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Evaluating the Aims and Methods of Defining Art

A Metaphilosophical Investigation Regarding the Question 'What is Art?'

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Introduction

'Philosophy of art' covers a wide variety of topics, such as the ontological status of art, aesthetic experience, aesthetic properties, the standard of taste, the value of art, creativity, style, interpretation and authorship. While I will often refer to 'the philosophy of art', it should be clear that this dissertation focuses on only one topic within the broader field of the philosophy of art, namely the definition of art. The project of defining art arguably touches on many of these other areas of investigation. While until the end of the 20th century the definitional project was considered to be the main project within the philosophy of art, attention for these other topics has grown in the last decades. They usually are addressed independently of the definitional project. I do not intend to suggest that the project of defining art is the only interesting topic within the philosophy of art. There are many other interesting and fundamental topics, but in this dissertation I cannot address them.

The project of defining art aims to answer the question 'What is art?' by formulating conditions or criteria for art. In general, definitions of art give necessary and sufficient conditions for arthood, while theories of art provide art conditions that are neither necessary nor sufficient (Gaut 2000, p. 26). In this dissertation, it is not my objective to answer this question. Rather, I am interested in metaphilosophical issues underlying the definitional project: what are philosophers of art doing when they try to define art? More specifically, I will examine the methods philosophers of art use and the aims they hope to fulfill. Recently, philosophers of art have expressed fundamental and urgent worries regarding the viability and fruitfulness of proposed definitions of art. I believe that metaphilosophical investigation is necessary to shed light on and respond to these worries.

There is little substantial metaphilosophical reflection on the project of defining art. Since some philosophers have argued that there is no obvious need for metaphilosophy in general, it might be argued that the lack of metaphilosophical reflection does not constitute a problem. Metaphilosophy has an ambivalent status within philosophy. Some philosophers have argued that metaphilosophy only amounts to navel-gazing. What could the relevance of philosophers examining philosophy be? Gilbert Ryle argued

against methodological reflection in general. According to Ryle, 'preoccupation with questions about methods tends to distract us from prosecuting the methods themselves. We run, as a rule, worse, not better, if we think a lot about our feet' (Ryle, 1953, p. 185). Correspondingly, 'knowing how' should be distinguished from 'knowing that'. The following quote makes the distinction even more clear: 'Certainly, the cultured chess-player may describe the permitted moves better than does the uncultured chess-player. But he does not make these moves any better' (Ryle, 1953, p. 176). Likewise, so critics of metaphilosophy argue, a philosopher who is able to describe the practice of philosophy is not therefore better at practicing philosophy. In this vein, philosopher of art Peter Kivy has urged that 'it should seem obvious [...] that you needn't have a philosophy of philosophy to do, to know how to practice philosophy' (Kivy, 2002, p. 13).

Against such views, Timothy Williamson has argued that metaphilosophy can be useful:

> Although an adequate self-image is not a precondition of all virtue, it helps. If philosophy misconceives what it is doing, it is likely to do it worse. (Williamson, 2007, p. ix)

In this dissertation, it will be demonstrated that an inadequate self-image in the project of defining art indeed brings about worse practice in that subdiscipline of the philosophy of art. Put differently, the lack of metaphilosophical reflection in the philosophy of art constitutes a philosophical *shortcoming*: there are fundamental problems with the way in which the definitional project is carried out and this directly affects philosophical practice, that is, the proposed definitions of art. Metaphilosophical reflection, then, is needed to reveal these problems and to suggest ways in which to proceed. My two main objectives, then, are: (1) to clarify and evaluate (a) the methods philosophers use to define art and (b) the aims they hope to fulfill by their proposed definitions of art; (2) to offer positive recommendations on how to proceed in the future.

My recommendations will be quite radical. In order to understand why this is so, it is important to announce that, throughout my analyses of the methods and the aims of philosophers of art, an overall picture of the discipline emerges. This picture contains three theses:

(1)   There is a conflict between the self-image of philosophers of art and their practice.
(2)   There are fundamental objections against the practice of philosophers of art.
(3)   The metaphilosophical views philosophers of art (often implicitly) hold are untenable.

The first thesis states that philosophers of art believe to be engaged in a specific kind of approach to the definition of art, while on further scrutiny, it turns out that their practice does not correspond with this self-image. The second thesis asserts that the methods philosophers of art use, are inadequate for reaching their aims: there is a

mismatch between aims and methods. The third thesis holds that the approach philosophers of art believe to be engaged in is an approach that will neither be possible to execute nor lead to worthwhile results. There is a clear connection between the three theses. The first thesis states that there is a tension between theory (self-image) and practice. The second thesis entails that, if this conflict is resolved in one direction (by adapting the self-image) there still is a problem: the practice is certainly not optimal. The third thesis implies that, if the conflict is resolved in the opposite direction (by changing the practice so that it fits the self-image), there still would be a problem, because of the untenability of the views. I cannot argue for these theses now, this will be done in Chapter 5. What is important is that, if one adopts this picture, like I do, there are two options. The first option is to give up the idea of defining art as a whole and revert to art reductionism. The second option is to come up with a radically new proposal about aims and methods. Fine-tuning the methods and aims that are used now, however, is *not* an option.

The structure of this doctoral dissertation is quite straightforward. In a preliminary chapter, I will set the stage: besides providing a succinct overview of proposed definitions of art, I will distinguish between four different approaches to the question 'What is art?' and discuss the (limited and fragmented) metaphilosophical reflections of philosophers of art from this perspective.

Part I will concern the methods philosophers of art use to define art and is meant to realize objective 1a. The focus will be on the role of intuitions. Chapter 1, entitled 'Experimental Philosophy and Intuitions On What Is Art', examines what it means to treat intuitions as evidence for definitions of art and questions the desirability of this method. Chapter 2, 'Disentangling the Use of Intuitions in Defining Art', investigates whether or not intuitions play an evidential role in the philosophy of art. Part II explores what philosophers of art are aiming at when they are defining art and thus sets out to realize objective 1b. Methods and aims are closely linked, since 'to judge the appropriateness of a method we need to know what it is a method for' (Overgaard et al., 2013, p. 8). In Chapter 3, 'Incommensurable Aims in the Philosophy of Art', it will be shown that philosophers of art usually (implicitly or explicitly) aim to fulfill diverse aims and it will be argued that these aims turn out to be incommensurable. In Chapter 4, 'The Charge From Psychology and Art's Definition', it will be shown that the force of objections raised from empirical sciences against the project of defining art depends on the aims a philosopher of art hopes to realize: the objections are germane when descriptivism is aimed at.

In Part III, I will discuss possible ways to proceed, taking into account the problems with the self-image and practice of philosophers of art that have been exposed in Part I and II. Chapter 5 will give a state of the art by substantiating the three abovementioned theses. In this way, my findings with regard to the first objective, namely to clarify and evaluate (a) the methods philosophers use to define art and (b) the aims they hope to

fulfill by their proposed definitions of art, will be coherently and comprehensively presented. Chapter 6, entitled 'Why We Need A Theory of Art As A Whole', will argue that giving up the search for a definition of art and focusing on smaller units (e.g. paintings, literature, music, and so on), that is, art reductionism, is not a viable option. In Chapter 7, I will formulate a radical alternative for philosophers of art who set out to answer the question 'What is art?'. In this way, the second objective will be realized.

Part IV, consisting of Chapter 8 'Borderline Cases and the Project of Defining Art', will provide an illustration of both the problems addressed in Part I and II and of the alternative I have offered in Part III.

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0. Preliminary Chapter

In this preliminary chapter, I will clarify the current debate on definitions of art. After giving a short historical overview, I outline two fundamental worries regarding the project of defining art. In order to be able to fully grasp these criticisms, I will distinguish between four possible approaches to the question 'What is art?'. Subsequently, it will be shown how recent definitions of art can be understood in light of these four approaches. In this way, I will lay the foundation of the metaphilosophical investigations into the project of defining art that will be executed in the main body of this dissertation.

0.1 Definitions of Art: Overview and Challenges

Philosophical claims regarding the nature of art or the nature of specific art forms already can be found in the work of Plato and Aristotle. In their view, imitation was the essence of art (Carroll, 1999, pp. 19-22). It must be noted that their Greek word 'art' had a meaning starkly different from the meaning of our concept of art today. Art entailed any practice that required skill. Plato and Aristotle, however, did not define this Greek word 'art', rather they argued that activities like painting, poetry, drama, sculpture and dance all involved imitation. Notwithstanding these early reflections on art, it is usually accepted that the origins of current debates regarding art's definition largely can be found in the 18th century, when the so-called modern system of the arts was in place. It was not until then that the concept of art was used in more or less the sense it is used now, that is, that practices like painting, sculpture, architecture, music and poetry were grouped together (Kristeller, 1951). 18th and 19th century philosophers, like Immanuel Kant, Georg W.F. Hegel, Arthur Schopenhauer and Friedrich Nietzsche, discussed questions regarding art and aesthetics as part of their all-encompassing philosophical theories or systems. However, it has been argued that these historical figures of

philosophy were not or not mainly focused on defining art. Kant, for example, was primarily interested in judgments of taste, beauty and the sublime. Hegel concentrated on how the spirit of the people was expressed in specific art forms. Moreover, Dominic McIver Lopes has recently argued that the early moderns were questioning which activities are arts and which are not, rather than pursuing a theory or definition of art (Lopes, 2014, pp. 28-35). The question 'What is art?' only became pressing when unclarity arose regarding how new artistic developments, that is to say avant-garde art, could be clarified philosophically. Noël Carroll states:

> what has been the driving [...] force behind the philosophy of art for at least a century – a century which not coincidentally could be called the age of the avant-garde – has been the startling innovations of modern art. (Carroll, 1993, pp. 313-314)

In a similar vein, Lopes has claimed that 'the hard cases spurred interest in theories of art' (Lopes, 2014, 35). While not everyone involved in the project of defining art shares this concern with the avant-garde – some have even claimed that the focus on the avant-garde has fundamentally misled analytic philosophers of art[1] – avant-garde art has undeniably been very central to debates on the definition of art.

In the 20th century, mimetic theories of art were falsified by developments like the invention of photography and expressionist painting and were followed by expression theories, formalist theories and aesthetic theories. These, in turn, were threatened by again new developments in the arts, such as conceptual art. In the mid-twentieth century, under the influence of Wittgenstein and his disciple Morris Weitz, the project of defining art was discredited: formulating necessary and sufficient conditions for arthood was deemed to be *impossible* since there is no feature that all artworks have in common. Moreover, the project was considered to be *futile*, since we more or less know what art is when we see it. Hence, it was argued that definitions of art cannot make a substantial contribution to a better understanding of the phenomenon 'art'. Philosophers sympathetic to this view either opted to abandon the whole project or chose to formulate anti-essentialist theories of art. The latter aimed to characterize the concept of art by means of family resemblances or cluster criteria. After this anti-essentialist phase, there was a return to essentialism; once more, philosophers tried to formulate necessary and sufficient conditions for arthood. At this stage, art was defined in terms of its relationship either to institutions, more specifically 'the artworld', or to

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[1] The view that avant-garde works are at best considered to be marginal phenomena within the domain of art and that recent philosophers of art have put way too much effort in trying to clarify their art status can be found in the work of Paul Crowther, Denis Dutton, Julius Moravcsik, Roger Scruton, and Nick Zangwill,. (Crowther, 2004; Dutton, 2006; Moravcsik, 1993; Scruton, 1996; Zangwill, 2006).

the history of art. At present, many different kinds of definitions and theories of art are on offer: some philosophers have defended a return to the anti-essentialist program, others have formulated hybrid or renewed aesthetic definitions.[2]

Although philosophers of art continue to propose new definitions of art, there is undeniably a certain fatigue surrounding the subject. The two main worries expressed by neo-Wittgensteinians, namely that defining art is an impossible as well as a futile project, have never been fully removed. Whereas Morris Weitz and others have not been able to conclusively show that we cannot formulate necessary and sufficient conditions for arthood, many philosophers of art are not hopeful, given that agreement on the correct definition of art is not within sight.[3] Moreover, the post-Weitzian proposals have all been met with substantial criticisms, not only because they fail to define art adequately, but also because these proposals are purportedly highly uninformative, circular, technical and complex. Christy Mag Uidhir and P.D. Magnus, for example, have argued that:

> In order to capture art's plurality [...] definitions often become dangerously complex, borderline arbitrary, or circular. Such definitions [...] yield application conditions for ART that are uninformative, highly complex, disjunctive, wholly unrelated, or wholly interrelated. The typical outcome is a definition that is neither well formed nor useful for thinking about art. (Mag Uidhir & Magnus, 2011, p. 85)[4]

These criticisms mirror worries about the relevance of analytic philosophy more generally. Hans-Johann Glock recently has argued that a lot of analytic philosophy has descended into scholasticism: analytic philosophers focus on a too narrow range of subjects, do not sufficiently reflect over the methods they use, have a preference for technicalities irrespective of their usefulness and are not inclined to explain the relevance of their topics. As a result, there is little interaction with other disciplines or the general public (Glock, 2008, pp. 246-247). Indeed, reference to analytic definitions of art is extremely scarce in other fields concerned with the arts, such as art history or

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[2] For pre-anti-essentialist theories see for example: (Bell, 2003; Collingwood, 1958; Fry, 1937). For anti-essentialist theories see: (Weitz, 1956; Ziff, 1953). For a plea to abandon the project altogether see: (Kennick, 1958) For relational theories see: (Dickie, 2000; Levinson, 1979). For a recent anti-essentialist approach see: (Gaut, 2000). For recent aesthetic approaches see: (Iseminger, 2004; Zangwill, 2007).

[3] Note that Robert Stecker does suggest that some consensus is within sight. It must be noted, however, that not many philosophers of art seem in agreement with this view. (See: Stecker, 2000).

[4] Similar criticisms can be found in (Kaufman, 2007; Zangwill, 1995, 2002, 2006).

artistic practice.[5] Nevertheless, very few philosophers of art have responded to these criticisms.

In light of these fundamental criticisms, it might be wondered whether a metaphilosophical investigation into this project is useful. All in all, if the project is as hopeless and useless as portrayed above, why even engage in it? However, regardless of how the project is executed, I maintain the question 'What is art?' is important. Here, I agree with Paul Crowther when he argues that

> At first sight, it might seem that defining art is one of those specialist activities with few reverberations outside aesthetics itself. Actually, the task has explosive epistemological and cultural implications that have scarcely received the consideration they deserve. (Crowther, 2004, p. 361)

Concepts are valuable to us because they structure our world: they indicate how to treat, evaluate and engage with phenomena we encounter. Applying the concept of art to certain items shows us how to present, approach and appreciate them. As Noël Carroll has put it, 'categorizing candidates as artworks puts us in a position to mobilize a set of art responses that are the very stuff of our activities as viewers, listeners and readers' (Carroll, 1999, p. 7). The field of the arts is confronted with many 'disputed cases', often called 'hard cases': cases in which there is fundamental disagreement over whether or not they are art. Disputed cases are not a marginal phenomenon: there is disagreement over the art status of a wide variety of artefacts, such as avant-garde works, artefacts from small-scale societies, popular arts and folk arts. Whether or not to include such artefacts into the domain of art has far-reaching consequences for the way in which these artefacts will be approached, presented, conserved and appreciated. Furthermore, whether or not they are considered to be art makes a crucial difference for the men and women who made these artefacts and the cultures in which these artefacts arose.

It is for these reasons that I believe metaphilosophical investigation into the project of defining art to be valuable, regardless of the fruitfulness of proposed definitions of art. While, admittedly, definitions of art have not generated much interest outside of the philosophy of art, the definitional project potentially is of great significance for the broader field of the arts. In order to realize this potential, it is worthwhile to strive to ameliorate the project. Correspondingly, it is not my aim to solely add new criticisms or to reinforce older ones. Rather, I seek to examine how the project is carried out in order

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[5] By means of illustration, in the Web of Science only one of the key articles of Jerrold Levinson on the definition of art was cited in an art history journal, and then even only in a footnote. See: (Dean, 2006, p. 26). There is no discussion whatsoever of the works of Berys Gaut, Robert Stecker and Stephen Davies in journals on art history.

to shed new light on these criticisms and to show how these criticisms can be most fruitfully addressed. In the next part of this preliminary chapter, I will distinguish between four different approaches to the definition of art. The criticisms considered above can only be fully understood in light of these different approaches.

0.2 Four Possible Approaches to the Definition of Art

Definitions of art aim to formulate an answer to the question 'What is art?'. However, not every philosopher of art interprets the question in the same way. There are roughly four ways in which to approach the question: the descriptive conceptual approach, the normative conceptual approach, the descriptive metaphysical approach and the revisionary metaphysical approach.[6] Succinctly put, philosophers can be interested in either the nature of art or the concept of art and they can aim to clarify the descriptive level or put forward a normative definition. In what follows, these approaches will be illuminated. For each approach, I will first show what the approach entails in general, and then I will elucidate what it encompasses when applied to the philosophy of art.

Descriptive Conceptual Analysis

Descriptive conceptual analysis means clarifying the conditions under which a concept is commonly applied. In other words, a descriptive conceptual analysis reveals the demarcation criteria we use to distinguish what falls under the concept from what does not fall under the concept. It is broadly accepted that such an analysis is made by reflecting on intuitive instances of the concept and trying to determine the necessary and sufficient properties of these instances. An analysis is refuted when it excludes instances that intuitively fall under the concept and when it includes instances that

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[6] The distinctions I make here are not new. The distinction between descriptive and revisionary metaphysics has been developed in (Strawson, 1959). The distinction between metaphysical, descriptive and normative conceptual approaches can be found in (De Vreese & Weber, 2008; Fisher, 2014; Haslanger, 2000). Not all these authors use the same terminologies, but the distinctions they make are very similar. What I call the non-metaphysical normative conceptual analysis, is what Haslanger calls the ameliorative project and what Fisher calls pragmatic conceptual analysis. Haslanger's 'descriptive' approach coincides with what I and many others call the metaphysical approach.

intuitively do not fall under the concept. In other words, an analysis is falsified when it allows for counterexamples. Here is an ample exposition of this method by Adam Feltz:

> [...] philosophers propose an analysis of a concept and then other philosophers try to construct counterexamples to that conceptual analysis. [...] Intuitions generated by these counterexamples are meant to suggest that the analysis is wrong or in need of refinement. As a result, conceptual analyses are typically thought to be better to the extent they can withstand intuitive counterexamples. (Feltz, 2009, pp. 201-202)

The primary aim, then, for conceptual analysts is extensional adequacy, that is, being able to catch the extension of the concept under consideration. Thus, descriptive adequacy equals extensional adequacy. The main presuppositions underlying this approach is that there is a large overlap between intuitive categorization judgments of different users of the concept and, in case one is offering a definition, that the concept under consideration allows for clarification in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions. In other words, it is assumed that there is a robust concept to be analyzed.

Philosophers of art who choose the descriptive conceptual approach are interested in our concept of art, more so than the nature of art. Usually, supporters of this approach do not think there is such a thing as the essence of art to be discovered (Stecker, 2000, p. 59). All we can hope for when defining art is a clarification or systematization of how the concept is used by competent users of the concept. This kind of project has been justified based on its ability to provide us with demarcating criteria; it can help us with identifying items as either art or non-art. Defining art is then seen as a branch of epistemology. Often, however, philosophers of art who choose this approach grant that the primary motivation for defining art is 'simply a curiosity' (see for example: Kania, 2011, p. 5).

It must be noted that it is not fully agreed upon that conceptual analysts of art (solely) make use of intuitions. Some have maintained that philosophers should not (only) base their definitions of art on 'intuitive' categorization judgments, but on the categorization judgments that are implicit in our artistic practices (D. Davies, 2004, 2009). In favour of this view, it is argued that people's intuitions about how they categorize art might differ substantially from the way in which they distinguish art from non-art in practice.

Normative Conceptual Analysis

Normative conceptual analysis makes recommendations about what one ought to mean by a given concept, rather than just attempting to describe how we use it (Woodward, 2003, p. 7). This approach aims to establish how a concept *should* be used, regardless of how it *is* used. Rather than exposing the demarcation criteria we use when applying the

concept, a normative conceptual analysis proposes novel or revised demarcation criteria. In other words, philosophers who adhere to this approach want to change the way in which we use the concept. Clearly, these philosophers need to provide us with reasons for changing our use. Broadly stated, the reasons provided fall into two kinds. On the one hand, philosophers might want to change our concepts in order for them to fit the actual structure of the world. This represents the metaphysical stance. On the other hand, philosophers might want to change our concepts in order to provide us with more useful concepts: concepts that are better suited to fulfill our practical and/or theoretical needs. I will refer to this stance as the pragmatic stance.

When the former position is adopted, then the approach collapses into the revisionary metaphysical approach: our concepts should be revised in light of (empirical) discoveries regarding the nature of what our concepts track. Demarcation criteria can and should be adjusted based on findings regarding the nature of what the concept tracks. The metaphysical revisionist argues that our concepts should be revised in order to match with the mind-independent reality. This approach, its methods and aims, will be further illuminated below. In what follows, I focus on the normative approach that is defended in terms of practical or theoretical utility.

Philosophers who want to change our concepts and formulate concepts that are more practically and theoretically fruitful can remain silent on whether or not there are real essences beyond our concepts that can be revealed. Often, however, it is assumed by them that it is impossible to refashion our concepts to match with the real nature or essences they track (see for example Haslanger, 2000, p. 34). Philosophers engaged in this approach first want to illuminate which roles the concept under consideration plays or what tasks it enables us to accomplish. Subsequently, they try to put forward a concept that is best suited to accomplish these tasks. It should be clear then, that extensional adequacy is not their main aim (Haslanger, 2000, p. 46; Zangwill, 1995). Their proposed definition might not capture every single instance that falls under the extension of the concept, yet, if it can be shown that the provided concept is better suited for fulfilling our practical and theoretical needs, then extensional inadequacy constitutes a negligible shortcoming. This approach is highly analogous to what Justin C. Fisher has called Pragmatic Conceptual Analysis:

> Pragmatic Conceptual Analysis proposes that we 'reverse-engineer' an existing conceptual scheme to determine how it works as well as it does so that we might then modify it to more consistently deliver benefits in these ways. Hence, the key desideratum imposed by Pragmatic Conceptual Analysis is that our explications preserve the ways in which our applications of pre-existing concepts have regularly delivered benefits. (Fisher, 2014, pp. 59-60)

The pragmatic approach does not only presuppose that it is highly unlikely that nature can fully tell us how to use our concepts, but also that systematization of common usage

will not help us much, since there is much disagreement over the application of our concepts and our categorization judgments or intuitions are likely to be biased, to showcase many arbitrary features and to be deeply confused and incoherent. Sally Haslanger pleads in favour of a normative approach to the definition of race and gender. She elucidates the approach as follows:

> The responsibility is ours to define them [the concepts of race and gender] for our purposes. In doing so we will want to be responsive to some aspects of ordinary usage (and to aspects of both the connotation and extension of the terms). However, neither ordinary usage nor empirical investigation is overriding, for there is a stipulative element to the project: *this* is the phenomenon we need to be thinking about. Let the term in question refer to it. On this approach, the world by itself can't tell us what gender is, or what race is; it is up to us to decide what in the world, if anything, they are. (Haslanger, 2000, p. 34)

How can these kinds of normative definitions be validated? They can be justified neither on account of empirical discoveries regarding the nature of what the concept tracks, nor on account of how the concept is used. A normative definition is adequate – rather than correct – insofar as it proves to be capable of fulfilling the purposes that have been put forward. Moreover, it must be determined whether or not the purposes that are put forward are legitimate.

Philosophers of art who adhere to the normative conceptual approach do not wonder which concept of art we have, but which concept of art we should have (Zangwill, 2006). When they use arguments based on (empirical) findings regarding the nature of art, they aim to give a revisionary metaphysical account of art: they want to reveal the mind-independent nature of art and refashion the concept of art in order to match this nature. When they aim at theoretical or practical utility, their approach needs to state which practical or theoretical roles the concept of art can play for us. There are many purposes we might want to accomplish by means of a concept of art. For example, curators might need a concept of art that guides their practice; jurists might need a concept of art for making legal verdicts concerning copyright, vandalism or forgery; anthropologists might need a concept of art for enquiring the artistic practices of small-scale societies and so on. It might come as no surprise, then, that many defenders of this approach emphasize that it is unlikely that one concept will serve all these purposes. These philosophers want to allow 'for different definitions responding to different concerns' (Haslanger, 2000, p. 32).

Descriptive metaphysics

Descriptive metaphysicians want to clarify our conceptual scheme or, put differently, our thoughts about the nature of the world. This branch of metaphysics has also been

called 'faux' metaphysics (Schwartz, 2012) or folk metaphysics (Zangwill, 2001, p. 2). Philosophers committed to this approach usually assume that we cannot make claims about the mind-independent reality. Like conceptual analysts, they are interested in our concepts, not in the (mind-independent) nature of what the concept tracks. This approach assumes that there is no knowledge possible without intervention of human presuppositions. Every science needs to make some presuppositions in order to be able to gather knowledge: it is simply impossible to make claims about the nature of phenomena that are untouched by our experience of these phenomena. Descriptive metaphysicians argue that they have not given up on traditional, that is, revisionary metaphysics, because this kind of enquiry is out of their reach, but because 'there is nothing to be known and nothing to be striven for which remains beyond our reach' (D'Oro, 2013, p. 592).

Descriptive metaphysicians do not formulate theories based on discoveries regarding the nature of *x*, but they try to make explicit what is implicit in our thoughts about *x*. It has been argued that descriptive metaphysics does not amount to much more than conceptual analysis. Conceptual analysis also aims to make explicit what we implicitly know by examining our practices or testing our intuitions. Yet, descriptive metaphysics does have a broader scope than conceptual analysis, since it does not only try to clarify the application conditions for a concept, but also our thoughts about the nature of these items after we have categorized them as such (Thomasson, 2007, p. 282). As P.F. Strawson has put it:

> How should it [descriptive metaphysics] differ from what is called philosophical, or logical or conceptual analysis? It does not differ in kind of intention, but only in scope and generality. Aiming to lay bare the most general features of our conceptual structure, it can take far less for granted than a more limited and partial conceptual inquiry. (Strawson, 1959, p. 9)

Most fundamentally, descriptive metaphysicians do not only want to illuminate the demarcation criteria we use to apply the concept under consideration, they also want to clarify the meaning of the concept. In other words, descriptive metaphysics is also interested in the *ontological status* of the instances that fall under the concept, not merely in how we distinguish between instances that fall and instances that do not fall under the concept.

Accordingly, philosophers of art committed to this approach aim to clarify the folk ontology of art, that is, what people believe to be the actual structure of the phenomenon of art. As D'Oro suggests, these philosophers of art do not believe that revisionary metaphysical enquiry is out of their reach, rather they argue that the correct theory of art must capture the view on the nature of art that is implicit in our artistic practices. The nature of art, then, *is* dependent on what we humans believe art to be. If a definition of art contradicts these beliefs, then it is false (cf. Thomasson, 2005).

Some descriptive metaphysicians of art maintain that the difference between the descriptive metaphysical and the descriptive conceptual approach is fundamental. Harold Osborne, for example, argues that confusion between the conceptual and the metaphysical question regarding the definition of art has generated a lot of 'futile discussion' (Osborne, 1981, p. 3). Osborne suggests that the conceptual question only examines 'our criteria for deciding whether something is or is not a work of art' (Osborne, 1981, p. 3) and is not a truly philosophical question, it is a factual question (Osborne, 1981, p. 5). The truly philosophical question, on the other hand, tries to establish what is meant by calling something a work of art. Thus, while both inquiries are 'conceptual' enquiries, the factual question gives us the *application conditions* for the concept, while philosophy is supposed to reveal the *meaning* of our concepts: what consequences do we attach to the fact that we call something a work of art? Dickie's institutional definition, in Osborne's view, does not answer the truly philosophical question, but the factual question. Definitions like Dickie's provide us with 'the factual material essential for reaching any fruitful conclusions in Philosophical Aesthetics'(Osborne, 1981, p. 5). In this way, Osborne makes a clear distinction between the descriptive conceptual approach of George Dickie and others and his descriptive metaphysical approach.

Revisionary Metaphysics

A philosopher doing revisionary metaphysics aims to investigate the 'actual structure of the world'. As Alvin Goldman clearly states:

> [revisionary metaphysics] tries to identify the real constituents of the world, the ones to which we ought to be ontologically committed, whether or not they coincide with our naive or commonsense conceptual scheme. (Goldman, 1987, p. 538)

Philosophers sympathetic to this approach often refer to this branch of metaphysics as 'genuine metaphysics' (Schwartz, 2012) or 'pure metaphysics' (Zangwill, 2001, p. 2). They argue that revisionary metaphysics constitutes the most fundamental kind of philosophical research. All other philosophical questions should be answered in light of this approach. In Michael Devitt's words:

> We should approach epistemology and semantics from a metaphysical perspective rather than vice versa; We should do this because we know much more about the way the world is than we do about how we know about, or refer to, that world. The epistemological turn in modern philosophy, and the linguistic turn in contemporary philosophy, were something of disasters in my view. (Devitt, 2010, p. 2)

Philosophers of art who are taking this approach try to reveal what phenomena actually are, independent of what people believe our concepts to entail. Such definitions are often called 'real' definitions. A real definition can help us determine what exists in the world, regardless how we label phenomena. Consequently, such definitions are true or false (Clowney, 2011, pp. 310-311). This approach does not involve clarifying *our* concepts or determining what we believe *our* concepts track, which is what, respectively, descriptive conceptual analysts and descriptive metaphysicians aim to do, nor is it changing our concepts for theoretical and practical purposes, which is what the pragmatic approach is after. These philosophers are not interested in how we distinguish between different phenomena in this world, but in how they should be distinguished given the actual structure of the world. Amie Thomasson has argued that this approach implies the 'discovery view'. It is the view that

> the world contains a broad range of fully determinate, mind-independent facts about which everyone may be ignorant or in error, but (some of) which the scientist seeks to discover by substantive empirical investigations. (Thomasson, 2005, p. 221)

A philosopher of art who takes the revisionary metaphysical approach wants to reveal the nature of art objects. First, then, it needs to be clear which objects are art objects. How can revisionary metaphysicians distinguish between art and non-art? Here, I want to draw a distinction between what I will call radical revisionary metaphysics and non-radical revisionary metaphysics. The radical interpretation of revisionary metaphysics entails that art and non-art *are* distinguished in the mind-independent reality. It is up to the philosopher to discover how nature makes these distinctions. By defining art, we are 'carving nature at its joints'. Correspondingly, philosophers of art formulate demarcation criteria for art based on the (empirical) discoveries regarding the mind-independent nature of art.

Virtually no philosopher of art adheres to radical revisionary metaphysics.[7] It is nonetheless worthwhile to elucidate this position, since philosophers of art opposed to the metaphysical approach to defining art often have this approach in mind.[8] Most philosophers of art, whether or not they are sympathetic to the revisionary

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[7] Correspondingly, in what follows, when I refer the revisionary metaphysicians, I refer to non-radical revisionary metaphysicians.

[8] Both Kathleen Stock and Aaron Meskin argue that no sense can be made of the revisionary metaphysical approach to defining art, since there is no distinction between art and non-art to be discovered in the mind-independent reality. Correspondingly, they have a very stringent view on what revisionary metaphysics entails. In the terminology used in this chapter: they assume that all revisionary metaphysics is radical revisionary metaphysics. See: (Meskin, 2008, p. 134; Stock, 2003, pp. 169-170).

metaphysical approach, seem to more or less agree with Stephen Davies when he argues that:

> It should be apparent that artworks do not as a class form a natural kind; neither does the concept result from an attempt to impose order upon some natural continuum. Rather, the classification of things as artworks would seem to reflect a need or concern that we have. (S. Davies, 1991, p. 37)[9]

It is important to point out that the impossibility of deriving clear demarcation criteria from the world does not necessarily rule out the viability of revisionary metaphysical investigation into art phenomena in general. Critics of the revisionary metaphysical approach have rightly pointed out that a metaphysician needs to know which objects are art before she can investigate the nature of these objects (Meskin, 2008, p. 134). Nonetheless, revisionary metaphysicians do not need to presuppose that clear demarcation criteria can be found in the world, i.e. they can consent to the view that nature cannot be straightforwardly carved at its joints and that it is initially us humans who are making the relevant distinctions. Revisionary metaphysicians can agree with P.D. Magnus, when he argues that:

> The problem is not that there are no rewarding places to cut, but that there are too many. There are so many joints in the world that we could not possibly carve it up along all of them. This might be a cause for nominalism or despair but it need not be. The divisions we find might be real features of the world, even if they are more numerous than those split by the butcher. [...] No single enquiry can make all the right cuts. Rather, different enquiries require cutting along different joints. (Magnus, 2012, p. 1)

There are several theoretical options for the revisionary metaphysician. I explain two options. Firstly, revisionary metaphysicians can start from paradigmatic examples of the concept under consideration and try to reveal the nature of these instances. It is then assumed that there is large agreement on which instances are paradigmatic and there is a principled way in which essential features of these paradigms can be distinguished from non-essential features. Secondly, philosophers can start from a normative conceptual analysis of art. In this case, they start from artefacts we should see as art. Adherents of this approach often presuppose that there is insufficient

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[9] It should be noted that here Stephen Davies seems to refer to a very restricted notion of natural kinds, one that virtually only includes biological species. It has been suggested that the natural kind model can also be applied to social kinds. It is then argued that our categorization of an item as a certain social kind is in relevant ways independent of our conventions and largely dependent on the causal structure of the world. See for example: (Boyd, 1991).

agreement on which instances are paradigmatic artworks and on the application of the concept of art in general.

