "Language does not fall from the sky as something ready in the presence of which we would become helpless: on the contrary, we can shape names in their formal contents so that they would reflect accurately the forms of their real counterparts."<sup>36</sup>

Ingarden does not share the common view on this subject, i.e. that language constitutes the factor that blocks the contact with reality. He is convinced that it can be subordinated to our purposes. He says: "To seek for linguistic formations means, above all, to refer to direct experience whose data will help us to generate a suitable tool for linguistic understanding of what is given."<sup>37</sup> And in the spirit of Twardowski he admits that language blurs reality only when it is inadequate and petrified. It is this state of language that causes "talking past the object".<sup>38</sup> He holds that in a normal situation we get language under control, accommodate it and adapt it for the purposes it is used for.

The underlying insight of this view of language seems to be that man as an animal possessed of language is not a passive witness of an objective structure which exists independently of him. He is not an observer who just surveys language and who

regards language as a result of some past acts of signification but he is actively involved in the present process of creating it. He is a being which produces language as he uses it.

Switching from Husserl to Twardowski in his position on the nature of language Ingarden orients his study from the analysis confined to language itself to the solution of the problem of the relation: language-thinking-reality. He abandons idealistic investigations of language in favour of the study of language as a part of reality. He performs a shift of interest from language to speech and to an interpersonal communication where one person speaks to another and where a speech is followed by a reply. In this he is mostly concerned with that function of language which is connected with representing reality in thoughts. The reason for this is that thought-language is characteristic of the cognitive process and puts a spot-light on the issue of the relation of language and cognition to reality.

Yet, despite his flexibility theory of language, Ingarden fights against the temptation to consider language as absolutely perfect and its expressions as completely adequate to match our ideas. On the contrary, he believes that ordinary language is often vague and creates delusions and that it seems to be impossible to fully express what one has in mind. He claims that there are some features of things to which there corresponds no

typical way of speaking. His opinion is that we are able only up to a point to apply words correctly to objects, for when we learn a language we do not master the complete denotation of words. He maintains that in learning to talk we acquire only certain principles of application. He insists, therefore, that we should not rely fully on language and he advocates instead some criticism with respect to usage. Ingarden is convinced that blind reliance on language and abstraction from the issue of reality may make us blind to really important features of things. This does not incline him, however, to share contempt for ordinary language held, for example, by positivistic circles. He thinks that "language is not the only factor constituting knowledge."<sup>39</sup> On the contrary, he maintains that "a wordless cognition is possible."<sup>40</sup> Ingarden says: "If by giving a name I could 'see' better, it would mean that naming is cognitively revealing", but cognition can take place without there being a name first.<sup>41</sup> And so, Ingarden concludes, "pre-linguistic predication is possible: one can assert a state of things without language."<sup>42</sup>

One of Ingarden's assertions is that he does not believe that we could use a word to convince ourselves about the existence of real objects denoted by it. This is so because, as he puts it, "It is not the word that assures a contact with reality - first I have to know the object in order to be able to form the word."<sup>43</sup> Thus,

he opposes the point of view that holds that "in the beginning was the word" with the attitude that says: in the beginning was what the word means.<sup>44</sup>

At the same time Ingarden believes that to some extent language reveals the world as structured according to the formal structures of language and that linguistic repercussions are possible in some aspects of the world. Thus he admits a certain correspondence between linguistic structures and structures of objects. He is convinced, however, that there is much more than what is captured by words and that our intuitions about reality transcend language. Because of that he insists that in philosophy we can and must move beyond the framework of language. Ingarden says: "When we have language we do not get the image of the world of pure experience."<sup>45</sup> He makes a point that "experience must be *prius*" and that "word formation is only a *consequens*", which amounts to saying that he believes that our image of the world is determined first of all by empirical data and does not depend only on conceptual apparatus of language.<sup>46</sup>

### 3. The Social Dimension of Ingarden's View of Language

Although Ingarden borrows Twardowski's thesis about the

intentionality of language and sees language as dependent on the subjective acts of consciousness, it is possible to demonstrate that the fact that language exists in the privacy of one's mind counts for him less than the fact that it is essentially communicable and shareable, a typical phenomenon of social life. He analyses language in a context and shows it to be moulded by the context and woven into all sorts of dependencies, for which he provides a developed framework. In Twardowski's realistic manner he sees language bound with reality, interacting with it and being shaped by the external factors. His closeness to Twardowski makes him follow Twardowski in regarding the study of language "in itself" to be a mistake.

Ingarden addresses primarily the utilitarian function of language, i.e. language as a means of communication, and focuses on language in its basic function as an instrument of inter-human communication. He distinguishes between *langue* and *parole* and, by saying that he studies "living speech", manifests his direct interest in the actual linguistic practice of the speakers.<sup>47</sup> He construes language as something essentially human and stresses its anthropological dimension by concentrating on its tool-like character in the process of transmission of ideas. This entails a dynamic and functional view of language. He presents language as an entity which in order to be must enter into specific

relationships and he reflects on communication between partners, who are, above all, members of a society. He conceives of language in the pragmatic sense, and realizes that language is not first of all descriptive but active. He thinks that even pure statements must be studied in a life situation because even then one wants "to do things with words". His main interest in this is to explain how in the light of the intentional nature of language intersubjective communication is possible at all.

Ingarden claims that it is the social roots of language that are basic in questions of mutual understanding. He holds the opinion that the meanings of words become concrete only in a definite context and that in order to understand a language it is necessary to refer it first of all to the community that speaks it. He believes that concepts must be adapted to the empirical world, and that they must have recourse to the situations of life. It is in this sense that he sees language speakers as creative creatures who construct linguistic expressions by deriving their meanings from the social background. Thus, to Ingarden linguistic meaning has a built-in social dimension.

Ingarden's considerations point to the social character of all linguistic operations and show that meanings of words from a language used by a social group are understandable only because

they are made up, called into existence and given to words by conscious acts of persons sharing the same social experience. Ingarden calls attention to the fact that a meaning usually arises only gradually and is transformed until we face it as something fixed and ready. He sees disappearance and emergence of words and their meanings as a function of changes in the social system.

Following Twardowski, Ingarden construes language as something existing in the world, a world fact. He believes that language develops and takes its definite shape under the influence of the real conditions existing in the objective reality, and that it is an inventory of various items of human experience gained within the social reality. Stressing the relationship of language and extra-linguistic reality Ingarden focuses on the active human contribution to the development of language. He sheds light on the practices of linguistically inventive people and emphasizes their active role in the formation and understanding of language within a given society. He claims that language forms a system common to a society and that its words and their meanings must not be treated in isolation from a society. By insisting on their being the elements of the system which has its grounds in the society he gives his theory of language a special dimension. He speaks against arbitrariness of natural languages and, in fact, he makes the social adaptability of language the most central thought of his

theory.

In this way Ingarden asserts the unity of language and society and maintains that it is the reference to the common universe of discourse that guarantees the understandability. Reflecting on the intersubjectivity of meanings he concludes that "words actually pronounced are established in advance as intersubjective, identical formations as long as there exists a given linguistic community."<sup>48</sup> Hence, he construes linguistic understanding as expressing oneself in a socially recognizable and accepted way and holds that it is the reference to the social *milieu* and social practice that is the principal cause of the success of the communication among persons belonging to the same society. He also makes this reference to society the chief criterion of the effectiveness of any process of communication and takes it to be a great merit of his theory. Ingarden says on this subject: "Contrary to physicalism and psychologism only this theory takes into consideration the essentially social character of language as an efficient tool of interhuman communication."<sup>49</sup>

Ingarden maintains that previous theories led to the oblivion of the social nature of language. On his view, they misinterpreted the fact that the formation of the meaning of the word is not an experience of a particular individual but a result of cooperation

of many conscious subjects remaining in a direct contact with an object. He explains that language can operate in a society because the rules of its operation are not private to any of the participants but are accepted in common by those who use it. He has this to say on this subject: "The linguistic community arises because language is common to all members of the community and is at the same time a product of their group cooperation. An individual finds language as its intersubjective reality which has its ontic foundation in the behaviour of its members. It is not only that language is common to all who speak it but that it unites them all into one community (as do custom, tradition, ideals)."<sup>50</sup>

It is this view of language, considered a "full-blooded theory of language"<sup>51</sup> and "the most elaborate phenomenological description in the field of language"<sup>52</sup>, that serves Ingarden as a model to draw the analogy between language and art.

In this chapter I have tried to contrast Husserl's approach to language with that of Twardowski's. I have placed Ingarden with Twardowski's analytical and realistic approach rather than with Husserl's idealistic one. In my interpretation I have tried to emphasize the uniqueness of Ingarden's social concept of language.

## NOTES

1

See J.M. Mohanty, Edmund Husserl's Theory of Meaning (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969); also G.Küng "The Role of Language in Phenomenological Analysis," American Philosophical Quarterly 6 (1969): 330-334.

2

G.Küng, "Language Analysis and Phenomenological Analysis," Akten des 14 Internationalen Kongresses für Philosophie 2 (1968): 249.

3

A.J.Ayer, "Phenomenology and Linguistic Analysis," Aristotelian Society Proceedings, Suppl. Vol.33 (1959): 111-124.

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Küng, "The Role of Language" 333. This interest in language constitutes a similarity between Husserl's phenomenology and analytic philosophy. See Ch.Taylor and A.J.Ayer "Phenomenology and Linguistic Analysis," Aristotelian Society Proceedings 33 (1959):93-124; G.Küng "The Role of Language in Phenomenological Analysis", American Philosophical Quarterly 6 (1969):330-334; C.A.Van Peursen "Edmund Husserl and Ludwig Wittgenstein," Philosophy and Phenomenological Research 20 (1959-60):181-197; R. Schmitt, "Phenomenology and Analysis," Philosophy and Phenomenological Research 23 (1962):101-110.

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R. Schmitt, "Phenomenology and Analysis," Philosophical and Phenomenological Research 23 (1962): 107.

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Schmitt 103.

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For philosophical foundations of Jakobson's linguistics see E. Holoenstein, Roman Jakobson's Approach to Language (Bloomington & London: Indiana University Press, 1976).

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(Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme et Cistre ,1978) 45 and 41.
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Holenstein 2.
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A.Szczepańska, the chapter on "Związki Ingardenowskiej teorii  
języka z lingwistyką współczesną" ("Connections of Ingarden's  
Theory of Language with Contemporary Linguistics"), Estetyka  
Romana Ingardena (The Aesthetics of Roman Ingarden) (Warszawa:  
PWN, 1988).
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Küng, "The Role of Language" 330.
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Art) (Warszawa: PWN, 1960); "O tłumaczeniach" ("On  
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R.Ingarden, " Dążenia fenomenologów," ("The Aims of  
Phenomenologists") Z badań nad filozofią współczesną  
(Warszawa: PWN, 1963) 305-306.
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For Ingarden's relation to Husserl see A.T.Tymieniecka  
"The Second Phenomenology," For Roman Ingarden 9 Essays in  
Phenomenology ( The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1959) 1-5 and  
Ingarden's own works on the subject.
- 21  
H.Bratu,I.Marculescu, "Aesthetics and Phenomenology,"  
Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 37 (1979): 341.

22

For information on Kazimierz Twardowski see H. Skolimowski, the chapter on "Kazimierz Twardowski and the Rise of the Analytical Movement in Poland," Polish Analytical Philosophy (New York: The Humanities Press, 1967).

23

Skolimowski observes that there was no philosophical movement in Poland which in the strict sense would correspond to Oxford philosophy of ordinary language but that there were, however, some philosophers in Poland who believed in following language. Skolimowski 172.

24

See K. Twardowski, the chapter on "O jasnym i niejasnym stylu filozoficznym" ("On Clear and Unclear Philosophical Styles"), Selected Writings in Philosophy (Warszawa: PWN, 1965) 346-349. Also L. Nowak, "Kilka uwag o postulacie jasności" (Some Remarks on the Requirement of Clarity), Studia Semantyczne 3 (1970).

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26

See Skolimowski, the chapter on "Kazimierz Twardowski and the Rise of the Analytical Movement in England" 24-56.

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For Twardowski's concept of language see K. Twardowski, the chapter on "O czynnościach i wytworach" ("On Activities and Products"), Wybrane Pisma Filozoficzne (Selected Writings in Philosophy) 217-241.

28

Twardowski's position on language and its relation to thinking cannot be reconciled with Austin's view on the subject. Twardowski's view that language is intentional is in sharp opposition to Austin's claim that language is conventional. For instance, the difference between illocutionary and perlocutionary acts is hard to make on the intentional theory of language.

29

A. Szczepańska, "Związki Ingardenowskiej teorii języka z lingwistyką współczesną," ("Connections of Ingarden's Theory of Language with Contemporary Linguistics") Studia Estetyczne XVII (Warszawa: PWN, 1980): 165.

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Mohanty's expression.
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Ingarden 112.
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Ingarden 112.
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- 36  
Ingarden 75.
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Ingarden 99.

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Ingarden 104.
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Ingarden 100.
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Szczepańska, "Związki Ingardenowskiej teorii języka" 166.
- 48  
R.Ingarden, O dziele literackim (The Literary Work of Art)  
(Warszawa: PWN, 1960) 499.
- 49  
Ingarden, Z teorii języka 23.
- 50  
Ingarden, Z teorii języka 23. In a way Ingarden suggests here that in order to really understand the language one must visit the country in which it is spoken for otherwise he will not understand a great deal without being aware of the reasons why.
- 51  
Riska 187.
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G.Küng, "Ingarden on Language and Ontology," Analecta Husserliana II (1972): 204.

## CHAPTER SIX

## CHAPTER 6

## LANGUAGE AND ART IN INGARDEN'S THEORY OF ART

Following the previous chapter I will now demonstrate by means of concrete examples Ingarden's engagement in the questions of language for the purpose of the theory of art. In order to do this I will discuss the linguistic element of two notions that play a crucial role in his theory of art, those of quasi-judgments and of concretization. In addition, I will present the objections raised against the purely linguistic treatment of the complex problems of art.

1. The Linguistic Component of Ingarden's Quasi-Judgment Theory

Ingarden's quasi-judgment theory is one of the most original parts of his aesthetics.<sup>1</sup> This theory has an obviously linguistic character. It combines aesthetics with linguistics and literature and is said to play a "tremendously important role" in the analysis of the literary work of art, the most verbal of all arts.<sup>2</sup> Speaking in the most general terms, this theory is grounded in Ingarden's theory of linguistic reference.