Since revisionary metaphysicians do not need to presuppose that nature gives us clear demarcation criteria for art, what distinguishes them from descriptive metaphysicians? Unlike descriptive metaphysicians, revisionary metaphysicians do not assume that demarcation criteria are fixed by conceptual analysis, rather demarcation criteria can and should be adjusted afterwards based on findings regarding the nature of art. In correspondence with Devitt's claims above, the metaphysical revisionist argues that our concepts of art should be revised in order to match with the actual structure of the phenomenon of art. Consider, for example, the following quote by Nick Zangwill:

> We are interested in objects, not concepts—the world, not words. We are doing metaphysics, not linguistic or conceptual analysis. [...] If we need to refashion concepts in order to understand things, then so be it. We want to understand the nature of a range of things, not gaze at our own conceptual navels. (Zangwill, 2002, p. 116)

In debates regarding the definition of art, the distinction between revisionary and descriptive metaphysics is often referred to as the distinction between real and nominal essence. Revisionary metaphysicians aim to discover the real essence of art, while descriptive metaphysicians aim to clarify art's nominal essence. If something has a real essence, then this essence exists in the world and can only be discovered a posteriori. However, if something has a nominal essence, its essence is merely the essence of our concept for it (see: S. Davies, 2003; Stecker, 2000, p. 59). Trying to illuminate the nominal essence of a phenomenon entails examining our conceptual scheme, while trying to discover the real essence of a phenomenon entails investigating what exists in the world.

The Impossibility and Futility of Defining Art

How do these different approaches relate to the criticisms that have been levelled against the project of defining art, namely that it is both impossible and futile to define art?

When it is argued that art cannot be defined since art has no nature independent from our categorizations of and thoughts about art, then it is claimed that the *revisionary metaphysical approach* is impossible. Any attempt at clarifying the real nature of art is consequently also futile: such a definition can only be pure speculation.

When critics of the project of defining art argue that the project is impossible because there is too much disagreement regarding the application of the concept and/or because art is structurally a vague concept, then these critics have the *descriptive approaches* (both conceptual and metaphysical) in mind. As seen above, both descriptive

approaches necessarily presuppose large agreement over the extension of art. Moreover, descriptive definitions of art assume that the concept of art has a classical structure, i.e., the concept can be clarified in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions.

The *normative conceptual approach* also can be rejected on account of impossibility and futility. Normative philosophers of art revise or regulate our usage of the concept of art with certain goals or purposes in mind. One could maintain that it is impossible to provide a solid justification for changing our concepts, given that it is impossible to defend the legitimacy of proposed goals in a non-question-begging fashion. A damaging kind of infinite regress might seem unavoidable: the proposed revisions need to be justified by providing goals, however, these goals themselves are also in need of further justification, and so on. Therefore, critics of this approach could assert that it is futile to suggest how we should use the concept of art.

Caveat: Descriptive and Normative Definitions of Art versus Descriptive and Evaluative Uses of Art

Before clarifying recent work on definitions of art in light of these four approaches, it is important to make sure that the distinction between the descriptive and the normative approach to defining the concept of art is not confused with the distinction between the descriptive[10] and the evaluative use or 'sense' of the concept of art. The latter distinction revolves around the question whether or not our classificatory practice is or should be essentially descriptive or evaluative. If our classificatory practice is considered to be descriptive, then artefacts with inferior artistic value, that is, 'very bad art', can be art. If our classificatory practice is considered to be evaluative, then the concept of art excludes very bad art. The former distinction, however, revolves around the question whether a definition of art should conform to and systematize our classificatory practice or whether it should revise our classificatory practice. Let me clarify these distinctions even further in order to avoid confusion.

The descriptive use of art entails that the evaluation of works of art takes place only *after* the artefacts under consideration have been classified as art. When the concept of art is used in a descriptive way, judgments regarding the artistic value of an artefact do not influence the classification of the artefact as either art or non-art. It follows that

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[10] The 'descriptive' sense of art is often referred to as the 'classificatory' sense of art. I think this terminology is confusing, since it urges us to make claims like: our classificatory practice is classificatory. Classification can either be descriptive or evaluative. Therefore, I stick to the terminology used by Stephen Davies in his *Definitions of Art* (1991).

artefacts with virtually no artistic value can be classified as art. The evaluative use of the concept of art, on the other hand, entails that 'the act of classification is itself evaluative', correspondingly, '[t]here is a threshold of merit, where merit is measured in terms of the efficiency of a piece in promoting the point of art, which a work must meet before it qualifies as an artwork' (S. Davies, 1991, p. 42). In this view, there is no such thing as 'very bad art'.

Most contemporary philosophers of art argue that a definition should clarify the descriptive use of the concept of art; the concept should allow for very bad art. It is important to note, however, that engagement in descriptive conceptual analysis does not necessarily imply engagement in the clarification of the descriptive use of the concept of art. A descriptive conceptual analyst can argue that our classificatory practice does not allow for very bad art, and that, therefore, a descriptive conceptual analysis should clarify the evaluative sense of art. Berys Gaut, for example, argues that:

> [...] the assumption that there are two senses of "art" is badly grounded. [...] the mere fact that we can call some art good, and some bad, does not show that there is a distinct, classificatory [Gaut refers to what S. Davies calls 'descriptive'] sense of "art". We can thus hold that the only notion of "art" is an evaluative one. The cluster theory is consistent with this, since the cluster of properties relevant to establishing something as art includes evaluative properties [...] For instance, an artwork can be bad, but still be art, since it possesses the other criteria relevant to establishing whether it is an artwork. But the notion of art is evaluative, since the question of whether these good-making features are possessed is always relevant to the question of whether something is art. (Gaut, 2000, p. 39)

Likewise, a philosopher who wants to advance a normative definition of art, that is, a definition that establishes how the concept of art should be used, can also put forward a concept of art that allows for very bad art. Put differently, a philosopher can urge that it is more *useful* to employ a concept of art that allows for very bad art. For example, one can argue that, if someone intended to make art, however bad the results, we should take her activities seriously and appreciate her endeavours as art, whether or not people generally accord art status to these endeavours.[11]

In summary, it should be clear that the descriptive usage of art is not necessarily linked with the descriptive approach to defining art, nor is the evaluative usage of art necessarily linked with the normative or revisionary approach. Both approaches ask

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[11] Jerrold Levinson argues for such a view (Levinson, 1993, pp. 414-415). Although Levinson claims he is engaged in a descriptive project, I believe here, at least, he is making recommendations on how to use the concept, rather than clarifying our informed usage of the concept. This idea will be further developed in the second chapter of this dissertation, 'The Role of Intuitions in the Philosophy of Art'.

different questions regarding the usage or sense of art. The descriptivist wonders whether our classificatory practice allows or does not allow for very bad art, while the normative philosopher questions whether or not it is *more useful* (cf. pragmatic analysis) or *more truthful* (cf. revisionary metaphysics) to have a concept of art that allows for very bad art.

In the next section, it will be examined which approach to the project of defining art philosophers of art are engaged in.

0.3 Metaphilosophical Views Underlying Definitions of Art

In this section, I focus on the self-image of philosophers of art: which project do they believe to be engaged in? First, I will sketch the evolutions in their self-image during the 20th century. Then, I will show that most philosophers explicitly adhere to the descriptive conceptual approach. Other approaches, however, also have some adherents.

Evolution in Metaphilosophical Commitments in the Project of Defining Art

It is widely accepted that the aims and scope of the definitional project were drastically altered during the 20th century. Roughly two far-reaching changes occurred. Firstly, there purportedly has been a move in subject-matter from the *nature* of art to the *concept* of art. The early 20th century theories, i.e. the theories that came before the anti-essentialist phase, wanted to uncover the real essence of art, rather than the concept of art: they wanted to clarify what art is, not how the concept of art is used. In other words, the project of defining art was largely seen as a revisionary metaphysical project. Morris Weitz forcefully argued against this approach:

> The problem with which we must begin is not "What is art?," but "What sort of concept is 'art'?" Indeed, the root problem of philosophy itself is to explain the relation between the employment of certain kinds of concepts and the conditions under which they can be correctly applied. [...] Thus, in aesthetics, our first problem is the elucidation of the actual employment of the concept of art, to give a logical description of the actual functioning of the concept, including a description of the conditions under which we correctly use it or its correlates. (Weitz, 1956, p. 30)

Most subsequent philosophers of art seem to have taken this point seriously and have tried to give necessary and sufficient conditions for the application of the *concept* of art; their focus was on how the concept of art is used, not on what art is.

The second change, a change that is related, but clearly distinct from the first one, consists in a move from a normative to a descriptive analysis of art. The earlier theories arguably did not bother with how people in general classified artefacts as art: they did not aim at clarifying what was standardly seen as art. As revisionary metaphysicians, philosophers of art revealed the nature of art and the way in which people used to concept of art had to be changed accordingly: if people categorize art in a different way than the theory predicts, then people should alter the way they categorize art, yet, the theory need not be altered (Pignocchi, 2012, p. 2). Morris Weitz has urged us to see these theories as normative theories: they tell us what art should be, not what we believe art to be. Post-Weitzian proposals, on the other hand, do not aim to tell us how the concept of art should be used, but how the concept of art is used. W.B. Gallie has giving a very clear exposition of the descriptive conceptual approach to the definition of art:

> Its starting-point is the long-recognised truth that philosophy is concerned with the elucidation of meanings not with the discovery of new facts. [...] The solution of any philosophical problem therefore, lies in the recognition of how certain words are properly used, i.e. the answer is always already there *in the words as properly used*. Any attempt to go 'beyond' or 'behind' these uses is to be abjured. To seek to explain or justify what we ordinarily (and properly) say – save by comparing and contrasting it with other things we ordinarily say in similar or relevantly connected contexts – betrays a fundamental misconception of what philosophy as opposed to other more positive or creative forms of enquiry, can do. (Gallie, 1956, p. 98)

Here, Gallie argues that recent definitions of art do not take the revisionary metaphysical approach, that is, they are not concerned with the discovery of new facts, rather they take the conceptual approach. Moreover, a definition does not justify ordinary usage, and, as such, there is no place for normative claims. This does not mean that descriptive conceptual analysts try to capture all possible usages of the concept of art. As can be seen in the quote above, Gallie talks about 'proper' usage, and, in a similar vein, Carroll talks about 'correct' usage (Carroll, 1999, p. 11). Conceptual analysts usually try to capture concepts as they are used by competent users of the concept. Competent users of a concept are well-informed about the phenomenon under consideration, unbiased and calm.[12] By clarifying the usage of competent users, conceptual analysts can

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[12] There is a clear parallel with methods used in moral philosophy: it has been argued that in order to formulate moral theories, people's moral judgments are only taken into account insofar as they are made

argue that certain folk or uninformed categorizations are false. What they are not committed to is to change the way competent users use the concept of art.[13] Let us now turn to the self-image of contemporary philosophers of art.

The Dominant Approach: Descriptive Conceptual Analysis

Gallie's quote above dates from 1956, yet, it quite adequately captures the self-image of most post-Weitzian philosophers of art. It is very much in line with Noël Carroll's reflections on the aims and methods of the project of defining art. In his view, philosophers of art try to determine the correct application conditions of our classificatory category 'art'. According to Carroll, this is done:

> by reflecting upon how we apply the concept of art, testing it intellectually against what we believe to be established applications of the concept, and even using thought-experiments (such as imagined examples) to see whether proposed reconstructions of the category of art mesh with our considered intuitions. (Carroll, 1999, pp. 11-12)

Similarly, Robert Stecker says that the goal of the definitional project is 'normally to find a principle for classifying all artwork together while distinguishing them from all nonartworks.' (Stecker 2010 95). Elsewhere, he notes that 'the point of that project has long been to articulate the conditions under which we classify items as art' (Stecker, 2000, p. 56). Other illustrations of this view of the project of defining art are abundant. Berys Gaut is interested in formulating criteria that are sufficient, yet not necessary, for the application of the concept of art (Gaut, 2000, pp. 26-27). Richard Kamber states that '[t]he stock challenge to a theory or definition of art is that it includes things that are not artworks or excludes things that are' (Kamber, 2011, p. 197). Stephen Davies argues that 'a definition must be exhaustive of all art and exclusive of all that is not art' (S. Davies, 2006, p. 45). Another main figure within the debate, Jerrold Levinson, also explicitly adheres to the descriptive conceptual approach, as can be seen in the following quote: 'What I have tried to *locate* [...] is the most general *concept* of art that we have now' [emphasis added] (Levinson, 1993, p. 411).

Critics of descriptive conceptual analysis also assume that most philosophers of art adhere to this approach. Daniel Kaufman, for example, writes: '[b]y the 'traditional

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under 'favourable conditions'. This entails that the person making the judgment is calm and has adequate information about cases being judged. See: (Daniels, 1979, p. 258; Rawls, 1973, pp. 47-48).

[13] Confer the difference between folk intuitions and expert intuitions. Most philosophers of art are interested in the latter, not the former. For work on this distinction, see: (Livengood, Sytsma, Feltz, Scheines, & Machery, 2012; Weinberg, Gonnerman, Buckner, & Alexander, 2012).

project of defining art', I mean the practice of compiling lists of characteristics, which all and only artworks are alleged to have; of identifying the necessary and sufficient conditions which must be met, if something is to fall within the extension of 'art'' (Kaufman, 2007, p. 280). Nick Zangwill, clearly unsympathetic to this approach to defining art, also assumes that most philosophers of art are aiming to analyze the *concept* of art in a *descriptive* way:

> Many aestheticians take extensional adequacy to be everything. That is, they have gone in search of a theory of art which classified as art all or most of the things that we intuitively count as art, and which excludes all or most of the things that we intuitively do not count as art. Aesthetics is supposed to make progress by thesis and counterexample. Aestheticians conjecture theories with the aspiration that they apply to most or all of the cases that we intuitively call 'art' and they hope that they fail to apply to most or all of the cases from which we intuitively withhold the term 'art'. Other mean-spirited aestheticians then come along and try to refute such theories by offering counterexamples which the theory fails to fit. If the counterexamples are genuine and significant, then the original theory must be abandoned or modified. This is how the game has been played. (Zangwill, 1995, p. 533)

Joseph Margolis likewise claims that the post-Weitzian philosophers of art have wrongly focused on the concept of art and on extensional adequacy. Margolis contends that Weitz has completely misunderstood Wittgenstein and 'that he has somehow managed to mislead the entire labour of analytic aesthetics thereby: witness the work of Davies and Carroll and of more recent discussants who have followed the official verdicts to the letter.' (Margolis, 2010, p. 218). This has, according to Margolis, yielded 'rather meager gains' (Margolis, 2010, p. 215).

Peg Zeglin Brand, in an equally critical fashion, holds that recent definitions of art try to capture the distinction between art and non-art as it is made in 'the established practices (or conventions) of an ongoing art tradition' by observing these practices 'in a neutral, objective way'. She critically adds that '[w]hat is really captured, however, is the history of "art" in (only) the Western world, as perceived by certain people, as they have been privileged to see it and promote it to others.' (Brand, 2000, p. 177) In other words, philosophers of art try to describe the concept of art as it is used in our artistic practices, yet, in doing so, they endorse a very biased and parochial view on what art is.

These reflections of philosophers of art make clear that both supporters and critics of descriptive conceptual analysis with regard to the project of defining art presuppose that this approach is predominant within the field. However, this consensus is not as general as portrayed above. A substantial amount of philosophers of art see themselves as being engaged in other approach to the definition.

Exceptions

It may come as no surprise that quite a few philosophers of art proposed definitions of art that do not fit the 'common view' on the project of defining art as described above. Firstly, some philosophers still are committed to revisionary metaphysics. Arthur Danto, a main figure within the field, was not solely interested in the extension of art; he also aimed to clarify the nature of art. This is very clear when Danto argues that history made possible 'the disclosure or discovery of its [art's] true philosophical nature' (Danto, 1992, p. 6). The notion of discovery is important here. A conceptual analyst makes explicit what we implicitly already know. The metaphysician, however, discovers the essence or the nature of the phenomenon under consideration. Consider also the following quote:

> As an essentialist in philosophy, I am committed to the view that art is eternally the same – that there are conditions necessary and sufficient for something to be an artwork, regardless of time and place. [...] But as an historicist I am also committed to the view that what is a work of art at one time cannot be one at another, and in particular that there is a history, enacted through the history of art, in which the essence of art – the necessary and sufficient conditions – are painfully brought to consciousness (Danto, 1997, p. 95).

Danto is not referring to some kind of nominal essence, but, rather, he is referring to art's real essence. This essence, unlike nominal essences, is not revealed by testing our intuitions on what is art or by how the concept of art is used in the field of the arts. Our intuitions and our practices may be wildly mistaken about 'art's philosophical structure'. For example, Danto maintains that it was only once Picasso 'discovered' that certain African artefacts were 'in fact' works of art, that people began to consider them as art. Yet, these artefacts, so Danto argues, 'were art all along' (Danto, 1992, p. 94). Thus, people were wrong about the art status of these artefacts before. Here, Danto is interested in what art is in the world and not in what people believe art to be. Contrary to what descriptivists argue, Danto's view implies that people can be fundamentally mistaken about the nature of art. It is important to note, however, that Danto cannot simply be categorized as a revisionary metaphysician. He was also extremely concerned about being able to capture the extension of art, and, more specifically, being able to account for avant-garde art.

Danto is not the only exception to the general picture. James C. Anderson also explicitly states that his project is metaphysical in nature: 'I am interested in trying to find out what a work of art *is* and what it is *essentially*' (Anderson, 2000, p. 68). Correspondingly, he argues that 'the job of a definition of art is not to *identify and determine* whether every object is or is not a work of art. The job is to explain what it is to be a work of art' (Anderson, 2000, p. 82). Nick Zangwill is also a noteworthy exception.

As has been shown above, Zangwill believes the descriptive conceptual approach to be deeply misguided:

> If philosophers do the philosophy of X (mind, mathematics, science, art), it is because they are interested in the phenomenon itself, not in words or concepts. We want to know what X is, not what the word cf. concept 'X' means. We are interested in something more like a 'real' definition. (Zangwill, 1995, p. 535)

A definition or account of art must not merely capture the extension of art, rather, it must explain why we think art is worthwhile. His aesthetic theory of art, then, must be seen and evaluated in this light.

James O. Young defends a normative approach to defining art. While some artefacts are generally accepted as art, 'there are reasons why some works should not be accepted as artworks' (Young, 1997, p. 57). Young claims that we should define art responsibly and that the artworld should only attribute art status to works that perform a valuable artistic function. Joseph Margolis, although in a starkly different vein, also defends a kind of normative approach to the definition of art. In defining art, so he argues, we are not constrained by the structure of the concept or by how the concept is generally used. We can define art for 'a special purpose' and in this case,

> the appropriate logical constraints on definition we recommend are no more than a function of the nature of the claims being advanced. There are no a priori requirements on definition, except what we choose to confer. (Margolis, 2010, p. 222)

Margolis believes that a satisfactory descriptive conceptual analysis of art is not forthcoming. However, the failure of the descriptive conceptual approach does not discredit the project of defining art in general. In Margolis' view, the normative approach is a viable approach, since there are no stringent descriptive evaluation criteria for normative definitions.

As noted above, Harold Osborne adheres to the descriptive metaphysical approach to defining art: a definition should elucidate the meaning of art, not merely the demarcation criteria we use to separate art from non-art (Osborne, 1981).

In what follows, I will systematically investigate philosophers' explicit metaphilosophical commitments (their self-image) and the metaphilosophical commitments underlying their definitions of art (their practice). Part I will concern the methods philosophers use to define art.

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Part I: Methods

Part I of this doctoral dissertation concerns the methods that are used to carry out the project of defining art. My focus will be on the role of intuitions in this project.

In recent years, there has been a considerable amount of metaphilosophical debate regarding the role of intuitions in philosophical practice. Two questions are central: (1) should intuitions be treated as grounding evidence for philosophical theories?; (2) do philosophers treat intuitions as grounding evidence for philosophical theories? Broadly speaking, there are three positions in the debate. Firstly, there are philosophers who defend the evidential status of intuitions in philosophy (see for example Bealer, 1998; Goldman, 2007; Sosa, 2007). These philosophers argue that intuitions have an evidential value analogous to the evidential value of perceptions and memories. Therefore, it is right for philosophers to appeal to intuitions as evidence. Given favourable conditions, that is, the one who intuits is well-informed about the case under consideration, is unbiased and in a calm mental state, intuitions provide evidence for philosophical theories. Secondly, there are philosophers who argue that while philosophers appeal to intuitions as evidence for their philosophical theories, they should not do this (see for example Cummins, 1998; Machery, Mallon, Nichols, & Stich, 2004; Stich, 1998; Weinberg, Nichols, & Stich, 2008). Philosophical intuitions are not evidential, since they are biased, not shared and vary amongst different cultures. A third group of philosophers denies the assumption underlying the two former positions, namely, that philosophers present intuitions as evidence for their philosophical theories (Cappelen, 2012; Deutsch, 2010; Earlenbaugh & Molyneux, 2009). As Earlenbaugh and Molyneux clarify:

> Our position [...] falls outside the traditional dialectic, where the two sides disagree over whether intuitions should play the evidential-role that they do. We deny the presupposition: We say that whether or not they should, they do not. (Earlenbaugh & Molyneux, 2009, p. 90)

In this part, I address the two central questions for the philosophy of art. Chapter 1, entitled 'Experimental Philosophy and Intuitions on What is Art', tackles the question whether or not intuitions on what is art should be treated as evidence for definitions of

art. Experimental philosophers have been the most ardent critics of the evidential use of intuitions. The chapter examines to what extent experimental criticisms can be applied to the project of defining art. Chapter 2, entitled 'The Role of Intuitions in the Philosophy of Art', investigates whether or not intuitions on what is art are used as evidence for definitions of art.

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Chapter 1
Experimental Philosophy and Intuitions On What Is Art.[1]

It is generally, but not universally, agreed upon that philosophers of art rely on their intuitions to justify or criticize proposed definitions of art. Experimental philosophers, however, have questioned the role of intuition in philosophy, since empirical research shows that philosophers' intuitions are neither widely shared nor reliable sources of justification. This chapter aims to apply these experimental challenges to the project of defining art. It will be demonstrated that while experimentalists are right in claiming that philosophers' intuitions cannot be used as evidential grounds for the definition of art, experimental research itself cannot provide justification for definitions of art.

Introduction

Experimental philosophers, unlike so-called armchair philosophers, maintain that philosophical questions can be clarified through experimental research, most predominantly, by surveying people's intuitions regarding philosophically interesting concepts. Recently, it has been argued that experimental philosophy might prove to be valuable for the project of defining art (Kamber, 2011), since philosophers of art

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seemingly try to define the concept of art by testing their intuitions on what falls under the concept.[2] This chapter wants to examine the role intuitions should play in the project of defining art and the relevance of experimental philosophy for this project. I aim to answer the following questions: can intuitions provide us with knowledge about the concept of art and can experimental research positively contribute to the project of defining art? These two theses will be defended:

(1)   Intuitions should not be used as evidence in the project of defining art, since they are neither shared nor unbiased.

(2)   Experimental philosophy cannot provide justification for definitions of art.

After clarifying the aims and scope of experimental philosophy in Section 1, Section 2 will show that the project of defining art is a right target for experimental philosophy, since most philosophers of art assume that intuitions are used as evidence for their definitions of art. Section 3 will examine what role experimental research on intuitions can play in the project of defining art. It will be shown that 'the experimental philosophy of art' is caught in a double bind: either experimental philosophers fall in the same trap as armchair philosophers and illegitimately use intuitions as evidence for philosophical theories or experimental philosophers deny intuitions this evidential status and their findings seemingly have not much to contribute to philosophical research. In Section 4, I will suggest what kind of roles experimental philosophy can play in the project of defining art.

1.1   Experimental Philosophy: Aims and Scope

Experimental philosophy is a philosophical movement that aims to criticize and improve or even abolish so-called armchair philosophy. Armchair philosophy refers to any a priori philosophical investigation. The often implicit idea behind the armchair methodology is that philosophers cannot and need not do experiments, or conduct surveys, to determine, for instance, what is moral, or what is knowledge. Rather, they consult their own intuitions on their subject matter to formulate and verify

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[2] Experimental philosophy has tackled other topics within the philosophy of art, most notably the standard of taste. The criticisms that will be formulated here do not necessarily apply to these investigations, since different methods are used within the debate on the standard of taste. For examples of such empirical investigations, see: (Cutting, 2007; Meskin, Phelan, Moore, & Kieran, 2013).

philosophical theories. Experimental philosophers, on the other hand, argue that using philosophers' intuitions as evidence in philosophy is unjustified, since experimental research has revealed that these intuitions do not always match with folk intuitions, are biased, unstable, and show (cultural) variability.

Experimental philosophy appears to be especially relevant in the domain of conceptual analysis, since there, reliance on intuitions seems to be ubiquitous. It is widely accepted that conceptual analysis is done by testing one's intuitions on what falls under the concept under consideration. This methodology implies that there is a shared concept that is implicitly known to us and, correspondingly, that we all have the same or highly similar intuitions regarding the concept's extension. Our intuitions, delivered by this implicit knowledge, enable us to formulate an analysis of the concept, in other words, to make the implicit knowledge explicit (Brown, 1999, p. 33). Thus, most conceptual analysts try to formulate the conditions under which a concept is commonly applied. Depending on the context, 'commonly applied' can refer to folk as well as expert application. For example, when philosophers are analyzing a concept within physics, in many cases they will be interested in physicists' intuitions rather than lay intuitions. Most practitioners of conceptual analysis underwrite descriptivism, not revisionism: they want to reveal how concepts are used, not how concepts should be used.[3] They aim to provide a descriptive analysis of philosophically interesting concepts such as justice, free will, knowledge and causation, through consulting their own intuitions. It is presupposed that intuition, like perception and memory, is a valuable, although not infallible, provider of knowledge (Sosa, 2007), in other words, they provide us with highly reliable evidence: when somebody reports she saw a bus driving by a couple of minutes ago, one will take this statement as evidence for the reported fact, provided the reporter does not suffer from perceptual impairments or was not lying, distracted or confused. Correspondingly, so most defenders of armchair philosophy maintain, when a philosopher intuits that an action is just, then this is reliable evidence for the fact that the action is generally accepted as just. Experimental philosophers, on the other hand, question the evidential value of intuitions: they doubt that philosophers' intuitions can be used to reveal the established application of a concept.

What do experimental philosophers hope to achieve with their experimental research on intuitions? Some maintain that experimentalists' data will help to confirm or disconfirm philosophers' hypotheses (Kamber, 2011, p. 206). This branch of experimental philosophy is adequately named 'Experimental Analysis' since its aims are moderate and similar to the aims of conceptual analysis (Nadelhoffer & Nahmias, 2007,

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[3] For a clear exposition on the distinction between descriptive and revisionist conceptual analysis see: (De Vreese & Weber, 2008).

p. 126). It represents the positive program of experimental philosophy. Usually, moderate experimentalists survey laypersons' intuitions and point out where these vary from those reported by philosophers. Philosophical intuitions, it is assumed then, do not represent the pre-theoretical intuitions of the community, whether this entails a folk or an expert community. Pre-theoretical intuitions, so it is argued, are needed in order to evaluate philosophical theories. Experimental analysis is continuous with conceptual analysis: moderate experimental philosophers aim to improve, not put an end to conceptual analysis. Defenders of the positive program propose that philosophers should 'embrace experimental methods as one more tool in the philosopher's toolbox' (Vaidya, 2012, p. 132).

Not all experimental philosophers believe that armchair philosophy can simply be reinforced by the findings of experimental philosophy. The negative program of experimental philosophy offers the so-called 'restrictionist challenge': they aim to radically revise or even abandon current armchair philosophical practices (Weinberg, Crowley, Gonnerman, Vandewalker, & Swain, 2012, p. 257). They do not only hold that philosophers' intuitions do not coincide with folk intuitions, they also provide evidence against the suggestion that we all share similar intuitions regarding philosophically interesting concepts (Gasparatou, 2010, p. 38). Since intuitions are not shared, using intuitions to justify philosophical theories equals unjustifiably privileging one's own intuitions over those of others (Nadelhoffer & Nahmias, 2007, p. 128).

Armchair philosophers have responded to this challenge by claiming that philosophers' intuitions are more reliable than folk intuitions (Kauppinen, 2007, p. 101) and some have tried to verify this claim by empirical research (Livengood, Sytsma, Feltz, Scheines, & Machery, 2012). This response is dubbed the 'expert-defence'. Experimental research has indicated that philosophers are alike in being more *reflective* than non-philosophers (Livengood et al., 2012, p. 32). Therefore, philosophers' intuitions *are* more reliable than folk intuitions; philosophers are 'expert-intuiters'. Against the expert-defence, restrictionists have formulated several counterarguments. To begin with, it is easily ascertained that philosophers' intuitions vary even among peers. How can it be decided which intuitions are correct when intuitions conflict among 'expert-intuiters'? It could be argued that philosophers can rely on confirmed theories in order to do this. However, restrictionists argue that there are no well-established, consensus theories available in philosophy (Weinberg, Gonnerman, Buckner, & Alexander, 2012, p. 63). Moreover, research has established that persons more inclined towards reflection have a tendency to impose 'coherent arbitrariness' on their judgments: they render later judgments consistent with earlier ones (Weinberg, Gonnerman, et al., 2012, p. 57). In other words, it is suggested that philosophical thinking is subject to confirmation bias: philosophers treat evidence in favour of and against the theories they accept differently (Nanay, 2013, p. 356). This explains why philosophers' judgments are more stable, yet not untouched by philosophically-irrelevant factors. In short, the restrictionist

challenge, if the challenge is valid, cannot be met without departing from the intuition-based methodology. Now, let us turn to the role intuitions play in definitions of art and see whether experimentalists' attacks are relevant in this field.

1.2   Intuitions and the Definition of Art

Although many philosophers of art remain silent about their methods and aims, most definitions of art are considered to be conceptual analyses of art. A conceptual analysis of art aims to state the conditions under which the concept art is applied. Most definitions of art aim to be descriptive: they aim to clarify the concept of art as it is used. Correspondingly, it is argued that these definitions need to square with people's intuitions: if certain consequences of a proposed definition are counterintuitive, then the definition needs to be altered.[4] It should be noted that virtually all philosophers of art aim to accommodate the intuitions of competent users of the concept of art, such as art professionals and art lovers, not lay people's intuitions. As Richard Kamber rightly points out, although most philosophers do not elaborate much on the methods they use to define art, they seem to endorse this intuition-based methodology. As such, defining art is rightly seen as an 'armchair affair'. Noël Carroll does elaborate on methodology and claims that analyzing the concept of art is not an empirical question. Subsequently, the question is not settled by 'taking polls, running experiments, or making observations', but rather by reflecting on how we apply the concept of art and by seeing whether our philosophical theories mesh with our considered intuitions. He even calls intuitions 'mother's milk to analytic philosophers' (Carroll, 1999, pp. 11-12).

The following examples substantiate the claim that philosophers of art mostly are in agreement with Carroll and believe they invoke intuitions as evidential base for the truth or falsity of their definitions or theories of art. It is striking that philosophers appeal to intuitions in order to defend clearly conflicting definitions of art: anti-essentialist, procedural and aesthetic accounts of art are all justified by appeal to intuitions.

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[4] Nonetheless, it should be pointed out that there are openly normative definitions of art, such as Bell's and Collingwood's definitions, and more recently, Zangwill's aesthetic theory of art. These philosophers do not aim to account for intuitions: when intuitions conflict with their theories, intuitions are left aside. Alessandro Pignocchi usefully distinguishes between descriptive and normative definitions of art. See: (Pignocchi, 2012, p. 2).

Berys Gaut is explicit about his metaphilosophical commitments and states which requirements a theory of art must meet in order to be adequate. One of the main requirements is 'adequacy to intuition'. This means that a theory or definition of art '[...] must agree with our intuitions about what we would say about actual and counterfactual cases: if the account claims that some object satisfies the concept, but it intuitively doesn't (or vice versa), then that is one strike against the account' (Gaut, 2000, p. 30). In a similar vein, Stephen Davies states that important debates regarding the definition of art can only be settled by a theory that coheres 'with a wide spread of intuitions about the terms in which art is discussed and interpreted' (S. Davies, 1991, p. 47). Gary Iseminger provides us with another good example of how intuitions are assumed to have evidential status in the philosophy of art. He states that philosophical proposals in general explain certain intuitions on the philosophical topic under consideration. Theories that conflict with these intuitions lose credibility. Iseminger himself takes great pains to show that his aesthetic definition accounts for important intuitions about art (Iseminger, 2004, pp. 9-11).[5]

Most philosophers of art, like Noël Carroll, defend this use of one's own intuitions by implicitly or explicitly invoking the expert-defence: we do not need folk intuitions to ground definitions of art, since philosophers' intuitions are better informed and less biased. However, this reply faces restrictionist objections that cannot be easily countered. Like within other fields, philosophers', i.e. expert-intuiters', intuitions often clash over what is art. Disagreements arise over hard or disputed cases, such as avant-garde art, culturally and historically remote artefacts, fashion and popular music. The art status of these artefacts is controversial. As restrictionists have argued, there is no easy answer to whose intuitions count or, in other words, how these identification problems are to be resolved. Philosophers of art cannot rely on well-established theories, since there are no such theories. There is heavy debate regarding virtually every theoretical framework for defining art; philosophers disagree over what kind of concept the concept of art is, what role intentions, history, institutions and aesthetic properties play in identifying arthood, and so on.[6]

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[5] More explicit reliance on intuitions can be found in: (Levinson, 1993; Longworth & Scarantino, 2010; Meskin, 2008; Stecker, 1997).

[6] Following examples illustrate some of these disagreements: Berys Gaut and Jerrold Levinson maintain that art is a vague concept, while Arthur Danto argues that the distinction between art and non-art is absolute (A. C. Danto, 1992, p. 110; Gaut, 2000; Levinson, 1993, p. 422). For aesthetic theorists like Nick Zangwill and Gary Iseminger, aesthetic properties are essential to arthood, while for Noël Carroll and Jerrold Levinson aesthetic properties are only historically, and thus contingently, important, but are not necessary conditions for arthood (Carroll, 2009; Iseminger, 2004; Levinson, 1990; Zangwill, 2007).

Then, how do philosophers address disputed cases? Rather than relying on a consensus theory, they render their identifications of disputed cases consistent with the theory they defend. The way in which disputed cases like avant-garde art and culturally and historically remote art are treated, illustrates this very well. For Jerrold Levinson, Noël Carroll and Arthur Danto, avant-garde artworks are seen as uncontested, and maybe even paradigmatic, artworks. Moreover, they argue that their theories are superior to other theories because they are able to account for avant-garde art. Conversely, for Nick Zangwill, Jerome Stolnitz, and others, avant-garde artworks are art to a lesser degree, second order art or even simply non-art. It is clear that intuitions diverge on avant-garde art and that the defended theory and the philosopher's intuitions are mutually related. The same goes for culturally and historically remote art. For Levinson, many of these items are not fully art, while for Denis Dutton, Julius Moravcsik and others, they are paradigmatic artworks. Again, the latter see it as an advantage of their theories that they include these artefacts in the domain of art, while Levinson sees it as an advantage of his definition that they come out as 'artful' (See Carroll, 1993; A. Danto, 1981; Dutton, 2006; Levinson, 1993; Moravcsik, 1993; Stolnitz, 1979; Zangwill, 2002). These examples show that philosophers' intuitions and preferred theory are mutually reinforcing. Nick Zangwill, for one, graciously acknowledges that philosophers of art's intuitions are corrupted by the theory they defend, whether they defend an institutional definition, like George Dickie, or an aesthetic theory, like Zangwill himself (Zangwill, 1995, p. 534). Moreover, confirmation bias is apparent in the fact that almost none of the leading figures within the debate on defining art, have substantially altered their definitions during their careers, although all of their proposed definitions have been met with serious criticisms.[7] Therefore, the restrictionist arguments against the use of intuitions in philosophy are equally applicable to the philosophy of art.

It is often argued, however, that these intuitions should be aligned with how the concept of art is used in artistic practice. David Davies has most ardently defended this position (D. Davies, 2004, 2009). Arguably, this is what many philosophers aim to do. They look at what is seen as art in the field of the arts to evaluate their intuitions. Nevertheless, the classificatory practice of members of the artworld is not uniform or consistent either. This is revealed when looking at how, for example, culturally remote art is treated in artistic practice: some remote artefacts are included in art museums, while others end up in archaeological museums; some art historians include these

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[7] Jerrold Levinson, for example, did not substantially alter his proposed definition in a time spam stretching from 1979 to 2002 (Levinson, 1979, 2002). The same tendency can be seen in the work of other main figures within the project of defining art such as George Dickie, Noël Carroll, Robert Stecker and Arthur Danto.

artefacts in their art histories, others willingly or unwillingly exclude them. Similar observations can be made regarding fashion, popular culture and folk arts. In other words, disagreements among philosophers of art are mirrored by disagreements among practitioners within the field of the arts. Since different practitioners attribute art status differently, they cannot provide an answer to the question which intuitions on what is art, need to be given priority.

To sum up, the project of defining art is a suitable target for the attacks of experimental philosophers. Correspondingly, experimental philosopher Richard Kamber is right when he argues that philosophers cannot simply presuppose the universality of their own intuitions and use these intuitions as evidence for their theories of art (Kamber, 2011). What remains to be seen is what experimental research on intuitions can positively contribute to the project of defining art.

1.3   The Experimental Philosophy of Art

In the following, I will evaluate the significance of the positive and the negative program of experimental philosophy for the project of defining art. First, I will focus on the positive program. Since Richard Kamber is the one who has done experimental research to evaluate definitions of art, his findings will be central. Thereafter, I will apply the restrictionist challenge to the positive program of the experimental philosophy of art and see whether their criticisms of the use of intuitions in philosophy are equally valid there.

Kamber performed several surveys to determine people's intuitions on what is art. His principle aim was 'to test the effectiveness of art theories in tracking the intuitions and judgments of art professionals and others about what is or is not art' (Kamber, 2011, p. 199). What is more, he suggests that disagreements between different definitions of art can be settled by means of experimental research. Accordingly, his project fits within the positive program of experimental philosophy. Kamber examined the criteria for arthood proposed by philosophers of art such as Clive Bell, Arthur Danto, Noël Carroll and Jerrold Levinson experimentally. The outcomes of his surveys show that definitions of art are not always good at tracking intuitions. It is noteworthy that Kamber included Danto and Bell. Both philosophers clearly do not intend to simply track intuitions on arthood, rather they want to determine the nature of art or how the concept of art should be applied. For this reason, as Kamber himself realizes, he cannot justifiably accuse Bell's and Danto's proposals of not accounting for intuitions. Nevertheless, as noted above, many philosophers of art, including Noël Carroll and Jerrold Levinson, do refer to intuitions as grounding evidence for the truth of their

theories. As such, they are committed to descriptivism. Consequently, these philosophers must account for intuitions. Philosophers should not use certain intuitions as evidential base and reject other intuitions because of the theory they are holding: this would render their philosophical practice methodologically unsound. A philosopher has to stick either to the descriptive level, in which case intuitions must be honoured, or to the normative level, in which case intuitions may be discarded. If the two levels are confused, then it is unclear whether a philosopher wants to clarify how the concept of art *is* used or how the concept of art *should* be used (cf. De Vreese & Weber, 2008). Therefore, Kamber rightly uses empirical data to *criticize* these descriptive proposals. The question that remains to be answered is how these data can help *verifying* definitions of art. In the following, the set-up and the results of Kamber's surveys will be discussed in more detail.

Since Kamber maintains that most competing definitions of art, like competing scientific theories, agree on 'the vast majority of cases to which they apply', he focuses on disputed cases (Kamber, 2011, p. 199).[8] Indeed, it would not be very useful to test our intuitions on the art status of, say, Da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*, Bach's *Cello Suites* or Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. Therefore, he chose to survey intuitions on artefacts that have a controversial art status. He rightly holds that philosophers of art need a method other than that given by their own theories to resolve these 'disputed cases'. How, then, can quarrels over the art status of disputed cases between competing theories be settled? Kamber suggests that experimental philosophy is needed in order to ground decisions on disputed cases (Kamber, 2011, pp. 205-206). However, his surveys show that folk as well as art professionals' intuitions conflict on cases that are also disputed cases within the philosophy of art, such as bridges, cars, amateur photographs, 'very bad art' and avant-garde art. This result is hardly surprising: this can also be concluded from studying existing definitions of art, looking at the artworld, or listening to people talk about art. The questions that remain unanswered are: which intuitions are to be disregarded and which are to be given centrality, and, how we can measure centrality and importance (Miller, 2000, p. 233). It is widely accepted, also among experimental philosophers, that information about the statistical distribution of intuitions does not automatically give us reason to accept or reject a particular philosophical view (Knobe & Nichols, 2008, p. 6). Nonetheless, Kamber suggests that these results *do* have a direct impact, as he maintains that experimental research is needed for the *resolution* of disputed cases (Kamber, 2011, p. 206).

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[8] On a side note, it should be pointed out that philosophers do *not* agree on the vast majority of cases, since there is disagreement over the art status of a broad collection of objects, such as culturally and historically remote artefacts, folk arts, popular music and avant-garde art.

Let us first have a look at some results of Kamber's surveys: 68 percent of all surveyed subjects (hereafter: ALL) and 73 percent of the surveyed art professionals (hereafter: AP) identified Duchamp's *Fountain* as art; 71 percent of ALL and 67 percent of AP identified a documentary photo as art; 55 percent of ALL and 47 percent of AP identified a conventional amateur picture of a bird as art; 70 percent of ALL and 71 percent of AP identified Homer's *Illiad* as art and 85 percent of ALL and 81 percent of AP identified a ceremonial mask from a primitive tribe in Patagonia as art. What can be concluded from these results, provided we can take them at face value?[9] Firstly, it is obvious that we cannot decide that the majority is right, since there is not always a substantial majority. Therefore, philosophers of art cannot simply use these empirical data to back up their theories. Take, for example, the bird picture, an amateur photo. Nick Zangwill would include amateur photos in the domain of art provided they are the product of aesthetic creation, while Arthur Danto and George Dickie would most likely exclude them, since amateur pictures mostly lack 'aboutness', a necessary criterion for arthood according to Danto, and institutional embeddedness, a necessary criterion according to Dickie (Zangwill, 1995, p. 534). Kamber's results show that the contested status of amateur photography in the philosophy of art is also apparent in judgments of the folk and art professionals, but these results cannot provide an answer to the question who is right. Even if there are rather substantial majorities, say starting from 70 to 75 percent, it does not seem legitimate for a philosopher with descriptive aims to simply discard the minority (Brunnander, 2011, p. 425). On the contrary, a descriptive analysis should account for the fact that intuitions diverge on the art status of these cases. An appeal to artistic practice will most likely not be of much help, since art professionals also disagree over the art status of these items. One can, again, argue that we can invoke a theory for distinguishing correct intuitions from incorrect ones. Still, as has been argued above, there are no substantial consensus theories that philosophers of art can rely on. Moreover, provided we could find a standard for distinguishing correct from incorrect intuitions, philosophers have no use for intuition anymore.[10] If there would be a well-established theory to distinguish correct intuitions on art identification from incorrect ones, then we could simply rely on this theory for art identification, and reference to intuitions would be futile.[11] Therefore, the restrictionist challenge is

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[9] It has been suggested that there are fundamental problems with these investigations, such as the unintended priming of subjects. Here, however, I have left out the most controversial examples, such as art made by animals and computer-generated Haiku poems.

[10] A similar argument can be found in (Cummins, 1998, pp. 117-118)].

[11] For example, if we accept Christy Mag Uidhir's Attempt Theory of Art, a theory that states that art is an intentional activity and that puts considerable constraints on theories and definitions of art (Mag Uidhir,

equally valid with regard to the positive program of experimental philosophy, while it is unclear what philosophical insights the positive program has to offer.

1.4   Philosophical Intuitions and the Positive Program

Let us return to the chapter's initial questions: can intuitions provide us with knowledge about the concept of art and can experimental research positively contribute to the project of defining art? The first question can be usefully rephrased as follows: should intuitions be seen as analogues to perception and memory, or rather as spontaneous judgments like hunches or gut feelings? In the former case, intuitions provide us with knowledge, in the latter case, they do not. My findings indicate that intuition does not function like perception or memory in knowledge acquisition in the way proponents of armchair philosophy claim. Armchair reflection as well as experimental research has revealed that disagreement over intuitions is much deeper and more fundamental than disagreement over perceptions. Under normal circumstances, competent language users will have similar perceptions and disagreement over perceptions can usually be resolved quite easily by pointing at failing perceptual capacities or irregular contexts. In contrast, it has been shown that intuitions over what is art differ to a considerably large extent. These disagreements cannot easily be explained away and there is no easy answer to the question who is right. Simply put, the answer to the first question is negative: intuitions on what is art do not make implicit knowledge about the concept of art explicit. They mainly show that there is no unified established application of the concept.

Secondly, my findings lead to the conclusion that the positive program with regard to defining art is misguided.[12] Since philosophers' as well as surveyed intuitions on what is art are not shared, empirical data concerning intuitions simply cannot be used to ground definitions of art. Therefore, the restrictionist challenge is valid with regard to the definition of art. Radical experimental philosophers have rightly argued that moderate experimentalists, like armchair descriptive philosophers, need to provide us with a means to discern which intuitions track the philosophical truth. Yet, like

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2013), then the need for appeal to intuitions to judge the art status of, say, paintings made by elephants, evaporates.

[12] Renia Gasparatou argues that the positive program is overall misguided. See: (2010).

armchair philosophers, moderate experimentalists have not offered an adequate way to accomplish this (Alexander, Mallon, & Weinberg, 2010, p. 310).

From these two conclusions, it follows that using our own or surveyed intuitions to develop a descriptive conceptual analysis of art cannot lead to successful results. However, this does not mean that the project of defining art itself should be abandoned. There are other routes to defining art than by eliciting and testing intuitions and other goals to attain with a definition of art than descriptive adequacy. This issue cannot be fully addressed here, but some suggestions will be offered. Recent metaphilosophical investigation on other philosophical topics, such as causation, function and knowledge, has suggested that descriptivism is not necessarily good in itself. Björn Brunnander, for example, has argued that the philosophical interest in 'function' was spurred by problems within the field and that a descriptive account of the concept is not what is needed in order to address these problems (Brunnander, 2011, pp. 418-419). The same could be said about the project of defining art. The matter became urgent when people within and outside of the field of the arts were confronted with items that seemed to claim or deserve art status, while being very dissimilar to what had been called art hitherto. This uncertainty about what is art generated doubt about how to approach these items, whether they should be subsidized, whether they deserve a place in art museums and so on. A descriptive analysis of art is unable to answer these problems, because when intuitions on what is art conflict, there is no way of telling which intuitions are valid. Philosophers have recommended different ways to attain these kind of goals, such as the theoretical utility model (Weber & De Vreese, 2009), conceptual revisionism (Bishop, 1992; Miller, 2000) and the development of alternative concepts (Brown, 1999, p. 49). These suggestions entail a normative approach to defining art.

Where does this leave experimental philosophy? As pointed out above, empirical data on intuitions cannot be used to verify definitions of art. Notwithstanding, experimental research might have another, yet more limited role to play in the project of defining art. If a normative approach to the project of defining art is chosen, then there are at least two potential ways in which experimental philosophy can contribute. Firstly, we need to know how the concept of art is used in practice, before we can formulate alternatives. In other words, we need to know where problems regarding the application of the concept of art arise, before answers can be given. Philosophers' intuitions will sometimes not suffice to do this, and then, surveying intuitions can be helpful. Secondly, as Justin C. Fisher recently has suggested, experimental philosophers can perform tests 'to see when and how subjects regularly benefit from employing a concept' (Fisher, forthcoming). In other words, experimental philosophers could examine which concepts of art have proven to be more useful, and thus more preferable, in specific circumstances and which ones have not offered us any guidance with respect to the problems regarding the application of the concept of art.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined the relevance of experimental philosophy for the project of defining art. It has been suggested that experimental philosophers add force to criticisms of the use of intuition in philosophy, yet, they cannot provide the needed justification for definitions of art. Given fundamental disagreements regarding intuitions on what art is, the descriptive approach to the project of defining art must be given up, insofar as it presupposes convergence in intuitions. It follows that both armchair philosophers of art who aim to propose descriptive definitions of art and moderate experimental philosophers need to rethink their projects.

It has been shown that many philosophers of art believe to be appealing to intuitions in order to defend their definitions or theories of art and that philosophers *should* not use this methodology. It remains to be seen whether this self-image philosophers of art have is adequate. Recent voices in the metaphilosophical debate have contended that most philosophers, contrary to their own believes, do not appeal to intuitions as grounding evidence for their philosophical theories. Whether or not this is true for the project of defining art is a question that warrants examination in future research.[13]

Acknowledgements

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[13] It should be clear that in Chapter 2, the question which role intuitions play in the project of defining art will be addressed.

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Chapter 2
The Role of Intuitions in the Philosophy of Art[1]

According to Herman Cappelen and Bernard Molyneux, it is widely assumed that intuitions are used as evidence for philosophical theories in virtually all areas of analytic philosophy. Philosophers' self-image, however, is wrong. This wrong self-image, so they argue, has misled metaphilosophers, but has had no substantial implications for philosophical practice. This chapter examines the role of intuitions in the project of defining art. In accordance with Cappelen and Molyneux, I demonstrate that philosophers of art believe intuitions are used as evidence for their definitions of art and that this belief is false. In contrast with Cappelen and Molyneux, I maintain that philosophers of art's false self-image causes substantial damage to their philosophical practice. Firstly, intuitions often are used as persuaders, while, in fact, they do not add philosophical force to the defended position. Secondly, and more importantly, intuition-talk and philosophers' wrong self-image are partly responsible for the confusion surrounding the kind of analysis proposed definitions of art offer. Reliance on intuitions seems to suggest that philosophers try to define the *concept* of art in a *descriptive* manner. However, since philosophers do not treat intuitions as evidence, it is unclear what definitions of art offer us.

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Introduction

In his book, *Philosophy Without Intuitions*, Herman Cappelen argues for the following three theses:

(1)   In analytic philosophy, philosophers almost universally accept that in their field intuitions are standardly used as evidence.

(2)   This self-image is wrong for all areas of analytic philosophy.

(3)   This wrong self-image has led to useless debates about the role of intuitions, but causes no substantial damage to philosophical practice.

The first thesis asserts that most philosophers adhere to what Bernard Molyneux has called, 'descriptive evidentialism', that is, they believe that intuitions are standardly treated as evidence of their contents, whether or not it is right to do so (Molyneux, 2014, p. 441). The second thesis states that descriptive evidentialism is wrong. Cappelen's third thesis argues that this wrong self-image has no tangible consequences for philosophical practice:

> At worst, analytic philosophers are guilty of engaging in somewhat irresponsible use of 'intuition' – vocabulary. While this irresponsibility has had little effect on first-order philosophy, it has fundamentally misled metaphilosophers. (Cappelen, 2012, p. 1)

This chapter examines the role of intuitions in the philosophy of art, or, more specifically, in the project of defining art. While some philosophers have criticized the use of intuitions as evidence in the philosophy of art (see for example: Huovinen & Pontara, 2011; Zangwill, 1995), philosophers of art have not examined whether it is true that intuitions are used as evidence. I will defend three theses:

(1*)   Many philosophers of art believe that philosophers of art standardly use intuitions as evidence for their definitions of art.

(2*)   In practice, philosophers of art do not use intuitions as evidence.

(3*)   This inadequate self-image has had dire consequences for the project of defining art itself.

By arguing for the first two theses, I show that Cappelen's first two theses hold for the project of defining art. He provides no evidence for this. My third thesis maintains that Cappelen's third thesis, that I will call the 'harmlessness thesis', is wrong, at least for the project of defining art.

In the first section, I will provide arguments for thesis (1*). It will be demonstrated that most philosophers of art adhere to descriptive evidentialism and that adherence to this position entails that philosophers of art take themselves to be engaged in descriptive conceptual analysis. The second section of this chapter will clarify what it

means to 'treat intuitions as evidence'. How can we separate evidential use of intuitions from other uses of intuition? This section forms the foundation for the three following sections, since it develops the method that will be used in those sections. In the third to fifth section, thesis (2*) will be defended. I will explore uses of intuitions in the definitional project. It will become clear that intuitions are mostly used as rhetorical or burden-shifting devices and philosophers of art are, insofar as they adhere to descriptive evidentialism, mistaken about the methods that are used in theories of art. In the sixth and final section, I will show the consequences of this inadequate self-conception. In this way, thesis (3*) will be defended; I will argue that Cappelen's harmlessness thesis is wrong. On the one hand, talk of intuition can mask incomplete or unconvincing arguments: they unwarrantedly add philosophical force to the defended position. On the other hand, appealing to intuitions adds confusion regarding what philosophers of art are aiming at when they are defining art. Reliance on intuitions seems to suggest that philosophers try to define the *concept* of art in a *descriptive* manner. However, since philosophers do not treat intuitions as evidence, it is unclear what definitions of art offer us. It will be concluded that philosophers of art should avoid intuition-talk and get clear on their methods and aims.

2.1   Descriptive and Normative Evidentialism

Metaphilosophers like Herman Cappelen and Bernard Molyneux have pointed out that the most dominant view on philosophical methodology entails that philosophers rely on intuitions as evidence for philosophical theories (Cappelen, 2012, p. 3; Molyneux, 2014, p. 441). Moreover, they have argued that this self-image is false. Molyneux has made a useful distinction between 'normative evidentialism' and 'descriptive evidentialism'. Adherents of the former position hold that intuitions *are* evidence of their contents, this means that intuitions, like perceptions and memories, are valuable, although not infallible, providers of knowledge (Sosa, 2007), whether or not they are treated as such. Adherents of the latter position believe that intuitions are standardly *treated* as evidence of their contents, whether or not it is right to do so (Molyneux, 2014, p. 441). Philosophers who argue that intuitions should not be used as evidence take intuitions to be hunches, gut feelings, or, mere 'inclinations to believe or judge (Haslanger, 2006; Miller, 2000; Weinberg, Nichols, & Stich, 2008; Williamson, 2007). In this section, I will examine whether philosophers of art adhere to normative and/or descriptive evidentialism: what do they consider to be the role of intuitions in the definitional project?

First, it must be noted that many philosophers of art showcase an unreflective attitude: usually, philosophers of art do not ponder much over the methods they use to define art, but immediately get to the business of formulating conditions for arthood.[2] However, if we take a closer look at the methodological reflections that are available, it becomes clear that descriptive, and, to a somewhat lesser extent, normative evidentialism is commonly adhered to. Noël Carroll, for example, states that defining art is done by:

> reflecting upon how we apply the concept of art, testing it intellectually against what we believe to be established application of the concept, and even using thought-experiments (such as imagined examples) to see whether proposed reconstructions of the category of art mesh with our considered intuitions. Of course, intuitions are anathema to social scientists, but they are mother's milk to analytic philosophers. (Carroll, 1999, pp. 11-12)

Noël Carroll, then, adheres to both descriptive and normative evidentialism: intuitions are treated as evidence in the philosophy of art and rightly so. Likewise, Berys Gaut supports the evidential use of intuitions. He argues that if an account of art '[...] claims that some object satisfies the concept, but it intuitively doesn't (or vice versa), then that is one strike against the account' (Gaut, 2000, p. 30). Correspondingly, intuitions on which items are art are and should be used as evidential bases. Gary Iseminger also assumes that intuitions have and should have an evidential role in philosophy as he argues that when a theory of art does not accommodate certain intuitions, it ipso facto loses credibility (Iseminger, 2004, p. 9).

Some philosophers of art, like Nick Zangwill and, arguably, Richard Kamber, adhere to descriptive evidentialism, yet reject normative evidentialism: intuitions *are* treated as evidence for definitions of art, yet they *should* not be treated this way. Zangwill states that while philosophers of art 'have gone in search of a theory of art which classifies as art all or most of the things that we intuitively count as art, and which excludes all or most of the things that we intuitively do not count as art' (Zangwill, 1995, p. 533), they should not have done this since our intuitions are corrupted (p. 534). Therefore, we should not 'make intuitions about cases into the final court of appeal' (p. 534). From a clearly different perspective, Richard Kamber also maintains that philosophers of art treat their intuitions as evidence for their definitions, yet claims they wrongly presuppose the universality of their own intuitions and should, correspondingly, gather

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[2] This lack of self-reflection has been pointed out and criticized by: (Huovinen & Pontara, 2011; Kamber, 2011; Zangwill, 1995).

empirical data regarding people's intuitions over which items are art in order to justify their theories (Kamber, 2011).

The use of intuitions in the definitional project seems to suggest that philosophers of art are engaged in descriptive conceptual analysis. That is, philosophers seem to be interested in the concept of art, rather than in the nature of art, which would entail a metaphysical project. As Aaron Meskin points out: 'the methodology that philosophers of art tend to use – the focus on getting the extension right and trying to accommodate intuitions about actual and counterfactual cases – seems ill-suited to investigating extra-linguistic reality' (Meskin, 2008, p. 133). In other words, our intuitions on which items are art cannot determine what art is in the mind-independent reality.[3] Moreover, it is widely accepted that philosophers of art are concerned with the descriptive level and do not aim to offer a normative account: they want to clarify how the concept of art *is* used, not how it *should* be used. Alessandro Pignocchi has recently suggested that '[a]fter the criticisms of Wittgensteinian philosophers, the search for a definition of art took a descriptive turn. Philosophers begin to search for a definition that respects people's intuitions' (Pignocchi, 2012, p. 2). A normative definition of art may reject certain intuitions when they conflict with the proposed theory, while a descriptive definition must be revised when it does not fit with our intuitions (Pignocchi, 2012, p. 2).

While there is some debate regarding whether or not philosophers of art should use intuitions as evidence for their definitions of art, and, correspondingly, whether or not they should be interested in descriptive conceptual analysis, there seems to be considerable agreement regarding the view that philosophers in fact do treat intuitions as evidence for their definitions of art. In other words, while normative evidentialism is not generally adhered to, most philosophers of art seem to cling to descriptive evidentialism.

The next section will demonstrate how we can distinguish between evidential and non-evidential uses of intuitions in order to be able to examine whether or not philosophers of art really do treat intuitions as evidence for definitions of art, that is, whether or not descriptive evidentialism is correct.

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3 It should be clear that the kind of metaphysical project that is referred to here, entails what Goldman has called 'genuine metaphysics' and what Strawson has called 'prescriptive metaphysics': 'It tries to identify the real constituents of the world, the ones to which we ought to be ontologically committed, whether or not they coincide with our naive or commonsense conceptual scheme.' (Goldman, 1987, p. 538) While it is broadly agreed upon that intuitions have a role in trying to describe the actual structure of our thoughts about the world, that is, in what Strawson has called 'descriptive metaphysics', intuition purportedly does not play this role in describing the actual structure of the world.

2.2 Evidential vs. Non-Evidential Use of Intuitions

2.2.1

The claim that intuitions are treated as evidence in philosophy is usually supported (1) by pointing at 'intuition-talk', that is, philosophers use the term ubiquitously and (2) by looking at philosophical practice; reliance on intuitions is implicit there. Just like we implicitly rely on perceptual evidence in order to verify, for example, claims about the present state of the weather, we implicitly rely on intuitions in order to verify philosophical claims. It is then thought that reliance on intuitions in philosophy is so obvious, that it is not always needed to make it explicit (Cappelen, 2012, p. 95).

The first line of defence of descriptive evidentialists is not very convincing. Even if it could be shown that the term 'intuition' and its equivalents appear in virtually every philosophical argument or debate, this does not mean that intuitions are used as evidence. There are other, clearly non-evidential, uses of intuition. We may treat intuitions as revealing, but not justifying, of their content. In other words, intuitions might be the causal source for a judgment, without being the justificatory source (Deutsch, 2010, p. 453). Intuitions could be, and arguably are, used as starting points. The intuition, then, shaped the philosophical inquiry, yet did not provide justification for the outcome of the inquiry. In this case, we need good arguments in support of the intuition in order to justify the content of the intuition. Alternatively, intuitions might be used as persuaders or as burden-shifting devices: for example, if it is intuitive that item x is an artwork, then it is suggested that the burden is on the one who defends that x is not an artwork (Earlenbaugh & Molyneux, 2009a, p. 36; Molyneux, 2014, p. 445). Again, arguments in favour of what is intuited are needed for further justification. Herman Cappelen himself admitted that he engaged in 'intuition-talk' before examining the use of intuition in philosophy and explains his usage of the word as follows: 'It was just a way of speaking that I picked up' (Cappelen, 2012, p. 58). Indeed, it could be argued that the term 'intuition' is just part of our philosophical jargon, without having a clear univocal meaning or function.

The second way in which descriptive evidentialism is defended is more substantial. If it can be shown that intuitions function as evidence in philosophical practices, like defining art, then descriptive evidentialism is conclusively defended. How can these uses of intuition be distinguished from evidential usage? Put differently, what does it entail to treat something as evidence? Most fundamentally, when something is treated as evidence, then it has 'rock bottom' status: evidence stands in no need of further justification (Russell, 2012, p. 110). If descriptive evidentialism is true, then intuitions serve as a kind of rock bottom justificatory point in philosophical argumentation. This entails that, in philosophy, when one treats intuitions as evidence, then the occurrence

of an intuition is taken to provide the person *who intuits* with prima facie justification for believing *what is intuited* (Pust, 2012). Under stable conditions, intuitions, like perception and memory, justify, but are themselves not in need of further justification. If intuitions are treated as evidence, then intuitions function as justification 'in isolation': even if the intuition cannot be supported with good arguments, it still retains it justificatory status (Cappelen, 2012, p. 112).

For the project of defining art, this would mean that when one intuits that *x* is an instance of art, a theory is falsified when it excludes *x* from the domain of art and a theory is correct insofar as it includes *x*. What is intuited, in this case that *x* is art, would be in no need of further argumentation. Even if one cannot provide good arguments in favour of this intuition, the intuition, if it has evidential status, should still be accounted for by any descriptive definition of art. If this is not the case, that is, if intuitions are in need of further justification or can be overruled by arguments, then intuitions are not evidential. Whatever argument is given to ground or argue in favour or against of what is intuited would provide the evidence, not the intuition itself (for an analogous argument see: Cummins, 1998, p. 118).

A distinction needs to be drawn between the use of theoretical arguments and the use of evidential intuitions in the project of defining art, since the two methods of justification presuppose engagement in different philosophical approaches. The use of intuitions as evidence presupposes that philosophers of art are engaged in a descriptive conceptual approach: they aim to spell out and clarify the criteria we use to distinguish art from non-art. This approach results in a, what I will call, descriptive definition of art. The use of theoretical arguments, however, presupposes engagement in different approaches. Broadly speaking, there are two kinds of theoretical arguments that can be used in support of definitions of art: normative and metaphysical arguments. Normative arguments are grounded in a view on what kind of concept(s) are desirable to have, what kind of concept(s) are best suited to satisfy our practical or theoretical needs. Use of normative arguments presupposes engagement in a normative conceptual approach. This approach prescribes which criteria we should use to distinguish art from non-art and results in a normative definition of art. Metaphysical arguments concern the essence of art. They are grounded in observations or findings regarding the mind-independent nature of art. Such arguments are not concerned with how a concept is used, but rather how the world is constituted. Use of such arguments assumes a metaphysical approach. This approach results in a metaphysical definition.

2.2.2

Let us now investigate what the distinction between evidential use of intuitions and use of theoretical arguments in the project of defining art concretely entails by focusing on

the art status of Orlan's *The Reincarnation of Saint-Orlan.* Three cases will be examined. In the first case that will be described, intuitions are used as evidence; in the second and third case, theoretical, respectively normative and metaphysical, arguments are used.

In the first case, philosophers of art are using intuitions as evidence and, correspondingly, they are engaged in the descriptive conceptual approach. If it is intuitive that *The Reincarnation of Saint-Orlan* is art, then no further support is needed to justify the claim that the Orlan piece is an artwork and a definition of art ought to include it as art. As noted above, strictly speaking, genuine evidential intuitions[4] cannot be refuted. Schematically put:

(1) A definition of art is justified in terms of matching intuitions;
(2) It is intuitive that *The Reincarnation of Saint-Orlan* is art;
Therefore: a definition of art must include *The Reincarnation of Saint-Orlan* as art.

The claim that a definition of art must include *The Reincarnation of Saint-Orlan* cannot be rejected, unless it can be shown that (2) is false, in other words, that the intuition is not genuine.

In the second case, someone argues that since *The Reincarnation of Saint-Orlan* was not intended to invoke aesthetic pleasure, application of the concept 'art' is not warranted. Therefore, a definition should exclude this work from the domain of art. Here, a normative argument is used, it appeals to how we should use the concept of art. The argument goes as follows:

(1) We should not include artefacts in the domain of art that are not intended to invoke aesthetic pleasure;
(2) *The Reincarnation of Saint-Orlan* is not intended to invoke aesthetic pleasure;
Therefore: a definition should not include *The Reincarnation of Saint-Orlan* as art.

The conclusion, *The Reincarnation of Saint-Orlan* should be excluded by a definition of art, can be rejected in several ways. Both (1) and (2) can be refuted. On the one hand, an opponent might argue that the intention to invoke aesthetic pleasure is not needed to warrant inclusion into the domain of art. This opponent might argue that it is a far too stringent condition for arthood. It is not *desirable* to deny all artefacts that do not meet this condition art status. On the other hand, an opponent might argue that Orlan's piece was intended to invoke aesthetic pleasure. In this case, the two philosophers either disagree about what 'aesthetic pleasure' entails or what kind of experience *The Reincarnation of Saint-Orlan* is intended to invoke.

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[4] For an intuition to be 'genuine' generally means that the one who intuits is unbiased, well-informed about the case to be judged and calm.

In the third case, metaphysical arguments are appealed to. Consequently, defining art is seen as a metaphysical endeavour. A philosopher rejects the art status of *The Reincarnation of Saint-Orlan* based on her belief that the piece is immoral and her assumption that art and immorality are incommensurable by nature. This assumption entails that something cannot be both art and immoral. Accordingly, a definition must eliminate immoral phenomena from the domain of art:

(1) Art and immorality are essentially mutually exclusive;
(2) *The Reincarnation of Saint-Orlan* is immoral;
Therefore: a definition must not include *The Reincarnation of Saint-Orlan* as art.

Here, the conclusion that the Orlan piece must be excluded, can be rejected by attacking (1) and/or (2). (1) can be rejected, for example, by arguing that, since there *are* many immoral artworks or since immoral artworks are imaginable, art and immorality are not essentially mutually exclusive. (2) can be falsified by arguing that *The Reincarnation of Saint-Orlan* is not immoral. In this case, the two opponents can either disagree about what it entails to be immoral, or how the Orlan piece should be interpreted.

This example shows that, while genuine evidential intuitions are supposed to serve as a kind of 'rock bottom justificatory point in philosophical argumentation' (Cappelen, 2012, p. 112), theoretical arguments do not have this kind of justificatory status: they can always invite further questioning regarding either what it is for a concept of art to be desirable or what claims about the nature of art are correct given our best observations.