Ingarden applies the term "quasi-judgments" to sentences occurring in literary fiction. In his view, they are not genuine but merely quasi-judgments, because they do not have reference. This amounts to saying that they do not point to objects beyond themselves but that, of course, they do have sense. To be precise, a quasi-judgment, according to Ingarden, is a sentence that is less than an assertive proposition. This last is accompanied by a claim to truth while a quasi-judgment is not.<sup>3</sup> Ingarden holds that a quasi-judgment neither refers nor asserts. Its projection does not reach any objectively existing, real state of affairs. Instead, it only simulates such a state of affairs, pretends to constitute it. Ingarden is convinced that truth is not a component of quasi-judgments. Truth and falsity "are here only agents acting behind the scene."<sup>4</sup> Ingarden maintains that as assertions quasi-judgments are weak assertions, and as sentences they are spurious or secondary uses of sentences. As Ingarden says: "Declarative sentences appearing in a literary work are not pure affirmative propositions nor, on the other hand, can they be considered to be seriously intended assertive propositions or judgments."<sup>5</sup>

Ingarden claims that the sentences in a literary work of art are intended by writers not to be true in the process of a deliberate and purposeful activity as writing is: the activity which consists in the intentional use of words. In this way he

also claims that the sentences used in literature do not really function as sentences from normal discourse. He holds that they do not relate beyond the linguistic world and are not translatable into "strict", "serious" sentences. They differ from true sentences in that they have a kind of a double nature. In other words, the quasi-judgment theory claims that the language of the literary work of art is essentially different from ordinary language when considered from the point of view of its effectiveness of usage. In this way, it goes beyond a mere description of language and reaches toward a description of linguistic acts. It deals with the actual performance, the real verbal communication and the practical function of language, i.e. with speech. As such, it provides for an analyses of sentences that are understood as speech acts. That this indeed is the subject of Ingarden's quasi-judgment theory is, however, camouflaged, for Ingarden uses a very different language than is found in the theory of communication. Thus, for instance, he never speaks of "speech acts", "messages", or "acts of communication", but sticks to the vocabulary in which language is described by means of such terms as "words" and "propositions". In spite of this, the quasi-judgment theory can be seen to be a theory about literary discourse and its communicative function.<sup>6</sup>

It is at this point that Ingarden's theory comes close to

the conclusions of several Anglo-American authors who, investigating the differences between various kinds of discourses, delved into the theory of speech in order to approach a definition of literature. One of them is a definition arrived at by R. Ohmann.<sup>7</sup> Ohmann formulates an illocutionary definition of a work of literature which reads as follows: "A literary work is a discourse whose sentences lack the illocutionary forces that would normally attach to them. Its illocutionary force is mimetic."<sup>8</sup> This definition brings about the conclusion that the speech-act quality is a significant quality of literary works, and in fact, the most relevant aspect of literature. In making use of the speech acts theory this definition draws mainly on the work of J.L. Austin.<sup>9</sup>

Austin's interest in language is that of someone interested in it as a certain instrument. He studies various communication systems, discursive units called speech acts, and tests them from the point of view of their logical significance and practical effectiveness.<sup>10</sup> He isolates paradigmatic uses and provides a logical account of what it is for persons to use language. A speech act has, according to Austin, many aspects that can be separated from it by way of abstraction.<sup>11</sup> Austin focuses largely on illocutionary acts, which are the acts that must be performed in order to communicate. Austin's theory maintains that speaking does

not entail only articulating or constructing sentences according to the grammar of a given language. Nor does it mean referring them. Speaking, then, is not only a phonetic, phatic or rhetic act. These three minimal units are present in every speech act and there is no novelty in noting this. What is new in Austin is that, according to him, to speak means also to act. Every act of speech performs a kind of social act - it promises, explains, apologizes and so on. By illocutionary act, Austin means that in saying what he says a speaker is performing a second kind of act. This aspect constitutes the basis of every illocutionary act, where the expression is equipped with some specific force which is something other than meaning. According to Austin to articulate an illocution means to intend the sentence to have this force and to secure an uptake. An illocutionary act, then, is something more than a standard act of saying something.<sup>12</sup> Austin explains that each illocution is also a locution and that in order to perform an illocution a speaker must first perform a locution. Thus, an illocution, just like a locution, can be judged in terms of its sense and reference. Austin talks at this occasion about the agreement with facts as a condition of its truth, i.e. the agreement of the phatic sense of the statement with its reference.<sup>13</sup> Austin claims that illocutionary force is conventional, and therefore extra linguistic, and that it has its source in various conventions regarding the use of language in a

community of speakers. But he discusses only the linguistic means of making this force explicit, leaving aside the non-linguistic aspects of the act.

Ohmann's definition of literature makes clear that no speech act in literature can ever be fully successful, that Austin's conditions of felicity can never apply, and therefore, cannot be met. The term "mimetic" in Ohmann's definition indicates the fact that a literary work deliberately imitates a series of "serious" speech acts.<sup>14</sup> It is at this point that the parallel between Ingarden and Austin reveals itself. Ohmann's definition which originated in the analytic school of philosophy provides a link between Ingarden and Austin. Consequently it bridges the distance between phenomenology and analytical philosophy.

Looked at from the perspective of Austin's views on speech, Ingarden's quasi-judgment theory can be seen to be a specific study of the acts called by Austin illocutionary speech acts.<sup>15</sup> In the light of this, Ingarden's quasi-judgments, the sentences from the work of literature, can be treated as quasi-equivalents of what Austin takes to be the most paradigmatic uses of language. With this reading, Ingarden's ideas quite unexpectedly take the shape of a phenomenology of performatives.<sup>16</sup>

Ingarden treats literature as an offshoot of discourse. He approaches literature as if it were an utterance with particular language related problems. Some of these problems are unique to literature, like those of meaning and truth, but some also arise with respect to other arts. That is why Ingarden extends his findings from the field of literature to other arts, so that the study of the literary work of art plays the role of a preparatory study of art in general. However, those elements that are exhibited occasionally in the other arts are always present in the case of literature: vocabulary, syntax, and semantics.

Ingarden approaches literature from the angle that its medium is the words and he focuses his attention on the verbal aspect of literature in the hope of determining what its nature is. He treats the words from the literary work of art as the words that already exist within ordinary language but he realizes that in a literary text they occur in a special function and do not have the usual consequences of ordinary words.

Ingarden focuses not so much on language as an abstract system but rather on language as a practical activity, a means of influencing other people. It would seem that Ingarden recognizes the existence of illocutionary force since he remarks that language is constructed in such a way that it possesses the ability to be

efficient in acting on other persons. As examples of what he means he mentions promise, order, and persuasion and he inquires into a relationship between the speaker, the listener and the message. As a result of the distinction he makes between the simple meaning of an utterance and meaning accompanied by force, his phenomenological description of literary fiction matches the analytical description.

Ingarden's quasi-judgments correspond directly to the mimetic-speech acts: they both look like true, ordinary speech acts but they are only acts of pretense: in fact they are make-believe illocutions. Neither of these linguistic acts has the force to relate to the world and in neither of them is the rhetic act complete. This is so because, as Ingarden and Ohmann suggest, the authors of these acts either intentionally or conventionally do not guarantee the state of affairs that is indicated by the judgment.<sup>17</sup> The mechanism which could secure the illocutionary force is missing and, as a result, literature consists of seemingly assertive judgments. Writers, according to Ingarden, resemble "born liars who enter fully into the story they are making up, who are on the point of believing the reality of their lies and yet, never lose certainty that all this is untrue."<sup>18</sup> Ohmann, however, does not draw such a drastic conclusion from his definition. He is inclined rather to believe that "falsehood is not a distinctive

mark of literature" but that mimetism only indicates a certain tendency.<sup>19</sup> He argues that literature does have a cognitive content but that it does not carry this content as an argument does, sentence by sentence. But quite like Ingarden, he argues that "literary works contain no statements."<sup>20</sup>

In this way, the phenomenological theory of a literary work of art coincides with speech act theory and becomes translatable into the language of analytic philosophy. A comparison of Ingarden's and Ohmann's views on the language of literature shows that the implications of the eidetic analysis correspond to the implications of the linguistic analysis. This mutual discovery arrived at from different philosophical positions brings forward a correlation that exists between analytic and phenomenological aesthetics. What might otherwise seem to be two independent approaches to language, to speech and to literature display a remarkable correspondence.

## 2. The Linguistic Component of Ingarden's Notion of Concretization

"Concretization" is one of Ingarden's most characteristic notions.<sup>21</sup> In fact, it is one of the pivotal concepts of his aesthetics, for it explains the transition from the real object into the aesthetic object. As such, it is the central concept of

his ontology of art and is often addressed as the most important discovery of Ingarden's aesthetics.

Ingarden puts forward the notion of concretization because he maintains that a work of art is a schematic entity which contains "places of indeterminacy".<sup>22</sup> He speaks of omission, inexpression or vagueness as the structural elements of the work. He stresses the elusive nature of the work and its failure to be able to supply a full account of what it is about. Ingarden maintains further that the work needs to have these places filled in in order for its potentialities to be realized. He refers to this "filling in" as "concretization", which comes to mean a reconstruction, a completion of an incomplete work into its fuller version.

Ingarden himself describes concretization in the following way: "What results from the intentional activities of an author is the work of art. But what constitutes, owing to the reception of a work by a reader, not only the reconstruction of the work in terms of what it effectively contains, but also, its partial complementation and actualization of its potentialities, and what is in a way the common product of the artist and the reader - is the concretization of a work."<sup>23</sup>

Ingarden believes that the requirement to complete applies to every work of art. He sees every work as a sort of appeal for an act of concretization and he claims that this holds true for all of the different types of works of art. Real objects, on the other hand, are on his view fully specified. Of all the works of art, he considers literature to be particularly suitable to the study of this phenomenon. The reason is that, on his view, literature furnishes the possibility of many more information gaps than any other kind of work of art and, therefore, that it exemplifies the process of concretization better than any other art.

Ingarden points out here that every concretization is determined not only by the structure of the work but also by the reader's activity. He holds that a literary work of art calls for a certain reaction on the reader's part which gives occasion to an interaction, a cooperation and a constitution between the text and the reader. In order to complete this task Ingarden's reader is bound to enter into a kind of conversation with the work, and not to be merely a passive recipient of what he is offered by the work. In this way, the reader becomes "a partner in a literary communication" and the shape of the work depends to a great degree on his co-creative activity.<sup>24</sup> What stands behind concretization is the idea of the aesthetic situation construed as the subject - object encounter. This idea entails the idea of an act of

communication.<sup>25</sup> In this way dialogue becomes fundamental to the understanding of the term of "concretization."

Similarly to the quasi-judgment theory one can also analyze Ingarden's notion of concretization as a linguistic notion. Although Ingarden limits his analysis of concretization to the specific structure of the work and the constitutive operations of the reader, there is still another factor which greatly interferes in this process, namely, that of language. The fact that concretization is carried out through means of language brings forward language as a mediating factor in the writer - reader unit. The reader concretizes the work by means of language and language is also his basic medium when he supplies the missing stuff in the stratum of the presented objects and appearances. He uses it to fill in the spots which the author's language failed to determine sufficiently. Thus, the reader works with the language and makes a verbal intervention on the level of the author's text. When this fact is noticed it can be argued that concretization is essentially a linguistic activity very much relying on language and fully dependent on it.

Ingarden believes that language itself contains places of indeterminacy and he observes that schematism is inherent in the language since language, by its very nature, contains domains of

variability. He claims that language simply does not allow for an unambiguous and exhaustive assignment of an infinite multitude of features. He indicates that places of indeterminacy occur in the phonetic and lexical strata. Thus, he maintains that ambiguity and the gaps of information are bound to occur, no matter how close to the written word the reader tries to keep, and that, therefore, the places of indeterminacy can disappear from the stratum of the meanings of words only to a certain degree. Hence, it is because of this "opalizing effect" of language that there cannot be anything like a final and conclusive concretization of the language stratum of the work of literature. Thus, on Ingarden's view, the verbal stuff of the work conditions the final outcome of concretization. Clearly, the preservation of the places of indeterminacy in the language stratum entails the failure of achieving a complete concretization in the other strata. In the light of this, the "decision" to concretize the work of art is almost purely a linguistic exercise, a genuinely linguistic action.

### 3. Critique of the Quasi-Judgment Theory and of Concretization

In spite of the obvious merits of the Ingardenian concepts of quasi-judgments and of concretization, often referred to as among the "greatest efforts in our times"<sup>26</sup> to solve the intriguing problems of literature, and in spite of them being judged to be"

one of the most interesting attempts to explain the nature of literary fiction ever undertaken by philosophy", they have met with considerable criticism.<sup>27</sup>

The quasi-judgment theory of literature has become the source of a very heated discussion which has focused on the problem of truth in literature and the whole complexity of problems connected with the cognitive function of literature and the relation of literature to reality. Ingarden's thesis about the modification of the sentences from the literary work of art from authentic into quasi-real has pushed many critics to interpret literature as "a game" that cannot and should not be taken seriously. Such an interpretation is in accord with Ingarden's conviction that "we use the word not to convince ourselves about the existence of real objects denoted by it. We may use linguistic formations in order to evoke from nothing the world of fiction."<sup>28</sup>

But many other critics feel reluctant to give Ingarden's theory such a semantic interpretation and refuse to accept the thesis about the make believe character of literature. They find Ingarden's conclusion that literature conveys no information about the empirical world troublesome and unacceptable. Thus Borowy, standing in opposition, attacks Ingarden's way of talking about literature in terms of containing "non-serious judgments" and accuses him of belittling the status of literature. He, however,

decides to attribute such a conclusion to a "terminological deficiency" since he cannot bring himself to believe that Ingarden should really consider all the sentences of a literary work of art to be mere quasi-judgments, and literature as a whole to be a non-serious thing.<sup>29</sup> Yet others interpret this theory as deliberately degrading literature, so that Ingarden's theory of literature is, in his own words, a "stumbling block" for them.<sup>30</sup>

Answering Borowy's critique Ingarden offers a supplementary explanation of the status of sentences and their relation to truth. He makes it clear that the status of a sentence from a literary work of art does not depend on its material content but on the context in which it occurs, so that two identical sentences can have two different logical functions. Nevertheless, he sustains his thesis that in literary fiction, i.e. in literature that is read in the aesthetic attitude, one deals with quasi-judgments only. It is only in other kinds of literature, such as factual literature, whose fragments refer to reality, that quasi-judgments may be accompanied by judgments *sensu stricto*.

Yet even with this additional supplement, Milbrandt still questions how a reader is to analyze sentences taken from an epic or from a historical novel which refer to a geographical or historical reality. Similarly, he questions how the reader is to

differentiate between a realistic novel and a sheer fantasy, a false judgment and a quasi-judgment.<sup>31</sup>

Pelc puts forward an objection from a standpoint of logic. He puts the correctness of the logicality of the quasi-judgment definition of the literary work of art into question by proving that it is in danger of the error of circularity: if the sentences in a literary work are quasi-judgments, the objects presented in it are vested in a specific "habitus"<sup>32</sup> of sham reality and, at the same time, if the objects presented in a literary work are vested in a specific habitus of sham reality the sentences which they consist of are quasi-judgments.<sup>33</sup> Further, Pelc talks about the confusion of relations on the level of author-sentence and sentence-reality and points to an overlapping of two different features of sentences: truthfulness and assertive character. He demonstrates that the error consists in assigning truthfulness to judgments only, and he emphasizes the necessity of differentiating the logical value of sentences from their assertive character.<sup>34</sup> In this way Pelc undermines the idea of claiming a right to truthfulness as characteristic for a judgment, which is the very concept on which Ingarden builds his quasi-judgment theory.<sup>35</sup>

Smoczyńska stresses that if Ingarden's theory, which is built around the concept of the character of sentences occurring in

literature, i.e. around linguistic facts solely, is taken in isolation, it would yield a reductionistic account of literature. She notices that such a view would reduce literature to an utterance. It would suggest that the work is fully describable in terms of linguistic units. The result would be not only that it would give the work of literature a unidimensional look but that it would simplify both the complex nature of literature and its relation to the world. Smoczyńska shows that such a theory would be unable to deal adequately with such important components of literature as plot, characters, style or events and their connections to the world. Besides, in this approach to literature the aesthetic value of the work would remain unexplained. This amounts to saying that the most important literary problem would be left out. Smoczyńska concludes that the quasi-judgment theory cannot be regarded as a thoroughly satisfactory, autonomous theory denoting sufficient and indispensable conditions for creating a literary work of art and for explaining its essence. Such a conception of a literary work of art can only function as one of the possibilities complementary to the inquiry which must deal with literature construed rather as a representation and a text.<sup>36</sup> She calls, therefore, for an enlargement of the scope of inquiry.

The concept of concretization has also given rise to a number of critical reservations. Markiewicz follows the evolution of

Ingarden's views on places of indeterminacy and concludes that initially Ingarden went too far in recommending the filling up of all "gaps", since not always do all the places of indeterminacy can or have to be removed.<sup>37</sup> Markiewicz claims that sometimes details that are purposely left unspecified enhance the quality of the style of the story and the story in general. He suggests that Ingarden first modelled his views on the 19th-century principles of imagining while reading and then modified them to make his theory broad and flexible enough for contact with 20th-century literature. In Markiewicz's view he succeeded only to a degree.<sup>38</sup>

Głowiński agrees with Ingarden's conception of schematicism of the work of art but he finds the notion of concretization to be at the same time "too narrow and limited to a few selected items " and "too generally conceived."<sup>39</sup> Not really entering into debate with Ingarden, he notices that Ingarden centres his attention only on selected places of indeterminacy while giving language marginal attention only. His major worry, however, concerns the lack of the standard of concretization in Ingarden's theory. While allowing that a concretization can enrich or deprive the work of its style and character, the theory nevertheless renders the reader unable to eliminate misconcretizations. Głowiński also criticizes Ingarden for carrying out his analysis of concretization in "laboratory conditions", in which nothing disturbs the process, and for

focusing only on some specific relations between the work, the language and the readers. This yields, in his opinion, a rather "far-fetched idealization".<sup>40</sup>

Besides, Głowiński notices, after Sławiński, the problem of synchronics and diachronics as related to concretization and talks about the process of "the reduction of diachronics to synchronics" as typical for Ingarden's idea of concretizing.<sup>41</sup> In this way, he calls attention to the question picked up also by Rosner which bears upon the element of historicity contained in the notion of concretization.<sup>42</sup> Głowiński and Rosner both reflect on the extent to which the awareness of history modifies the language of the process of concretization. Needless to say, Ingarden does make a simplifying assumption and Rosner sounds correct in saying that "we cannot exclude the fact that the meanings of words occurring in the literary text have been modified throughout the ages in a way that may be quite vague to us."<sup>43</sup> She speaks in favour of the fact that the individual elements of language are historically modified and that the objects presented in literature inherit their meaning from meanings of words and sentences that they depend on. It is not surprising that Rosner calls for the use of a broader notion of language than what Ingarden meant by the term, and that she criticizes Ingarden for absolutizing the language of artistic communication of one particular epoch.<sup>44</sup>

In this chapter I have tried to show that Ingarden's philosophical style is analytic in method and that the analysis of language is important for his theory of art. At the same time, however, I believe that the critique that such an approach raises signals the inadequacy of the approach based solely on the study of language to recognize certain important problems of literature.

## NOTES

1

Ingarden develops his quasi - judgment theory in chapters 25-26 in O dziele literackim (The Literary Work of Art) (Warszawa: PWN, 1960).

2

A.Riska, " Language and Logic in the Work of Roman Ingarden," Analecta Husserliana 4 (1976): 205.

3

Ordinary judgments are acts whose authors guarantee the state of affairs that the judgment talks about. To ask about the truth of a judgment is in fact to ask about this guarantee which constitutes the illocutionary force of the judgment. See J. Szymura, Jezyk, mowa i prawda w perspektywie fenomenologii lingwistycznej J.L.Austina (Language, Speech and Truth from the Perspective of Austin's Linguistic Phenomenology) (Wroclaw: PWN, 1982).

4

Riska 206.

5

Ingarden, O dziele literackim (The Literary Work of Art) 229.

6

For the adaptability of Ingarden's theory to the theory of communication see K. Rosner, "Ingarden's Philosophy of Literature and the Analysis of Artistic Communication," Roman Ingarden and Contemporary Polish Aesthetics ed. P.Graff and S.Krzemień-Ojak (Warszawa: PWN, 1975). Rosner states there that Ingarden never applied the semiotic definition of art or studied the peculiarities of a work of art as a symbol or sign but that, nevertheless, his aesthetics can be translated into the language of semiotic aesthetics. Rosner 191.

7

R.Ohmann, "Speech Acts and the Definition of Literature," Philosophy and Rhetoric 4 (1971): 1-19.

8

Ohmann 14.

9

J.L.Austin, How To Do Things With Words (Cambridge. Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962).

- 10 Skolimowski remarks that Austin's awareness of the necessity to elaborate the logic of various types of utterances did not originate with him and that his theory, "although no doubt original", is not novel in the absolute sense. H. Skolimowski, Polish Analytical Philosophy (New York: The Humanities Press, 1967) 41.
- 11 According to Austin, almost any speech act is at the same time an act of locution, illocution and perlocution.
- 12 A standard speech act is called in Austin's theory "a locution". To perform it is to utter something sensible in such a way that the utterance refers to something. The locutionary speech act possesses both sense and reference that constitute its meaning.
- 13 The fact that a standard illocutionary act usually produces certain effects and is in this sense also a perlocutionary act is not essential to the comparison drawn here.
- 14 Ohmann 14.
- 15 For that see B. Smoczyńska, "The Illocutionary Definition of the Work of Art and Roman Ingarden's Quasi-Judgment Theory", in manuscript.
- 16 Szymura notices that although Austin did not refer to any particular tradition, not to mention phenomenology, some suspect that his speech-act theory may have its source in his almost certain knowledge of the Husserlian distinctions concerning the intentional acts of thought. Szymura 228.
- 17 Ingarden and Austin stand in opposition as to their views on language. Ingarden claims that language is intentional and Austin that it is conventional. The difference between illocutionary and perlocutionary acts is hard to make using an intentional theory of language.
- 18 R. Ingarden, "O tak zwanej prawdzie w literaturze" ("On So-called 'Truth' in Literature") Studia z Estetyki vol.I (Warszawa: PWN, 1966) 421.

- 19  
Ohmann 17.
- 20  
Ohmann 14.
- 21  
Ingarden introduces the term " concretization" in the chapters 62-64, O dziele literackim (The Literary Work of Art ).
- 22  
For the concept of places of indeterminacy see Ingarden chap. 42. For critical remarks on this subject see H.Markiewicz, "Places of Indeterminacy in a Literary Work," Roman Ingarden and Contemporary Polish Aesthetics, ed.P.Graff and S.Krzemień-Ojak (Warszawa: PWN 1975). Markiewicz observes there that the Anglo-American literary criticism which has been preoccupied with ambiguity, plurisignification and multiple meaning has in fact been preoccupied with places of indeterminacy in the meanings of words and sentences. Markiewicz 164.
- 23  
R.Ingarden, Studia z Estetyki t.I (Studies in Aesthetics) vol.I (Warszawa: PWN, 1966) 267.
- 24  
Głowiński, "On Concretization" 44.
- 25  
Again, as in the case of the quasi-judgment theory, Ingarden uses a different terminology to speak about this activity: the category of communication has its counterpart in the concept of the cognition of a work of art and concretization itself recalls interpretation.
- 26  
W. Borowy, "Szkoła krytyków," ("The School of Critics") Przegląd współczesny 19 (1937): 35-41 quoted after A. Szczepańska, "Polemiki wokół Ingardena," (Controversies on Ingarden) Studia z dziejów estetyki polskiej, ed.P.Graff and S.Krzemień-Ojak (Warszawa: PWN, 1975) 130.
- 27  
Smoczyńska 17.
- 28  
R.Ingarden, Z teorii języka i filozoficznych podstaw logiki (The Theory of Language and the Philosophical Foundations of Logic) (Warszawa: PWN, 1972) 45.

- 29  
Borowy 136.
- 30  
Ingarden, " O tak zwanej prawdzie w literaturze" ( "On So-called 'Truth' in Literature") 415-464.
- 31  
M.Milbrandt, rev. of O poznawaniu dzieła literackiego (The Cognition of the Literary Work of Art) ,by R.Ingarden, Przegląd Filozoficzny 41,1938, quoted after A.Szczepańska, Studia z dziejów estetyki polskiej (Warszawa: PWN, 1975) 133.
- 32  
Ingarden's expression for "external form."
- 33  
J.Pelc, "Quasi-sądy a dzieło literackie," ("Quasi-Judgments and a Literary Work of Art") Pamiętnik literacki 3 (1963): 78; quoted after Smoczyńska 16.
- 34  
Pelc 78.
- 35  
Ingarden does not specify the difference between judgments, propositions and sentences. For this terminological confusion see P.McCormick, Fictions, Philosophies, and the Problems of Poetics (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988) 93-97.
- 36  
Smoczyńska 9.
- 37  
Markiewicz 162.
- 38  
Markiewicz 170.
- 39  
Głowiński, " On Concretization" 36.
- 40  
Głowiński 36 and 37.
- 41  
J.Sławiński, J." Synchronia i diachronia w procesie literackim," ("Synchronics and Diachronics in the Literary Process") Dzieło. Język. Tradycja (Work, Language, Tradition) (Warszawa: PWN, 1974) quoted after Głowiński, "On

Concretization" 40.

42

K. Rosner, "Ingarden's Philosophy of Literature and the Analysis of Artistic Communication," Roman Ingarden and Contemporary Polish Aesthetics, ed. P. Graff and S. Krzemień-Ojak (Warszawa: PWN, 1975) 204.

43

Rosner 204.

44

Ingarden may have for his excuse the fact that verbal language changes less during history than the language of artistic communication.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

## CHAPTER 7

## INGARDEN'S GENERAL THEORY OF ART

Here I plan to begin with an account of Ingarden's position on two issues: the ontology of works of art and the structure of works of art. I want to explain his notion of the work of art as an intentional object as well as a multilayer, schematic object. Then, in contrast to the previous chapter, I want to stress Ingarden's commitment to other than purely linguistic matters in his outlook on art.

1. The Work of Art as an Intentional Object

Ingarden develops central points of his theory of art in The Literary Work of Art.<sup>1</sup> He introduces there basic categories, conceptions and solutions of his theory. He later amplifies it in Studies in Aesthetics, Experience, Work of Art, Value and The Cognition of the Literary Work of Art.<sup>2</sup> His goal is to find an essence and a mode of existence of the work of art. In other words, what Ingarden looks for are the essential qualities of a work of art, i.e. for what its *eidos* is. In order to find it he examines a chosen set of uncontestable works of art which are

because of their uncontestability good works of art. In a way, he lets the problems of value into his theory. When discussing literature he differentiates between the term "literary work" and "literary work of art", using the former to designate every work of *écriture* and the latter to refer to such cases where the work is a genuine work of art. He focuses his attention on the second kind of works. He proceeds this way because he believes that one should first analyze works whose arthood is beyond any doubt and only then transfer those findings to borderline cases.

Ingarden's interest in the essence of the work of art is other than just definitional; moreover, it is other than just aesthetic. It is essentially philosophical: his analysis is designed to vindicate the issue of the mode of existence of the world.<sup>3</sup> His main concern lies with the controversy about the existence of the world. He undertakes to abolish the Husserlian view that the real world is an intentional object. He criticizes Husserl's transcendental idealism and his notion of the world as existentially dependent on the acts of consciousness, and tries to fix his own position.

He turns for that to the work of art, which seems to him to be a good example of an object existentially derivative from creative acts of human consciousness and dependent on them. He

chooses a literary work of art to demonstrate this fact because literature contains fictional objects which are never transferred into reality. Therefore, it is ideal from the point of view of methodology to point out the basic difference between reality and non-reality, and consequently to settle his argument with Husserl. In this task Ingarden gets influenced only partly by language, and he endeavours to determine the nature of art first of all by means of ontological investigations. The reason for this approach is that Ingarden does not believe that language could carry with itself any explicit ontological commitment, and as a matter of fact, he accords little value to such attempts where language and ontological decisions go hand in hand. There can be no doubt that "at the cross section of his ontology and a theory of language one finds the preference given to ontological assumptions."<sup>4</sup>

Ingarden defines ontology as "the a priori analysis of the content of ideas", where by ideas he means "general objects". He engages in questions concerning the content of our thoughts about art and in the task of deciding the structure of the idea of art. He works on the assumption that ontology will provide the answer as to the content of the general idea of a work of art, by asking what pertains to this idea, what its constants and variables are and what relations hold between them.<sup>5</sup> In particular, turning to literature, Ingarden expects from ontology an answer to the

question how a certain individual object ought to be constituted, and what general qualities it ought to have in order to be something like a literary work of art. And further, he expects to be able to specify what are the possible types and variants of literary works of art admissible under the basic general structure of the work.<sup>6</sup>

In order to explain the above Ingarden makes use of the notion of intentionality. This notion plays a crucial role in his philosophical development. He admits that his interest in it was created by both Twardowski and Husserl. Especially Twardowski gave him an insight which enabled him to speak of the formal structure of the object and to build his own notion of the constitutive nature of intentional objects. This idea of a special category object constitutes the main element of Ingarden's theory of art.