In the next three sections, I will examine whether or not intuitions have rock bottom status in philosophical debates over what is art. The focus will be on three classical counterexamples that have been used to doubt the adequacy of proposed definitions of art, namely, 'isolated' art, forgeries and 'very bad art'. It is often believed that the method of counterexamples necessarily involves evidential use of intuitions. The common view on the method of counterexamples is adequately illuminated by Adam Feltz:

> [...] philosophers propose an analysis of a concept and then other philosophers try to construct counterexamples to that conceptual analysis. [...] Intuitions generated by these counterexamples are meant to suggest that the analysis is wrong or in need of refinement. As a result, conceptual analyses are typically thought to be better to the extent they can withstand intuitive counterexamples. (Feltz, 2009, pp. 101-102)

Indeed, in all three counterexamples that will be discussed, philosophers have purportedly appealed to intuitions. However, the way in which these counterexamples are discussed, so I argue, indicate that intuitions on arthood are not attributed rock

bottom justificatory status; the counterexamples are ultimately supported by arguments.

2.3 Isolated Art

'Isolated art' often has been used as a counterexample against definitions of art, more specifically, institutional definitions. An 'isolated artist' is someone who lived long before there were any cultures that had standard artists, or someone in the present day who for some reason is totally isolated from any culture that has standard artists. What will be examined here is whether or not philosophers' intuitions on the arthood of isolated art are attributed rock bottom justificatory status.

Monroe Beardsley (Beardsley, 1976, p. 141), Jerrold Levinson (Levinson, 1979, p. 233), Robert Stecker (Stecker, 1997, p. 83), Stephen Davies (Davies, 1991, p. 103), and Jeffrey Dean (Dean, 2003, p. 33), all argue that an isolated individual can make art and that any definition of art must allow for isolated art. In this way, they criticize institutional definitions of art, most notably George Dickie's definition. Some, most notably Stecker and Davies, seem to appeal to the intuitiveness of the counterexample. Both argue that to deny the possibility of isolated art is 'counterintuitive' (Davies, 1991, p. 103; Stecker, 1997, p. 83) and that, therefore, any definition of art must allow for this possibility. While both agree that George Dickie's institutional definition does not allow for this possibility, Davies and Stecker disagree over whether or not Davies' own institutional definition can account for isolated art. George Dickie, however, refutes the counterexample: he simply claims that such a person has not made art; whether or not someone thinks this is unintuitive does not seem important (Dickie, 2004, p. 390). First, it must be noted that, unlike Davies and Stecker, Dickie does not engage in 'intuition-talk'. Can it then be concluded that Stephen Davies and George Dickie might have similar intuitions, but Dickie is engaged in another sort of project than Davies? What I will show here is that neither a simple clash of intuitions, nor an engagement in a different project altogether fully clarifies these diverging responses to the counterexample. Rather, this divergence stems from the fact that Davies and Dickie have a fundamentally different view on what kind of activity art is. What is important here is that this view is not justified by appeal to intuitions, but by theoretical arguments, based on observations and findings regarding the nature of art.

According to Davies, art is grounded in our biological nature, and is therefore best seen as a natural-kind activity. This view follows from two *observations*: the observation that 'the members of all cultures always have engaged in storytelling, drawing, carving and whittling, song, dance, and acting or mime' and the observation that we can easily

recognize artefacts from remote cultures and times as art (Davies, 2000, p. 199). These observations suggest that art is pan-cultural and emerged spontaneously as part of our normal development and not as the result of datable acts of invention (Davies, 1997, 2000, 2010). Note that Davies starts from 'observations' and not from 'intuitions' to argue for the pan-culturality of art. Moreover, Davies relies on empirical sciences such as psychology and neurology in order to support his view (Davies, 2010).[5] The idea that an isolated person can make art follows from his 'naturalistic' view on artistic creation: if art behaviour is grounded in our biological nature, then one does not need an artistic context in order to make art.

George Dickie, on the other hand, proposes that art is a cultural-kind activity: such activities are 'invented by the members of a particular group and are passed on by learning' (Dickie, 1997, p. 25). Correspondingly, art behaviour is 'not written in the genes' (Dickie, 1997, p. 26). Dickie adds that 'cultural-kind activities are carried out in a self-conscious way in the sense that those doing the activities are aware or could become aware that the activities are aspects of their group cultural life' (Dickie, 1997, p. 26). Therefore, an artefact can only be art within a cultural 'artworld' structure. These structures have developed at many different times in many different cultures; Dickie does not suggest that art is a purely Western phenomenon. Still, the artworld structure already needs to be in place before there can be art (Dickie, 2000, p. 102). Consequently, an isolated artist cannot make art, since she cannot self-consciously intend to make art. Dickie elaborates on the fictive example of an early Cro-Magnon, whose tribe is assumed to be totally ignorant of art, who makes a representation of his hand on a cave wall using his own hand as a stencil. Dickie goes on to compare his intentions with the intentions of 21st century artists and concludes that the intentions of the isolated artist and the intentions of the 'conscious' artist differ too much in order to warrant the application of the same concept to their creative products (Dickie, 2004, p. 390). Dickie does not rely in any way on intuitions to justify his categorization of isolated art as non-art. Rather, it follows from his view on the nature of art as a cultural-kind activity.

Let me clarify this further by focusing on the example George Dickie gives, namely the Cro-Magnon hand print. This would be the structure of Davies' criticism of Dickie's definition if intuitions would be used as evidence:

(1) It is intuitive that the Cro-Magnon hand print is art;
(2) Dickie's definition excludes the Cro-Magnon hand print as art;
Conclusion: Dickie's definition is an inadequate descriptive definition of art.

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[5] Correspondingly, in this case, Davies seems interested in the actual structure of the world, in not in our thoughts about the actual structure of the world (see note 3).

The first premise, insofar it concerns a genuine intuition, needs no further argumentation. The second premise needs to be supported by correctly applying the Dickie's definition of art. However, examination of the debate between Davies and Dickie regarding the possibility of isolated art reveals a different picture. This is the structure of the response of Dickie to Davies:

(1) The Cro-Magnon hand print is not art;
(2) Davies' and Stecker's definitions of art include the Cro-Magnon hand print;
Conclusion: Davies' and Stecker's definitions are inadequate metaphysical definitions of art.

The first premise is grounded in a metaphysical claim, namely, that art is a cultural-kind activity. This metaphysical claim can be rejected by further findings and observations. It could also be advanced that while most art originated within a cultural artworld context, it is an important, yet merely contingent and thus non-essential feature of art. The second premise is correct insofar as the definitions under consideration are correctly applied. Davies' criticism of Dickie can be systematized as follows:

(1) The Cro-Magnon hand print is art;
(2) Dickie's institutional definition of art excludes the Cro-Magnon hand print;
Conclusion: Dickie's definition is an inadequate metaphysical definition of art.

Again, the first premise is grounded in a metaphysical claim, namely, that art is a natural-kind activity and can be rejected based on findings regarding the mind-independent nature of art. It could be argued while art has some natural origins, the distinction between art and non-art is determined by cultural factors. The second premise is correct insofar as the definitions under consideration are correctly applied.

In conclusion, what has been shown here is that intuitions do not play a rock bottom justificatory role in the case of isolated art. Disagreement regarding the art status of isolated art boils down to a dispute over the nature of artistic creation, namely: 'Is art a natural-kind or cultural-kind activity?'. This is a metaphysical debate: it is not carried out by appeal to intuitions, yet by formulating arguments that are backed up with empirical observations regarding the nature of art.

2.4 Forgeries

Let us now focus on another counterexample that has been used in discussions on definitions of art, namely forgeries. Whether or not forgeries are or can be art is

controversial, this makes them 'hard' or 'disputed' cases. Still, as in the case of isolated art, they have been used as counterexamples to definitions of art.

Crispin Sartwell used forgeries as a counterexample to Jerrold Levinson's historical-intentional definition of art. In Levinson's view 'an artwork is a thing (item, object, entity) that has been seriously intended for regard-as-a-work-of-art, i.e., regard in any *way preexisting artworks are or were correctly regarded*.' (Levinson, 1989, p. 21) Sartwell claims that this definition implies that forgeries are art, since a forger intends the fake to be regarded in all the ways the original artwork is correctly regarded. His critique is not merely academic nit-picking, so he maintains: although the forger intends the fake to be regarded in all the same ways the original was intended to be regarded, '*it is not in fact correct to regard the fake in all those ways*' (Sartwell, 1990, p. 157). Thus, the inadequacy of Levinson's definition has undesirable consequences for the appreciation of art. Jerrold Levinson thinks Sartwell's counterexample is 'a clever one' and aims to provide a satisfactory answer to it; he tries to show that his definition does not necessarily include forgeries into the domain of art. A forger, so Levinson argues, cannot have had the same intentions as the original artist. An original artwork is correctly regarded when the public situates the artwork in the correct historical context of production. The artist of the original artwork intends her work to be situated in this context. A forger, however, cannot intend for the public to situate the forgery in its correct historical context of production. On the contrary, a forger wants to deceive the public (Levinson, 1990, p. 231). Consequently, so Levinson argues, his definition is not falsified by means of this counterexample.

While both philosophers do not directly appeal to intuitions, this debate seems to confirm descriptive evidentialism: the relevance of the counterexample is accepted, i.e. both philosophers agree that forgeries are not (always) art, and the criticized philosopher tries to show that his definition can provide a satisfactory answer to the counterexample by showing that his definition in fact does not include forgeries in the domain of art. However, Graham Oppy reconsiders this counterexample and questions its relevance. Oppy claims that Sartwell says that according art status to forgeries is 'surely counter-intuitive'. Oppy, on the other hand, wonders why we should accept, without further argumentation, Sartwell's intuitive judgement that a 'fake' is not a work of art (Oppy, 1992, p. 159). Firstly, it is noteworthy that Oppy, for one, does not think that intuitions have rock bottom justificatory status: they are in need of further arguments. Oppy himself gives arguments in favour of including forgeries into the domain of art. Although he grants that a fake Rembrandt is not a Rembrandt, he maintains that a fake Rembrandt painting is nonetheless a painting and that 'surely anything which is a painting is a work of art' (Oppy, 1992, p. 159). He adds that it seems odd to suppose that the ontological status of entities should depend upon the intentions of their creators. Thus, he uses arguments grounded in beliefs about the nature of art in order to argue for the inclusion of forgeries into the domain of art.

Secondly, what is equally remarkable is that neither Sartwell nor Levinson appeal to intuitions in order to address this counterexample. Oppy states that Sartwell says that including forgeries into the domain of art is 'counterintuitive', yet a careful and detailed reading of Sartwell's article has shown that there is no mention whatsoever of 'intuition' in it. Hence, Oppy simply *assumes* that Sartwell is appealing to intuitions. Sartwell, however, states that a forgery is a slavish reproduction of an extant work of art and that 'in the absence of some independent argument, it does not seem that a definition out [sic] clearly to count it as a work of art' (Sartwell, 1990, p. 157). Furthermore, as shown above, he shows that if forgeries are seen as artworks, then an incorrect appreciation can follow from this. Sartwell says that seeing a fake as an artwork 'seems doubtful'. 'Seem', it is argued, often indicates use of intuition (Bealer, 1996, p. 5). However, 'seem' does not function as a substitute for evidential intuition here. With 'seem', Sartwell just shows that his position is in need of further justification and that is exactly what he does later on in his short discussion piece: he gives arguments in favour of his position. His arguments are grounded in the normative claim that it is undesirable to have a concept of art that includes forgeries.

Let us focus on the example of the fake Rembrandt. If intuitions would be used as evidence, then the structure of the counterexample would be the following:

(1) It is intuitive that the fake Rembrandt is not art;
(2) Levinson's definition includes the fake Rembrandt as art;
Conclusion: Levinson's definition is an inadequate descriptive definition of art.

Premise one, insofar as the intuition is genuine, needs no further justification and premise two is correct insofar as the application of the definition is correct. Nonetheless, what the criticism of Sartwell against Levinson's definition in fact involves, is the following:

(1) The fake Rembrandt should not be included as art;
(2) Levinson's definition includes the fake Rembrandt as art;
Conclusion: Levinson's definition is an inadequate normative definition of art.

The first premise is grounded in a normative claim regarding how we should use the concept of art. The claim follows from the idea that it is not warranted to treat forgeries as artworks. This claim can be rejected by giving reasons why it is more desirable to have a concept of art that includes forgeries. The second premise is correct insofar as Levinson's definition is correctly applied to the case. Levinson argues that while premise (1) is correct, premise (2) is false. The criticism of Graham Oppy against both Levinson and Sartwell looks like this:

(1) The fake Rembrandt is art;
(2) Levinson's definition excludes the fake Rembrandt as art;
Conclusion: Levinson's definition is an inadequate metaphysical definition of art.

The first premise is grounded in a metaphysical claim regarding the ontological status of paintings. Since all paintings are art and the fake Rembrandt is a painting, the fake Rembrandt is art. This claim can be rejected by arguing that not all paintings are, ontologically speaking, artworks.[6] The second premise, as in all cases, is correct insofar as Levinson's definition has been correctly applied.

Succinctly put, intuitions are not used as evidence: it is not the intuitiveness of the counterexample that is fundamental for the criticisms against Levinson's definition of art levelled by Sartwell and Oppy. Sartwell argues that the case of forgeries shows that Levinson's definition, insofar as it includes forgeries, has undesirable consequences and is, therefore, normatively unwarranted. Oppy, on the other hand, raises that Levinson's definition, insofar as it excludes forgeries like the fake Rembrandt, is metaphysically incorrect.

2.5   Very Bad Art

Let us now consider yet another case that has been used to show the inadequacy of definitions of art, namely the case of 'very bad art'. Robert Stecker, for example, used this case as a counterexample to Levinson's definition of art. As mentioned above, Levinson's definition entails that 'an artwork is a thing that has been seriously intended for regard-as-an-work-of-art, i.e., regard in any way *pre-existing artworks are or were correctly regarded*' (Levinson, 1989, p. 21). It follows that, when a thing is related in the right way to the history of art, it is art, even if it does not elicit the regards it was intended to elicit; thus, even if it is artistically very bad. Stecker claims that this is an unwelcome consequence, since in this way Levinson's definition includes things into the domain of art that should not be included. Stecker conveys a couple of fictive cases of very bad art that are included in the domain of art according to Levinson's definition: items that, according to Stecker, are not art because they lack artistic value. One example is 'a piece of verse produced by someone completely incompetent in this domain with no redeeming qualities whatsoever' (Stecker, 1990, p. 268). In Stecker's view, this is not a very bad poem, but a failed attempt to create a work of art. Another example is of 'an individual living in 1989 in the USA but ignorant of developments in music since the classical period composing in the style of Mozart and doing so with

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[6] It should be noted that the latter view is very widely accepted. For a recent defence of this view, see (Lopes, 2014, p. 17).

competence but no more than that' (Stecker, 1990, p. 268). Again, Stecker is reluctant to call his anachronistic musical compositions works of art, since in this case complete ignorance of the evolution of an art indicates that an item is not an artwork, but a failed attempt at making an artwork.

Levinson maintains that including these artefacts into the domain of art is 'hardly unintuitive' (Levinson, 1993, p. 414). Although Levinson explicitly makes mention of intuitions in order to support his inclusion of very bad art in the realm of art, it is quite clear that intuitions are not used as grounding evidence; he gives forceful reasons in favour of his position and I will quote them at length:

> In the latter example it would be perverse, I think, to deny that the product was music, and to be approached as such. We might undertake to update the composer's awareness of stylistic evolution in recent centuries, and point out the relatively minor artistic value of what he was engaged in [...] but it would seem like critical fascism to deny artistic character to his or her sincerely undertaken and historically groundable activity. [...] Turning now to the former example, of the hopelessly botched poem, why not allow it the label of 'poem' – or if not that, 'verbal art item' – nonetheless? This has the merit of marking its difference from other linguistic macaroni, such as may have arisen from mere doodling, or the sketching out of a love letter, or the accidental adhering together of scraps penned by a number of independent individuals. [...] By allowing that the very bad 'poem' is nonetheless art, if appropriately intentionally projected, we prevent its ontological degradation, its assimilation to other verbal artifacts with which it does not really belong. (Levinson, 1993, pp. 414-415)

Levinson most likely uses the term intuition to suggest that his position is not nonsensical. As Joshua Earlenbaugh and Bernard Molyneux have claimed about the role of intuitions in philosophical practice in general, intuitions here are used as persuaders, not as truth trackers (Earlenbaugh & Molyneux, 2009a, p. 36). The fact that his position is not counterintuitive should persuade us to consider his position, not justify it. What Levinson does here, besides appealing to intuitions, is giving us *arguments* for including very bad art into the domain of art. Whether the arguments he gives are adequate or not is not of utmost importance here. What is important is that, in this case, Levinson does not bother with the evidential weight of intuitions per se. By including very bad art, he argues that these artefacts should be treated as artworks. In other words, it is desirable that we approach them in this way. Likewise, Stecker does not want to exclude very bad art from the domain of art because of his intuitions, but because he is convinced that art needs to have at least some artistic value in order to be accorded that status. Their disagreement on the art status of very bad art is best explained in terms of the dispute whether or not art should be a purely classificatory concept or also should have evaluative features: should an artefact have at least some artistic value in order to warrant its inclusion in the domain of art? Their arguments are not grounded by

intuitions, rather they are justified by normative claims regarding how we should treat certain artefacts.

If intuitions would be used as evidence, then the structure of Stecker's criticism would look as follows:

(1) An anachronistic musical composition is intuitively not art;
(2) Levinson's definition includes such compositions as art;
Conclusion: Levinson's definition is an inadequate descriptive definition.

Premise (1) is in no need of further justification and premise (2) is correct insofar as Levinson's definition is correctly applied. However, schematically put, Stecker's criticism of Levinson's definition looks as follows:

(1) An anachronistic musical composition should not be included as art;
(2) Levinson's definition includes the composition as art;
Conclusion: Levinson's definition is an inadequate normative definition.

Premise (1) is grounded in a normative claim regarding whether or not our classificatory practice should be evaluative, in other words, whether or not we should allow for the inclusion of very bad art into the domain of art. The claim can be rejected by giving reasons why it is more desirable to include very bad art as art. This is exactly what Levinson does. His defence looks as follows:

(1) An anachronistic musical composition should be included as art;
(2) Levinson's definition includes such compositions as art;
Conclusion: Levinson's definition can be an adequate normative definition.

Premise (1) presupposes that it is more desirable to have a concept of art that allows for very bad art. This normative claim can be rejected by giving reasons why it is unwarranted to include very bad art into the domain of art. Premise (2), as in all other cases, is correct insofar as the definition is correctly applied.

In both Stecker's criticism and Levinson's defence, intuitions on the arthood of the anachronistic musical composition play no evidential role, rather they use normative arguments to back up their criticisms and defences of definitions of art. Levinson and Stecker do not disagree over whether or not it is intuitive to include very bad art as art, they disagree whether or not it is desirable to have a concept of art that includes very bad art into the domain of art.

2.6 Metaphilosophy and Philosophical Practice

Many philosophers of art claim that intuitions have justificatory status in the philosophy of art. However, the three cases explored above, namely isolated art, forgeries and very bad art, show that philosophers of art neither refer to intuitions as much as is often assumed, nor give these intuitions rock bottom justificatory status. Philosophers of art do not presume that a theory will be accepted because it fits with intuitions, rather because it is backed up by adequate arguments. These arguments are either grounded in normative claims or in claims regarding the nature of art, that is, metaphysical claims. Therefore, my findings confirm Cappelen's, Deutsch's and Molyneux's suggestion that intuition is not given evidential status in philosophy. Intuitions on what is art, then, are best simply seen as inclinations to judge. When we find it intuitive that *x* is art, we are inclined to judge it as art. In order to see whether or not our inclination is justified, we look for independent arguments. As Earlenbaugh and Molyneux have argued, 'there is no denying that inclinations to believe are often the starting point of productive lines of inquiry' (Earlenbaugh & Molyneux, 2009b, p. 108). Do these findings entail, as Cappelen, Deutsch and Molyneux suggest, that criticisms against the use of intuition in philosophy have no force whatsoever? To this question we will turn now.

Cappelen, Deutsch and Molyneux have argued that philosophers' wrong self-image regarding their use of intuitions merely has led to futile and misguided metaphilosophical debates regarding the evidential role of intuitions. Cappelen grants that relying on intuitions as evidence is problematic, but since philosophers do not rely on intuitions, there are no real problems, only 'pseudo-problems'. Put differently, philosophical projects, like the project of defining art, are not harmed by the irresponsible use of the term intuition. Nonetheless, I will argue that this conclusion is not entirely warranted. At least two substantial problems for art philosophical practice follow from this careless use of the term 'intuition' and from this wrong self-image.

Firstly, intuition-talk tends to mask incomplete arguments. Whenever philosophers have intuitions 'on their side' the burden of proof seems to lay with the other party. In other words, intuitions are used as burden-shifting devices. While intuitions mostly are used as persuaders, in fact, they do not add philosophical force to the given arguments. Intuition-talk obscures disagreements on other levels: the counterexample of isolated art shows a fundamental divide between philosophers who see artistic creation as a natural-kind activity and philosophers who think of art as a cultural-kind activity. The case of forgeries reveals an important disagreement over the implications of the maker's (immoral) intentions for art status. The last example, very bad art, shows that philosophers differ on whether the concept of art should allow for very bad art.

Consequently, use of intuition partly impedes engaging in these more pressing debates. Yet, these debates are far more interesting than debates over conflicting intuitions.

Secondly, and more importantly, intuition-talk and philosophers' wrong self-image are partly responsible for the confusion surrounding the kind of analysis a definition of art offers. On the one hand, the descriptive and the normative level are confused; it is unclear whether definitions of art show us how the concept of art is used or how it should be used. On the other hand, the conceptual and the metaphysical level are mixed up; it is unclear whether philosophers are interested in our concept of art or in the nature of art. Intuition-talk seems to imply a commitment to descriptive conceptual analysis: philosophers of art purportedly try to describe the way 'art' is used by competent users of the concept of art. Consequently, a definition neither wants to show how we *should* use the concept of art, nor aims to clarify what art, metaphysically speaking, *is.* However, as seen above, philosophers like Stephen Davies and George Dickie start from observations and empirical findings about the *nature* of art, that is, what it means to be art in this world, and not about the way in which the concept of art is used, in order to defend their own view or criticize other views. In these cases, they are trying to clarify the metaphysical level, not the conceptual level. Jerrold Levinson argues in favour of including very bad art in the domain of art because 'it would seem like critical fascism to deny artistic character' of these activities (Levinson, 1993, p. 414). Clearly, this is a normative statement. Levinson does not suggest that we in fact do include very bad art in the domain of art, rather he maintains that we *should* include it. Levinson shows us how we should use the concept of art, not how the concept is used: he is giving an, at least partly, normative analysis of the concept of art.

In short, intuition-talk reinforces the confusion surrounding what kind of project the project of defining art is. Philosophers' presupposed reliance on intuitions suggests that the project of defining art is a clear case of descriptive conceptual analysis. However, since it has been shown that philosophers of art do not use this intuition-based methodology, it has become less obvious what kind of analysis the project of defining art aims to offer and based on which criteria proposed definitions can be evaluated.

Conclusion

In summary, this chapter has shown that (1) many philosophers of art adhere to descriptive evidentialism, (2) intuitions are not used as evidence in the project of defining art, and, that (3) this inadequate self-image and the continued use of the term 'intuition' in debates on definitions of art has negative consequences for the practice of philosophers of art.

Philosophers of art largely justify their definitions of art by pointing at desired usage of the concept of art, or by relying on findings regarding the mind-independent nature of art. This entails that they are not or not only engaged in descriptive conceptual analysis, unlike what the use of the term intuition seems to suggest. Correspondingly, it is unclear what definitions of art offer: an analysis of how the concept is used, an analysis of how the concept should be used or a clarification of the nature of art. Hence, it is crucial that philosophers of art avoid intuition-talk and get clear on what they are after when they are defining art.

Acknowledgements

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Part II: Aims

Part II of this dissertation focuses on the objectives philosophers of art hope to attain when defining art.

As has been demonstrated in the Preliminary Chapter, there are, broadly speaking, four possible aims philosophers can hope to accomplish by defining certain philosophically interesting phenomena: descriptive conceptual, normative conceptual, descriptive metaphysical and revisionary metaphysical aims. When a philosopher has descriptive conceptual aims, she hopes to give a description of the way in which the concept of the phenomenon under consideration is generally used. Put differently, she wants to make explicit the (implicit) demarcation criteria we generally use when applying the concept. Descriptive metaphysicians go further than descriptive conceptual analysis, and aim to offer a clarification of the meaning of the concept, i.e. what people believe the concept to track, what they believe the phenomenon to entail. When a philosopher has normative conceptual aims, she aims to revise or regulate the demarcation criteria that are used in light of practical or theoretical utility, i.e., in light of certain purposes one might have. When a philosopher has revisionary metaphysical aims, she aims to reveal what the concept tracks, not what people believe the concept to track, and revise current demarcation criteria accordingly.

What, then, are philosophers of art aiming at when they are defining art? Given that philosophers of art believe to be using descriptive methods, it might come as no surprise that they assume to have largely descriptive conceptual aims. However, when we take a closer look at the practice of philosophers of art, it becomes clear that virtually all of them aim for their theories to have a normative bite: when there is disagreement over the application of the concept, their theories must be able adjudicate the conflict.

In Chapter 3, 'Incommensurable Aims in the Philosophy of Art', I will examine how descriptive and normative aims can be combined. Several philosophers of art have maintained that both aims can be fruitfully attained by employing the method of reflective equilibrium. I will show that this method is deficient, and, accordingly, descriptive and normative aims are incommensurable.

Chapter 4, 'The Charge From Psychology and Art's Definition', investigates the aims underlying the project of defining art by focusing on the so-called *charge from psychology*. This charge entails a well-known critique against descriptive conceptual analysis in general and argues that this approach falsely presupposes a classical theory of concepts. An oft-heard objection against this charge is that philosophers do not have descriptive aims, i.e., they do not want to clarify and systematize the way in which a concept is generally used, rather philosophers aim to show how the distinction between art and non-art is made in reality. In other words, philosophers are interested in metaphysics, not in descriptive conceptual analysis. In this chapter, I investigate both the charge and the counter objection. In doing so, I will shed new light on the aims that philosophers can fulfill with their definitions of art.

To summarize, Chapter 3 will show that philosophers of art cannot have it both ways: they cannot hope for their definitions of art to be both descriptively and normatively adequate. Correspondingly, philosophers of art must choose between these aims. Chapter 4, however, demonstrates that descriptive adequacy is not an attainable aim for philosophers of art. Therefore, descriptive conceptual analysis of art must be given up. This is a part of the overall picture that emerges, and that will be fully developed in Part III (Chapter 5).

Chapter 3
Incommensurable Aims in the Philosophy of Art[1]

This chapter argues that philosophers of art wrongly aim for their definitions of art to be both descriptively and normatively adequate, for the method that is used to achieve both aims, namely the method of reflective equilibrium, is not applicable to the project of defining art. Therefore, in order to facilitate genuine debate regarding definitions of art, philosophers must abandon the method of reflective equilibrium and determine which approach, be it descriptive or normative, deems more appropriate.

Introduction

It is often accepted that most philosophers of art aim for their definitions or theories of art[2] to be both descriptively adequate and normatively adequate. In other words, a definition of art needs to include items that are generally thought of as art in the domain of art and exclude all others, as well as provide a solution to contested cases, that is, cases in which there is disagreement over whether or not an item is art. However, I will argue for the following thesis, which I call the Incommensurable Aims thesis (IA):

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[1] This article has been accepted for publication in *Logique et Analyse*.

[2] Although a distinction can be drawn between definitions and theories of art, here I will use 'definition of art' and 'theory of art' interchangeably. Both terms refer to an attempt to clarify 'art' by formulating certain conditions for arthood. I will stick to the terminology used by the philosophers that are being discussed in the given contexts.

(IA) A definition or theory of art cannot be both descriptively and normatively adequate; these two aims are incommensurable.

In order to fulfill both aims, philosophers of art try to reach a reflective equilibrium between the proposed definition and our classificatory judgments[3] on which items are art.[4] In this chapter, I will discuss three requirements that should be met in order for the method of reflective equilibrium to be applicable to the project of defining art: (1) there needs to be a consensus over the circumstances in which a definition needs to be descriptive or normative, or alternatively, there needs to be a consensus over which cases are contested cases; (2) the number of contested cases needs to be limited; (3) philosophers of art need to be able to provide reasons independent of their proposed definitions for discarding some classificatory judgments, while retaining others. In showing that these requirements cannot be met, (IA) will be confirmed, verifying that philosophers of art cannot aim for their definitions of art to be both descriptively and normatively adequate.

The thesis defended in this paper is considered straightforward and meaningful. (IA) not only clarifies why philosophers of art often seem to talk past each other, it also has significant implications for the way in which the project of defining art should be executed and evaluated. Philosophers will have to choose which approach, be it descriptive or normative, they want to engage in, and consequently adopt methods that are consistent with the chosen approach. Only in this way is it possible to know what to expect from and how to evaluate definitions of art.

In the second section, I will show that, contrary to what some philosophers of art themselves believe, most philosophers of art explicitly or implicitly aim for their definitions of art to be both descriptively and normatively adequate. My intention is to present a potentially problematic mainstream view rather than attack a minority position. In the third to the sixth section, I will clarify reflective equilibrium and show how philosophers of art use this method. Then, I will focus on the three requirements for the applicability of the method of reflective equilibrium and show that they are not

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[3] In the literature on definitions of art, the term 'intuitions' is more frequently used than 'categorization judgments'. I prefer to use the latter term, since recent metaphilosophical investigation has shown the former one to be highly problematic. It is unclear what 'intuitions' exactly entail and which role they play in philosophical research (see e.g., Cappelen 2012; Deutsch 2010; Williamson 2007). I maintain that the notion 'intuitions', as used by philosophers of art, is most charitably and accurately understood as categorization judgments.

[4] Reflective equilibrium is a method borrowed from moral philosophy. It is conceived to work back and forth among our considered judgments about particular instances or cases, the principles or rules that we believe govern them, and, in case one is engaged in 'wide' reflective equilibrium, the relevant background theories with regard to these considered judgments and principles. Any of these two or three elements are revised in order to achieve an acceptable coherence among them.

met, thus endorsing the proposed thesis (IA). In the last section, the consequences of (IA) for the project of defining art will be discussed.

3.1   Descriptive and Normative Aims

It is first worthwhile to elucidate what descriptive and normative aims in the philosophy of art involve. Descriptivism entails that a philosophical definition of art merely aims to clarify and systematize our concept of art; put differently, it is concerned with how we use the concept of art, rather than how we can be guided to classify items as either art or non-art. A descriptive account does not establish what the extension of art is; rather, this extension is implicit in the way we use the concept. The underlying idea is that while there is broad agreement regarding which items fall under the concept of art, substantial disagreement exists only regarding the theory that best elucidates our classifications (cf. Pust 2012). A descriptive analysis of art has to be in accordance with our classificatory practice. Such an analysis can be falsified by showing that it contradicts our usage; if a descriptive definition includes item x in the domain of art, while x is commonly excluded from the domain of art, then the definition is in need of modification. In other words, descriptivists want their definitions to be 'extensionally adequate,' with the aim of catching the extension of art. It must be noted that virtually all descriptive proposals aim to capture the classificatory practice of 'competent users', who are well-informed about art, unbiased and are calm when making their classificatory judgments (see e.g., Levinson 1993, 413, Thomasson, 2012). By clarifying the usage of competent users, descriptivists can argue that certain folk or uninformed categorization judgments are false. What they are not committed to is to change the way competent users use the concept of art.

A normative analysis of art proposes which concept or concepts we ought to deploy. As Nick Zangwill has put it: 'the question is not: what is our concept of art? But: which concept or concepts should we have?' (Zangwill 2006, 88). Such an analysis will not completely depart from our classificatory practice. Otherwise, it is not an analysis of the concept under consideration at all. However, a normative analysis does not need to be maximally extensionally adequate. Clearly, these philosophers need to provide us with reasons for changing our use. Broadly stated, the reasons provided fall into two kinds. On the one hand, philosophers might want to change our concepts in order for them to fit the actual structure of the world (cf. Goldman 1987, 538), which represents the metaphysical stance. On the other hand, philosophers might seek to change our concepts in order to provide us with more useful concepts - concepts that are better suited to fulfill our practical and/or theoretical needs, such as simplicity, coherence or

fruitfulness for contexts in which the concept figures.[5] Such a theory can be rejected, when it fails to fulfill the metaphysical or pragmatic goals that are sought.

Although expressed implicitly, most philosophers engaged in defining art aim at descriptive *and* normative adequacy. Overall, definitions of art need to be extensionally adequate, yet, when there is disagreement regarding the art status of certain items among competent users of the concept,[6] a definition should be able to settle the disagreement. Berys Gaut and Robert Stecker openly argue for this view. In his article '"Art" as a Cluster Concept', Gaut considers the constraints on the adequacy of a theory of the concept of art (Gaut 2000, 30). A theory of art, so argues Gaut, must be susceptible of both intuition and a 'normative bite':

> First and most obvious, the account of the concept should be adequate to intuition. That is, it must agree with our intuitions about what we would say about actual and counterfactual cases: if the account claims that some object satisfies the concept, but it intuitively doesn't (or vice versa), then that is one strike against the account. [...] Second, and related to the first constraint, the account must be normatively adequate. The process of matching the account to intuitions is unlikely simply to leave all intuitions as they stand. Our linguistic intuitions about particular cases may be flawed in resting on confusions, on ignorance about the language, or on many other factors. Thus some intuitions that do not fit the proposed account may be rejected [...]. (2000, 30-31)

Put differently, a theory of art should catch what is generally meant by 'art', but when there is disagreement regarding the application of the concept, a theory should provide us with an answer to why some categorization judgments are wrong.