Generally speaking, what Ingarden understands by intentionality is the active conception of human consciousness which confers structure, meaning and value on reality.<sup>7</sup> He distinguishes intentional objects from real objects in that the latter do not have to have anything conferred on them. Applying the notion of intentionality to art he locates art in consciousness and claims that works of art are not real: they are products of intentional acts of human consciousness. According to Ingarden

works of art depend for their existence on the intention of the artist, i.e. their creator. However, it requires another intentional act on the part of the percipient for them to achieve a status of art. There are then, as it were, two stages on which intentionality operates. Thus, in Ingarden's view, an object is not art until someone's art-intent makes it so: in fact, Ingarden claims, two intentional acts are necessary for the existence of the work of art. Most specifically Ingarden elaborates the point that in order to be art, objects must enter into a relationship with the perceiving subject. He stresses the fact that their very being is contingent upon their power to bring the observer to constitute such an object. This notion of a subject-object encounter, the aesthetic situation, which Ingarden introduces constitutes the core of his conception of art. It contains the idea that arthood is a relational property.

The notion of the work of art as an intentional object renders an account of the fact that works of art do not so much exist as become, that they depend upon intentional acts of a creating or a perceiving subject. This very idea also implies that works of art are not accessible unless a suitable operation takes place, and then they continue in existence only as long as the act of consciousness holds them in being. As intentional objects works of art are basically private possessions.

Ingarden is convinced that the acceptance of the thesis of the existence of intentional objects is not a multiplication of entities beyond necessity, but that it serves a concrete explanatory function in the conflict of realism and idealism. The category of intentionality helps Ingarden to explain the ontology not only of art but of all cultural objects. Ingarden maintains that all cultural objects are creatively constituted by consciousness.<sup>8</sup> That is why he holds that they form a very specific kind of human world, neither real nor ideal.

Ingarden's most crucial thesis concerning works of art is that intentional objects do not possess any existential autonomy, any ontical foundation in itself. He maintains that intentional objects exist only as a dependent formation analogous to illusion, to something which only pretends to be something though it is not this something. Ingarden focuses on the fact that intentional objects that come into being with individual mental acts are existentially heteronomous with respect to human thinking.

Yet, he differentiates the work of art from the subjective experiences and impressions of the maker and observer. He presents the work of art as ontologically independent of them and intersubjectively accessible. He maintains that while being essentially private works of art can nevertheless transcend the

privacy of one's mind. In this sense his idea of art is non-psychological. According to Ingarden works of art, although non-empirical, also exist in their material shape. Ingarden holds that it is necessary to think of works of art also as physical objects which occupy space and time and which are existentially independent objects. Ingarden introduces the notion of the ontic foundation, which makes the material world enter his theory of art and makes him speak about the physical basis and material grounding of a work of art.<sup>9</sup> This kind of realistic phenomenology, and the reference to the physical ontological basis of the work of art, makes of Ingarden "*la bête noire*" for orthodox phenomenologists.<sup>10</sup>

Ingarden depicts the relationship between the material basis and the work of art as depending on the kind of work of art: sometimes the relationship is very close, as in the case of architecture, and sometimes it is very remote, as in a literary work of art. But he dismisses the idea that objects of art might just be physical objects: on his view the role of the material object is secondary and instrumental, and he clearly differentiates between the work of art and its material substratum. He maintains that the physical foundation is there only for the intentional object to get anchored in the reality. Thus, the thesis of intentionality entails the claim against pure physicalism.

Ingarden does not develop the subject of the material moments of the work of art. He rather wants one to bear in mind that works have properties which the physical objects do not have: as intentional objects they carry certain additional meanings.

## 2. The Structure of the Work of Art and the Definition of Art

Ingarden is convinced that there is a relationship between the mode of existence and the formal structure of the object. So, apart from the existential thesis of the work of art, he develops the thesis about its structure. He claims that works of art, in contrast to real objects, are complex, stratified entities. A literary work of art, for instance, is composed of four strata arranged in a hierarchical way: the phonetic stratum, the stratum of meaning of sentences, the stratum of represented objects, and the stratum of appearances of those objects.<sup>11</sup> Ingarden suggests that the connections between strata become established during the intentional act of the creator of the work. He indicates that in the process of the cognition of the literary work of art, each stratum has to be cognized separately. Yet, he also calls for a synthesis of all the strata of the work. He points at the fact that there is a close relationship between different strata and that they all unite in an ideal polyphony, with the lower strata serving

as existential foundations for the higher ones. It is a characteristic feature of Ingarden's philosophical method that he first emphasizes the heterogeneity of elements in a work of art, and then attempts to organize them into an organic unity by means of hierarchical stratification and interlayer connections.<sup>12</sup>

Apart from the thesis of stratification Ingarden puts forward the thesis of schematization and claims that works of art, in contrast to real objects, are schematic objects. By this he means that the objects in the literary work of art are described in some respects only, so that the work needs supplementing to obtain "fullness of existence and concreteness".<sup>13</sup> In a literary work of art schematization occurs in all four strata. In other works, those apprehended directly by senses, the sources of schematization are different. Nevertheless, schematism applies to all kinds of works.

Ingarden holds that each work, by its very nature, is "unready". The very thesis about the unreadiness of the work of art constitutes the greatest *novum* of his theory of art.<sup>14</sup> Ingarden maintains that the potentiality of the work of art, and the presence of "the insufficiently qualified spots" in it, bring about the necessity to complete it.<sup>15</sup> He indicates that this is

carried on during the process of concretization, which on his view constitutes the necessary procedure that has to be performed in order to realize the function of art. The notion of concretization ties works of art with the world around, and implies that the reader must go beyond the work of art in order to fill places of indeterminacy. Hence, the notion of concretization introduces the idea that the work of art acquires some extra intentional qualities which add to its qualities acquired "at birth".<sup>16</sup> It also brings forward the problem that art is relational to its setting, and that arthood has a contextual frame. Ingarden emphasizes the fact that one work of art may yield many different concretizations at one time, as well as that concretizations may change over time.

A concretized work of art, i.e. a completed work of art, becomes on Ingarden's theory an aesthetic object, which Ingarden clearly distinguishes from the work of art. In a way, his theory shifts the attention from the work of art as such to the aesthetic objects that might be generated from it and which are causally connected with it. His view is that it is one of the possible concretizations of the work of art that becomes the aesthetic object of the work of art. By introducing the concept of the aesthetic object Ingarden admits a conceptual split of the work of art into artistic and aesthetic object. The artistic object, once

created, remains the same, and like its physical embodiment is an intersubjective object. The aesthetic object is a monosubjective object, one which continues to change through concretizations. Ingarden stresses this complexity of art objects, and considers it absolutely necessary when talking about the nature of art to distinguish between three distinct, although connected, entities: the physical object, the work of art as schematic and intentional object, and the work of art as a concretized object, i.e. the aesthetic object.

Ingarden juxtaposes the work of art and its concretizations in the sense that he maintains that only a concretized work, i.e. the work whose potentialities have been actualized, can perform the basic function of art, i.e. that it can be appreciated aesthetically. In other words, he maintains that only the aesthetic object is the legitimate object of the aesthetic experience. In a way, he ascertains that in the aesthetic attitude there is no direct access to the work of art, but only to the aesthetic object. He presses the point that the aesthetic perception of the work of art always assumes the form of the perception of one of its concretizations. Ingarden is convinced that the aesthetic attitude is the only right attitude to be taken towards works of art, one which helps realize the aesthetic function of art. He contrasts this attitude with other possible

attitudes, e.g. the cognitive attitude which avoids concretizing and renders the work of art in its schematic form. He admits of a possibility of reaching the work of art itself only in a situation of such a purely cognitive approach in a pre-aesthetic cognition. But he firmly believes that the primary role of art is not to provide cognition of any sort, but aesthetic pleasure. At the same time, however, he emphasizes the fact that the concretization of a work of art should not be taken as an obstruction to get to the work itself. It must rather be understood as a means to reveal the potentialities of the work. Ingarden warns against identifying the work with its concretizations, and insists that the work of art is very different from its concretizations.

Ingarden links the multi-layer, schematic formation of works of art with the fact that they are intentional entities, and he believes that the combination of these elements constitutes a common feature that all works of art share - the essence of art. These concepts serve Ingarden to separate cultural objects from the rest of the physical world. Yet, they are not sufficient to determine by themselves that the object belongs to the realm of art. In order to demarcate the realm of art Ingarden adds the requirement for the existence in the object of the aesthetically valuable qualities. He calls attention to the perceptual features of the work, and refers to them as the inherent qualities of the

work. He considers as crucial material qualities of the work and its formal moments, and speaks at this occasion about the aesthetically valuable framework of the work. He holds that the material or formal moments occurring in the ontic foundation of the work are necessary as the physical signs, i.e. the perceptual base for the aesthetically valuable qualities, and those in turn are necessary for the intending to happen.<sup>17</sup> The art-creating intentionality is, then, not accidental. Once the art intending happens toward an aesthetically valuable object there is justification in regarding this object as art. Actually, Ingarden maintains that it is the discovery of the aesthetically valuable features that leads to canonization of objects as art. In this way axiology constitutes an important part of Ingarden's theory of art, which presents art as a value-laden terrain. He points out that the aesthetic qualities occurring in the work of art do not constitute a separate stratum of the work but add to each stratum, so that the work and its axiological element become one interwoven structure. He distinguishes an aesthetically neutral skeleton of the work from aesthetically valuable qualities which build up upon this skeleton, and which, in the end, determine the value of the work of art as a whole. Ingarden maintains that the aesthetic value of the work of art is the total value of all the strata and of all aesthetically active qualities occurring in them.<sup>18</sup>

On Ingarden's theory the adoption of the aesthetic attitude towards the work of art results in the aesthetic experience, which Ingarden presents as an answer to the aesthetic quality of the work of art. He speaks in favour of one model of the aesthetic experience, and claims that although aesthetic experiences differ among themselves, they differ in degree, not in quality. Therefore, he holds that all aesthetic experiences have the same universal structure which develops in time and in several stages. He speaks of three such phases: initial emotion and the change from the practical disposition into an aesthetic one; the constitution of the aesthetic object; and the emotional reply to the value of the object. The aesthetic experience culminates in the experience of the metaphysical quality of the work, the constitution of which is the best proof of the value of the work of art. Thus, on Ingarden's theory, it is the aesthetic experience that serves to form the aesthetic object, and to grasp the aesthetic value of the work of art of which the aesthetic object is the bearer.

Differentiating between the work of art and the aesthetic object, Ingarden differentiates also between the artistic and the aesthetic value. By artistic value he means the value of the work itself as a schematic object, and by aesthetic value he means the value as it appears in the result of concretization in the aesthetic object. Ingarden holds that artistic values belong to

the work itself and play a purely instrumental role. One cannot grasp them in the aesthetic experience: one can only infer their existence from the aesthetically valuable concretizations of the work of art.

Although Ingarden is not directly interested in forming a definition of art, nevertheless his analyses point at certain characteristics common to works of art.<sup>19</sup> Some of his phrases remind us of a definition, and offer conditions without which our thoughts about art could not be directed towards the right kind of objects.<sup>20</sup> Thus, the most general definition of a work of art deduced from Ingarden's theory of art would take the following form: works of art are intentional, structured, schematic objects which are ontologically grounded in the material object, and which possess qualities that get revealed as aesthetically valuable by specific acts of consciousness.<sup>21</sup> This definition focuses on the mode of existence of the works of art and their serving the aesthetic function, as well as creative procedures that constitute them. Ingarden does not specify the material qualities the object has to have in order to have efficacy in promoting the aesthetic function of art, and limits himself to the general statement about the presence of "some aesthetically active qualities" without saying anything more precise about them.

Although there is nothing really linguistic in Ingarden's

definition of art, one might like to look at it as a linguistic account of a particular use of "art". His definition of art may be taken as a particular use of "art": it denotes the word "art" as used in the 19th-century, as a term from a technical language as well as both from ordinary language as spoken by the people with a rather high degree of acculturation. The people who use this term have historical knowledge of the epoch to which the work belongs and believe that working with a medium is a central thing to art. Ingarden refers to the group of people who know what they call "art" and he recommends the preservation of this usage of "art".<sup>22</sup> It is not any usage of any time or place but an educated usage which makes implicit reference to a particular tradition.

### 3. Ingarden's Non-Linguistic Account of the Nature of Art

Ingarden never gives questions of language primary importance. For him language is very important not from the point of view of its relationship with logic but from the point of view of the constitution of the work of art and its relationship with reality. He grounds in the dual stratum, of sounds and meanings, his conviction about the intersubjectivity of the work, which is an intentional, private object, but which nevertheless relates to a community of readers. He associates the cultural tradition of art making not with a linguistic but with an aesthetic activity, and

concentrates on aesthetic features of an object. For Ingarden language is only a tool servicing ontology, and he believes that it is the ontological assumptions that mould the linguistic material and not vice versa. His interest lies with the study not of concepts but of phenomena, not merely with language but also with reality, and he justifies his approach by taking his examples of art from experience and not from the talk about art. Clearly, he is not interested in the uses of "art" or the analysis of the meaning of the concept "art" but the nature of art. His analysis goes, therefore, to non-verbal intentions of consciousness, beyond facts about language and clarification of concepts. He maintains the position that the linguistic version of the philosophical problem may be a useful heuristic device for attacking the problem, but he would consider it ludicrous to suppose that language may constitute the entire subject matter of philosophy and that philosophy is, or ought to be, nothing more than the study of language. He escapes the narrowness of this approach by making it his directive that "Once we have come into direct contact with the objects, the role of the concepts taken from ordinary language comes to an end."<sup>23</sup> Ingarden believes that only going beyond the narrow frame of language can provide neatly defined and fixed concepts, and he turns against a theory which limits its world to language, disregarding the problem of reality. For him the purpose of words is to deal with matters other than words, and he has a low

appraisal of the approach that proposes to treat the extra-linguistic world only from the analysis of language.