A similar view can be found in Robert Stecker's metaphilosophical reflections. On the one hand, he argues that 'one can ask little more from a definition than that it define a concept currently in use' (Stecker 1997, 22) and that 'the main thing we have to go on in defining art is our classificatory practice' (Stecker 2000, 60). These are clearly descriptive aims. On the other hand, Stecker grants that our classificatory practice regarding art is not as uniform as it is for 'classifying people as aunts', and that, therefore, a definition 'will be somewhat descriptive and somewhat suggestive or

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[5] This confers with James Woodward, who defends a normative approach to be the analysis of the concept of causation. He argues '[...] my project has a significant revisionary or normative component: it makes recommendations about what one ought to mean by various causal and explanatory claims, rather than just attempting to describe how we use those claims. It recognizes that causal and explanatory claims sometimes are confused, unclear, and ambiguous and suggests how these limitations might be addressed' (Woodward 2003, 7).

[6] In this chapter, '(dis)agreement regarding the extension of art' refers to (dis)agreement among competent users of the concept of art.

revisionary' (2000, 60). A definition of art, then, is aimed at a rational reconstruction of our classificatory practice which, accordingly, can be measured by testing whether a definition satisfies the following desiderata:

> An adequate conception ought to be well informed (about the history of art forms, for example), unbiased, reflective (in the sense of taking into account implication of one's view and recognizing other well-known views). It ought to be consistent and not viciously circular. It ought to be able to cover the generally agreed on extension of "art" and handle hard cases in plausible ways. It ought to make the judgment that something is art corrigible. (Stecker 2000, 55-56)

Stecker acknowledges that there can be multiple rational constructions, yet, while they might not be fully compatible, a consensus view is within sight (2000).

While Berys Gaut and Robert Stecker fully recognize that they pursue descriptive as well as normative aims, other philosophers, at first sight, seem to solely focus on descriptive aims. Three main figures in the debate, namely Jerrold Levinson, Stephen Davies and George Dickie, have suggested that a definition of art merely explicates our classificatory practice; it does not establish the extension of art, but clarifies this extension. Levinson states: 'what I have tried to *locate* [...] is the most general concept of art that we have now' [emphasis added] (Levinson 1993, 411). In a similar vein, Davies argues that 'a definition must be exhaustive of all art and exclusive of all that is not art' (Davies 2006, 45). Dickie clarifies the aims underlying the project of defining art as follows:

> What philosophical definitions of "work of art" are really attempting to do is then to make clear to us in a self-conscious and explicit way what we already in some sense know. That philosopher's definitions have been so frequently misdirected testifies to the difficulty of saying precisely what we in some sense already know. (Dickie 1997a, 79)

It is therefore suggested, in opposition to Stecker, that we are not in need of a definition of art to settle contested cases. Dickie argues that virtually, everyone interested in art is well-acquainted with the word art, knows some works of art and has experience in using the term. Therefore, Dickie concludes, a philosopher's definition of 'work of art' does not function like a dictionary definition; it need not settle the meaning and extension of the word 'art' (Dickie 1997a, 78-79). Levinson wittily argues that '[n]o one needs a conceptual analysis of person, say, in order to be able to recognize people and distinguish them from apes, mannequins, and IBM PC's.' (Levinson 1989, 27). The same goes for art: we do not need a conceptual analysis of art in order to be able to distinguish art items from non-art ones. According to Davies, one can perfectly well acquire a working mastery of a concept by being introduced to some typical examples falling under the concept. Davies draws the following analogy to clarify his view: 'people

could identify water successfully long before science revealed its essential molecular structure.' (Davies 2001, 227)

If we take a closer look at what it entails to give a descriptive account of the concept of art, it is apparent that virtually no philosopher of art, including Jerrold Levinson, Stephen Davies and George Dickie, solely aims at descriptive adequacy. A descriptive account of a concept shows us how a concept *is* used instead of how it *should be* used. Contrary to Stecker's proposed desiderata, a descriptive definition need not be consistent and reflective; it merely need show us how a concept is used. Consequently, as Alessandro Pignocchi has rightly pointed out, descriptive philosophers of art should provide a theory of disagreement, yet not an error theory: a descriptive definition must be able to elucidate why people sometimes disagree over the application of the concept of art. However, it should not tell us which categorization judgments are right and which are wrong, since this would inescapably add a normative component to the definition. Pignocchi's own intentional account of the concept of art is intended to be purely descriptive and is expected to provide us with a theory of disagreement, not with a theory of error. His account states that:

> An agent intuitively uses the concept of art to categorize an artifact if and only if she infers that this artifact has been intended to fulfill a function or set of functions which she has already accepted as a function or set of functions that can be fulfilled by artifacts that she considers as typical art. (Pignocchi 2012, 6)

It should be emphasized that Pignocchi's theory does not require that a maker of an artefact must have had certain intentions in order to warrant the application of the concept of art. It merely holds that people attribute certain intentions to a maker when attributing art status to an artefact. Pignocchi's theory can illuminate disagreement in two ways: firstly, disagreements might spring from the attribution of different intentions to the creator. Secondly, two persons can have a different function or set of functions in mind that have to be fulfilled in order to be art (2012, 7). Pignocchi remains anchored to being descriptive, since he does not maintain that categorizations are correct insofar as people attribute the correct intentions to the maker of the artefact, nor does he indicate what counts as art making intentions (2012, 6). Pignocchi's descriptive characterization is correct if it can be shown that this is the way in which people use the concept of art. However, this is not a central issue in this chapter. What is important here, is that Pignocchi is not committed to judging certain uses of the concept of art as mistaken.

If his approach is contrasted with other definitions of art on offer, it appears that the latter have a clear 'normative bite': they give us conditions based on which contested cases can be excluded or included. In other words, those definitions not only encompass a theory of disagreement, which shows why people disagree over the art status of certain items, they also have an error theory, a theory that shows which judgments are

mistaken and why they are mistaken. Jerrold Levinson, Stephen Davies and George Dickie also propose a solution to contested cases, as will be shown below.

As noted above, Jerrold Levinson has maintained that the task of defining art is a descriptive one. However, his intentional-historical definition, a definition that, as Pignocchi acknowledges (2012, 7), is highly similar to Pignocchi's purely descriptive theory, has a normative component. Pignocchi's account asserts that an item x is considered to be art by person A, if A attributes art making intentions to the maker of x. Levinson's definition roughly contends that an item x is art if and only if the item is intended for similar regards as past uncontested art (Levinson 1979, 1989, 1993, 2002). While Pignocchi focuses on whether people attribute art-making intentions to the maker of an item, Levinson's primary concern is whether the maker of item x has or had art-making intentions. Correspondingly, according to Pignocchi's theory, there are no right or wrong categorization judgments. His theory simply aims to show how these judgments are generated. Levinson's definition, however, does distinguish between correct and incorrect categorization judgments. When categorization judgments conflict on the art status of an item, his theory then tells us which judgments are right and which are wrong. They are right when the maker has the right kind of art-making intentions and wrong when the maker lacks these intentions.

Stephen Davies forcefully argues that any adequate definition of art must be able to account for the so-called non-Western art (Davies 2000). However, there is clear disagreement over whether or not the concept of art should be applied to these items, among philosophers themselves, but also among art historians (for disagreement among philosophers see: Anderson 1989; Crowther 2003; Dutton 2000; Lopes 2007; Shiner 2001; Clowney 2011; for disagreement among art historians see: Kasfir 1992; Dean 2006; Ravenhill 1992). Again, it is clear that Davies not only aims to show us why people disagree over the art status of non-Western art, he also wants to reveal that people who deny those items art status are simply wrong. In other words, apart from aiming at extensional adequacy, he further argues which items should be included in the extension of art. Thus, he exhibits how the concept of art should be applied, besides how it is applied.

Likewise, George Dickie's institutional definition of art offers us a clear answer to contested cases. While the art status of avant-garde art remains contested, even among philosophers, Dickie unequivocally includes avant-garde artworks into the domain of art, since these items clearly satisfy the conditions for arthood he discussed through his definition; avant-garde art is strongly embedded in art institutions. In fact, the inclusion of avant-garde art is one of the main motivations behind his definition. Much culturally and historically remote art, however, is not so clearly institutionally embedded. When it can be shown that these artefacts are made outside of any kind of artworld, according to Dickie, then they are not art (Dickie 2004). This follows from his view that art is a cultural-kind activity (Dickie 1997b, 27-28), regardless of the common view concerning

whether or not art is seen as a cultural-kind activity. Therefore, Dickie's definition not merely illustrates why people disagree, but also settles the disagreement.

To summarize, there are strong reasons to believe that most philosophers of art, whether or not explicitly, adhere to the view that a definition of art must be both descriptively and normatively adequate.[7] The next part delineates that these two aims cannot be combined.

3.2   Three Requirements for the Method of Reflective Equilibrium

As presented above, philosophers implicitly or explicitly try to formulate definitions of art that fit our classificatory practice, and they also attempt to suggest how the concept should be used when the art status of an artefact is contested. Gaut, Stecker and others argue that philosophers of art have borrowed a method from moral philosophy, namely the method of reflective equilibrium in order to do this (Gaut 2000, 31; Stecker 2000, 60; Abell 2012, 678; Lopes 2014, 54). The term 'reflective equilibrium' was coined by John Rawls (Rawls 1973, 20) who elaborated on this method in his book *A Theory of Justice*. Applied to the definition of art, the method entails the following. A theory of art in reflective equilibrium is a theory whereby hypotheses regarding the extension of art, that is, what we judge to be art, and hypotheses concerning the intension of art, that is, the proposed definition of art, have been mutually adjusted. In consonance with moral philosophy, reflective equilibrium in the philosophy of art undergoes the following procedures. Firstly, our initial judgments over the extension of art are collected. Certain judgments will be immediately rejected because they have not been made under favourable conditions. In moral philosophy, 'favourable conditions' suggest that the person making the judgment is calm and has adequate information about cases being judged (Daniels 1979, 258; Rawls 1973, 47-48). In the philosophy of art, this requirement entails that the judgments are made by 'competent users' of the concept of art. Once these categorization judgments have been collected, philosophers of art try to propose definitions of art that fit with these judgments. In other words, a definition or theory of art is formulated that is able to catch the extension of art, as derived from the collected

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[7] As noted above, Alessandro Pignocchi is an exception since his theory is purely descriptive. Nick Zangwill and James Young, on the other hand, are also exceptions, since their theories are openly normative, see: (Pignocchi 2012; Zangwill 1995; Young 1997).

judgments. Lastly, when philosophers of art come across a 'lack of fit', cases in which judgments are conflicted and consequently do not fully match with the proposed definition, they try to mutually adjust the categorization judgments and the proposed definition of art. In this way, as argued by the proponents of the method, a definition of art is able to catch the extension of art and to provide a solution to contested cases.

Commentators on the method of reflective equilibrium have distinguished between 'wide' and 'narrow' reflective equilibrium. In a narrow equilibrium, a philosopher aims to formulate a theory that 'economically systematizes' the collected categorization judgments (Daniels 1980, 22). The method of wide reflective equilibrium, however, points out three elements that need to be integrated into equilibrium: (1) the categorization judgments, (2) the proposed definition of the concept, and (3) a set of relevant background theories regarding the concept (Daniels 1979, 258). It follows that our categorization judgments are not merely adjusted to the proposed definition and vice versa, they are also judged against background theories. These theories, in turn, can be adjusted in light of the categorization judgments and the proposed definition. When philosophers of art use the method of wide reflective equilibrium, they also include theories on issues such as the ontological status of artworks, artistic value and the interpretation of art, into the adjustment process.

It should be noted that some commentators on Rawls' reflective equilibrium maintain that the method only concerns one person's moral judgments and principles: 'the reflective equilibrium is one achieved by a person between his disposition to make certain moral judgments and to adduce certain reasons to back them and the moral principles which would lead to the making of those very moral judgments' (Raz 2003, 178). In this view, the method of reflective equilibrium only aims to render people's personal moral beliefs more consistent and coherent. Applied to the philosophy of art, this would imply that the method only aims to render our personal categorization judgments on which items are art and our personal beliefs about what it means to be art more consistent and coherent. It is, however, not intended to show us how people generally judge items as art, nor does it aim to formulate an answer to contested cases, cases over which there are interpersonal disagreements. However, this view on the method is not adhered to by many commentators on the method of reflective equilibrium. Many seem to agree with Norman Daniels, who argues that the method of reflective equilibrium must not only formulate precise statements of different moral conceptions, but 'must also face the task of choosing between competing moral conceptions, of solving the problems of justification and theory acceptance in the moral

domain' (Daniels 1980, 21).[8] Hence, in what follows, I will examine whether these goals can be attained by the method of reflective equilibrium in the philosophy of art.

As noted above, Berys Gaut and Robert Stecker are explicit about their adherence to reflective equilibrium. Yet, those philosophers of art who are not explicit about their methodological commitments also employ this method. For instance, Stephen Davies, when trying to establish why procedural approaches are to be preferred over functional approaches, states that:

> Any theory that settles the difference between these two approaches to an analysis of the concept of art must cohere with a wide spread of intuitions about the terms in which art is discussed and interpreted. It cannot rely on a narrow match between its claims and a single critic's comments about some particular, controversial work of possible art. (Davies 1991, 46)

In other words, we should not choose between these two approaches solely based on our intuitions regarding the extension of art, but should instead seek coherence between various principles: the proposed definitions of art, our categorization judgments and our other beliefs about art, i.e., our 'background theories'. Davies' metaphilosophical reflections are duly manifested in his practice. In his work on non-Western art, Davies evaluates proposed definitions of art by examining whether they can account for this phenomenon and concludes that many cannot do this (Davies 2000, 210-213). He invokes background theories on aesthetic properties (2000, 207), linguistics (2000, 202) and art's origin and development (2000, 209) in support of adjusting definitions of art to include non-Western art into their extension. These background theories, then, justify adjusting the definition to the extension, and not the other way around.

Jerrold Levinson also seeks to establish an equilibrium between the hypothesized extension of art and his definition. He first observes the extension of art (Levinson 1979, 3) and reviews how the competing definitions of art try to capture this extension (1979, 4-6). Then, he formulates his own definition of art that is purportedly better at capturing the extension of art (1989, 21). Finally, when faced with counterexamples, i.e. tensions between art's extension and his definition, he sometimes adjusts the extension - and thus rejects the counterexample - to his definition, as in the case of very bad art (1993, 415). Other times he further clarifies, as in the case of forgeries (1990, 231-233) or even adjusts his definition to be able to account for the counterexample, as in the case of first art (1993, 421, 422; 2002, 371-372). Frequently, he depends on background

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[8] This view is endorsed by philosophers of art who are explicit about their adherence to reflective equilibrium (Gaut 2000, 31; Stecker 2000, 60; Lopes 2014, 54). For a few recent examples in support of my claim outside the philosophy of art, see Campbell (2014); Doorn (2013); Nichols (2012); Zatpentine, Cipolletti, & Bishop (2012).

theories regarding the ontological status of artworks (1993, 415) or the rationality of intentions (1990, 231) to support his adjustments.

Similarly, George Dickie evaluates his own and the competing proposals not only on the extension of art, but also on whether they are consistent with the view that art is a cultural-kind activity (Dickie 1997b, 25). Isolated art, i.e. artefacts made by people who are unaware of art and artistic practices, is excluded in the extension of art for reasons irrelevant to our classificatory practice, but because the metaphysical theory Dickie adheres to necessitates this exclusion (1997b, 27).

For the method of reflective equilibrium to be successful in the sense described above, some requirements need to be met. (1) There needs to be a consensus over when and where there is disagreement over categorization judgments, that is, there needs to be a consensus over which cases are contested. If there is no such consensus, then it is unclear when theory and categorization judgments need to be mutually adjusted and when not, and, relatedly, how the descriptive and normative adequacy of a theory can be judged. In moral philosophy, this consensus is presupposed. John Rawls, for example, presupposes that we have the greatest confidence in judging racial discrimination and religious intolerance to be unjust, while 'we have much less assurance as to what is the correct distribution of wealth and authority' (Rawls 1973, 19-20). Thus, one starts from considered moral judgments regarding uncontested issues like racial discrimination and religious intolerance, in order to formulate answers to more contested issues, such as the correct distribution of wealth and authority. However, if it turns out that there is no consensus on which issues are uncontested among well-informed persons in favourable conditions, then the method of reflective equilibrium cannot succeed in the tasks that Norman Daniels has formulated. Let me clarify this with a plausible example. Imagine that person A finds religious intolerance unjust, while person B finds religious intolerance often acceptable, since fully tolerating religion may lead to even more radical intolerance. Moreover, person A, like Rawls, believes that religious intolerance does not constitute a contested case, whereas person B does otherwise. It is clear that A cannot hope for B to accept her moral theory that is partly justified in terms of being coherent with judging religious intolerance to be unjust. For B, A needs to provide arguments for the view that religious intolerance is unjust. These arguments, according to the method of reflective equilibrium, should be grounded in consistency with what B accepts to be uncontested cases, that is, considered moral judgments that are shared. In summary, the method of reflective equilibrium can only hope to fulfill tasks including choosing between competing theories, that is, judging the descriptive and normative adequacy of proposed theories, if the adherents of different theories agree over which cases or judgments are contested and which are not.

This leads us to a second related, yet different requirement that concerns the amount of disagreement. (2) The collection of contested cases, broadly conceived, cannot be overly extensive, otherwise there is no clear starting point for the method of reflective

equilibrium. Within ethics, this requirement for the method of reflective equilibrium is commonly agreed upon, by defenders and foes of the method alike. Joel Feinberg, a defender of the method, argues that '[i]f there is no common ground of moral conviction whatever between the two individuals, either at the level of general principle or the level of singular judgment, then the game is over before it begins' (Feinberg 1972, 1020). In what follows, he is quick to argue that it is a reasonable assumption that 'two individuals in ethical disagreement over one question can find other matters on which they are in solid agreement' (1972, 1020). As has been argued with regard to requirement (1), one cannot hope to persuade an opponent of her theory by pointing out that that theory is consistent with moral judgments her opponent does not share. D. W. Haslett has suggested that a radical Marxist and a fundamental Christian cannot hope to convince each other of the virtues of their moral theories since they start from starkly different moral judgments. It seems that 'in achieving a reflective equilibrium, both the radical and the fundamentalist would have accomplished little more than a systematization of his initial perspective, thereby leaving us still with no basis for choosing between the two perspectives' (Haslett 1987, 307).

The third requirement is arguably the most important one. In response to the first two requirements, it could be argued that disagreements are not deeply pervasive and even if they are, the method of reflective equilibrium is at least able to eliminate minor disagreements between those with similar starting points (Haslett 1987, 309). Requirement (3) states that we need a principled way to decide what kind of adjustments need to be made: in which cases do we need to adjust our considered judgments to our proposed definition and in which cases do we need to adjust the proposed definition to our considered judgments? If such a principle cannot be provided, then, these adjustment decisions can only be made arbitrarily. This would render the method viciously circular and arbitrary. Such a principle should operate independently of both proposed definition and the considered judgments. In other words, the reasons for adjusting the considered judgments cannot be derived from the proposed theory and vice versa. Otherwise, the method of reflective equilibrium will inescapably entail circularity and arbitrariness. This requirement, again, is underwritten both by defenders and foes of the method and has been labeled 'the independence constraint' (Daniels 1979, 259). While moral philosophers who defend the method argue that such a principle can be found in background theories, that is, by applying the method of wide reflective equilibrium (Daniels 1979), foes of the method argue that background theories cannot give independent support for making adjustments (Haslett 1987; Cummins 1998; Holmgren 1989).

In what follows, it will be shown that all three requirements cannot be met in the philosophy of art.

3.3 Consensus Over Contested Cases

The first requirement denotes that a definition that aims to be both descriptively and normatively adequate tries to either reflect or systematize our usage of the concept, or prescribe how to use the concept. An obvious question arises: do we have a principled way to help us determine the conditions under which a definition need be descriptive or normative? The equally obvious answer would seem to be: a definition will need to be normative when there is disagreement, that is, when we are confronted with contested cases; in all other cases, a definition should stick to the descriptive level. Contested cases, then, are cases over which there is disagreement amongst competent users of the concept of art regarding their art status. If disagreement can be resolved by pointing out that one party is misinformed or biased, then there is no genuine disagreement. This answer, however, presupposes that there is a consensus over when and where there is disagreement over categorization judgments, in other words, that there is a consensus over which cases are contested cases. Nonetheless, a quick read of the literature on definitions of art shows that there is no consensus over disagreement; philosophers of art disagree over which items have a contested art status. This means that philosophers disagree over when a definition needs to have a 'normative bite'. Let me clarify this issue with some examples. Berys Gaut argues that his account has an adequate normative bite, since it provides a solution to the contested art status of non-Western artefacts. His theory shows us that non-Western art should be included into the domain of art, since the reasons for excluding these items are misguided; according to Gaut, definitions that exclude non-Western artworks wrongly take the intention to make art to be a necessary criterion for arthood (Gaut 2000, 37-38). Denis Dutton, Julius Moravcsik and Stephen Davies, however, see the art status of some non-Western artefacts as a descriptive fact that should be accounted for by any definition of art (Davies 2000; Dutton 2006; Moravcsik 1993). Still other philosophers, including David Clowney, argue that the fact that non-Western art is often discussed as art does not qualify for inclusion. He says:

> [...] we label lots of things from the past and from other cultures as art. The question we are trying to answer is whether the label gives us any insight into what those people did and made or whether we are simply assimilating their practices to our categories. (Clowney 2011, 312)

It follows that there is no consensus over whether or not the art status of non-Western art is contested. Admittedly, Dutton, Moravcsik, and others acknowledge that for some the art status of non-Western art is contested. However, they suggest that the perspective of people who deny such artefacts art status is parochial. (Crowther 2003, 130; Dutton 2006, 367-368; Moravcsik 1993, 429). Put in another way, they believe that

competent users of the concept, those who are not parochially biased, agree that non-Western artefacts can be art, thus making them disingenuous contested cases. Avant-garde art provides us with another example. For philosophers such as Arthur Danto and George Dickie, some avant-garde artworks, including Duchamp's *Fountain* and John Cage's *4'33"*, are paradigms of art, while for Denis Dutton and Nick Zangwill, they are marginal and contested phenomena within the domain of art at most (Danto 1992; Dickie 2000; Dutton 2006; Zangwill 2006). Again, philosophers disagree over whether or not the art status of avant-garde art is contested. As in the case of non-Western art, philosophers who argue that many avant-garde works are paradigmatic artworks tend to acknowledge that these works' art status is contested by some. Yet, they seem to believe that these judgments are misinformed and biased: how can one exclude artefacts from the domain of art that are so clearly included by competent users of the concept of art, namely members of the artworld (Danto 1997; Dickie 2000)? In Levinson's words, Conceptual art, Minimal art and Performance art present an 'undeniable evolution of art' (Levinson 1989, 22).

Against this context, it is thus unclear how it can be decided when adjustments need to be made, and, more generally and importantly, how a genuine debate regarding the descriptive and normative adequacy of a definition of art is possible.

3.4 The Amount of Contested Cases

The second requirement states that the amount of contested cases needs to be limited. Indeed, this is commonly assumed by philosophers of art. However, disagreement over which items are art is extremely wide. While it has been shown above that philosophers of art disagree about which instances are contested cases, a case is justifiably called contested when different philosophers of art attribute a different status to them. A quick review of work on definitions of art and empirical data produce the following contested candidates for art: instances of 'romantic' isolated art, non-Western art, cave art, avant-garde art, popular arts, folk arts, bad art, forgeries, pornography, cooking and fashion (on non-Western and folk art see: Anderson 1989; Crowther 2004; Dutton 2000; Lopes 2007; Shiner 2001; Clowney 2011; Levinson 1993; on avant-garde art see: Zangwill 2006; Carroll 1993; on forgeries see: Lessing 1965; Oppy 1992; Sartwell 1990; Levinson 1990; on romantic art see: Dickie 2004; on fashion see: Hanson 1998; Kim 1998; Miller 2007; on cooking see: Telfer 2002; Korsmeyer 2002; on pornography see: Maes and

Levinson 2012; on bad art see: Levinson 1989; Stecker 1990). Therefore, it is impossible for a definition of art to be largely descriptive in the sense that it cannot catch the commonly agreed upon extension of art, since there is no such thing.[9]

The substantial disagreement is problematic since it erases the possibility of a largely descriptive account. Moreover, it results in the method of reflective equilibrium being unable to be implemented. The first step to attain a reflective equilibrium is to collect the categorization judgments at hand, which is clearly a descriptive step. It merely tries to establish what is commonly seen as the extension of art. Indeed, all philosophers who aim at descriptive and normative adequacy start from the extension of art, or what is seen as art in artistic practice broadly conceived (D. Davies 2004, 21). However, given the amount of disagreement, this descriptive basis is extremely thin. Unsurprisingly, when we take a closer look at the 'descriptive' starting points of philosophers of art, it is apparent that these extensions already include contested cases of art and are, as such, normative starting points. Denis Dutton, for example, states that '[w]e must first try to demarcate an uncontroversial center that gives the outliers whatever interest they have' (Dutton 2006, 368). Yet, his 'uncontroversial center', including cave art, non-Western art and Bollywood movies, is not uncontroversial to many other philosophers of art and participants in the field of the arts. Likewise, Danto's and Dickie's starting points, including much pioneering avant-garde art, are controversial. It could be objected, however, that while these philosophers indeed do not start from an 'uncontroversial center', there are artworks that are *undoubtedly* art, and these artworks could be used as starting points. Examples of such uncontroversial artworks are those by canonical artists such as Michelangelo, Rembrandt, Da Vinci, Shakespeare, Mozart and Bach. Nonetheless, such works are few in view of the totality of 'candidates for art status' and thus too limited to form the uncontroversial core required for employing the method of reflective equilibrium. In a reflective equilibrium, the collection of considered judgments must be able to adjudicate between different theories. Yet, virtually all theories can account for this collection of uncontested artworks, but for different reasons: in view of their historical origins, their place in the artworld, the intentions of their makers or their possession of aesthetic properties. Reference to this thin core of uncontested artworks cannot show us which of these criteria are art criteria and accordingly, is unable to show us whether or not contested cases such as non-Western art should be included into the domain of art.

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[9] Accordingly, the most a descriptivist can hope for is an account of how people categorize items as art, rather than catching the commonly agreed upon extension of art. Alessandro Pignocchi's account is a good example of such an approach (Pignocchi 2012).

To summarize, the method of reflective equilibrium has to build on the agreed-upon applications of the concept and presupposes agreement on a broad collection of categorization judgments. However, the agreement over the extension of art is thin, which makes it challenging to find a clear descriptive starting point for defining art, as is evident from the fact that philosophers' starting points are already normative to some extent. Accordingly, the method of reflective equilibrium is unable to provide us with a means to choose between two competing theories. Since different theories start from different collections of 'agreed upon' categorization judgments, we are unable to compare their merits on the basis of the used method. Competing theories can all be in equilibrium, yet, advocate different answers to contested cases.

3.5   The Independence Constraint

The third requirement depicts that we need guidelines for making the adjustments; we need to know when we have to adjust the definition to the judged extension or vice versa. In other words, we need a way in which we can justify the made adjustments, that is, the solutions to the contested cases. If there is a mismatch between categorization judgments and proposed definition, then this mismatch can be eliminated by adjusting either the proposed definition or our categorization judgments. The method of reflective equilibrium does not seem to provide us with an answer to the question which option should be chosen. It seems that, as D. W. Haslett has suggested, we can choose between these two options only arbitrarily (Haslett 1987, 310). This problem is also discernible in the project of defining art. Richard Kamber and Catharine Abell have formulated related criticisms with regard to proposed definitions of art. Abell has argued that the mutual adjustment between the extension and intension of art can only proceed when the two hypotheses are independent of one another (Abell 2012, 678). Kamber argues that, when identification problems arise, most philosophers of art justify their solution to these cases in terms of their own proposed definition and has convincingly shown that this procedure entails circularity and dogmatism (Kamber 2011, 197). This means that the proposed definition of art is justified in terms of being able to catch the extension of art, and the extension of art that follows from the definition, is justified in terms of the proposed definition. Indeed, this represents a classic case in the project of defining art. For instance, Robert Stecker and Jerrold Levinson disagree over whether or not 'very bad art' should be included into the extension of art. At one point, Levinson defends the inclusion of 'very bad art' since 'it would seem like critical fascism to deny artistic character to [...] sincerely undertaken and historically groundable activity' (Levinson 1993, 414). Here, Levinson restates the

conditions for arthood proposed by his own intentional-historical definition of art in defence of his favoured extension of art. Insofar as other philosophers do not accept his definition, they have no reason to accept his defence of the inclusion of very bad art.

Defenders of the method of reflective equilibrium have argued that this problem can be avoided when employing wide reflective equilibrium, as opposed to narrow reflective equilibrium. As explained above, wide reflective equilibrium entails that not only the extension and the proposed definition are mutually adjusted, but that both are also judged against background theories. This methodology can only be acceptable if the background theories are independent of the categorization judgments on the one hand and the proposed definition on the other. Thus, the categorization judgments that informed the proposed definition cannot be the same categorization judgments as the ones that informed the background theories. This is the so-called independence constraint, as formulated by Norman Daniels (Daniels 1980, 26).

The independence constraint forms the crux of the method of wide reflective equilibrium. If the constraint cannot be met, then there is no way to escape the circularity complaint. The first problem that arises is that the way in which this constraint is to be met, is questionable. There seems to be no adequate reason not to arbitrarily take some categorization judgments into account for formulating a definition of art, in order to gain independent support from background theories that are informed by the withheld categorization judgments (Haslett 1987, 308). Since, by hypothesis, narrow reflective equilibrium takes into account a broader range of categorization judgments than wide reflective equilibrium, there seems to be no convincing reason to prefer one to the other (Holmgren 1989, 58). Moreover, it is highly unlikely that philosophers ad hoc do not take into account categorization judgments, simply to meet the independence constraint.

Secondly, if we take a closer look at possible background theories for the project of defining art, it becomes clear that it is implausible that they can serve as an independent element in the adjustment process. In the literature on wide reflective equilibrium, it is often unclear what kind of theories could count as background theories (Holmgren 1989, 50). It seems reasonable that relevant background theories for definitions of art are theories concerning artist's intentions, artistic value, the ontological status of artworks, the metaphysics of art, art institutions, art's meaning, aesthetic properties, aesthetic experience and other related aspects. A first problem for using these theories as background theories in a wide reflective equilibrium is that there is wide disagreement over these theories as well. Disagreements over these

theories are just as deep as those over definitions of art themselves[10], which is problematic. George Dickie, for example, cannot hope for other philosophers to accept that isolated art needs to be excluded from the extension of art on account that art is a cultural-kind activity, when other philosophers deny that art is a cultural-kind activity. A second problem that arises is that the background theories one holds are intricately connected to the definition of art one proposes and the extension that is presupposed. In other words, the theory one defends in relation to art's ontological status and artistic value is consistent with the theory one holds about the concept of art. It is, then, highly unlikely that the background theories appealed to by philosophers of art are based on a different set of categorization judgments than that used to formulate their definitions of art. The independence constraint is simply not met. Denis Dutton defends a cross-cultural naturalist definition of art. The metaphysical theory of art he defends, states that art is a universal phenomenon and that art is a natural kind. Accordingly, Dutton sees his definition of art compatible with these metaphysical views. George Dickie, on the other hand, defends an institutional definition of art. As shown above, he does not adhere to the metaphysical view that art is a natural kind; he rather defends that art is a cultural kind, thus considers his very own definition compatible with this view. Both Denis Dutton and George Dickie have reached an equilibrium between their hypothesized extension of art, their proposed definition of art and their background theories. However, with the method of reflective equilibrium, it cannot be shown which definition is to be preferred. The background theories do not function as independent factors in the equilibrium; they are simply presupposed by the defended definition.

Arthur Danto and Jerrold Levinson think we cannot judge the artistic value of an artwork when we are unaware of its historical origins; artistic value depends on the historical context in which the artwork is made. They judge their own definitions to be upheld by the fact that their definitions are consistent with this view on artistic value. Philosophers who defend aesthetic theories, on the other hand, mostly adhere to some form of aesthetic autonomy, the idea that aesthetic appreciation can proceed to some extent independently of knowledge of historical context. They see their theories as paying honor to the theory of aesthetic autonomy. In other words, philosophers of art can proclaim their definitions superior to those of others on account of consistency with background theories. Yet, since the background theories particular philosophers hold are not independent of the definition they defend, circularity is not avoided. Adjustments made in order to resolve contested cases turn out to be merely justified in

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[10] For disagreement over the metaphysics of art, see Carroll (2004a); Davies, (2010); Dickie (1997b); for that over the role of artists' intentions, see Carroll (2000); Levinson (2010); Stecker & Davies (2010), and over aesthetic properties, see Carroll (2004b); Shelley (2003).

terms of the defended definition. Berys Gaut is aware of the problem of circularity and advocates a seemingly somewhat different solution to it through an error theory. He suggests that, to avoid begging the question, the normative dimension of a theory of art, that is, the adjustments made in the reflective equilibrium, must include a theory of error- an account of why people have the mistaken intuitions they do and of why these intuitions seem plausible to them (Gaut 2000, 31). Thus, when there are conflicted categorization judgments, we can discard some of them if we can show why they are mistaken. Again, such an error theory must be independent of the proposed theory of art.

The independency constraint here is also hard to be met. Dominic Lopes has convincingly argued that it is quite easy to make up an error theory. One can always accuse a rival theory of wrongly turning a contingent feature of art into a necessary condition for arthood. Indeed, defenders of institutional theories often accuse defenders of aesthetic theories of making aesthetics an essential feature of art, while it is an oft-recurring, but contingent feature of art. Likewise, defenders of aesthetic theories have accused institutionalists of rendering institutional embeddedness into a necessary criterion for arthood, while it is also merely a contingent feature (Lopes 2014, 55-56). It is clear that in these cases the error theory is not independent of, but merely follows from the defended theory. The method of reflective equilibrium cannot correspondingly settle these disagreements.