In the light of the above, on Ingarden's theory, a literary work of art is not only a linguistic structure but a multilayer structure which includes both the linguistic and the non-linguistic strata. These last ones are the stratum of the represented world: the stratum of objects and their appearances. Ingarden shifts the attention of his theory rather to the intentional existence of the stratum of the represented world than to the linguistic stratum, i.e. to the semantic structure formed on the basis of the phonetic one, as a result of the link between meanings and sounds of a given language. He pays some attention to the linguistic stratum only because he believes that the sound is a carrier of meaning, and the omission of the linguistic stratum in a given work might cause inability to reach other strata of the work. Yet, his basic question does not concern the ways in which the literary text performs its various verbal functions. His concern is rather about the structure and qualities of the text built upon these functions. That is why he does not occupy himself with the propositions from the linguistic stratum of the work, but focuses on the problem of how the meanings of sentences produce their intentional equivalents, i.e. represented objects and states of things. He concentrates first of all on the appearance of this schematic world

and its relationship to non-fictitious reality, and he firmly defends the position that a literary work of art cannot be reduced to its language level if we want "to do justice" to all its qualities.<sup>24</sup> In the light of this it is possible to interpret his quasi-judgment theory not as a denial of the cognitive functions of art, as most critics want it, but as ascribing cognitive roles to higher strata of the work instead of the linguistic stratum.<sup>25</sup> Ingarden's standpoint contains the imperative to transcend the limits of language, and to make of it a point of departure servicing the purpose of philosophy conceived in larger terms than just linguistic.

Consequently, there are more dimensions involved in the quasi-judgment theory than just the investigation into the nature of sentences from literary fiction. Ingarden has never engaged in the study of ambiguities, multiple meanings or plurisignification. He has never been preoccupied with places of indeterminacy occurring in the meanings of words and sentences in the manner of the Anglo-American literary criticism. His theory has to do with the linguistic representation of reality, and it undertakes "the bridge problem", i.e. that of the connection of language from the literary work of art to the world.<sup>26</sup> As such, it is motivated not by Ingarden's desire to understand the technicalities of the author's language, the grammatical and syntactical structure of the

sentences produced, but by the fact that Ingarden "always felt stirred by the character of quasi- reality displayed by the world of art."<sup>27</sup> His quasi-judgment theory reveals much more than the speech act character of the literary language: it moves from the level of sentences to that of the whole text, and its linguistic version is just an auxiliary device for attacking a real philosophical problem of truth. Actually, it explains the fact that literature is not meant to copy the world in the way that photographs and newsreels do. It describes literary reality as just a quasi- reality, and explains that the objects presented in it are merely seemingly placed in it and marked artificially as real. It is from this position that Ingarden considers the problem of metaphysical qualities as they appear in the stratum of presented objects. He explains that they are not as intense as in real life because they belong to a different world and do not acquire a real life dimension. It is then the stratum of appearances and of presented objects, and not the stratum of language per se, that is, in fact, the real focus of this theory.

There is also more contained in the notion of concretization than just the analysis of "silence" and "concealment", and of the language used to fill the unsaid. On Ingarden's view all the strata, not only the linguistic, undergo modifications in the process of concretization. Such is the sense of "the cultural

atmosphere factor" he insists upon, which includes social, cultural and historical conditioning of the work.<sup>28</sup> He maintains that the process of conversing with a literary work of art involves much more than just the knowledge of the language. He shifts the accent from the verbal to the non-verbal, pictorial and contextual dealings with it. Ingarden asserts that the places of indeterminacy and schematism appear in other strata of the work even more than they do in the stratum of language.

Although he admits that the linguistic stuff of the work is the first and foremost condition of its interpretation, yet he holds that the most important modifications occur within the stratum of appearances and of presented objects. He, for instance, tries to minimize the diachronic element of art, and leaves aside the problem of the changeability of language and the variety of meanings that it carries with itself over time. He makes the impression that he takes for granted the fact that the language in which the work was written and the language of the reader are the same. Evidently Ingarden prefers to treat all possible historical influences on art as accidental, external elements, and he prefers not to have to deal with the historical growth of meanings in his trans-historic search for essences. He seems not to be interested in looking at language in the past tense and surveying its development as a product of past acts of signification, so that, in

consequence, he allows only for "remnants" of historicity. As Fieguth says "Ingarden's writer and reader resist the historico-literary process."<sup>29</sup>

Ingarden moves away from language and refers to the outer, extra linguistic factors. He claims that concretization should involve both the knowledge of the language and the knowledge of the cultural language, and that it requires quite a degree of education and acculturation on the part of the speakers. Only the joint intervention of these two, according to him, can ensure a complete reconstruction of the work of art and consequently the passage to the aesthetic object. He stresses many extra-linguistic dependencies, and instead of assimilating the literary work to a linguistic utterance, he assimilates it rather to a perceptual object. The language by itself without understanding the whole background in which it is spoken interests him far less, and he requires some acculturation as a *sine qua non* to really understand the code of usage which governs what we mean when we say certain things. He assumes that some people, although they know the language, may not know how to "read" the work. On his view, stopping at the stage of understanding merely the sense of sentences brings about the result that "we know then what we are reading but we do not clearly realize what we are reading about and what are its (the work's) properties."<sup>30</sup>

Ingarden addresses his theory to competent users of the language only, who know to construe the text as a representation and to concretize it in the spirit of the epoch it was created in. In other words, he makes culture a necessary background for art and for artistic criticism, and reveals a significant trait of his entire approach to the problem of the nature of art: not to concentrate on the work alone.

In this chapter I have portrayed Ingarden as a philosopher who applies typically phenomenological notions to the study of art. At the same time I have argued that his theory of art contains both analytical and phenomenological insights. I have tried to demonstrate how a combination of these elements broadens the perspective on the character of art.

## NOTES

1

R. Ingarden, The Literary Work of Art, trans. G. Grabowicz (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), Polish version, O dziele literackim (Warszawa: PWN, 1960).

2

R. Ingarden, Studies in Aesthetics Vol. I, Polish version, Studia z Estetyki T. I (Warszawa: PWN, 2nd edition 1966); R. Ingarden, Experience, Work of Art, Value, Polish version, Przeżycie, dzieło, wartość (WL: Kraków, 1966) and R. Ingarden, The Cognition of the Literary Work of Art, trans. R. Crowley and K. Olson (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), Polish version, O poznawaniu dzieła literackiego, (Warszawa: PWN, 2nd edition 1976).

3

For that see R. Ingarden, Spór o istnienie świata vol. 2 (Controversy Over the Existence of the World) (Warszawa: PWN, 2nd edition. 1966).

4

A. Riska, "Language and Logic in the Work of Roman Ingarden," Analecta Husserliana 4 (1976): 191.

5

G. Kūng, "Ingarden on Language and Ontology," Analecta Husserliana 2 (1972): 213.

6

Ingarden, the chapter on "Ontologia dzieła literackiego" ("Ontology of the Literary Work of Art") in O poznawaniu (The Cognition) 267.

7

In interpreting art in intentionalistic terms phenomenology goes much further than analytic aesthetics. For the already classical treatment of the artistic intention see M.C. Beardsley and W.K. Wimsatt, "The Intentional Fallacy," in W.K. Wimsatt, Jr., The Verbal Icon (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1954). It is maintained there that artistic intention is not relevant to the criticism of works of art / their interpretation and evaluation, not identification / but the concept of intentionality is not even outlined there. Beardsley sees no logical disharmony that intentions are crucial in making something an artwork but irrelevant in criticism. For that point see M.C. Beardsley, the chapter on "Some Persistent Issues in Aesthetics," The Aesthetic Point of View (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982).

8

As early as 1912 Twardowski attempted to formulate a general ontology of all cultural products.

9

According to Ingarden the role of the material object is secondary and instrumental: it is there for the intentional object to get anchored in the reality. The art of Ingarden's time suggested a very strong connection between these two. Now, from the perspective of artistic experiences unknown to Ingarden this relationship does not seem so imperative, and it is possible to conceive that the dependency goes from some works of art to material objects and not vice versa, as Ingarden saw it. For that point see P. Graff, "Pojęcie przedmiotu estetycznego w najnowszej polskiej refleksji nad sztuką," ("The Notion of the Aesthetic Object in the Most Recent Polish Reflection on Art"), Studia Estetyczne XIX (1982): 259.

10

The conception of the physicality of the work of art endears Ingarden at the same time to Anglo-American aestheticians.

11

The musical work and the abstract painting constitute an exception since they contain only one stratum.

12

A.T.Tymieniecka, Phenomenology and Science in Contemporary European Thought (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Cudahy, 1962) 20.

13

A.Szczepańska, "O definicjach sztuki," ("On Definitions of Art"), Studia o współczesnej estetyce polskiej (Warszawa: PWN, 1977) 30.

14

A.Szczepańska, "Myśl fenomenologiczna w polskiej estetyce współczesnej," ("Phenomenology in Contemporary Polish Aesthetics"), Studia Estetyczne : 299.

15

For critical remarks on the subject of places of indeterminacy see H. Markiewicz, "Places of Indeterminacy in a Literary Work of Art," Roman Ingarden and Contemporary Polish Aesthetics, ed. P.Graff and S.Krzemień-Ojak (Warszawa: PWN, 1975) 164.

- 16  
It is, then, as if there were two stages in the formation of the work of art. See, Graff 264.
- 17  
Szczepańska raises the point that Ingarden does not develop the problem of the material moments of the work of art. She locates in this lack of interest on Ingarden's part the basic difference between his and other attempts to define art. Szczepańska, "O definicjach sztuki," ("On Definitions") 36.
- 18  
Yet, Ingarden does not consider language important aesthetically. He believes that within a linguistic stratum there may occur altogether indifferent elements, and that in such a case other fragments of the work, i.e. higher strata, are responsible for the aesthetic value of the work as a whole.
- 19  
Apart from Ingarden only W. Tatarkiewicz tried to deal with the problem of the definition of art in Polish aesthetics but Ingarden's conception of art turned out to be much more attractive than Tatarkiewicz's alternative definition. It made more impact on those who dealt with the essence of art in general, as well as those who dealt with particular arts. For Tatarkiewicz's definition see W. Tatarkiewicz, "The Problems of Defining Art Today," British Journal of Aesthetics 11 (1977).
- 20  
Szczepańska, "O definicjach sztuki" 35.
- 21  
Szczepańska, "O definicjach sztuki" 37.
- 22  
This use of "art" has been prominent for some centuries and still persists quite widely today.
- 23  
R. Ingarden, "Dążenia fenomenologów," ("The Aims of Phenomenologists"), Z badań nad filozofią współczesną (Warszawa: PWN, 1963) 306.
- 24  
Ingarden's expression.
- 25  
Szczepańska, contrary to the majority of critics, claims that the quasi-judgment theory is a version of the view ascribing to art cognitive values. According to her, Ingarden

allowed for cognitive functions of art but associated them not with the linguistic stratum of the work or the truthfulness of its propositions, but rather with the relationship between the schematic world of the work and the non-fictitious reality. A.Szczepańska, "Ingardenowska teoria quasi-sądów a funkcje poznawcze sztuki," ("Ingarden's Quasi-Judgment Theory and the Cognitive Functions of Art") Estetyka Romana Ingardena (Warszawa: PWN, 1988).

26

Smoczyńska contrasts Ingarden's quasi-judgment theory, which is just a part of Ingarden's whole theory of art, with the illocutionary definition of the work of art as it is known in analytic aesthetics, and concludes that the analytic view on the literary work is not "productive enough" and "oversimplifying". It does not cover all types of literature and therefore, in her opinion, should not be regarded as an autonomous theory. B.Smoczyńska, "The Illocutionary Definition of the Literary Work of Art," manuscript: 17.

27

J.Makota, "Ingarden's Views on Communication with a Work of Art," Roman Ingarden and Contemporary Polish Aesthetics, ed.P.Graff and S.Krzemień-Ojak (Warszawa :PWN, 1975) 156.

28

On the cultural atmosphere factor see M.Głowiński, "On Concretization,"Roman Ingarden and Contemporary Polish Aesthetics, ed. P.Graff and S.Krzemień-Ojak (Warszawa: PWN, 1975) 41-42.

29

R.Fieguth, "Pierwiastek historyczny w literaturoznawczych koncepcjach Romana Ingardena," ("The Historical Element in Roman Ingarden's Conceptions of Literary Science") Teksty 1 (1987): 49.

30

Ingarden, O poznawaniu dzieła literackiego 41.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

## CHAPTER 8

INGARDEN'S AND TWARDOWSKI'S UNDERSTANDING OF LANGUAGE AND  
THE RESOLUTION OF THE ANALYTIC IMPASSE

In the course of this chapter I will be trying to do three things. First, I will describe how analytic aesthetics deals with the cultural and social context of art. Second, I will outline Ingarden's concept of art as socially dependent. Finally, I will try to demonstrate how Ingarden's partly analytical and partly phenomenological ideas on art can mediate in the analytic crisis.

1. The Social Context of Art in the Analytic Theories of Art

The shift in the discussion of the nature of art in analytic aesthetics from the artistically relevant intrinsic properties of works of art to the artworld signifies a readiness to discuss the context of art. Most recent attempts at defining art clearly indicate that the old requirement of concentrating on the work alone brings no answer to the nature of art and that art cannot be properly understood without having an understanding of its background. Some of the most recent developments in aesthetics are

found in theories in which being a work of art is thought to depend upon the existence of certain social or cultural institutions.

Dickie's Institutional Theory of Art can be viewed as an outright attempt to characterize art in terms of its social background. Dickie puts emphasis on the social aspect of art in many different places of his theory : when talking about Duchamp and his ready-mades he stresses the social framework in which Duchamp acted; when talking about the aesthetic object he appeals to conventions operating in a given culture and shows that the way people read objects as art depends on the practices and habits of their culture; and last but not least, he places the very process of art creation in the hands of the social institution. To some, his theory directs aesthetic considerations along the sociological path to the point of taking them away from philosophy towards social anthropology.<sup>1</sup>

Dickie, however, does not give the social element contained in his theory a systematic treatment. He neglects to explain the structure and to delineate the boundaries of the artworld. He has no account to offer either for the cultural or the historical development of the artworld. He fails to discuss the specificity of the roles of the artworld members or to discuss the procedures by which those roles within the artworld institution become

occupied.