This problem is also observable when we look at Berys Gaut's own error theory. The cluster account can give a simple explanation of disagreement, so Gaut argues: 'at least one side in the dispute is misapplying the concept of art by converting criteria into necessary conditions' (Gaut 2000, 37). Gaut is not only showing why people disagree, but also aims to show that at least one of the sides is wrong (2000, 37). How can Gaut provide us with independent reasons for arguing that one side of the dispute is wrongly converting criteria in necessary conditions? The cluster account claims that there are no necessary conditions for arthood. Therefore, anyone denying arthood to some item by arguing that it does not satisfy a necessary criterion for arthood is mistaken in light of the cluster account. So, his verdicts on contested cases simply follow from his theory. Still, Gaut argues to have found independent support for his error theory. He focuses on conceptual art, primitive art and popular music:

> The opponents of conceptual art, "primitive" art, and popular music, as we saw, hold that the relevant criteria are really necessary conditions. This assumption can be challenged by appeal to other, less contentious examples. To take some of the examples given earlier, those who insist on the necessity of the skill criterion can be challenged by the case of the fluke masterpiece, those who support intentionality as a necessary condition can be challenged by consideration of the artistic status of an artist's practice sketches, of the case Méliès, and so forth. Thus

> the cluster account has the resources to argue that in certain cases one side in disputes about art is in error. (2000, 37-38)

First, it should be noted the 'less contentious' examples are nonetheless contentious. Many philosophers have no problem with excluding fluke masterpieces from the domain of art. Christy Mag Uidhir, for example, concedes that there are failed art attempts that turn out to have artistic qualities anyway, but apart from the intentions with which they were made. These items can later be appropriated as art by the artist, but then this constitutes a new art attempt, so maintains Mag Uidhir (Mag Uidhir 2013, 34-35). The art attempt, however, did not initially result in an artwork, according to Mag Uidhir. Therefore, the analogy drawn between fluke masterpieces and primitive art does not fully work. The same goes for sketches; some would exclude them insofar as the artist did not intend to present them as such. Second, these less contentious examples could be included in the domain of art for other reasons; they may possess other art criteria that the contested cases lack. For example, artist's sketches were made in an artworld context, while primitive art was not. Therefore, one might still feel like she has valid reasons to exclude primitive art and include artist's practice sketches in the domain of art. The less contentious examples, if effective, do not show that it is mistaken to exclude primitive art; they merely show that the intention to make art is not a necessary criterion for arthood. Then, the normative dimension of Gaut's cluster theory is quite underdeveloped and dependent on the cluster theory: if one denies art status to an object because she takes one art criterion as necessary, then this exclusion – for this reason – is unwarranted. But, this is only so if the theory is correct. Put differently, Gaut assumes that we should not take any criterion as a necessary criterion in any case, a view that is derived from his theory. Therefore, he justifies his solutions to contested cases on account of his own theory as opposed to an independent error theory.

To sum up, the method of reflective equilibrium cannot lead to satisfactory results in the philosophy of art. Firstly, it is unclear when classificatory judgments and proposed definition need to be brought into equilibrium, since there is no agreement on which items have a contested art status. Secondly, since disagreement over art status is considerable, there is no clear descriptive starting point for the method. Thirdly, no solution is in sight to resolve contested cases that does not rely on either the categorization judgments or on the proposed definition of art. Accordingly, the circularity of the method of reflective equilibrium with regard to defining art has not been eliminated. In this way, it is sufficiently shown that descriptive aims and normative aims in the philosophy of art are incommensurable (IA). In the next section, it will be shown that the circularity problem leads to justification problems and suggestions will be made as to what should be done in order to avoid the problem of circularity.

3.6 Consequences

In this section, I will show what hinges on the circularity inherent to the method of reflective equilibrium, when applied to the project of defining art. Firstly, I will argue that this circularity is vicious, since it renders rational debate regarding definitions of art impossible. Secondly, I will maintain that, in order to avoid circularity and facilitate rational debate, philosophers of art will have to choose to engage in either the descriptive approach or the normative approach.

In the previous section, it has been shown that it is unclear how some categorization judgments can be prioritized over others. Generally, philosophers of art give priority to the categorization judgments that fit the definition they defend. The circularity of this procedure is highly problematic, since it turns the justification of definitions of art into an extremely thorny issue: when a definition is criticized on account of not being extensionally adequate, the definition can be defended in terms of normative adequacy, and when a definition is criticized for not being able to provide a solution to hard cases, the criticism can be rejected on account of trying to meet descriptive aims. Put differently, since it is unclear when philosophers are making descriptive claims and when they are making normative claims, it is equally unclear how definitions of art can be evaluated. Furthermore, there is no way in which we can establish that one definition is superior to another when both definitions are in equilibrium. As shown above, completely incompatible definitions of art, such as aesthetic and institutional definitions, can be equally justified by the method of reflective equilibrium. Each definition can be supported by matching background or error theories. There is no resolution in sight, and consequently it is impossible to hold a rational debate about definitions of art.

What, then, needs to be done in order to ameliorate the project of defining art? First and foremost, philosophers of art must abolish the idea that a definition must and can be both descriptively and normatively adequate, and must similarly abandon the method of reflective equilibrium. Instead, they can explicitly state which approach, be it the descriptive or the normative approach, they are pursuing and stick to the methods that fit with the chosen approach. Only few philosophers of art, most notably Nick Zangwill and Alessandro Pignocchi, have applied this rule. Zangwill openly rejects extensional adequacy as a main aim for the philosophy of art and defends a normative approach that aims at clarifying why art is valuable to us. In this sense, his theory cannot be entirely rejected on the basis of the theory's failure to fully capture the extension of art. It *can* be rejected, however, if it is shown that it does not shed light on the value of art. Pignocchi's theory, on the other hand, aims to be purely descriptive: it does not prescribe how we should use the concept of art, but merely systematizes how the concept is used. This fact that his theory does not provide a solution to contested

cases, however, does not constitute an adequate reason to reject his theory. On the contrary, his theory should not be accompanied with an error theory, but only a theory of disagreement, a theory that explains divergences in categorization judgments. An error theory that shows when and why categorization judgments are mistaken will inescapably add a normative component to a theory. However, a descriptive theory can be falsified, if it is shown that it fails to correctly capture how we make categorization judgments. Whether or not Zangwill's and Pignocchi's theories are successful is not what matters here. What is important is that both philosophers are clear about their aims and methods and have enabled us to evaluate their definitions by explicated and appropriate criteria.

To sum up, only by (1) choosing one approach, whether it is the descriptive or the normative approach, (2) sticking to the methods that are in line with the chosen approach, and (3) explicitly stating which approach has been chosen, can the circularity inherent to the method of reflective equilibrium be avoided and debates regarding definitions of art be held in a more rational fashion.[11]

Conclusion

Nearly all definitions of art on offer have descriptive as well as normative aims: they try to catch the agreed upon extension of art and provide a solution to contested cases. This chapter has shown that these two aims are incommensurable.

In order to be able to fulfill both aims, philosophers of art have borrowed a well-known method from moral philosophy, namely, the method of reflective equilibrium.

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[11] In order to further evaluate the project of defining art, we need to examine why the project is worth pursuing. Descriptive proposals are often merely justified in terms of 'curiosity' (seee.g., Kania 2011, 5; Levinson 1979, 232). It has been argued that such justification is deficient (Kaufman 2007, 280-281; Zangwill 2002, 215-216). Noël Carroll, however, has given more substantive reasons for defending the project: since applying the concept of art to certain items shows us how to present, approach and appreciate them, we need to get a firm grip on this concept (Carroll 1999, 7). Moreover, it has convincingly been demonstrated that the descriptive approach is unlikely to yield many results, given there is no robust concept of art to be analyzed (Mag Uidhir & Magnus 2011). Normative proposals have been defended on account of explanatory power (Zangwill 1995) and on account of theoretical and/or practical utility (Margolis 2010). Standard objections to normative proposals center around the idea that one needs plausible reasons to revise our usage of a given concept, and that such reasons are not yet available (cf. De Vreese & Weber 2008, 98). All these discussions have warranted further investigation into the value of defining art.

However, I have offered three reasons explaining why the method is not applicable to the project of defining art. First, there is no consensus regarding contested cases, and therefore, it is unclear when a definition of art needs to be descriptive and when it needs to be normative. Second, disagreement is extremely widespread, and there is correspondingly no clear descriptive starting point for the method. Third, there are no theories available that can justify giving more weight to some categorization judgments over others when there is disagreement. As a result, categorization judgments justify definitions of art, but when these judgments are in conflict, then some judgments are prioritized on account of the proposed definition. The circularity of this procedure is deemed vicious, since it renders the justification of definitions of art arbitrary.

The thesis defended in this paper has clarified a range of problems with regard to the project of defining art. Since it is unclear when philosophers are making descriptive statements and when they are making normative statements, an impasse is unavoidable. (IA) shows what must be done to ameliorate the debate on definitions of art. To enable and encourage genuine debate, it is of the utmost importance that philosophers of art are clear on what they are aiming for when they are defining art, and then use methods that are consistent with these aims and explicitly state their aims in their work.

Acknowledgements

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Chapter 4
The Charge from Psychology and Art's Definition.[1]

This chapter argues that the so-called Charge from Psychology does not decisively invalidate the project of defining art. The charge entails that the project is misguided because it clarifies the concept of art in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions. Psychological research, however, has shown that concepts like art cannot be analyzed in this way, since they lack a classical structure. The Charge from Psychology will be challenged by distinguishing philosophers' from psychologists' aims. This challenge does not involve a distinction between metaphysical and conceptual aims, but a distinction between descriptive and normative aims. Unlike what many philosophers of art themselves believe, I will argue that the project of defining art is best seen as a normative project, since proposed definitions of art formulate conditions under which the concept of art should be applied and not solely under which the concept is applied. Therefore, it is not inherently problematic to propose necessary and sufficient conditions for arthood: a normative definition does not need to capture how people categorize items as art. It does not follow, however, that psychological data do not have any significance for the project; they can and should be used as sources for debates regarding art's definition.

Introduction

Psychological research on concepts purportedly has posed deep challenges to the project of defining art. Since cognitive psychologists have shown that most concepts, including 'art,' do not have a classical structure and the project of defining art presupposes that art has a classical structure, the project is proclaimed to be mistaken (Dean, 2003). It is this challenge, the so-called *Charge from Psychology* (Sandin, 2006), that I will refute:

> (CP) The project of defining art is misguided since it relies on a theory of concepts
> that is not valid with regard to concepts like 'art'.

In the first section of this chapter, the main argument in favour of (CP) will be elucidated. Definitions of art, so it is argued, aim to clarify the concept of art in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions. However, this can only be done if there is a classical concept of art underlying our identification of certain items as 'art'. Psychological research, however, has shown that concepts such as art do not have such a classical structure (Lakoff, 1999; Rosch, 1999). Consequently, philosophers of art should drastically alter or even abandon the project of defining art.

In the second section, a common and widely accepted counterargument against (CP) will be repudiated. This counterargument entails that there is a distinction to be drawn between psychological and philosophical truths: cognitive psychology tells us how we in fact do categorize art, while philosophy is supposed to reveal art's metaphysical or 'real' essence. Yet, this distinction needs to be questioned. Firstly, the way in which the project is usually carried out is inappropriate for attaining these metaphysical aims. Secondly, it is unclear how criteria for arthood can be derived from the mind-independent reality.

In the third section, it will be shown that it is possible to draw a distinction between the philosophical and the psychological project of defining art, without insisting on the metaphysical nature of the philosophical project of defining art and without ignoring the relevance of empirical studies. On the one hand, I will argue that if philosophers want to give a descriptive conceptual analysis of art, then they need to use all empirical means available. Insofar as psychological studies prove to be satisfactory, philosophers with descriptive aims should account for them. On the other hand, I will suggest that descriptive conceptual analysis is not the project philosophers seem to be pursuing. Although descriptivism, as in many other fields within philosophy, is mostly openly adhered to, virtually all proposals are normative (revisionist), in the sense that they show us how we *should* use the concept of art, not how we *do* use the concept of art. Although fundamental methodological problems follow from the confusion regarding the aims of the project of defining art, the revisionist project in itself is worthwhile

pursuing. Empirical and armchair research has shown that the concept of art is confused, unstable and showcases many arbitrary features. Therefore, there seems to be no reason not to propose new or revised concepts for thinking about art. Within a revisionist project, (CP) loses force: it is not necessarily problematic to propose necessary and sufficient conditions for arthood. A philosopher might argue that such an analysis is more productive in light of its simplicity and consistency.

Finally, I will show what conclusions can, and cannot, be drawn from my findings. The refutation of (CP) does not imply that psychological or, more broadly, empirical research has no significance whatsoever for the philosophy of art. What will be argued here is that the bearing of psychological and empirical data on philosophical theories fully depends on the questions philosophers aim to answer. Thus, before refuting philosophical theories on grounds of empirical data, it must be investigated what kind of project philosophers are engaged in.

4.1   The Charge from Psychology

The Charge from Psychology is not particularly new, but has only influenced the project of defining art quite recently (Dean, 2003). William Ramsey has provided the most clear exposition and defence of the charge (1998). The charge broadly entails that the psychological assumptions underlying conceptual analysis have been empirically falsified. A conceptual analysis provides us with necessary and sufficient conditions for the application of a philosophically interesting concept, such as free will, cause, essence, person, and so on. Such an analysis is made by reflecting on intuitive instances of the concept and trying to determine the essential properties of these instances. An analysis is refuted when it excludes instances that intuitively fall under the concept and when it includes instances that intuitively do not fall under the concept. In other words, an analysis is falsified when it allows for counterexamples.[2] Ramsey points out two

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[2] There is much metaphilosophical debate regarding the role of intuitions in philosophy. Intuitions have long been accepted as prima facie evidence for philosophical theories. However, it has been argued, most notably by experimental philosophers, that intuitions should not be treated as evidence in philosophy, since intuitions show (cultural) variability and instability (Machery et al. 2004, B8). Within the field of aesthetics, Huovinen and Pontara have given a detailed account of how deeply intuitions conflict over musical expressivity and have maintained that in this case intuitions cannot play an evidential role (2011). Other philosophers, such as Herman Cappelen (2012), Max Deutsch (2010), Joshua Earlenbaugh and Bernard Molyneux (2009), maintain that intuition does not play the role in philosophy that is ascribed to it. Earlenbaugh and Molyneux have

assumptions conceptual analysts necessarily rely on. Firstly, they take for granted that there is considerable overlap in the intuitive categorizations people make. Such overlap is needed, otherwise, it is only to be expected that there will be intuitive counterexamples. Secondly, conceptual analysts presuppose that our intuitive categorization judgments will correspond with simple clusters of properties, since they formulate analyses in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions (Ramsey, 1998, pp. 164-165). Put differently, conceptual analysts assume the correctness of the 'classical theory of concepts' with regard to philosophically interesting concepts. Ramsey sketches conceptual analysts' dependence on the classical view of concepts as follows:

> [...] categorization intuitions are assumed to lead us to tidy sets of necessary and sufficient properties because, it is further assumed, these intuitions are generated by underlying representations *of* necessary and sufficient properties. On this view, it is assumed that we have tacit knowledge of the essence of abstract concepts, that the essence is a small set of necessary and sufficient conditions, and that we can uncover this knowledge by appealing to our intuitive categorization judgments. (1998, p. 165)

Psychologists, however, have forcefully rejected the classical view of concepts with regard to philosophically interesting concepts. They have shown that, in these cases, class membership is not an all-or-nothing matter. Rather, our categories have graded membership; some instances of a given philosophical concept are more central to the class than others (Ramsey, 1998, 166). People's categorizations do not stem from their tacit knowledge of necessary and sufficient conditions of concepts, rather they are dependent on, for example, prototypes, confer the prototype theory of concepts, or our (naive) theories of concepts, confer the theory-theory of concepts.[3] Correspondingly, proposing counterexamples is futile, since it is only to be expected that there will be counterexamples: (1) philosophically interesting concepts do not allow for clarification in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions. Correspondingly, whenever such an analysis is offered, someone is bound to come up with an instance that does not fit it. (2) There is insufficient overlap between intuitive categorization judgments. Ramsey concludes: 'Hence, the search for a simple nondisjunctive definition of a given philosophical concept that accords with all of our intuitions and admits of no counterexamples is a hopeless enterprise, there simply is no such thing' (1998, p. 171).

Before applying this charge to the project of defining art, it must be specified which theories of art presuppose the classical theory of concepts: to which theories of art is

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claimed that intuitions are used as persuaders, not as truth trackers (2009, p. 36). The thesis defended in this chapter is consistent with the latter view. However, I cannot fully develop this point here.

[3] For a good overview of non-classical concept theories, see: (Johnston & Leslie, 2012; Machery, 2009).

the charge applicable? Whereas Ramsey suggests that only simple non-disjunctive, i.e., conjunctive, theories are targeted, there are good reasons to assume that the charge is also applicable to some disjunctive theories of art, as Jeffrey T. Dean seems to suggest. Still, a complex disjunctive theory like Berys Gaut's cluster account is not targeted (2003, p. 34 n. 6). I will argue that the charge is applicable to all definitions of art. However, which theories of art do I count as definitions of art here?

There is much debate over whether or not some or all disjunctive theories of art are definitions of art (Gaut, 2005, pp.285-88; Dutton, 2006, pp. 374-75; Davies, 2004; Longworth and Scarantino 2010). For the purposes of this chapter, the distinction Berys Gaut has drawn between simple disjunctive theories and highly disjunctive theories is useful (2005, p. 285). In Gaut's view, the former are definitions, while the latter are not. This distinction is agreed upon by defenders of simple as well as highly disjunctive theories (Stecker 2000, p. 48; Longworth and Scarantino 2010, pp. 164-65). There are several differences between the two varieties of disjunctive theories. Firstly, highly disjunctive theories have more disjuncts - the number of disjuncts is possibly indeterminate - and the conditions in the disjuncts are variegated. Simple disjunctive theories have a small, determinate number of disjuncts and the conditions for being art exhibit clear commonalities (Gaut, 2005, pp. 285-286). Secondly, while for highly disjunctive theories, it may be indeterminate whether or not a given set of conditions is sufficient for being art, the sets of conditions stated by simple disjunctive theories are asserted to be determinately sufficient (Stecker, 2000, p. 48). In other words, the disjuncts proposed by simple disjunctive theories are 'classically structured', as they are stated in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions. Accordingly, like conjunctive definitions, they have clear boundaries and their structure does not allow for graded membership (Longworth and Scarantino, 2010, p. 164).[4] Therefore, I argue that the charge is applicable to conjunctive and simple disjunctive theories of art, but not to highly disjunctive theories. The disjunctive theories of art on offer can quite easily be divided into these two classes.[5] Thus, in this chapter, 'definitions of art' refers to conjunctive and simple disjunctive theories of art.

Applied to the project of defining art, the reasoning behind the Charge from Psychology goes as follows:

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[4] It must be pointed out that defenders of definitions of art has argued that definitions can allow for graded membership: some of the proposed necessary and sufficient conditions may entail vagueness in themselves (see for example Davies, 1991, p. 20).

[5] For examples of simple disjunctive definitions of art, see: (Davies, 2000; Stecker, 1990). For examples of complex disjunctive definitions, see: (Dutton, 2006; Gaut, 2000; Longworth and Scarantino, 2010).

(1) Definitions of art are best understood as descriptive conceptual analyses of art.

(2) Since definitions of art clarify the concept of art in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions, the project of defining art presupposes that the concept of art has a classical structure.

(3) Cognitive psychology has revealed that philosophically interesting concepts, including 'art', do not have a classical structure.

Conclusion: (CP) The project of defining art is misguided because it relies on a theory of concepts that is not valid with regard to concepts like 'art'.

It is assumed that definitions of art are most accurately seen as descriptive conceptual analyses of art, since, primarily, they aim for their definitions to capture the extension of art, that is, to include items that are judged to be art and to exclude all other items, by formulating necessary and sufficient conditions for arthood. In order to do this, philosophers test their intuitions on counterexamples to proposed definitions. These aims and methods seemingly presuppose a classical theory of concepts. However, since the concept 'art' lacks a classical structure, counterexamples against proposed definitions lose force: it is only to be expected that there will be counterexamples, since there are no necessary and sufficient conditions for being an artwork and intuitions on what is art diverge to a non-trivial extent. Therefore, so supporters of (CP) argue, the project of defining art is misguided.

Jeffrey T. Dean, who has applied the Charge from Psychology to the project of defining art, adheres to the prototype theory of concepts. The prototype theory entails that, rather than being defined by sets of necessary and sufficient conditions, concepts are instead organized around prototypes. These prototypes are important for our understanding of the concept and non-prototypical items are identified as falling under the concept due to their relation to the prototypical instances (2003). Correspondingly, Dean argues that we should focus on the question how non-prototypical instances can be identified as either art or non-art and how we can motivate these extensions, while we should abandon traditional definitional approaches to the question, 'What is an artwork?' (2003, pp. 32-34). Other philosophers of art, most notably Thomas Adajian, have defended the project of defining art against (CP). It is this defence that will be challenged in the next section.

4.2   Distinguishing Between Psychology and Philosophy I

Thomas Adajian has forcefully rejected Dean's prototype theory of art by pointing out that the prototype theory itself is highly controversial and by arguing that there is a

clear distinction to be made between psychological and philosophical theories. The first line of defence is not very convincing. Adajian suggests that prototype theories have been met with substantial and even fatal criticisms. Indeed, all theories of concepts have been met with considerable criticisms.[6] However, as Aaron Meskin has rightly pointed out, 'it is the *failure of the classical account of concepts* that generated the problem for definition, not merely the truth of the prototype view. So appeal to problems with the prototype account does not seem to answer the challenge' (2008, 133). As long as the correctness of the classical theory of concepts is under serious attack, the Charge from Psychology remains valid, regardless the adequacy of the alternatives.

Adajian's second line of defence, distinguishing between psychological and philosophical theories, is more insightful. He argues that, while psychological theories, attained by observations and surveys, simply show us how people decide, correctly or incorrectly, whether something is a work of art, philosophical theories need to show us the 'extra-psychological conditions for category membership' (2005, p. 233). In other words, philosophers of art do not want to clarify or systematize how the concept of art is used, rather they want to formulate a 'metaphysically taxonomic theory of art'. They are not interested in how we distinguish between art items and non-art items, but in how they are distinguished in the mind-independent reality. Thus, (CP) is falsified by arguing that (1) does not hold: definitions of art do not aim to clarify the *concept* of art, but rather the *nature* of art.

A similar argument can be found in George Dickie's response to Dean's defence of a prototype theory of art. Dickie does not wish to deny that it is highly likely that people have prototypes of kinds of works of art, rather than necessary and sufficient conditions for arthood in mind when they categorize certain items as 'art'. However, this poses no problem for the project of defining art:

> I do not think that there is any inconsistency between the existence of a prototype of a kind of work of art or prototypes of kinds of works of art and the attempt of philosophers of art to give definitions of "work of art." The attempt to define "art" is, I think, an attempt to go beyond prototypes to reveal what lies behind them. (2004, p. 391)

It follows that the project of defining art cannot be rejected on account of psychological research on how people use the concept of art. Philosophers of art and psychologists are engaged in a different project altogether. Here, Adajian and Dickie rely on an old distinction between 'conceptual' and 'real' definitions and suggest that philosophical

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[6] For a plea for abandoning the term 'concept' from psychology and philosophy see: (Machery, 2009).

definitions of art aim to be real definitions: they aim to elucidate the nature of art, not how the concept of art is used.

This distinction between philosophical and psychological truths has been challenged, most notably by Aaron Meskin and Kathleen Stock. Meskin does not think that philosophers are mainly interested in the metaphysical project and argues that the methodology philosophers use to carry out the project, namely 'getting the extension right and trying to accommodate intuitions about actual and counterfactual cases' is not suited to investigate the mind-independent reality (2008, 133). Moreover, both Meskin and Stock argue that no sense can be made of such a metaphysical project. Although there is a gap between our quotidian methods of categorization and the real essence of categories in the case of natural kinds, this is not the case for non-natural kinds like art. There is no scientific investigation into the essence of art, like there is in the case of natural kinds like gold and water (Meskin 2008, 134). In a similar vein, Stock claims that '[a]lthough classifications within nature exist more or less independently of our practices of classification, it seems odd to think that a class of artworks would exist whether or not we categorized them as such' (2003, pp. 169-170).[7]

These objections against Adajian's distinction between the psychological project and the metaphysical project are, I believe, convincing and I will reinforce them in what follows. Although there is scientific work on the question 'what is art?', these studies cannot give us clear-cut answers on how to distinguish between art and non-art. Let me clarify this with an example. Drawing on developmental psychology and cognitive neuroscience, Johan De Smedt and Helen De Cruz have examined which cognitive processes are required for art production and appreciation in order to clarify and identify instances of 'earliest art' and have aimed to, in this way, move forward the project of defining art (2011). Although a wide range of cognitive skills are involved in art production and appreciations, they focus on those skills that they *believe* typify

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[7] It might be objected that Stock and Meskin adhere to a very restricted view of 'natural kind', one that virtually only includes biological species. It has been suggested that the natural kind model can also be applied to social kinds (Boyd, 1991). It is then argued that our categorization of an item as a certain social kind is in relevant ways independent of our conventions and largely dependent on the causal structure of the world. However, even on this view, it remains unclear how demarcation criteria can be discovered in the world. There are many relevant patterns of causal relations between artworks and how the term art is used, as is evidenced in the many proposed definitions of art. However, it is unclear how 'the causal structure of the world' enables us to choose between these competing proposals. It might also be argued that while art might not be a natural kind, there are good reasons to believe that it tracks one, since the making and consumption of art delivers evolutionary pay-offs. Stephen Davies has offered such a view. It is then argued that '[...] though the category is a humanly invented one, the human category is not merely a contingent fabrication with no content or constraints other than its answering to some classificatory need or other purpose we have, because it is imposed on and is to some extent answerable to natural categories' (2003, p. 6). While this is a defensible suggestion, it remains unclear how demarcation criteria can be derived from this metaphysical viewpoint.

behaviors related to art. These skills include the ability to recognize intentionality, symbol-mindedness, and aesthetic sensitivity. It should be clear that these skills can only be picked out once it is decided what counts as art, art production and art appreciation. However, they use their own proposed criteria, namely the exhibition of these three cognitive skills, in order to decide whether or not an item is art. The circularity of this procedure is apparent. Correspondingly, they do not start from categorization principles found in nature, rather they put forward categorization principles: to judge whether a specific kind of artefact is art they 'examine whether they were deliberately designed, had symbolic meaning, and applied aesthetically to their contemporaries' (2011, p. 385). These three criteria are not mind-independent facts about art. Rather, they are conditions that, according to De Smedt and De Cruz, need to be fulfilled in order to warrant the application of the term art. The boundaries between art and non-art are not found in reality, rather they are imposed on reality by our categorizations. Once it is decided which items to include into the domain of art, it will become possible to investigate the nature of these items.[8] However, reality itself does not offer us these demarcation criteria.

While Adajian's distinction between a metaphysical/philosophical and epistemological /psychological project of defining art is unconvincing, there seems to be something right about his objection against (CP). There are good reasons to believe that philosophers are not engaged in the same project as psychologists: philosophers *do* judge some categorization judgments to be correct and others to be incorrect, while psychologists are not interested in the correctness of our categorization judgments. I will further develop this idea in the following section.

4.3   Distinguishing Between Psychology and Philosophy II

The distinction between the metaphysical and psychological project does not have much force against (CP). Still, I will suggest that another distinction between the psychological and the philosophical project should be drawn: a distinction between a descriptive and a revisionist or normative project.[9] More so than being mistaken about

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[8] Therefore, the claim that no demarcation criteria can be derived from nature does not render investigation into the nature of art impossible. Christy Mag Uidhir, for example, starts from a widely shared belief that art is in some way intention-dependent and shows which epistemological and metaphysical implications this belief has (2013).

[9] I will use 'revisionist' and 'normative' interchangeably, since they mean the same thing.

the concept of art, philosophers of art might turn out to be mistaken about the kind of project they are engaged in. In order to examine this suggestion, let us take a closer look at philosophers' of art metaphilosophical commitments and their definitions of art.

Descriptivism entails that when a definition departs from the way people categorize art, the definition must be altered, while revisionism entails that in such case people's usage of the concept should be altered (Pignocchi 2012, 2). As within many other fields in philosophy (Brunnander 2011; Brown 1999), descriptivism is openly adhered to in the project of defining art: philosophers aim to clarify the concept of art as it is used, not to change our usage (Kania 2011, 5). Correspondingly, Berys Gaut claims that 'first and most obvious', an account of the concept of art should be 'adequate to intuition' (2000, 30), Robert Stecker states that 'the main thing we have to go on in defining art is our classificatory practice' (2000, 60), and Stephen Davies maintains that important debates regarding the definition of art can only be settled by a theory that coheres 'with a wide spread of intuitions about the terms in which art is discussed and interpreted' (1991, 47). These metaphilosophical reflections strongly suggest that these philosophers are engaged in descriptive conceptual analysis: they are interested in the *concept* of art, rather than in its metaphysical *essence*, thus in conceptual analysis rather than in metaphysical reflection, and in how the concept *is* used, rather than how it *should* be used, thus they stick to descriptivism, and do not turn to revisionism.[10]

It must be noted that several philosophers of art agree with Berys Gaut when he argues that a theory of art must have adequate 'normative bite' (2000, p. 38). Philosophers of art try to systematize 'correct' categorization judgments. They do this by focusing on the categorization judgments made by *competent* users of the concept and by employing the method of reflective equilibrium. Competent users of a concept are well-informed about the phenomenon under consideration, unbiased and calm. By clarifying the usage of competent users, conceptual analysts can argue that certain folk, biased or uninformed categorizations are false. Correspondingly, they assume that competent users have broadly shared intuitions on what is art. Moreover, they mutually adjust hypotheses regarding the extension of art and hypotheses regarding the intension of art in order to provide us with a 'rational reconstruction' of the concept of art (Stecker, 2000, p. 60). In these two senses, descriptive theories of art supposedly do perform a (limited) normative role.[11] What descriptivists are *not* committed to is to change the way competent users use the concept of art in view of specific metaphysical or/and pragmatic goals and needs, which is what revisionists are after.

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[10] The idea that most recent definitions of art are rightly seen as descriptive conceptual analyses of art is also defended by (Meskin, 2008; Pignocchi, 2012; Zangwill, 1995).

[11] A remarkable exception is Alesssandro Pignocchi's characterization of art: he wants to abandon all normative components from his characterization of art. See: (Pignocchi, 2012).

When taking a closer look at philosophers' actual, 'first-order', work on the definition of art, it is apparent that philosophers' commitments to descriptivism are less strong. Virtually all proposed definitions of art contain strong normative elements. In other words, definitions of art do not solely clarify and systematize how the concept of art *is* used, but often suggest how it *should* be used in view of what roles they want the concept of art to perform. This is quite easily shown when looking at debates on whether 'very bad art' (Levinson, 1993; Stecker, 1990) and forgeries (Levinson, 1990; Oppy 1992; Sartwell, 1990) are artworks. Arguments given in favour of attributing or denying art status to these cases do not appeal to how the concept of art *is* used, but to how the concept of art *should* be used. For example, Levinson argues it would be 'critical fascism' to deny very bad art art-status altogether (1993, p. 414), while Stecker suggests that we ought not to include artefacts with no artistic qualities whatsoever into the domain of art (1990, p. 268). On forgeries, Crispin Sartwell and Jerrold Levinson believe that it is not warranted to include them into the domain of art, since this would lead to a misappreciation of these artefacts (Sartwell, 1990, p. 157; Levinson, 1990, pp. 231-232). Graham Oppy, on the other hand, thinks forgeries in general should be seen as art, since they belong to an art form and an item that belongs to an art form is art (1992, p. 160). These examples show that different parties give different reasons for including or excluding artefacts from the domain of art, yet they do not justify their position by pointing at common usage, rather they rely on normative reasons and arguments. They revise the concept of art in view of what roles they want the concept to perform.

It is clear that no philosopher of art is willing to fully take into account the way the concept of art is used. Let us consider the following example. Kathleen Stock criticizes James Carney's definition of art for not being able to account for the fact that in the art form of painting nearly all paintings are judged to be art, while in literature, the concept of art has a far more evaluative function (2003, p. 167). If this is correct and the project is descriptive, then a definition should account for the fact that the concept of art is used in different ways when addressing different art forms. Yet, hardly any philosopher would allow for such inconsistencies in their characterization of the concept of art.[12]

Descriptivism demands that when a theory does not substantially fit the way the concept of art is used, the theory must be altered, not our usage. Thus, the main desideratum of a descriptive definition is extensional adequacy. However, almost all philosophers of art show how the concept should be used, not how it is used. Moreover,

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[12] It is noteworthy that Kathleen Stock herself does not put forward a full-blown theory of art.

they aim for their definitions to be consistent and not overly complex.[13] Philosophers' metaphilosophical commitments do not match their actual philosophical practice. This is problematic; if the descriptive and the normative project are confused, then it is unclear whether a philosopher wants to clarify how the concept of art *is* used or how the concept of art *should* be used (cf. De Vreese & Weber, 2008). In fact, it is of utmost importance that philosophers get clear on their aims and methods. This to avoid a mismatch between aims and methods, which ultimately results in bad arguments, and to avoid confusion regarding what we can expect from a definition of art. Simply put, a philosopher cannot point at common usage to justify normative claims and vice versa. A normative proposal cannot be attacked simpliciter by arguing that the proposal conflicts with common usage, and a descriptive proposal should not be criticized because it does not offer a commendable usage of the concept that is being clarified. Moreover, when a philosopher proposes to alter our usage of the concept of art, she must give us good reasons to do so. In other words, she must state in light of which *purposes* she revises our concept, and why these purposes are legitimate.[14] When these purposes are not made explicit, there are no clear evaluation criteria for definitions of art. It does not follow, however, that the normative project in itself is not worthwhile.

It is striking that William Ramsey himself explicitly states that these psychological findings regarding concepts should encourage philosophers to give analyses of philosophically interesting concepts that showcase explanatory power rather than extensional adequacy and thus pleads for revisionism (1998, p. 176). Psychological studies on concepts and on how people categorize art have shown that trying to formulate an informative, consistent and not overly complex definition of art in the descriptive sense is 'a hopeless enterprise' (Ramsey 1998, 171). The normative approach to defining art, on the other hand, does not seem so hopeless. The project of defining art was instigated by problems encountered in the field of the arts: how to approach, categorize and evaluate, for example, non-Western art, avant-garde art and popular arts.[15] A descriptive account, if successful, will show that these cases constitute problems, since there is disagreement over their status. Such an account, however, cannot propose positive answers to these problems. We need definitions or theories of art that establish whether it is *recommendable* or not to include certain items in the domain of art in light of certain purposes. Amie Thomasson, Aaron Meskin and Nick Zangwill, although all three from different perspectives, have rightly argued when we

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[13] Highly complex theories, as the ones proposed by Gaut, Longworth and Scarantino do not aim at simplicity. Yet, as noted above, (CP) does not apply to them.

[14] It is not unlikely that there will be multiple legitimate purposes, resulting in multiple legitimate concepts of art. Christy Mag Uidhir and P.D. Magnus have defended this position. See: (2011).

[15] Brunnander argues something similar with regard to the concept of 'function'. See: (2011, p. 419).

discover that our concepts do not have much explanatory power and exhibit a lot of inconsistencies, it is desirable to revise our concepts in order for them to serve our interests.[16] Again, it must be stressed that it is then of the utmost importance that our interests, i.e., our envisioned purposes, are explicitly and coherently stated. If it is unclear what kind of interests a proposed definition aims to serve, then there are no criteria for measuring the adequacy of the definition. A normative proposal, then, can be criticized because it does not serve the envisioned purposes as well as because these purposes are futile or wrongheaded. Note that the normative approach to defining art might as well entail formulating necessary and sufficient conditions for arthood. Such a classical definition might be advisable in terms of clarity and consistency (Thomasson, 2012, p. 187; Meskin, 2008, p. 140; Zangwill, 2006, p. 87). Therefore, psychological research on the way in which people categorize art cannot falsify a normative analysis of the concept of art.

To summarize, (CP) is not refuted by distinguishing between a metaphysical and an epistemological project, rather it is undermined by distinguishing between a normative and a descriptive project. In the remainder of this chapter, I will consider the consequences of my refutation of (CP) for the relationship between empirical data and philosophical theories.

4.4   Empirical Data and Philosophical Theories

In this chapter, I have argued that the Charge from Psychology against the project of defining art is valid insofar as philosophers of art aim to formulate a descriptive conceptual analysis of art. Correspondingly, if philosophers of art wish to formulate a descriptive analysis of art, they need to take into account the relevant empirical data regarding the structure of the concept of art. Since most philosophers, although they do not admit it, are involved in a more 'creative' or revisionary approach, the charge loses its force. However, does it follow that psychological and, more broadly, empirical data cannot have any bearing on philosophical definitions and theories of art whatsoever?

Regarding the project of defining art as it is usually pursued, empirical findings might not have the importance they are claimed to have by proponents of (CP), yet there might be some role for these findings. Namely, they can reveal where problems

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[16] Robust defences of (forms of) revisionism can also be found in other philosophical fields. See for example: (Bishop, 1992; Brown, 1999; Weber & De Vreese, 2009; Miller, 2000).

regarding our concepts lay, over which items there is and is not agreement regarding their art status. Philosophers may be mistaken or ignorant about the inconsistencies and arbitrariness in our concepts of art. Empirical psychology can show philosophers how lay people categorize items as art. As has been shown above, psychological findings regarding lay people's categorization judgments do not put constraints upon the definition of art. Correspondingly, a philosopher of art should not exclude item x from art status, on account of, for example, lay people's claim that x cannot be art since 'their grandchild could have made x'. However, such findings are not irrelevant to the philosopher of art either, since they might reveal over which items and in which circumstances there is disagreement or ignorance regarding the application of the concept of art. The fact that people exclude certain items from the domain of art because the artists did not display enough skill is of interest to the philosopher of art; such findings show in which ways concepts of art need to be improved. Let me draw a parallel with the philosophy of science in order to clarify this point even further. A philosopher of science will not and should not include astrology into the domain of science based on the fact that lay people sometimes consider these practices to be scientific. However, the fact that these pseudoscientific practices are often considered to be science is of interest to the philosopher of science, as is evident from the abundant literature on the demarcation problem (see for example: Pigliucci & Boudry, 2013): some philosophers of science want to put forward definitions or theories of science that exclude pseudoscience from the domain of science and that show why these practices should be excluded. These philosophers of science argue that this is an important task: it can prevent pseudoscientific practices like astrology from being treated like scientific practices. If philosophical definitions of science or art aim to provide us with useful tools for guiding our behaviour towards certain phenomena, then it is important to know how concepts like science and art are used by lay people. Moreover, as Justin Fisher has suggested, empirical research might show which purposes are served by which concepts. Correspondingly, we can use such data to craft philosophical analyses that will enable us to better realize our envisioned purposes (2014). To summarize, while empirical data cannot be used to straightforwardly construct or reject definitions of art, they can and should be used as sources for debates on definitions of art, since these data can show interesting problems regarding the application of the concept of art that may have been neglected, or may not have been noticed, by philosophers of art.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that the Charge from Psychology is valid only insofar as the project of defining art is rightly seen as an exercise in descriptive conceptual analysis. The common counterargument against the charge, namely that philosophical truths are metaphysical in nature and thus clearly separated from psychological truths, does not have much currency in this debate, since it is unclear how demarcation criteria can be derived from the mind-independent world. Yet, when taking a closer look at philosophers' work on definitions of art, it is clear that another distinction needs to be made, namely a distinction between the descriptivist and the normative project of defining art. Proposed definitions of art formulate conditions under which the concept of art should be applied, not solely under which the concept is applied. Although this confusion regarding the methods and aims of definitions of art is fundamentally problematic and philosophers should argue for the categorizations they propose, the normative project in itself is worthwhile. Definitions of art have been proposed in order to solve problems regarding the identification, the appreciation and the evaluation of art. A descriptivist approach can help expose where problems lay, but will not help resolve them. Psychological and empirical research can have a role in the normative project; their findings can be used as sources for debates over the application of the concept of art. However, this role is much more limited than is often presupposed by empirically-minded philosophers, in the sense that it does not put constraints on proposed definitions of art. Most importantly, the role such empirical data can play depends on the questions that a philosopher hopes to answer and the aims she hopes to fulfill by defining art.

Acknowledgements

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Part III: Ways to Proceed

In Part I and II, I have shown that there is a mismatch between philosophers of art's self-image and their practice and that this leads to methodological problems. Descriptive methods are used to substantiate normative claims and vice versa. Moreover, it has been demonstrated that these problems can be resolved neither by adjusting their self-image to their practice, since their practice is problematic, nor by adjusting their practice to their self-image, since descriptive conceptual analysis is untenable. In Part III, I will evaluate alternative approaches to the definition of art.

Two alternatives are available. Firstly, one can give up the search for a theory of art and try to theorize about smaller units, namely, art kinds. This option implies, what Christy Mag Uidhir has called 'moderate art eliminativism', also called 'art reductionism'. Art reductionism does not mean getting rid of the category 'art' altogether, but entails substantially restricting the role of the concept of art. It is then believed that art can be more satisfactorily clarified by focusing on the individual arts, such as painting, sculpture, music, literature and dance. Secondly, one can take a different approach to the project of defining art, namely the normative conceptual, also called the pragmatic, approach. The pragmatic approach aims to offer normative theories that allow us to evaluate existing concepts of art and propose new concepts in light of attaining certain purposes that people may have. Consequently, such an approach does not start from the way in which the concept of art is used, but from what purposes the concept enables us to realize. Such purposes either center around theoretical and practical utility or are metaphysical in nature. In Part III, I will maintain that art reductionism is not more viable than the descriptive conceptual approach and I will defend a pragmatic approach to defining art.

Chapter 5 encompasses a state of the art. I will substantiate the three theses that have been stated in the introduction of this dissertation with my findings in Part I and II. In Chapter 6, entitled 'Why We Need a Theory of Art As a Whole', I will evaluate art reductionism. In his recent book, *Beyond Art*, Dominic McIver Lopes has suggested that we should abandon the search for a theory of 'art as a whole' and focus on theories of the individual arts instead. It is assumed, then, that nobody needs a theory of art and

that all the questions that need to be answered by a theory of art can be answered by these theories of the individual arts. Finally, in Chapter 7, I will substantiate and defend a pragmatic approach to defining art.

Chapter 5
State of the Art: Aims and Methods of the Project of Defining Art

Philosophical interest in the project of defining art is decreasing. Many philosophers of art feel that the debate regarding definitions of art has reached an impasse, because there are no plausible ways in which disagreements over the application of the concept of art can be settled (Lopes, 2014, pp. 53-58) and because it is unclear how definitions of art can contribute to a better understanding of art or can be useful for other art-related domains (Kaufman, 2007, pp. 290-291; Mag Uidhir & Magnus, 2011, p. 85). In other words, the two main worries expressed by neo-Wittgensteinians, namely that defining art is an unviable as well as a futile project, have never been fully removed. I believed that, to be able to fully grasp these worries, it was needed to clarify the methods and aims of defining art. To know what these worries amount to, it needs to be investigated *how* philosophers define art and *what* they hope to achieve by their definitions. As I have already mentioned in the introduction of this dissertation, throughout my analyses of the methods and aims of philosophers of art, an overall picture of the discipline, containing three theses, emerges. The theses are:

(1)   There is a conflict between the self-image of philosophers of art and their practice.
(2)   There are fundamental objections against the practice of philosophers of art.
(3)   The metaphilosophical views philosophers of art (often implicitly) hold are untenable.

In what follows, these theses will be substantiated with my findings in Part I and II.

5.1 The First Thesis

The first thesis states that philosophers of art believe to be engaged in a specific kind of approach to the definition of art, while on further scrutiny, it turns out that their practice does not correspond with this self-image. My argument for this thesis can be summarized as follows. Most philosophers of art have a descriptive self-image, which has two components: (1) they claim to use intuitions or facts about our classificatory practice as evidence; (2) they claim to have descriptive aims. This self-image is wrong because, in reality, (1*) they use intuitions in a non-evidential way; (2*) they have descriptive *and* normative aims.

I will now develop the argument in more detail. Most philosophers of art, so I have shown throughout Part I and Part II, have a descriptive self-image. They are largely committed to the descriptive conceptual approach to defining art, i.e. the approach that seeks to capture the extension of art by reflecting on how we commonly use the concept of art. Their commitment to the descriptive conceptual approach is evidenced by the methods and aims they explicitly adhere to. In both Chapter 1 (Section 1.2) and Chapter 2 (Section 2.1), it has been demonstrated that most philosophers of art believe that the project of defining art is carried out by using descriptive *methods*, given they assume that intuitions are standardly treated as evidence in the project of defining art. The intuition-based methodology is a descriptive methodology: intuitions, so it is believed by adherents of this methodology, enable us to make our implicit concepts explicit. Correspondingly, most philosophers of art claim to have descriptive *aims*: they aim to include all items that are generally accepted as art and exclude all other items (see: Section 1.2; 2.1; 3.1). In other words, they want to reveal the demarcation criteria we generally use to distinguish art from non-art. Some philosophers of art have higher aims: they also want to clarify the meaning of art and, as such, are interested in descriptive metaphysics. Nevertheless, the descriptive metaphysical approach they defend, starts off by determining the demarcation criteria that are used to separate art from non-art, i.e. by conducting a descriptive conceptual analysis.

This descriptive self-image, however, is inadequate. Firstly, as I have shown in Chapter 2, intuitions do not function as evidence in debates regarding the definition of art. After examining disputes about specific cases (see: Section 2.3-2.5), it is apparent that philosophers of art neither refer to intuitions as much as is often assumed, nor give these intuitions rock bottom justificatory status. Philosophers of art do not presume that a theory will be accepted because it fits with intuitions or because it fits with our classificatory practice, but rather because it is backed up by adequate arguments. These arguments are either grounded in pragmatic claims or in claims regarding the nature of art, i.e., metaphysical claims. I have illustrated this with clear examples. George Dickie defends his exclusion of 'romantic' art, not by appealing to intuitions or our

classificatory practice, but by appealing to his metaphysical views regarding the nature of art. Likewise, Jerrold Levinson defends a concept of art that includes very bad art into the domain of art, not because of his intuitions, but rather because he believes that excluding such artefacts from the domain of art has unwarranted pragmatic and metaphysical consequences: excluding very bad art from the domain of art entails 'critical fascism' and 'ontological degradation'. Secondly, and correspondingly, the above examples also show that philosophers of art do not merely have descriptive aims, but also have normative aims. They often aim to revise or regulate our usage of the concept of art in light of being more fruitful or metaphysically correct. Accordingly, they do not solely systematize what we already know about art, rather they revise the concept of art to fit with the metaphysical and/or pragmatic views they adhere to. This has been demonstrated in Chapter 3 and 4. This mismatch between self-image and practice renders the practice of these philosophers of art methodologically unsound: they use descriptive means to substantiate normative claims and they use normative means to substantiate descriptive claims. This is problematic since evidence regarding how the concept of art is used cannot be used to show how the concept should be deployed and normative arguments cannot be used to clarify how the concept is deployed. These methodological objections imply that there are no clear evaluation criteria for definitions of art. Consequently, there is much confusion surrounding the kind of analysis a definition of art offers. On the one hand, the descriptive and the normative level are confused; it is unclear whether definitions of art show us how the concept of art *is* used or how it *should* be used. On the other hand, the conceptual and the metaphysical level are mixed up; it is unclear whether definitions of art clarify our *concept* of art or the *nature* of art.

Admittedly, as has been demonstrated in Chapter 3, several philosophers of art acknowledge that they have descriptive as well as normative aims. They claim that these aims can be combined by employing the method of reflective equilibrium. The Second Thesis nonetheless shows that the abovementioned methodological problems do not evaporate when philosophers of art make explicit their adherence to reflective equilibrium.

5.2   The Second Thesis

The second thesis asserts that the practice of philosophers of art is problematic. The argument for this thesis can summarised as follows: most philosophers of are doing reflective equilibrium, yet this idea does not work for the philosophy of art.

In Chapter 3 (see: Section 3.1), I have shown that some philosophers' explicit commitment to descriptivism is stronger than that of others. Philosophers like George Dickie unambiguously states that all a definition of art has to offer is a clarification of the commonly accepted extension of art. A definition need not regulate our usage of the concept (Dickie, 1997, pp. 78-79). These statements have been echoed by other philosophers (Davies, 2001, p. 227; Gallie, 1956, p. 98; Levinson, 1989, p. 27). Berys Gaut and Robert Stecker, however, grant that our classificatory practice is not always uniform and that there are some disagreements regarding the application of the concept of art. Nonetheless, they argue that descriptivism need not be abandoned for this reason: disagreements can be resolved or flattened out. Correspondingly, an adequate definition or theory of art is 'first and foremost' descriptive, yet has a 'normative bite' when needed (Gaut, 2000, pp. 30-31). These descriptive and normative aims can be attained by employing the method of reflective equilibrium, that is, by mutually adjusting the extension of art, i.e. the collection of artefacts that are generally judged to be art, and the proposed definitions of art. In this view, a definition of art sometimes does regulate our usage of the concept, rather than merely clarifying this usage, but only when there are disagreements regarding the application of the concept of art. Thus, the latter philosophers admit that they have descriptive as well as normative aims.

Chapter 3 has also shown that the theory of reflective equilibrium captures the practice of most philosophers of art, including George Dickie, Stephen Davies and Jerrold Levinson, quite well. Correspondingly, it could be argued that self-proclaimed descriptive philosophers simply need to accept that they are doing reflective equilibrium and the methodological problems sketched in the previous section vanish. However, I have demonstrated that the method of reflective equilibrium cannot deliver the desired result, namely a definition that can clarify the concept of art as it is commonly used and can adjudicate disputed cases. This is so, because three requirements for the method of reflective equilibrium cannot be met in the project of defining art. (1) There needs to be consensus over in which circumstances a definition needs to be descriptive and in which circumstances a definition needs to be normative, that is, there needs to be consensus over which cases are contested cases. If there is no such consensus, then it is unclear when theory and categorization judgments, i.e. the extension of art, need to be mutually adjusted and when not, and, relatedly, how the descriptive and normative adequacy of a theory can be judged (see: Section 3.3). (2) The amount of contested cases needs to be limited, otherwise there is no clear starting point for the method of reflective equilibrium (see: Section 3.4). (3) Philosophers of art need to be able to provide reasons that are independent of their proposed definitions for discarding some categorization judgments, while retaining others. If such reasons cannot be provided, then, these adjustment decisions can only be made arbitrarily (see: Section 3.5).

To summarize, a possible solution for the conflict between self-image and practice (cf. first thesis) would be to make philosophers more aware of the fact that they are doing reflective equilibrium and let them proceed with what they are doing. This, however, is not a good solution, since the method of reflective equilibrium is not applicable to the project of defining art. So this solution would amount adapting the self-image to a problematic practice. Accordingly, Chapter 3 concludes that descriptive and normative aims cannot be combined and philosophers of art have to choose between the descriptive and the normative approach to the project of defining art. The next thesis, nonetheless, argues that the descriptive option is not viable.

5.3   The Third Thesis

The third thesis holds that the approach philosophers of art believe to be engaged in is an approach that will not be possible to execute. As stated above, a possible solution to the mismatch between self-image and practice is to adjust the practice to the self-image. In other words, philosophers of art can be advised to do pure and real descriptive conceptual analysis, instead of merely paying lip service to this approach. This is not a viable option, because (1) intuitions on what is art are not shared nor is our classificatory practice uniform; (2) the charge from psychology is applicable to descriptive conceptual definitions of art.

Argument (1) entails that the descriptive conceptual approach to defining art is impossible because agreement regarding the application of the concept of art is absent. Pace Nick Zangwill, the descriptive approach is doomed, given there is no robust and stable concept of art to be analyzed (Zangwill, 2006, p. 87). Throughout Part I and II (see for example: Section 1.1, 3.3, 3.4), it has been demonstrated that such agreement is a precondition for the feasibility of any intuition-based methodology. This methodology cannot hope to justify a definition of art in light of accordance with intuitions, if intuitions are not shared. More generally, intuitions cannot function like perception or memory when disagreements over intuitions cannot be explained away by pointing at factors like biases and physical or mental impairments. Defenders of the descriptive approach often have suggested that disagreements are minor once we focus on the way in which the concept is applied by competent users of the concept of art and once biases and ignorance are filtered out (Gaut, 2000, pp. 30-31; Stecker, 2000, p. 55). This response, however, is inadequate since there is much disagreement among competent users as well (see: Section 3.4). Moreover, the extension of art cannot be derived from our classificatory practice, that is, from the way in which the concept of art is used by competent users of the concept, given that there is much disagreement regarding the

application of the concept of art. Hence, even if philosophers of art remain on the descriptive level and solely try to capture the extension of art, they cannot provide us with the desired outcome, namely a clarification of the concept of art, since there is no robust concept of art to be clarified (see: Section 1.2).

Argument (2) states that the descriptive conceptual approach to defining art is impossible, insofar as this approach presupposes that the concept of art has a classical structure. Both conjunctive and simple disjunctive definitions of art presuppose that art has a classical structure, since they clarify art in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions. Cognitive psychology has revealed that philosophically interesting concepts, including 'art', do not have a classical structure (see: Section 4.1). While Chapter 4 has argued that the charge from psychology is not applicable to current definitions of art, given that these definitions also aim at normative adequacy, the charge remains applicable to purely descriptive definitions.

From these findings it follows that traditional descriptive conceptual analysis, that is an analysis that aims to capture the extension of art is, not an option for philosophers of art.

What now?

The global picture I have sketched leave two options available for philosophers of art who want to theorize about art: art reductionism and the normative conceptual approach. The former option will be discussed in Chapter 6 and the latter option will be discussed in Chapter 7.

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Chapter 6
Why We Need a Theory of 'Art as a Whole'.[1]

In his book *Beyond Art*, Dominic Mc Iver Lopes maintains that nobody needs a theory of art and that theories of the individual arts can answer all the important questions concerning art. In this chapter, I reject this thesis. On the one hand, Lopes' alternative to a theory of art as a whole is neither more viable nor more fruitful: it is likewise incapable of resolving disagreement regarding the status of certain artefacts and of being fruitful for the broader field of the arts. On the other hand, Lopes downplays the fact that applying the concept of art has important normative implications. Hence, unreflected use of the concept of art has dire political and societal consequences: certain artefacts and practices are excluded due to bias and ignorance. Therefore, so I will argue, it is unwarranted to abandon the search for a theory of art as a whole.

Introduction

This chapter discusses and evaluates moderate art eliminativism, also called art reductionism. I borrow the terms art eliminativism and art reductionism from Christy Mag Uidhir. Art reductionism does not mean getting rid of the category 'art' altogether, but entails substantially restricting the role of the concept of art. Accordingly, art reductionism does not state that there is no such thing as an artwork, yet entails that

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[1] An article based on this chapter will be submitted to *British Journal of Aesthetics*.

we do not need (a theory of) 'art', since the category fully reduces to other simpler categories (Mag Uidhir, 2013, p. 205). Dominic McIver Lopes' well-received buck passing theory can be seen as a form of moderate art eliminativism. In his book, *Beyond Art*, Lopes argues that all we need to answer the question 'What is art?' are theories of the individual arts, such as music, dance and painting. In other words, the question can be answered by referring to two new questions: 'Which kinds are art kinds?' and 'Given a list of the arts, what is each art?' (Lopes, 2014, p. 14). This enterprise is claimed to be both more manageable and more fruitful for (1) handling 'hard cases' or 'disputed cases', these are artefacts whose art status is controversial, and for (2) serving empirical art studies. Nonetheless, in this chapter, I will defend the need for a theory of art as a whole, and, consequently, reject art reductionism.

Section One will expose Lopes' buck passing theory and spell out how it implies art reductionism. In Section Two, it will be argued that defining the individual arts is not fundamentally easier than defining art as a whole: it is unclear how disagreement over whether or not an artefact is in a certain art kind can be resolved more easily than disagreement over whether or not an artefact is an artwork. Section Three will show that, as Lopes admits, a satisfactory theory of the arts, a theory that states which kinds are art kinds, is not forthcoming. Unlike what Lopes believes, I will argue that this *does* constitute a serious problem for his buck passing theory of art. Section Four will defend the need for a theory of art as a whole. As Lopes acknowledges, the arts as a grouping is to a non-negligible extent arbitrary. This arbitrariness has fundamental political and cultural implications and is not resolved by simply ignoring the category of art.

6.1   The Buck Passing Theory of Art

In his book, *Beyond Art,* Dominic McIver Lopes has proposed the buck passing theory of art. He has set out a new framework for thinking about the definitional question, 'What is art?', by shifting the attention away from 'art' to the different 'art kinds', such as painting, sculpture and music. The theory states that x is a work of art if and only if x is a work of K, where K is an art (Lopes, 2014, p. 14). In other words:

> The buck passing theory of art states that a work of art is a work in an art kind, hence typically a product of an activity outputting works of that kind. (Lopes, 2014, p. 14)

The buck passing theory answers the question 'What is art?' by asking two new questions, namely: 'Which kinds are art kinds?' and 'Given a list of the arts, what is each art?' (Lopes, 2014, p. 14). On the other hand, 'buck stopping theories of art', as Lopes

calls them, state what it is for an artefact to be a work of art without raising new questions; these theories aim to give non-question-begging criteria for arthood. Virtually all proposed analytic definitions and theories of art fall under the latter category.[2] These theories, then, assume that the reasons why a music piece is art are the same reasons as why a work of architecture is art. The buck passing theory of art, in contrast, aims to take seriously the plurality of the arts and states that what we need in order to answer the question 'What is art?' are theories of the individual arts. Unlike a theory of art, a theory of an individual art does not need to 'treat the various arts in a unified manner, so that what makes a Rolling Stones song a work of art is the same as what makes the Barcelona Pavilion a work of art, which is the same as what makes Beowulf a work of art' (Lopes, 2014, p. 61). In other words:

> The specific features of each art – the ones in virtue of which it differs from its sister arts – need not be represented in a theory of that art as realizing a feature it shares in common with its sister arts. Whatever the similarities among the arts, these similarities need not be built into what makes each art the art that it is. Indeed, the buck passing theory of art invites us to freely borrow the resources of buck stopping theories of art, putting them to work in constructing theories of the several arts with absolutely no regard for uniformity. (Lopes, 2014, p. 62)

Thus, Jerrold Levinson's intentional-historical definition might be suited to define painting, while Berys Gaut's cluster account might be suited to define music, and so on.

Lopes argues that his buck passing theory is superior to theories of art since it is both more viable and more fruitful. It is more viable, because the task of defining the individual arts is more likely to lead to successful results than the task of defining art. He admits that someone who sets out to define, for example ceramics, will still need to show why some ceramic artefacts are art, while others are not. This job of theorists of the individual arts, so Lopes argues, 'is much, much easier if what differentiates the art of painting from non-art painting need not be the same as what differentiates literature from non-literary writing' (Lopes, 2014, p. 160).

The buck passing theory is not only more viable, it is also more fruitful as it is better (a) at handling hard cases, these are works 'whose status as art is controversial from a theoretical perspective' (Lopes, 2014, p. 6) and (b) at serving empirical art studies, such as art history, the sociology and anthropology of art. Lopes maintains that we do not need a theory of art to handle hard cases (cf. a). About John Cage's *4'33"* he wonders: 'Is it genuinely an option to fret about what does or does not make *4'33"* a work of art and

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[2] Examples of buck stopping theories are abundant: (Abell, 2012; Carroll, 1993; Crowther, 2004; Danto, 1981; Dickie, 1997; Dutton, 2006; Gaut, 2000; Iseminger, 2004; Levinson, 1979; Pignocchi, 2012; Stecker, 1990; Zangwill, 2007).

remain sanguine about what does or does not make it a work of music?' (Lopes, 2014, p. 59). In other words, if it can be shown that the work is in an art kind, then the work is art; if not, then it is not art. We need theories of the individual arts to settle its art status, not a theory of art. Moreover, (cf. b)we do not need a theory of art for grounding empirical art studies, Lopes maintains, since '[a]rt as a whole is not the object of any field of empirical inquiry. That is, there are no serious psychological, anthropological, sociological, or historical hypotheses about all and only works of art' (Lopes, 2014, p. 65). Theories of the individual arts more directly serve the formulation of such hypotheses, since they, like empirical art studies, focus on art kinds such as painting, dance and sculpture.

Although Lopes' buck passing theory clearly does not entail a radical form of art eliminativism (the concept or category of art still figures in his account), it does entail a moderate form, namely art reductionism, as Christy Mag Uidhir has suggested (Mag Uidhir, 2013, p. 205). In Mag Uidhir's words:

> Ultimately, what sets the reductionist philosophically and methodologically apart from the group is the view that there is nothing to being an artwork over and above being in one of the individual Arts, and as such, the philosophy of art enterprise, and all legitimate inquiry therein, must take place at the lower level of *the philosophies of the Arts.* (Mag Uidhir, 2013, p. 205)

Correspondingly, there is no need for a theory of art as a whole. There is no insight we can gain from such a theory. The category of art cut loose from individual art kinds has no meaning, in this view.

Lopes' commitment to moderate art eliminativism is further illuminated when we consider the parallels between Lopes' buck-passing theory of art and Visual Culture Studies. Some scholars of Visual Culture studies consider themselves to be studying visual culture and whether or not the objects they study are artworks is insignificant or of minor interest, since the category of art is merely a social fact.[3] Their objects, then, are:

> [...] those material artefacts, buildings and images, plus time-based media and performances, produced by human labour and imagination, which serve aesthetic, symbolic, ritualistic or ideological-political ends, and/or practical functions, and which address the sense of sight to a significant extent. (Walker & Chaplin, 1997, pp. 1-2)

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[3] As in many academic disciplines, there are deep disagreements regarding which principles the discipline is committed to. Some have contested the idea that Visual Culture neglects the category of art. See: (Mitchell, 2002).

In this way, Visual Culture Studies purportedly wants to abolish certain hierarchies inherent to the category of art (Elkins, 2007, p. 129). Visual Studies scholars who defend art eliminativism maintain that the term 'art' comes with a lot of baggage: it has been used to elevate the cultural endeavours of a very limited group of people. This grouping of cultural endeavours, however, is arbitrary.[4] This constitutes one of the reasons why they want to change the subject from art to visual culture. Similar concerns are expressed in the following quote by Lopes:

> The buck passing theory of art ventures to change the subject. For a hundred years after the art question first gripped the Parisian salons and German coffee houses, philosophers struggled to know what singles out some activities as arts, hence as deserving a special prestige and attention. The twentieth-century avant-garde changed the subject once by confronting us with hard cases that provoked us to ask what makes some items works of art. While the buck passing theory declines to take up the question that exercised the early moderns, it does take seriously the provocations of the artistic avant-garde, by reconfiguring them as challenges to theories of the individual arts. (Lopes, 2014, p. 203)

Alternatively, insofar as the category of art is used as a way to single out some activities as more prestigious and worthy of attention than others, the category should not concern us. Lopes tellingly wonders: 'is someone fascinated by comics likely to gain much insight into that genre by campaigning for its art status, once its character and value have been fully appreciated?' (Lopes, 2014, p. 204). Lopes grants that which activities are arts and which are not is to some extent arbitrary. He concludes that this is not a major problem, since, '[t]he proposal [underlying his buck-passing theory] is that the arts are fundamentally appreciative kinds, to be theorized alongside other appreciative kinds' (Lopes, 2014, p. 121). This is not unlike Visual Studies scholars who argue they are studying visual culture and the objects of visual culture include, but are not limited to artworks.

Let us now turn to the question whether or not the buck passing theory of art is both more manageable and more fruitful than buck stopping theories of art.

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[4] John A. Walker and Sarah Chaplin, for example, suggest that Visual Culture entails an expansion of the subject matter beyond art. A welcome consequence is that 'the specialness of art diminishes as theorists noted that all forms of visual culture possessed aesthetic qualities [...]' (Walker & Chaplin, 1997, p. 5). Consider, also, following quote by Christopher Pinney: 'Visual culture encompasses a scepticism towards the transcendent claims of the art-idea, 'anthropologizing' the mythography of art and the heroic artist' (Pinney, 2006, p. 134).

6.2 Theories of the Individual Arts

As explained above, Lopes proposes to answer the question 'What is art?' by referring to two novel questions, namely, 'Which kinds are art kinds?' and 'Given a list of the arts, what is each art?'. The former question is answered by a theory of the arts and the latter question is answered by theories of the individual arts. In this section, I will tackle Lopes' claim that theories of the individual arts are easier to come by.

Lopes asserts that buck stopping theories structurally fail to adequately address the hard cases. Hard cases, in Lopes' view, mainly consist of avant-garde artworks. So-called traditional theories of art, that define art in aesthetic terms, tend to deny them art status, while so-called genetic theories of art, that define art in terms of provenance, tend to include them into the domain of art. Lopes rightly states that both parties do not only disagree over the art status of hard cases: traditionalists see it as a *virtue* of their theories that it denies hard cases art status, while geneticists see it as a *virtue* that they include them into the domain of art (Lopes, 2014, p. 53). It is unclear, however, on what basis we can choose between the two positions. This disagreement is not solely grounded in conflicting intuitions. Such disagreements, so Lopes argues, can be resolved by independent criteria for theory choice, criteria that decide which intuitions must be given priority.[5] However, with regard to the art status of hard cases, there are no independent criteria for theory choice since 'there is deep disagreement about the criteria for choosing a theory of art and this disagreement about criteria for theory choice stems from clashing intuitions about the hard cases' (Lopes, 2014, p. 53). Traditionalists favour heuristic adequacy, that is, a definition must be serviceable to the broader domain of the arts, as the main desideratum for definitions of art, while geneticists favour extensional adequacy, that is, a definition must capture the full extension of art. This leads to what Lopes calls 'a dialectical impasse': we have no independent resources for establishing who is right and who is wrong.

The question that needs to be answered is: can the buck passing theory of art evade these problems? In other words, is defining the individual arts more likely not to end up in a dialectical impasse? As noted above, Lopes believes that formulating theories of the individual arts is less difficult than formulating a theory of art, since there is no need to propose criteria that must apply to artefacts as diverse as painting, sculpture, music, dance and so on. Lopes argues that the buck passing theory 'channels our questioning into theories of the arts, where answers are easier to come by' (Lopes, 2014, p. 203).

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[5] In Chapter 1, I argue that reference to intuitions becomes futile once there is agreement over theories that judge which intuitions should be given priority.