While talking about conventions Dickie implies that they are essentially cultural but he does not characterize their origin and hardly explains their nature. As a result, in the light of his theory, conventions seem to be quite arbitrary and the artworld seems to operate as "an organic creature."<sup>2</sup> Paradoxically, all Dickie manages to say in his socially oriented theory of art is that there may be some socially sanctioned ways for things to be art and that explaining art's participation in culture may be helpful in understanding the nature of art. Altogether what one finds in his theory are just hints that there are reasons for the theory of art to look beyond the artworld.

If there is a social dimension in Dickie's theory it is because it was Danto's introduction of the concept of the artworld which prepared the ground for this type of discussion of the nature of art. After all, Danto was the first to say that one must analyse art within its context. By making a "counter-phenomenological turn" and exploring the nature of the background significant for arthood Danto shows that he in fact believes that it is theory, culture and history that make it possible for artists to create and for the public to decipher what is viewed as artworks. He indicates that *Brillo Boxes* could not have been art

fifty years ago and that a necktie painted by Cézanne could not have been art in his artistic lifetime. With these and similar examples he makes the point that one cannot really understand what art is without understanding the culture in which it exists. He maintains that the artist's work is dependent on the historical time and the social and cultural frame within which he works. In other words, he puts forward the thesis that it is history, culture and society that allow one to forge a common perspective on what is art and to work out a consensus in this matter.<sup>3</sup>

Yet, his analysis of the course of art is historically not reliable.<sup>4</sup> In addition it does not take into consideration any other factors from behind art and presents the development of art as autonomous and isolated from social, economic or other factors. Besides, although Danto indicates the role of culture in the process of interpreting an artwork, he does not analyze interpretation from the point of view of the cultural phenomena which exist beyond the artwork and which decide about the final character of interpretation. Similarly, he leaves unexplained the concept of the readiness of the artworld to accept new kinds of art.

One can also spot an element of the social dimension of the concept of art in Tilghman's views on art. He reproaches Danto

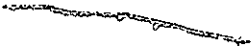
that his artworld is distinct from the form of life, while he himself believes that there is ground to view art as a form of life. He feels there is need for a theory that would explain the artistic culture as a part of culture in general. He has an idea of art which refers to the practical sphere and he insists that one should provide the framework for art determined by the factually lived reality. His pragmatic approach to art implies a cultural understanding of art: he believes that it is mainly in terms of the rules of culture that it is true to say that to understand what art is is to understand a form of life.

Summing up, analytic aesthetics for the most part pays insufficient attention to the fact that human community, which is realized through language, is a social phenomenon, and that understanding a discourse is subject to historical and cultural influences. It makes a mistaken assumption that we know enough about the context in which words are used, in the world and in the society, to explain the community of the language users. As a result, it is faced with the necessity of affirming that this community is devoid of any root in nature and that it simply so happens that people usually so use the words in such contexts. Therefore, in order to really understand what Dickie, Danto and Tilghman are saying when they hint at history, culture and society in their discussions of art, a larger debate on the context of art

seems necessary.

Unfortunately, analytic aesthetics cannot enlarge the debate itself because of the restricted range of interests dictated by its foundational beliefs that make it "draw its nourishment only from itself".<sup>5</sup> What one finds in mainstream analytic aesthetics as represented by Danto, Dickie and Tilghman does not do justice to the complex problem of the nature of art, and analytic aesthetics can rightly be accused of "blindness towards the socially charged context of art".<sup>6</sup>

The result of this state of things is a lack of continuity in analytic theories of art between art and the rest of culture. There is need to account for the relationship between art and other segments of culture, to mark art as a strand of social interaction and to explain its connections with central functions, practices and institutions that make up a society. In this particular situation analytic aesthetics is bound to look for help to a different tradition which spells out explicitly the connection of art and its social universe.



## 2. Ingarden's Concept of Art as a Social Construct

It seems that some aspects of Ingarden's theory may be helpful to correct the deficiency of all those theories which, like Anglo-American theories of art, do not contain appropriate categories and cognitive means to make possible a grasp of the social aspects of art. Ingarden argues that in order to cognize the work of art, to get to know its structure and its function, it is not enough to get to know the text, i.e. what is given in words. His directive is to get beyond language. He advocates getting into what is not expressed in words but what nevertheless exists in the work in the form of places of indeterminacy, i.e. the extra-literary reality and the life experience. Ingarden's making culture a part of the concept of art and demonstrating a link between works of art, language, and culture in general might satisfy, perhaps, the growing awareness within analytic aesthetics of the degree to which artworks are determined by outside factors.

Ingarden refers to Twardowski's idea that a dialogue is never carried on in abstraction from the context and that it is this context that gives the meaning to words and sentences. In other words he believes that linguistic statements are the function of the context. Ingarden follows Twardowski's indication that in the

actual use of language there prove to be more dimensions involved than simply those that can be represented in the objective description of language. He combines two views of language, language construed as grammar, and language construed as linguistic practices and he believes that these two views are compatible with each other.

Ingarden elaborates the thought that man always exists in a culture. Proceeding from this standpoint Ingarden's theory of art refers to the social community and construes this community in much larger terms than just the union of those who speak the language. Ingarden realizes that the union of speakers is not the only one that exists in a society and he attempts to test the other grounds for intersubjectivity that exist in virtue of something other than just partnership in language.

Ingarden reflects on what is required by way of concepts from a person in order to experience art in an adequate way. He finds that art is woven into the complex of external interrelations and derives from the total collective experience of the community. He sees this community as giving legitimacy to artistic conventions in the same way as to linguistic expressions and in this way ensuring the intersubjectivity of both. In order to emphasize this social dependence of the concept of art Ingarden actually bases his theory

of art on two moves: he first traces art to the act of intending, but then locates it in the society. By doing this he supplies the activity of a personal consciousness with the supra-personal consciousness of community. This allows him to take a stand in the field where individuals act within a society.

Ingarden first emphasizes that works of art, like language, necessarily are the products of intentional actions. He describes the act of intending as an individually assumed frame of mind of a person who has his own goal in view. At the same time, the very move, the appeal to intentionality, by virtue of the presumption that it is impossible to be conscious in a vacuum, makes Ingarden deny the absolute importance of individual intentions. The clue of his argument is that art cannot be identified as such except in a context of a society and that one must test all the external attachments of the individual psyche.

In his theory Ingarden suggests at first that the artist's intentions are, like language, anchored in the subjective acts of the speaker. Yet, he never says that the artist's art-making intentions are enough to produce art. On the contrary, he holds that they do not determine all the properties of the work and its interpretations. He claims that they are not totally independent and fully determinative of arthood. He never even gives a hint

that he considers the artist's own interpretation, i.e. his idiosyncratic way of seeing the content of the work of art, as the only correct version of the work of art. He does not indicate that the model concretization should aim at grasping the work in the form that the artist intended it. Ingarden claims instead that the act of the artist's consciousness is by itself not enough to fully create a work of art in its form and content. He makes this subjective element necessary, but not sufficient for arthood.

Like Twardowski in the case of language, so Ingarden in the case of art holds that the nature of art is both intentional and cultural. Under Twardowski's influence he is inclined to believe that speaking depends upon the cultural background. His view is that one may learn the grammar of the language and become fluent in it but unless one actually visits the culture in which the language is spoken there will be a great deal about the language one does not know. He indicates that these extra-linguistic rules governing the usage in a language apply also in the case of art. He implies that art forms, like linguistic expressions, require education for their availability, and that they may only be identified within the larger context of culture.

Therefore, Ingarden looks at art from the position of a social being performing and using art as one uses language - as a

participant in a cultural tradition. Indirectly he denies the possibility of an artist having a strictly personal language. In Ingarden's view, an artist participates in the social consciousness of his community, just as a speaker participates in a social universe of language. Ingarden insists that an artist must see his relation to art not only as an individual but also as a social being. He believes that it is absolutely necessary to know the cultural conditions in order for an artistic impulse to be identified as artistic and for an art intention to be intelligible. Culture also plays a role in the appreciation of the work of art as art. Ingarden appeals to tradition and education, which includes the possession of some common ideas on what art is and what its function is. His argument rests upon the existence of a class of linguistically determined central cases of art. In this way, he makes it clear that art is a property of a society in the sense that society gives it its legitimization. He points to the fact that art has significance only within a framework which is social and communal, never merely individual.

Literature in particular gives expression to the social spirit, basic tendencies in the development of the society, its culture and the state of advancement of the social consciousness. Referring to his own method of studying the nature of literature Ingarden admits that the consideration of the work of art in

isolation constitutes in his theory just a "certain logically indispensable stage" preparing for the grasp of the work in various contexts and in agreement with norms of the place and the epoch.<sup>7</sup> Ingarden says: "I considered the literary work of art in separation from the live contact with psychical individuals and so away from the cultural atmosphere and various spiritual currents developing in history. Now, it is time to put, as it were, the work back in contact with the reader and place it in a concrete spiritual and cultural life".<sup>8</sup> Proceeding from this standpoint his theory treats art not as something added to culture but as itself constituted culturally.

Ingarden replaces the blanket term "culture" with the detailed study of elements from the general cultural ambience of art. He amplifies the image of the leading themes of cultural life that inform the world of the arts and within which artists articulate and carry through their intentions. He enumerates politics, intellectual currents, tradition, conventions, social tendencies, beliefs, literary trends and spiritual life of the epoch as determinant of the cultural situation. When discussing the literary work of art, for instance, he appeals in particular to "a literary atmosphere" of the epoch which he characterizes like this<sup>9</sup> : "the coexistence, or better said, the simultaneous development of many literary trends, opposed to one another and yet

influencing one another this or that way leads to the formation of the literary atmosphere of a certain epoch and this atmosphere brings about the existence of a particular cultural formation: the literature of a certain cultural group in a particular epoch".<sup>10</sup> And he talks about perpetually ongoing "mutual change of the relative hierarchy of works which is connected with the appearance of new works but also with transformations of concretizations - cultural trend of the epoch".<sup>11</sup>

Ingarden pays particular attention to artistic conventions that constitute the necessary background for art. As in a conversation where one speaker reads the meaning from the other speaker's words, Ingarden's reader must know how to read artist's intentions from the work of art. He claims that it is artistic conventions that make the reading of the work possible and that the reader is bound to use the conventions as determinants of the artist's intentions of the properties of the work. He believes that conventions exist in an interpersonal manner and, therefore, govern the standards for the intersubjective attitude towards art. In other words Ingarden believes that the conventions and the practices of language do not render unnecessary the speaker's intentions. He simply claims that not all artist's intentions are relevant for the work of art but only those expressed through widely known conventions.

By acknowledging the role of cultural conventions Ingarden frees the work from the personal circumstances of the artist and the reader, and partly from intentionalization in general: he claims that the work retains the properties that depend on artist's or reader's intentions but at the same time it is freed from those intentions. He sees the situation in terms of a dialogue of artists with their readers: artists using the conventions that are known to their readers as vehicles of meaning so that they can make their intentions plain. He makes the success of concretization, which is the fundamental category for his concept of art, wholly dependent on the cultural institutions and binds it with literary traditions, habits and beliefs that operate within the society. He comments in this way on the role of this background: "what is most important in this all is that concretizations existing in particular are first of all a manifestation of the relation between the work and the literary atmosphere of the epoch and only secondarily of the relation between the work and the individual structure of the reader. The work in its concretizations takes on the shape typical of the epoch".<sup>12</sup> Ingarden makes it clear that concretization is efficient, just like a linguistic communication, only if both the artist and the reader know and recognize the same conventions, stereotypes, rules and standards which belong to the social consciousness and cannot be determined by an individual. Their presence not only makes language communicable and art

socially intelligible but helps make them both intersubjectively accessible. He stresses in this way the fact that it is society and its culture that decides about the final shape of the work of art and its appreciation. As in the case of language Ingarden thinks that the conventions of language allow one to consider the meanings that can be put on a sentence neither as a matter of one's meaning something oneself by those words, nor as a matter of discovering what the speaker meant, but simply as a matter of one's considering the meanings those words might sustain given the conventions of language applying at the time of speaking. Ingarden approaches the problem in the way the speaker does who engages in the act of communication with a definite strategy in mind and who bends the linguistic forms available to achieve his aim. The consideration of this issue has the effect that Ingarden allows scope for a wider range of legitimate interpretations than just the interpretation of the artist. Actually, he accepts a multiplicity of interpretations of a single work of art.

The idea of making art relative to social factors suggests an attempt on Ingarden's part to place art in the *Lebenswelt*.<sup>13</sup> By doing this he leaves behind the world of human speech and reaches over to the practical and historical world. He replaces psychology and its study of individual psyche with the history and culture of an epoch. He thus avoids the situation where "language is the

creator of the perspectives of the world and there is no reality at all".<sup>14</sup> He replaces the in-depth investigation of intentional entities by referring to what is pre-given to consciousness, and by testing the relations of intentional entities with the external world. He demonstrates that he believes that one must first understand the world before one can adequately understand the forms of consciousness, like art. He points to the fact that art, like language, has to be grasped in terms of its connection with the real world and correlated with the world's other phenomena. In this way he expresses his conviction that neither language nor art "falls from the sky" and that they transcend the world of human consciousness. Moving towards the lifeworld he returns art from the act of intending back to the world, to the vital, living, engaged standpoint by which he makes it real.

Ingarden proceeds along the line that if works of art are products of human intentionality and if they are rooted within social practices then they must be treated historically. He introduces into the discussion on art the community with its historical background and its traditions. He treats art as he does language, i.e. as a living organism, and emphasizes the non-stop play between linguistic creativity and the language already in existence woven into a historical process. This leads to historical relativism of the notion of the work of art. However,

Ingarden handles the problem of the historical existence of works of art without falling into relativism. His method consists in stressing that works of art have a certain characteristic structure. Ingarden follows his ideas on language, which in Twardowski's teaching originates in the subjective acts of the speaker and yet has a structure of its own so that the meanings of its sentences can be intersubjectively understood. In relation to this Ingarden claims that even prior to concretization there exists a work-schema which is a historical constant and is always responsible for the identity of the work of art. On the one hand he shows that a work of art has a life of its own and is bound to change over time, that concretizations differ from one another and thus constitute a variable in the notion of the work of art, but on the other hand he insists that despite the flux of time the work of art retains its identity and the work itself does not change. As an intentional, heteronomous entity it cannot change by itself nor be changed by any of its possible concretizations. He emphasizes the close relationship of the work of art and its concretizations and accepts as natural the fact that despite the margin of difference there is in fact a repetition of the basic form.

3. The Mediating Role of Ingarden's Views on Art in the  
Analytic Impasse

Focusing on the social interactions of art, Ingarden formulates a concept of art which has the potential to mediate between some existing differences of opinion within analytic aesthetics. His theory of art provides a means to help bridge the dichotomous solutions that analytic aestheticians arrive at. It suggests how to compromise extremist views to get out of the conflict.

By appealing to intentionality Ingarden makes art subjective but by putting it in a social, common context he makes it objective. He determines by this that art is the effect both of the state of mind and of the surrounding circumstances. He states that art is the product of both individual and social powers. In this way he avoids the subjective - objective dichotomy of analytic aesthetics and balances the desire for individualism in art with its intersubjective dimension.

This move makes Ingarden capable of resolving the dilemma between Danto's version of art's drive to autonomy and Dickie's version of art involved in the process of institutionalization. He

manages to do this by endorsing at one and the same time the individual and the extra-individual nature of art. He combines the idea of art as a product of the individual state of mind with the idea of art as the product of culture, and makes the possibility of considering these two suggestions as mutually exclusive vanish from the investigations of arthood. Ingarden disagrees both with Danto's idea of art understood mainly in terms of free personality expression of the artist, and with Dickie's idea of art construed as the result of the verdict passed on behalf of the artworld. Ingarden thinks that art is neither an entirely private nor a solely public matter for the people who are steeped in a culture and the traditions of a given society.

Needless to say, such a view of art entails a constraint on what can be considered art. It allows Ingarden to offer an answer to the question "what is art?" that avoids accepting as art anything that goes beyond what is socially accepted. The appeal to the common reality of individuals serves Ingarden to refute as art all vacuous irrelevancies that may be produced and passed under the concept of art as a personal self-expression of an artist. He strengthens the concept of art against arbitrariness which enables him to discriminate when classifying new objects as art. Ingarden provides protection from over-permissiveness and from taking as art that, which comes to exist by chance, is just frivolous or

fanciful. He dismisses from his concept of art all that which is the product of individual peculiarities and idiosyncracies and refuses to take moral consequences.

Ingarden's world of art is not a reservation in which artists work under some sort of directives coming from some social organisms, as Dickie's theory implies. Nor is it a place where artists are liberated from all sorts of restraints and alienated from social circumstances, as Tilghman's and Danto's views suggest. While maintaining like Dickie that art is inextricably bound up with society, Ingarden holds that none of the social institutions are crucial enough to determine the nature of art. Ingarden sees the role of the art institutions in a different light than Dickie: their presence in the society is not to confer the status of art but to make possible artists' carrying out their intentions. Hence, Ingarden does not create a tension between intentions and institutions. He just believes that art institutions are institutions of a certain culture and that the principles of their functioning simply presuppose the grasp of cultural factors. He points to the culture of the society as a solid component of the concept of art. In doing that, however, he excludes both Dickie's idea that it is impossible for art to exist outside society, and Danto's fear about the end of art. From Ingarden's perspective, art is a stuff of society to some extent only and the threat of the

death of art does not apply since as long as there are societies cultures do not end and there cannot be cultures without art.

Ingarden does not juxtapose intentions and conventions the way Dickie does, but interposes artistic conventions between the reader's concretization of the work and the artist's intentions. He shows that they interact and that there is a symbiotic relationship that holds between them. He recognizes that art making conventions exist as a vehicle by which artists convey their intentions and make their intentions transparent. He accords importance to the artist's intentions to the degree that those intentions are apparent in the work as a result of the artist's employment of conventions. In this way he links the problem of the selection of the means for the achievement of the artist's aims not primarily with the artist's personal freedom and his subjective way of taking in the world, as Danto seems to suggest, nor with the objective, impersonal operation of conventions, as Dickie would like it. He presents the process of artistic creation in terms of the recognition and assimilation by the artist of particular cultural values which the artist shapes within himself and assumes to be his own. Ingarden views creation in this way because he views the artist as a social being who shares in the culture of its community. Ingarden's artist lives in a given society, and at a given time, and tests the adaptability of existing conventions to

carry on his own artistic aims.

If the artist's intentions are of interest to Ingarden it is not, as for Danto, that they set limits to the most correct interpretation of the work. It is rather because artist's intentions are more likely to point towards the more rewarding of the interpretations available. Ingarden makes a significant move which acknowledges an active role of the reader in the process of art creation. He gives the reader a status similar to that of the artist and claims that the reader contributes effectively to the work of art. He introduces the reader into the scene to say that there are two stages in the creation of the work of art and that both the artist's and the reader's intervention are needed to make it complete. Ingarden's theory construes a work of art neither in terms of an autonomous entity which is independent of its functioning, nor in terms of the reception of the work independent of the properties of the work. It therefore avoids the consequences of these two extreme views. To concretize the work of art means neither to discover what the artist intended nor what the context supplied. It means to take into consideration all the interpretations that the work may sustain.

Ingarden's motivation for providing such an account of art is not to focus on the artist's or reader's understanding of the work of art, but rather to grasp the work in a way that makes its

experience the more pleasurable. He believes that being given specific information the reader will direct his attention to the properties of the work of art identified as worth attending to by culture and traditions. Ingarden measures the merit of the work of art by the efficacy of the work to prove itself significant *qua* art. He maintains that the work cannot be classified as art until it demonstrates that it has potentialities to become art. Opposing Dickie and Danto, he links the classificatory and the evaluative notions of art in a way similar to Tilghman's. Ingarden's notion of concretization tests the work to see if it can function as art. The candidates for the status of art according to his theory qualify as art to the extent that they are able to be rewarding aesthetically when an appropriate attitude is taken to them and appropriate procedures followed. If, as a result of concretization, the work does not yield an aesthetic experience, it does not qualify for the status of art because it proves that it cannot function as art. The value of the work of art on Ingarden's theory is then the ability of the work to inspire as many concretizations as possible.

Such a notion of art allows Ingarden to see how objects not intended for aesthetic purposes can become art objects under favourable cultural conditions, i.e. under the circumstances when their so far neutral aesthetic qualities begin to be perceived as

aesthetically valuable in the light of new contexts, and procedures. It also allows him to explain how works of art, because of some such contexts lose in a given moment their art status.

The aesthetic substance of art, the fulfilment of the aesthetic function of art, however, does not occupy a dominant position in Ingarden's theory. Ingarden tries to discover not only the strictly aesthetic side of the work of art but all its other interesting properties. Therefore, concretization means the requirement to reveal both the intellectual and the aesthetic potentialities of the work of art. To grasp the work of art in its entirety Ingarden's reader needs to assume the aesthetic attitude but also, similarly to Dickie's members of the artworld, needs to know artistic conventions, and as Danto's artworld members, must have certain intellectual qualifications. On Ingarden's view concretization demands quite a lot of knowledge and a high degree of literary, historical, linguistic and other competence in order to bring to light the undisclosed qualities of the work of art. The faithful reconstruction of the work of art combines the aesthetic sensibility with intellectual qualifications. It is the joint effect of these two that becomes the object of appreciation and the source of enjoyment of art. In other words Ingarden believes that there may be features of the work of art which are

not accessible to persons who do not have a special training. Such a perspective on art diminishes the discrepancy that may appear between the aesthetic function of the work of art and its intellectual content and settles the tension that exists in this respect between Tilghman's aesthetic and Danto's intellectual ideas of art. It shows that art objects are not only appreciated but also understood. Ingarden's view provides protection against the trivialization of art without, however, ignoring its aesthetic nature. It highlights the intellectual ingredient of art but it points at the same time to other qualities of art worth attending to. It also shows that the reference to the extrinsic properties of the work of art is relevant when it directs us back to the work itself, to the intrinsic properties of the work. It makes one realize that understanding a work of art is important because it helps us to perceive its visual qualities.

Apart from this, Ingarden construes concretization also as a means to act, as a specific activity, as the attitude characteristically taken to bring out the status of art. Ingarden claims that concretization is the proper type of procedure to be applied to the work that exists as a schematic entity in order to reveal its potentialities to become a work of art. In insisting on this he tries to keep together the procedure and the function of art: the procedure is used with the aim of proving the function.

The efficacy of concretization is tightly bound with the efficacy of the aesthetic experience and Ingarden stresses neither the procedure nor the function. The idea of concretization carries within itself then the possibility of mediating between the procedural and the functional approaches to arthood. In this way it settles the principal disagreement between Dickie's and Danto's theories.

As a matter of fact, the burden of Ingarden's theory falls specifically on the object, the work of art itself. Ingarden makes central the ontology of works of art. He emphasizes the fact that works of art are both ideal and real, and thus lessens the conflict between Danto, who equates an artwork with language, and Dickie, who equates it with an artifact. In this particular context Ingarden stresses that works of art have a structure of their own which resists all the modifications and stays intact.

By combining the notion of intentionality of works of art with the notion of concretization as a cultural norm Ingarden reconciles Dickie's and Danto's idealism with Tilghman's realism. By concentrating on the multiplicity of relationships that art makes with the author, the reader, other works of art, culture, tradition and so on he makes the ideal concept of art take on a real existence. Placing the concept of art in the lifeworld Ingarden stresses its empirical origin, by which he achieves the

concrete fullness of art and grasps art in its totality. Ingarden explores both the insight that art is a theoretical construct and the insight that it is a fact of life. At this point his concept of art takes on a practical dimension and comes close to a Wittgensteinian form of life. Ingarden emphasizes the character of art as a form of life which, although it forms a separate system, is a system which interacts with the world. Thus Ingarden presents art not as Dickie and Danto do, as an entity that has a separate reality, but as a distinct entity which has its own artistic reality but which, at the same time, participates in a human reality.<sup>15</sup>

Where Danto alludes only to the personal responsibility of the artist,<sup>16</sup> and Dickie alludes to "acting on behalf" and rather neglects the problem of the responsibility of the institution for its conferrals, Ingarden raises this ethical question. He makes it at the same time a question of personal and social responsibility. He sees the artist as the one who has the power to confer the meaning and to give sense to the object he creates. He holds that for something to be a work of art means that there is somebody who takes responsibility for it. He refers to the moral obligation of the artist: in his view the artist's responsibility results from his full awareness of the values he seeks to promote or to demolish. In Ingarden's view the artist has the obligation to shape

the fate of the world and delineate the course of the future tasks and events in accordance with his personal choices. Ingarden points to the fact that the artist's participation in culture and traditions makes a moral demand on the artist and makes art creation predominantly an individual struggle to preserve or promote ethical values of the society. In this way, on Ingarden's theory the artist's individual responsibility for the work not only amounts to the possibility of him losing face, as Dickie sees it, but becomes at the same time a communal responsibility.<sup>17</sup>

Ingarden himself comments on his method that treats art as "a segment of the whole system of philosophical knowledge about the reality of man and man himself" as the only appropriate way to carry on research in aesthetics.<sup>18</sup> He says: "only this way seems proper to me, in accordance with the connections holding between various spheres of reality man is in contact with, and his numerous interests and his way of life".<sup>19</sup> At the same time, however, opting for the enlargement of horizons of research he warns his possible followers by saying that when they engage in it, "then, things become more complicated and problems begin to show which would never appear had the questions of art been treated separately."<sup>20</sup>

Most critics admit that Ingarden's conception of the necessity of drawing the social background into the process of studying the nature of art has opened large possibilities for the study of the reception of the work of art in the process of artistic communication. But some tensions still remain.

If Graff challenges Ingarden's contextual approach to art he does it not on the ground that the social setting is insignificant in questions of art, but because he does not agree with Ingarden's shift in methodology. He thinks that such an interest in the work, according to which artworks are to be understood in their cultural and social context, undermines the very goal of Ingarden's essentialistic investigations. The concept of "the life of the work of art", which entails considering matters external to the work, implies that in that process the work of art takes on qualities which were not intended by the act of intending lying at its origin. Ingarden's orientation towards the outside of the work ruins, in Graff's opinion, the already formed concept of the structure of the work of art and its properties, and takes it away from the act of intending that was to determine it at full length. It suggests that the properties of the work are at least in part determined by matters external to the work. Such a contextual phenomenology makes Ingarden's theory philosophically deficient in Graff's eyes.<sup>21</sup>

Besides, Graff, like other contemporary theoreticians of art, finds fault with Ingarden's theory along the sociological line as well. He criticises his approach in a much more radical way than, for instance, Szczepańska does. Szczepańska makes the point that Ingarden's aesthetics concentrates on "high culture" exclusively and thus leaves aside other possible types of culture. She believes that it is therefore incapable of accounting for the pluralistic state of contemporary culture.<sup>22</sup> She notices that setting the standard for concretization to be as close as possible to the work in spirit and in style, to stay within the limits denoted by its internal structure and the atmosphere of the time it was created in, Ingarden makes a pretty high demand on the reader, wanting him to be able to recognize the epoch the work comes from, to place it in an appropriate period, category, school and so on. He requires from him a high degree of acculturation and of competence and, in a sense, ignores other concretizations made by less knowledgeable or less experienced readers or viewers. He limits his theoretical interest to perfect readers, ideally predisposed to "understand" the work, and thus absolutizes this particular social group making of art the realm of the elite, the educated few. To Graff, this is sufficient to say that Ingarden fails entirely to account for the social nature of art.<sup>23</sup> To Szczepańska however, this type of reproach can be valid only when

made from the position of an external critique which aims at a different set of questions and which has different cognitive aims than the theory of art.<sup>24</sup>

The most radically opposite view to Ingarden's views on the work of art comes from Lem, who contests the thesis about the existence of any organized immanent structure of the work of art.<sup>25</sup> In denying that there exists any genotype and opting just for a variety of readings, he refutes Ingarden's idea of concretization by maintaining that the role of the reader is not to fill in the existing structure but to constitute it.

Showing preference for the most artistically, culturally, historically etc. faithful reconstruction of the work Ingarden does not make the criterion of the notion of closeness to the work sharp enough in order to decide which concretization "does justice" to the work better. In other words, he does not provide the basis for preferring one interpretation over any other. Hence, the notion of justice remains vague and no criteria for the correctness of the concretization can be fixed. This fact leads to a disagreement among critics. Some of them, like Szczepańska, claim that Ingarden allows for very much freedom in concretizing and that he accepts a large margin of the sphere of irrelevance in different concretizations, almost transgressing the limits of the work's

identity.<sup>26</sup> She applauds Ingarden's willingness to accept the great multiplicity of the readings of the work of art. She sees the testing of the fact of how many interpretations the work may sustain to be of interest. Some others, however, like Graff, for instance, maintain that there is no such freedom implied in Ingarden's theory. In Graff's view, Ingarden's thinking about artistic communication is still very much determined by the rules of the internal consequence of the work and, therefore, radically excludes certain possibilities. He maintains that Ingarden's idea of communication implies that man is capable of interpreting in an error free manner which, he holds, has a lot to do with the Enlightenment ideal of man shared by thinkers of Ingarden's generation. He observes that there is no longer any ultimate agreement as to the rules and conventions functioning in a society and there is no longer any means to impose constraints.<sup>27</sup>

Ingarden maintains that his theory of intentional objects which concerns the whole cultural reality of man does, in fact, contain a historical aspect.<sup>28</sup> Intentional objects are not fully determined "at birth:" they are fragile, they live and are, therefore, thoroughly historical in their nature. Yet, some critics have problems with reconciling the addition of this diachronic approach to concretization and combining a thesis about "the life of a work" with his thesis about the constituting

activity of the subject.<sup>29</sup> In most cases they see this historical coefficient as a paradox. Rosner, for instance, does not know how to establish the criterion for the identity of the work of art which may be read in different historical periods and in different stages of the evolution of the language, i.e. in different cultural situations. She does not find in Ingarden's theory any basis to talk about one and the same work. According to her, the work of art, on Ingarden's theory, becomes just a variety of *communiqués*. She blames him for having allowed the work "to melt" in the diverse processes of reception.<sup>30</sup> She senses difficulties with accounting for the kinship between historically changing concretizations that veil up the work. She wonders what kind of changes impinge upon the work's essence and what do not. She wonders also at Ingarden's postulate "to keep as close as possible to the work" and finds him "at odds with his method", which allows for, among other things, for remote concretizations.<sup>31</sup> In Graff's opinion, the thesis about "the life of a work of art", i.e. the work of art as a peculiar, temporal object, is obviously incompatible with the idea of a work of art as an extra-temporal object. Graff holds that it undermines the search for the structure of the work in itself and he accuses Ingarden of inconsistency. He sees Ingarden as all of a sudden denying the work of art a stable structure and thus as contradicting the essentialistic aim of his theory.<sup>32</sup> Fieguth similarly talks about paradoxes in Ingarden's theory but refrains

from interpreting them as contradictions. He attributes to Ingarden the ability to develop two divergent thoughts at a time and calls it a typical Ingardenian method of argumentation. He stresses its "intellectual attractiveness" but admits that the simultaneous presence of opposite trends in Ingarden's theory may cause a tension.<sup>33</sup>

In other words, one may conclude that Ingarden's sociologically oriented theory does not fit a pluralistic society. Yet, at the same time, Graff expresses the opinion that Ingarden's theory of art seemed to be the last word in questions of art at the time when works of art used to be well integrated objects, clearly separated from the rest of reality. He adds that it "bears critical analysis with difficulty."<sup>34</sup> One can indeed agree with Graff that the flaws of Ingarden's theory come to light not so much as a result of a purely theoretical critical assessment but rather as a consequence of the radical change of the artistic practice that shifted from the creation of unproblematic works of art to creating works that test the stability of the borders of art and the art-nonart distinction.

In this chapter I believe I have accomplished the following: First, I have shown the readiness of analytic aesthetics to discuss the social context of art. Second, I have demonstrated that

Ingarden's theory of art contains a centrally important social dimension. And third, I have shown that Ingarden's views on the nature of art are such that they can mediate between the dichotomies of analytic aesthetics and therefore suggest a solution to the current crisis.

## NOTES

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## CONCLUSION

## CONCLUSION

The focus of analytic aesthetics on language as the clue to understanding the nature of art has led to an impasse. The reason for the impasse lies in the view of language that sees language as something existing merely for its own sake and independently of the world.

Danto undertakes to demonstrate that language has links to the world. To do that he exploits the fact that language has a built-in history. He advances the understanding of art in terms of language by adding a time factor to it, and by stressing the fact that the concept of art is historically changeable. He binds art with time, gives it a sense of history and of continuity, and acknowledges its temporal nature.

Ingarden includes a social factor in his understanding of language. He relies on the idea that language contains in itself cultural elements and is tightly bound with the culture of the society that speaks it. He combines the view of language as present in personal acts of intending with the view of language as a communal phenomenon. He claims that art is also culturally

conditioned and he turns to society and its culture for the explanation of the concept of art.

Both Danto and Ingarden, although from different philosophical standpoints, make a common point that the analysis of language "in itself" is not sufficient for the purpose of analogy with art. They show that art, like language, has intricate relationships with reality and that these must be taken into consideration in order to reveal the complicated nature of art. Their views on art run counter the traditional view that demands the consideration of works of art for their own sake. These two philosophers clarify the complex set of interrelationships that art has with history and with the culture of a society. In this way they open up perspectives for further progress on philosophical investigations into the nature of art. They make a promise that the study of the concept of art will become richer and fuller.

However, in spite of the enlargement of the scope of Danto's and Ingarden's investigations, their approach also reveals gaps and does not allow for a full grasp of art as a phenomenon which has such an important place in our culture.

The realization of the historical nature of art leads Danto to the realization of the post-historical state of contemporary

art. This opens him, in turn, to the idea of the futility of the search for the definition of art. He pays, therefore, a fairly high price for historicizing art.

Ingarden's appeal to society puts him under the necessity of compromising orthodox phenomenology with contextual phenomenology. It compels him to make a plea that it is culture that has a final say in the determination of the nature of art.

Altogether, the multiplicity of problems that arise when one tries to explain the significance of art in life, or to discuss the problems of art's reception and appreciation, or to talk about beauty, truth, expression or value of art, raise the question of the importance of the very issue of the definition of art. There is an air of dissatisfaction with insisting on carrying on with defining art. Some philosophers compare the usefulness of this definitional trend to "plucking fruit from barren trees."

There is a split on the subject of the significance of providing the definition of art by a theory of art even within analytic aesthetics. The urge to define art takes various directions. For Dickie, aesthetics as such limits itself to a definitional analysis, and it almost exhausts itself in an attempt at a definition. For Danto, in addition to defining art, a theory

of art includes an attempt at some kind of clarification of aesthetic concepts - their philosophical understanding. For Tilghman, a theory of art should embrace the study of the activities in which people engage when they face a work of art. There is a tension here among three concepts of aesthetics: aesthetics construed as a precisionist definitional activity versus aesthetics as a complex clarification of our aesthetic concepts and versus aesthetics as a study of various doings of concrete members of the public.

This tension seems to be even stronger in case of the confrontation with phenomenology, where the demand for a definition of art is much less than in analytic aesthetics. Ingarden makes much more an objective of his aesthetics the formulation of a comprehensive theory of art than the provision of a definition of art.

There is a feeling nowadays that defining art is not a very revealing activity by itself, and that there are several questions of a most general nature that need to be answered in connection with defining.

One problem is whether questions about the definition of art have much to do with specifying the nature of art. The direction of investigation set at definitions, labels and other

identifications bothers even some of the analytic philosophers who consider the strictly definitional orientation as not very informative and "stretched."<sup>2</sup> Some of them deem any defining, and hence also defining art, to be by nature "a conservative activity",<sup>3</sup> For that reason they do not consider it compatible with the contemporary art scene. Representatives of this view are deeply convinced that the definitional activity is carried on now merely "out of blind habit."<sup>4</sup>

Another problem centres on the usefulness of having a definition of art as such. In answer to this question some focus on practical and some on theoretical sides of the search for definitions.

Some philosophers stress that the role of definitions is to make theoretical investigations possible by blocking their areas, and by determining their scope and limits. They are undoubtedly right in thinking that it is scientifically helpful to have a characterization of the objects to which some term is applied. It happens quite often that one knows something, but finds it difficult to say what is it that one knows, and it is the definition which says what it is that one knows. The test for such a definition is its theoretical fertility. Yet, many raise the point that the latest definitional achievements in the area of the

theory of art are "not likely to provide any significant philosophical insight or illumination."<sup>5</sup> They insist that a definition of art would serve no good theoretical purpose.

Some other philosophers, though, tend to give definitions an empirical test and list chiefly pragmatic reasons for struggling to get a definition of art. What they sometimes have in mind is the ability to conduct a kind of a warehouse test, i.e. to have a way of telling which objects in the world are art and which are not. What they are after is a formula which would tell if a randomly offered item is an artwork. In other words, they look for a flexible method for telling art from non-art and adapted to the purpose in hand. More often, however, they stress the demands of discourse on art: having a definition of art promotes a higher standard of art talk and secures illumination about art in art criticism.

On the whole, it seems that definitions are made to appear more important in philosophical books than in the stream of life and practice. When one considers the difficulties connected with the search for a definition of art, one is ready to agree that the defining of art may indeed be "a red herring" and a philosophical "dead end."<sup>6</sup> Therefore, perhaps, it should not be carried on with such an insistence, in spite of the "fascinating ingredient" which

it contains. <sup>7</sup>

Ingarden's role as a figure to look up to when dealing with defining art comes to something more than just the fact that he makes clear that there is more to aesthetics than the determination of what art is. He certainly is more than an old metaphysician and a phenomenologist. His aesthetics, dating from over half a century ago, addresses nearly every problem taken up by recent Continental and analytic aestheticians.

Ingarden is a "critical" phenomenologist and his basic philosophical position is both phenomenological and analytic. He reveals his qualifications as an analyst and in his hands the study of aesthetics becomes a mixture of metaphysical speculation and linguistic analysis. He shows that he is no less guided by language than analytic philosophers are and that he argues with the kinds of data very similar to those employed in analytic philosophy. He proves that there is a lot in the subject of aesthetics that lends itself to analytical treatment and he demonstrates that in other philosophical traditions the study of art is also to some degree analytical. In this way he finds himself among the few philosophers who are interested in aesthetics and who, at the same time, practice a strict analytic method. Because of that he is a figure in the history of philosophy who

helps converge two separate streams. Since even in Poland Ingarden is known rather for his phenomenology than for his analytic methodology, I believe I can claim some small originality in demonstrating that his philosophy may be appealing because other things can be found in it than the programme of Husserl.

Instead of competing for domination Ingarden's phenomenology proposes a different scenario: it attempts to forge a third way between two traditional opposites, Continental and Anglo-American philosophies. Ingarden's approach shows contemporary philosophy how to overcome isolationisms and how to ensure not only philosophical coexistence, but cooperation of antagonistic systems.

Above all, however, Ingarden demonstrates how to reconcile opposing parties. He chooses an intermediate position, not an alternative one, and manifestly shows how to avoid certain long-standing difficulties inherent to the analytic tradition. He provides a means to do away with some dichotomies indivisibly reigning in the Western thinking on art. With his ideas he erases antagonisms inside the analytic school and averts conflicts.

However, Ingarden not only turns out to be a mediator between

the parties at odds who provides solutions to the impasse, but also the philosopher who advances in several respects the understanding of the nature of art and supplies analytic theories with the missing dimension of art. He demonstrates the non-analytic qualifications needed to study art and shows that it is more important to discover the external links of art than to find the definition of art. Ingarden's approach to art holds artist, work and perceiver in view simultaneously and in addition takes account of the social embeddedness of art. The reference to society and its culture, not always noticed even by some of the closest followers of Ingarden, makes Ingarden's theory very well adaptable to the contemporary ways of dealing with socially conditioned types of reception and with the recent tendency to think of culture in an integral way.<sup>8</sup> This fact makes Ingarden's theory of art adaptable to the study of post-modernist art. It helps create an affinity between Ingarden's thinking about art and that of the most recent theoreticians of art. That is why, it seems, Ingarden's proposal may be used to reinforce the programme of analytic aesthetics in order to render a more rounded view of art.

I hope that by bringing together analytic and phenomenological perspectives I have contributed towards minimizing the differences which still separate Continental and Anglo-American

philosophical traditions. With the growing interest in Continental thought and a crisis in analytic aesthetics, which comprises a vast multitude of frequently incompatible views, this thesis has, perhaps, also suggested a new orientation for the philosophical analysis of art.

Nowadays one can witness a decline of the definitional paradigm of understanding. The question that seems to interest most analytic aestheticians of how far one can go with one term, "work of art", when even the artists use different terms for what they produce, is more and more being seen as "stupid".<sup>9</sup> In the light of this fact it is very possible to accept that the definitional orientation of analytic aesthetics is the main factor contributing to the fact that the power and appeal of analytic aesthetics has now significantly waned.<sup>10</sup> It may also be the reason behind the fact that Continental philosophy is beginning to gain attention and that the Continental modes in aesthetics are beginning to converge with those of Anglo-American aesthetics.

It seems quite likely that the intellectual curiosity employed in defining art in analytic aesthetics might now be applied to "some more pragmatist and activist direction."<sup>11</sup> There is an indication that aesthetics might again serve criticism of art and continue its traditional role as a philosophy of criticism.

It is also quite possible that one will have to put up with the fact that art, by its very nature, cannot be caught up by any definition. One may therefore have to accept the uncertainty and inexplicability of some aspects of the world, and carry on living in the tradition where art is still, in spite of all the definitional troubles it causes, so significant.

## NOTES

- 1  
J.Hospers, rev.of Culture and Art, ed. L.Aagaard-Mogensen, Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 35 (1977): 229.
- 2  
S.Hampshire, " Are Philosophical Questions Questions about Language?," Aristotelian Society Proceedings 22 (1969):
- 3  
S.Goldsmith, "Ready-Mades of Marcel Duchamp," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 42 (1983): 197.
- 4  
K.Walton, rev.of Art and the Aesthetic, by G.Dickie, Philosophical Review 86 (1977): 101.
- 5  
Walton 99.
- 6  
Walton 101 and 99.
- 7  
Margolis speaks about defining art as a "troublesome but fascinating endeavour". J.Margolis, rev. of Art and the Aesthetic, by G.Dickie, Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 33 (1975): 341.
- 8  
Gołaszewska, who owes a lot to Ingarden, refers after Ingarden to the aesthetic situation as the centre of interest for aesthetics but she tends, unlike Ingarden, to treat the relation author-work-percipient in terms of individual author, particular work and concrete percipient and never mentions culture as a uniting link for these three. See M.Gołaszewska, Zarys Estetyki (An Outline of Aesthetics) (Kraków: WL,1973).
- 9  
P.Ziff, Antiaesthetics (Dordrecht, Boston: D.Reidel,1984) 36.
- 10  
R.Shusterman, "Analytic Aesthetics: Retrospect and Prospect," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 46 Special Issue (1987): 115-124.
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Shusterman "Analytic Aesthetics" 122.

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