Against the idea that defining individual arts is more plausible to yield worthwhile results, Aaron Meskin has argued:

> the concepts of painting, sculpture, and music turn out to contain more diversity than one might initially think. [...] many of the individual arts display almost as wide a range of functions as art. (Meskin, 2008, p. 143)

As Stephen Davies has remarked in his review of *Beyond Art*, if we take a closer look at the debate regarding definitions of music, it is clear that these definitions 'are highly divergent, are mutually critical, and reach no common ground' (Davies, 2014, p. 330). Disagreements about the extension of music seem as wide-ranging and fundamental as disagreements about the extension of art. To give a few examples: Stephen Davies and Andrew Kania think that at least some forms of muzak should be included into the domain of music, while Levinson sees it as a virtue of his definition that it excludes these phenomena, since muzak is not intended to be listened to (Davies, 2012, p. 537; Kania, 2011, pp. 10-11; Levinson, 1990, p. 274). Moreover, they disagree over a familiar hard case for theories of art, namely John Cage's *4'33"*. Granted, all three agree that it is an artwork. However, Davies argues it is 'a performance piece, a theatrical work if you will, about the performance of music, not a musical work as such' (Davies, 2012, p. 536), Levinson argues that it is music (Levinson, 1990, p. 270) and Kania suggests that it is a work of sound art (Kania, 2010). Given that these philosophers situate the work in a different art kind, their theories of music have not, so it would seem, been at service of the empirical art studies, who want to know whether or not they should study *4'33"* as a piece of music. Moreover, other philosophers, like Roger Scruton, suggest that the piece is neither art nor music (Scruton, 2007, p. 238). Scruton maintains that the questions regarding the piece's status as either art or music are misguided:

> [...] all such questions seem to me to get nowhere. For they can all be answered as you will, without casting any light whatsoever on why works of art are significant to us, and what kind of significance they have. Matters would be different if we had a viable account of aesthetic interest. For then we could define art as a functional kind, namely the kind designed as objects of aesthetic interest [...] (Scruton, 2007, p. 238).

As in the case of buck stopping theories of art, there are fundamental disputes both regarding whether or not certain cases fall under the category of art or under the category of a specific art kind and regarding the correct criteria for theory choice. Consequently, there are, again, no independent criteria for comparing the merits of competing definitions. Andrew Kania, for example, strives for extensional or descriptive adequacy more so than for heuristic adequacy and normative adequacy: he wants to reveal the criteria we use to distinguish music from non-music, rather than showing how the distinction should be made in order to have a fruitful concept or

category of music for scholars working on music or for appreciators of music. This is apparent in the way in which he rejects and defends claims with regard to the concept of music. Against Levinson, Kania argues that the practicing of scales is music, pointing out that '(f)ew would deny that such activities produce music' (Kania, 2011, p. 3). He rejects subjective definitions since these have *unintuitive* consequences (Kania, 2011, p. 6). Consider also this quote regarding pieces by John Cage and Yoko Ono:

> You might, of course, simply deny that such works are music, though that would require a revisionist view of much of twentieth-century music history. However, it would be wise to investigate why people have been inclined to call such works music before dismissing them (Kania, 2011, p. 9).[6]

Jerrold Levinson, on the other hand, either does not accept or does not care that his definition of music has 'counterintuitive' consequences, like excluding muzak from the domain of music. Muzak simply should not be included for the reasons stated above (Levinson, 1990, p. 274). Thus, either Kania and Levinson disagree over what is intuitive, or they disagree over what role intuitions should play in defining music. The latter seems to be most plausible explanation: Levinson believes it is more fruitful to exclude pieces from the domain of music that were not intended to be listened to. Admittedly, there might be some unclarity regarding Levinson's preferred criteria for theory choice. Roger Scruton and Andrew Kania, however, clearly do disagree in this respect: Scruton suggests that we have not said anything at all if we have not clarified why art or music is important to us. Since definitions of art and music that strive for descriptive adequacy do not deliver us these kinds of insights, descriptive adequacy is an inferior criterion for theory choice (Scruton, 2007, p. 238).

In summary, there are no strong reasons for accepting that theories of the individual arts will turn out to be more viable and more fruitful. Disagreement regarding the extension of the individual arts also seems very wide-ranging. Moreover, Lopes has not shown that there are independent criteria for discarding some categorization judgments and retaining others with regard to defining the individual arts. In the next section, I will assess Lopes' answer to the question: 'which kinds are art kinds?'.

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[6] Against this, it could be argued that, in fact, many people, including well-informed people, would be disinclined to call such pieces music.

6.3   A Theory of the Arts

Even if we assume that satisfactory theories of the individual art kinds are forthcoming, the buck passing theory of art still needs to establish which kinds are art kinds. The project of defining the individual arts can only start off, so it would seem, if we know how to distinguish between art and non-art kinds. To put it more concretely, do we have principled reasons to count novels, dance and mime among the arts, but not biographies, ice dance and clowning? (Lopes, 2014, p. 107). Can we decide, non-arbitrarily, that some practices are art kind and others are not.[7] A theory of the arts, so Lopes maintains, is only informative insofar as it provides us with non-arbitrary criteria for distinguishing non-art kinds from art kinds (Lopes, 2014, p. 108). Lopes argues that all art kinds are appreciative artefactual kinds, yet, not all appreciative artefactual kind are art kinds. He states that '[a]n appreciative kind is a kind whose nature connects to the value of its members' (Lopes, 2014, p. 130). The problem, then, can be restated as follows: how can it be established which appreciative kinds are art kinds?

Even before fully addressing this problem, Lopes admits that 'the prospects are not good for an informative theory of the arts' (Lopes, 2014, p. 107). Broadly stated, there are two not fully satisfactory answers to the problem. Firstly, like George Dickie (Dickie, 1997, pp. 76-77), one can argue that it simply is arbitrary which kinds are art kinds: which kinds are part of the artworld depends on contingent historical and sociological factors. Concisely put, an acceptable theory of the arts is not forthcoming, since the arbitrariness is irresolvable (Lopes, 2014, p. 110). Secondly, like Catherine Abell and Gary Iseminger (Abell, 2012; Iseminger, 2004), one can argue that the artworld has reasons to accept some kinds as art kinds. Iseminger has stated that the artworld's function is to promote aesthetic communication. Lopes rightly points out that if we accept this kind of position, we will have to include kinds into the domain of art that are usually not included, such as furniture design, cooking and gardening. Although we might agree to accept some of these in the domain of art, it will be hard to exclude certain kinds we do want to exclude like body building and philosophy (Lopes, 2014, pp. 113-114). In the end, Lopes sides with the first approach, an approach that does not even try to resolve the arbitrariness, given that it is a hopeless endeavour (Lopes, 2014, p. 115).

Lopes suggests that the fact that the prospects for an informative theory of the arts are 'grim' is not fatal for his buck passing theory of art since a workable solution to the problem 'can be pieced together from more modest resources than a theory of the arts'

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[7] The problem entails what Richard Wollheim has called the 'bricoleur problem': why is it that 'arbitrarily identified stuffs or processes should be the vehicles of art'? (Wollheim, 1980 [1968], p. 43).

(Lopes, 2014, p. 108). How can this be done? Lopes notes that debates regarding the art status of certain practices, like photography, proceed, appeal to 'analogies and disanalogies that hold only among subsets of the arts' (Lopes, 2014, p. 119). In other words, in order to defend or contest the art status of certain activities or kinds, local analogies, features they may share with *some* other arts, and not global analogies, features that they share with *all* other arts, are used as evidence (Lopes, 2014, p. 117). Consequently, we have not much reason to believe that 'a systematic and unified concept of the arts can be extracted from these disputes' (Lopes, 2014, p. 119). These debate can be illuminated by reference to theories of the individual arts, not a theory of the arts. Hence, the need for a theory of the arts evaporates. Moreover, as mentioned above, Lopes proposes 'that the arts are fundamentally appreciative kinds, to be theorized alongside other appreciative kinds' (Lopes, 2014, p. 121). Therefore, so Lopes suggests, we need not worry much about the arbitrariness of the grouping of art kinds, since other appreciative kinds will also be included as objects of inquiry. He concludes:

> The arts belong in a very large company, which includes natural objects and settings, the crafts, industrial design, and much else besides. We can be secure in the knowledge that the arts keep such (good!) company, even if we suspect that their own clique is not much more than a matter of convenience. (Lopes, 2014, p. 124)

In what follows, I will demonstrate that, since Lopes has not provided us with a satisfactory theory of the arts, he cannot handle hard cases, such as fashion, cooking or industrial design. Lopes defines hard cases as any work whose status as art is controversial from a theoretical perspective. Thus, they are hard cases for theories of art, not necessarily for the field of the arts as a whole. He states:

> A work's being a hard case is consistent with its being a work of art and also with its not being a work of art. If it is in fact a work of art then it is puzzling what makes it a work of art, and if it is *not* in fact a work of art then there is a temptation to take it for one. No case is less hard for being deprecated as not art or for being promoted as art: deprecation and promotion generally make a hard case harder, not easier. (Lopes, 2014, p. 6)

Lopes virtually only considers 'bewildering' avant-garde works as hard cases (Lopes, 2014, p. 36). Here, I want to argue that the collection of hard cases is much broader than avant-garde works. Gardening, fashion, industrial design, tapestry and cooking, just to name a few, all satisfy the criteria for being hard cases. There are strong disagreements regarding their art status and these disagreements can neither be resolved by appealing to intuitions, since they conflict, nor by relying on independent and agreed-upon criteria for theory choice, since there are no such criteria. Note that the question is whether some instances of the categories mentioned above might be art, not if all of

their instantiations are art. This does not speak against their art status, since it is commonly and rightly accepted that not all paintings are art, not all ceramic artworks are art, not all dances are art, and so on (Lopes, 2014, p. 17). Since Lopes has not formulated an informative theory of the arts, he cannot easily deal with these hard cases. We can indeed look for local disanalogies and local analogies with neighboring art kinds, yet, the point is that these (dis)analogies point in different directions. Philosophers with aesthetic/traditionalist sympathies might be inclined to argue that some instances of fashion or gardening are art, since some of their instantiations promote aesthetic communication, are the product of aesthetic creation or are intended to provide aesthetic pleasure. Philosophers with institutional or genetic sympathies, on the other hand, might be inclined to exclude these kinds from the domain of art as they are not firmly embedded in artworld institutions. Lopes seems to favour the institutionalist position in most of these cases, conceding that activities like ice dance are art, so Lopes argues, ventures onto a slippery slope and we might end up having to include body building into the domain of art (Lopes, 2014, p. 113). However, the buck passing theory in itself does not give us much reason to favour this position, nor sheds new light on these hard cases: it neither takes them seriously, nor provides a solution to them.

Section Two and Section Three have shown that the buck passing theory faces the same problems as buck stopping theories with regard to the hard cases. In the next section, I will focus on Lopes' claim that we do not need a theory of art as a whole.

6.4   Why We Need a Theory of Art

As shown in Section One, Lopes does not merely argue that theories of the individual arts are easier to come by than a theory of art. Ultimately, so Lopes argues, we do not need a theory of art. Art scholars and art lovers are not interested in 'art as a whole', rather they are interested in specific art activities; they are interested in the individual arts. Therefore, the buck passing theory of art serves their purposes more than a theory of art, so the reasoning goes.

Lopes' claim that there are no serious psychological, anthropological, sociological, or historical hypotheses about all and only works of art can be questioned (Lopes, 2014, p. 65). There are adequate examples of sociologists who are genuinely interested in the

category of art per se.[8] Moreover, on first sight, these empirical art studies need a concept of art, or at least a theory of the arts, to know and justify their objects of study.[9]

In this section, however, I want to focus on more fundamental reasons why we need a theory of art as a whole. Art eliminativism in any form is not opportune, since art is, as I will argue, a 'framework concept', a notion which I borrow from Sally Haslanger (Haslanger, 2006, p. 114). A framework concept is a concept that has a structuring role in the field in which it is functioning. In other words, it is hard to imagine how the field under consideration could operate without that concept. Additionally, a framework concept brings with it a certain normative weight and entitlement. Let me clarify this with an example Haslanger gives. She states that 'parent' is a framework concept, while 'primary caregiver', which is argued to be a more inclusive and neutral concept, is not. Firstly, it is difficult to imagine a social theory that does not employ the notion of parent, while there are plenty of social theories that do not refer to 'primary caretaker'. The concept 'parent' is central to our thinking about community and family, while 'primary caregiver' is not. Secondly, the concept of parent has a certain normative weight. While being a parent does not necessarily entail being a good parent, what it means to be a parent is strongly connected to what we believe to be good parenthood. In this way, the notion of 'framework concept' is highly compatible with what Joshua Knobe, Sandeep Prasada and George E. Newman have called a 'dual character concept':

> Dual character concepts characterize their members in terms of both (a) a set of concrete features and (b) the abstract values that these features serve to realize. (Knobe, Prasada, & Newman, 2013, p. 242)

Thus, *x* can fall under the dual character concept *A* because it satisfies a set of concrete features without realizing the abstract values attached to the concept. In this case, *x* is an *A*, without being a 'true' *A* (Knobe et al., 2013, p. 243). This seems applicable to the

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[8] He rejects the idea that Pierre Bourdieu, for example, formulates hypotheses about art as a whole, since his hypotheses are also applicable beyond the domain of art: 'Of course, there are hypotheses about all art works, but they are also hypotheses about non-art' (Lopes, 2014, p. 65). Admittedly, Bourdieu is interested in the field of cultural production as a whole. However, he is also interested in the field of artistic production more specifically. This is the field that 'produces belief in the value of art and in the value-creating power of the artist' (Bourdieu, 2003, p. 103). In general, it could be argued that while many sociologists see the category of art as merely a social convention, often considered to be held together solely by its ideological function, they are interested in how the category functions in our society. Norbert Elias, for example, is interested in the relationship between art producers and art consumers (Elias, 2003); David Brain investigates what separates technical artefacts from works of art (Brain, 2003).

[9] In fact, sociologists have been reflecting upon what should be considered art and what not. Some have tried to widen the definition of art objects by focusing on the aestheticization of the home (Eyerman & Ring, 1998, p. 279).

concept of parent: one can be a parent, while not being a 'true' parent. Also, certain normative attitudes towards a parent are expected. The concept of primary caretaker, on the other hand, is not so closely connected to certain abstract values and normative attitudes. Haslanger argues that it is unwarranted to eliminate framework concepts like 'parent' from our theoretical vocabularies. Haslanger states that while eliminativists rightly argue that our concept of parent is confused and has a lot of discriminatory and biased implications, it is more preferable to revise and ameliorate our concept of parent, than to erase it from our vocabulary altogether. Why is eliminativism not a solution according to Haslanger? Eliminativists would need to introduce a whole new conceptual framework. Yet, since a framework concept is so deeply entrenched in our practices, it is virtually unimaginable that such a new conceptual framework will be accepted. In the end, the confused and biased concept of parent will be the one that structures our social relationships and our thinking about social relationships. Therefore, we should not adhere to parent eliminativism, but ameliorate our concept(s) of parent.

Similarly, I argue that 'art' is a framework concept, while 'visual culture' or 'appreciative artefactual kind' are not. Firstly, it is hard to imagine that the cultural field will stop referring to 'art'. Furthermore, the concept of art brings with it certain expectations. While not all art is good art, what it means to be art is strongly connected to what it means to be good art. To return to the dual character concepts, although it makes much sense to talk about a 'true work of art', it does not make much sense to speak of a 'true object of visual culture' or a 'true appreciative artefactual practice'.[10] Also, we are expected to showcase certain attitudes in our commerce with art. How a cultural artefact is preserved, presented and appreciated is highly dependent on whether or not the artefact is considered to be art. The concept also has legal implications: consider, for example, art vandalism, plagiarism and copyright. The categories 'visual culture' and 'appreciative artefactual practices', on the other hand, do not bring about this normative weight and entitlement. Thus, there are valid reasons to conceive of 'art' as a framework concept.

Lopes agrees that 'art' has a clear normative dimension, since he argues that:

> [...] consensus upon the grouping of the arts was understood in the salons and lecture halls of the early modern period to be a high stakes enterprise, with winners and losers contending over a prize package of social prestige as well as financial reward. (Lopes, 2014, p. 31)

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[10] Shen-Yi Liao, Aaron Meskin and Joshua Knobe defend that art is a dual character concept. See: (Liao, Meskin, & Knobe, 2014).

Furthermore, he agrees that, given that the grouping together of art kinds remains arbitrary, some gender and racial biases persist. Lopes grants that the concept of art can be critiqued for 'excluding certain activities associated with women and members of underprivileged classes' (Lopes, 2014, p. 119). He gives the example of landscape design: when it was executed by males, it was accepted as an art kind, but its status 'slipped' once it became associated with the 'feminine pursuit of gardening' (Lopes, 2014, p. 119). He has no clear answer to these problems. As noted above, he suggests that all these activities are appreciative kinds – some are considered to be arts, others are not, but they can and should be studied side by side. The arbitrariness of the grouping, however, does not go away by merely focusing on smaller (the individual arts) and bigger (appreciative kinds) groupings. The effects remain the same, given that art is a framework concept: it is deeply entrenched in our cultural theories and (institutional) practices. Since it is unlikely that a new conceptual scheme with no or a marginal role for the concept 'art' will be accepted and adopted in the cultural field, art reductionism is unattractive. Haslanger has argued that: 'because framework concepts are embedded with normative principles, rejecting the concepts may leave us with old practices and no new principles to guide us' (Haslanger, 2006, p. 115). In other words, categorizing an artefact as art brings with it a cluster of normative attitudes, regarding its preservation, treatment and evaluation. Ignoring the category of art in our theories will not change this. Therefore, it is important to reflect on how the concept can most fruitfully be used, rather than abandoning it altogether. Otherwise, old uses, likely to be informed by gender, racial and social biases, will remain unquestioned. As Kitty Zijlmans has rightly argued with regard to Visual Studies:

> The replacement of the term "art" by that of "visual culture" seems to offer too easy a way out. In the first instance, the modernist concept of art will not be challenged and will continue to be constrained within the confines of its narrow definition. Outdated and limited as it may be, in many cases it still is and will remain the point of reference. (Zijlmans, 2008, p. 137)

To summarize, the arbitrariness of the grouping of the arts is by no means innocent, but has severe implications for the treatment and evaluation of practices of minority groups. In this way, Paul Crowther is right to argue that the task of defining art 'has explosive epistemological and cultural implications that have scarcely received the consideration they deserve' (Crowther, 2004, p. 361). Therefore, giving op the project of defining art, i.e. the search for a theory of art as a whole, is an undesirable option.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that art reductionism is not a viable alternative to theories of art. Firstly, unlike what art reductionism assumes, theories of the individual arts encounter the same problems as traditional theories of art: there are no plausible ways in which disagreements over hard cases can be settled and it is unclear how theories of the individual arts art can contribute to other art-related domains. Secondly, art reductionism cannot provide us with an informative theory of the arts, and, therefore, accepts that the grouping together of certain activities as art is to some extent arbitrary. More specifically, it excludes certain activities from the domain of the arts based on gender, social and cultural biases. This is all the more problematic since art is a framework concept: how cultural artefacts are preserved, presented and appreciated hinges on whether or not the concept of art is applied to them. As the grouping of the arts is to some extent arbitrary and biased, it is important to revise and ameliorate this concept, rather than to ignore it altogether. The latter solution simply leaves old biased concepts of art unchallenged.

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Chapter 7
Alternative Way to Define Art

In this chapter, I will substantiate and defend the pragmatic approach to defining art. Firstly, I will state the aims of this approach. Secondly, I will clarify the methodological steps that need to be taken to realize these aims. Thirdly, I will demonstrate how this approach differs from other approaches. Finally, I will argue why this approach is a promising route to take.

7.1   The Aims of the Pragmatic Approach

The aims of a pragmatic approach center around practical and/or theoretical utility: the normative theories that follow from this approach allow us to evaluate existing concepts of art and propose new concepts in light of attaining certain purposes that people may have. Such an approach, pace Sally Haslanger, accepts that it is our responsibility to define certain phenomena for our theoretical or practical purposes (Haslanger, 2000, p. 52). The normative character of the theories lies in the advice (to use certain concepts in certain contexts) that derives from them. Similar approaches have been defended in divers fields of philosophy, like causation, race, gender and free action (Fisher, 2014; Hall, 2006; Haslanger, 2000; Weber & De Vreese, 2009). Let us take a closer look at what such practical or theoretical purposes might entail. Sally Haslanger, for example, has aimed to provide us with concepts of gender and race that are 'effective tools in the fight against injustice' (Haslanger, 2000, p. 36). It is clear, then, that it is not her aim to say what gender and what race *are*, rather it is her aim to develop concepts of race and gender that a feminist antiracist theory *needs* (Haslanger, 2000, p. 52). With regard to the concept of art, several possible purposes come to mind: aestheticians might need a concept of art that allows them to explain why we value art;

art historians might need a concept of art that enables them to justify the selection of their study objects; anthropologists might need a concept of art that helps them investigate similarities and dissimilarities between different cultural practices; cognitive psychologists might need a concept of art that enables them to study certain kinds of perception; lawyers might need a concept of art to judge cases of forgery, copyright and vandalism. Normative theories of art will allow us to criticize, defend and optimize the concepts of art that are used within specific contexts. Descriptive theories, in contrast, merely aim to clarify the concepts of art that *are* used.

In a recent paper, Christly Mag Uidhir and P.D. Magnus have defended art concept pluralism. While the debate regarding art concept monism and art concept pluralism is the central issue in their paper, the pragmatic approach to the project of defining art is implicitly defended. Art concept pluralism conjectures that there are several, at least two, legitimate concepts of art. The different concepts entail a different extension and are *fruitful* in different inquiries. An art concept is legitimate if it 'is useful in many domains, in many inquiries, and for many purposes,' yet, it need not be 'useful in *all* domains, in *all* inquiries, or for *all* purposes' (Mag Uidhir & Magnus, 2011, pp. 89, 91). While the pragmatic approach I defend does not *necessarily* entail concept pluralism, it also starts from the idea that we are in need of concepts of art in order to fulfill certain purposes. Indeed, many defenders of pragmatic proposals in other fields grant that it is highly unlikely that there will be one concept that is adequate to fulfill every legitimate purpose we may have. The pragmatic approach also has adequate resources for proposing different concepts of art, since the approach starts from the needs we aim to fulfill with a concept, rather than 'the' extension of art. If it is presupposed that there is an agreed upon extension of art, then, it is unclear how different concepts of art can be in place. However, if a concept is formulated in view of a certain purpose one has, then it is not difficult to see that other concepts can be formulated alongside this one: these other concepts, then, are aimed at other purposes.

7.2   The Methods of the Pragmatic Approach

Since pragmatic aims starkly differ from descriptivist aims, it is only to be expected that different methods need to be employed to realize normative theories. A necessary preliminary step is to investigate in which contexts the concept of art is operative. Subsequently, the work that needs to be done to develop such a normative theory can be divided in three phases: (I) an examination of how the concept of art is used in a specific context; (II) a formulation of the background standards against which the employed concepts of art will be evaluated, namely, the possible purposes people might

legitimately aim to fulfill; and (III) a development of the criteria that must be fulfilled by concepts of art in the investigated context.

For completing phase (I), we can rely on a framework offered by descriptivist philosophers of art. They have made useful distinctions for classifying different answers to the question 'What is art?'. The criteria underlying these distinctions concern the form as well as the content of the concept of art. Regarding the form of the concept, philosophers of art have examined, among other things, whether or not the concept of art is vague, whether or not it allows for clarification in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions and whether concept monism or concept pluralism is correct. Regarding the content of the concept of art, philosophers have investigated whether or not certain features are constitutive, or even essential, for being art. Such features include: being created or accepted as art within an art institutional context; being the product of certain art making intentions; being historically connected to preceding artworks, and; possessing aesthetic properties or arousing aesthetic experience.

Phase (II) aims to establish which purposes people, like art historians, aestheticians, artists or lawyers, might legitimately hope to accomplish by employing the concept of art. These purposes will form the background standards against which concepts of art will be judged. It is of the utmost importance that these purposes are clearly stated, otherwise there will be no clear evaluation criteria for proposed normative theories of art. Haslanger has rightly argued that 'an adequate evaluation of an existing theory or success in developing a new one is only possible when it is made clear what the broader goals are' (Haslanger, 2000, p. 35).

In Phase (III) the main issue is: which are the desired criteria of concept(s) of art given our purposes. Therefore, the criteria proposed in phase (I) need to be judged against the legitimate purposes proposed in phase (II). While descriptivist philosophers wonder which criteria for arthood are correct given how competent users of the concept of art generally use the concept, the question here is which criteria we need given what we want from our concept(s) of art. Let me illustrate this with an example. When an art historian wants to write a cross-cultural introduction to art, it is unlikely that a concept of art that entails that institutional embeddedness is an essential criterion for art will be very fruitful. A sociological analysis of artistic practice in Europe in the 19th century, however, might need a concept of art that does require that institutional embeddedness is essential for art. Whether or not institutional embeddedness is commonly used as a criterion for distinguishing between art and non-art is overriding neither in the context of art history, nor in the context of sociology. Once all proposed criteria regarding the form and the content of the concept of art are evaluated in this light, a normative theory can be provided for defending, criticizing and optimizing concepts of art (that are used in specific contexts).

7.3   Comparison With Other Approaches

From the exhibition of the aims and methods underlying the pragmatic approach, it should be clear how it differs from the other approaches that have been addressed in this dissertation. Let me recapitulate these differences. Descriptive conceptual approaches start from the way in which the concept of art is used, while pragmatic approaches start from the role the concept of art plays in specific contexts. For purely descriptive conceptual analysts, extensional adequacy is the only desideratum, while for the pragmatic approach, it is an inferior desideratum. Correspondingly, while the purely descriptive approach solely aims to establish how we generally apply the concept of art, the pragmatic approach aims revise or regulate how we apply the concept of art in light of certain purposes we may have. The purely descriptive approach clarifies the demarcation criteria we use, while the pragmatic approach puts forward new or revised demarcation criteria. The descriptive approach that relies on the method of reflective equilibrium, on the other hand, does sometimes recommend certain demarcation criteria. Yet, this approach is clearly different from the pragmatic approach. On the one hand, extensional adequacy is still the primary desideratum for philosophers who employ the method of reflective equilibrium. Correspondingly, broad agreement over the application of the concept of art is presupposed. On the other hand, the method of reflective equilibrium allows philosophers to make recommendations in light of a 'rational reconstruction' of the concept of art, while the pragmatic approach makes recommendations on how to use the concept of art in light of certain specified purposes one hopes to achieve with the concept of art.

How does the pragmatic approach relate to metaphysical approaches to defining art? Both the descriptive and the revisionary metaphysical approach need to start from a certain set of demarcation criteria. They need to establish of which objects they want to clarify the meaning or nature, i.e., which objects are artworks. Descriptive metaphysicians usually want to reveal the generally accepted meaning of the concept of art. Therefore, they start from descriptive conceptual analysis (Thomasson, 2005). Consequently, the descriptive metaphysical approach differs from the pragmatic approach in the same way as the descriptive conceptual approach. The revisionary metaphysician likewise needs to choose which objects to investigate. The pragmatic approach is a route the revisionary metaphysician can take in order to establish which objects she wants to investigate. In this case, one recommends a concept of art that will allow us to fruitfully investigate the nature of art. In other words, in such cases, the purposes one hopes to fulfill with the concept of art are metaphysical in nature. Nonetheless, the pragmatic conceptual and the revisionary metaphysical approach do not necessarily imply each other. A philosopher engaged in a pragmatic approach might not believe revisionary metaphysics to be worthwhile or even feasible. Likewise, a

revisionary metaphysician can argue that she does not need propose demarcation criteria, since these criteria can be derived from the mind-independent reality, or since the approach can start off from a collection of paradigm cases of art.

7.4   Why the Pragmatic Approach?

Why is the pragmatic approach superior to the other approaches? Succinctly put, the pragmatic approach evades the persistent criticisms already formulated by the neo-Wittgensteinians, namely: there are no plausible ways in which disagreements over the application of the concept of art can be settled (Lopes, 2014, pp. 53-58) and it is unclear how definitions of art can contribute to our understanding of art or can be useful for other art-related domains (Kaufman, 2007, pp. 290-291; Mag Uidhir & Magnus, 2011, p. 85).

The pragmatic approach is *viable* since (1) this approach need not make unwarranted presuppositions regarding agreement over the application of the concept of art or regarding the structure of the concept of art; (2) there are clear evaluation criteria for definitions or theories of art that follow from this approach.

As we have seen above, all descriptive approaches necessarily presuppose that there is broad agreement over the application of the concept of art, yet, this presupposition is false. The pragmatic approach, however, need not assume that there is broad agreement over the application of the concept of art, since it does not start from the way in which the concept is generally used. Rather it starts from the purposes a concept serves and tries to establish how the usage of the concept should be regulated in order to optimally serve those purposes. Correspondingly, there are no limitations regarding the form of the concept of art, except the limitations we have imposed ourselves in light of our purposes. For example, it is not unimaginable that we need a concept of art with clear boundaries that allows for clarification in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions in order to deliver a legal verdict regarding copyright. In such a case, we are free to construct a 'classical' concept. In this sense, the pragmatic approach is consistent with Joseph Margolis dictum that: 'There are no a priori requirements on definition, except what we choose to confer' (Margolis, 2010, p. 222).

In this dissertation, I have argued that many proposed definitions of art are methodologically unsound: the method most philosophers adhere to, the method of reflective equilibrium, provides us with no principles for justifying the settlement of disagreements over the application of the concept of art. It needs to be noted, nonetheless, that there are clear evaluation criteria for purely descriptive theories of art, yet, they are too stringent: extensional adequacy is, given the amount of

disagreement, unattainable. There are clear standards for judging the way in which disagreements over the concept of art are settled within the pragmatic approach. These standards coincide with the purposes that one has formulated. Again, it needs to be stressed that these purposes need to be clearly stated and substantiated. Otherwise, the pragmatic method does not fare much better than the method of reflective equilibrium.

The pragmatic approach is *fruitful*, since the normative theories of art it offers are of potential relevance to other art-related domains. Many descriptivist philosophers of art agree that the primary motivation for defining art is 'simply a curiosity' (see for example: Kania, 2011, p. 5). It should come as no surprise, then, that outsiders, such as art historians, have not taken much interest in proposed definitions of art and that analytic philosophy of art has often been criticized on account of scholasticism and of not interacting with other disciplines. However, I argue that, given the importance of concepts of art in many domains, philosophers of art need to take the task of defining art more seriously. We should 'take up responsibility' and offer concepts of art that are commendable, rather than descriptively adequate. This is what the pragmatic approach aims to do. Correspondingly, the approach will enable us to convert a project of seemingly mere academic interest into a socially relevant project.

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Part IV: Illustration

Part IV will serve as an illustration of the main arguments in this dissertation: there is a mismatch between the (descriptive) self-image and the (partly descriptive, partly normative) practice of philosophers of art and this mismatch renders their practice methodologically unsound; the practice cannot be optimized by adjusting either self-image to practice or practice to self-image, and; the pragmatic approach is a viable way in which to approach the project of defining art. I will do this by focusing on one specific issue, namely, the role of borderline cases of art in the evaluation of definitions of art.

The ability to account for borderline cases of art is broadly accepted as a satisfactory criterion for assessing the descriptive adequacy of a definition of art. I will show that the criterion is not satisfactory because there is no agreement regarding which artefacts are borderline cases of art. In this way, it will be illustrated that descriptive conceptual analysis is an unviable approach. Moreover, it will be argued that philosophers of art do not clarify the borderline status certain artefacts have, rather they argue that these artefacts should be attributed borderline status based on their theories of art. In this way, it is shown that the practice of philosophers of art is methodologically unsound. While they assume to be clarifying the status certain artefacts have, they in fact advice people to classify certain artefacts as borderline: they present their normative recommendations as descriptive facts. Finally, it will be shown what role borderline cases can play in the pragmatic approach to defining art. In doing so, it will be exemplified that this approach is viable.

Chapter 8
Borderline Cases and the Project of Defining Art[1]

Most philosophers of art assume that there are three categories with regard to arthood, namely 'art', 'artful' and 'non-art' and that, therefore, a definition must be able to account for 'artful items', also called 'borderline cases of art'. This chapter, however, defends the thesis that, since there is no agreement over which items fall under the category 'artful', the ability to account for borderline cases of art should not be used as a criterion for evaluating definitions of art. The defended thesis is important, not merely because the borderline criterion is often used in support of proposed theories, but also because the thesis has implications for the (many) artefacts that are considered to be borderline cases of art.

Introduction

Most recent philosophers of art assume that there are borderline cases of art; items that are neither fully art, nor fully non-art.[2] Accordingly, it is accepted that there are three categories with regard to arthood: art, artful and non-art. Moreover, it is believed that the ability to account for borderline cases can be used as a criterion for assessing the viability of a definition of art. I will call this criterion the borderline criterion (BC):

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[1] A version of this chapter has been submitted to *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*.

[2] Only one main figure within post-war analytic philosophy of art explicitly states that the boundary between art and non-art is absolute, namely Arthur Danto, (Danto, 1992, p. 94).

(BC) Under an adequate definition or theory of art, instances that are borderline cases of art must come out as borderline cases of art and not as either art or non-art.[3]

Since certain artefacts generally are classified in the category 'artful', a definition or theory of art, so the reasoning goes, should be able to clarify and account for these borderline cases of art. The borderline criterion is so widely acknowledged as valid that it is hardly ever questioned in the literature on defining art.[4]

In this chapter, I want to argue for the following negative thesis:

(NT) The ability to account for borderline cases of art should not be used as a criterion for evaluating definitions of art.

The core of my argument is that there is no agreement on which artefacts fall under the category 'artful'. Therefore, it is impossible for a definition of art to straightforwardly accommodate them.

The defended thesis has important implications. It does not merely entail that an oft-used criterion for assessing the viability of definitions of art is inadequate and should be rejected as an evaluation criterion. (NT) also reveals that, when definitions of art put forward borderline cases of art, this constitutes a normative recommendation about how we should categorize certain instances, instead of being a descriptive fact about our usage of the concept of art. In other words, philosophers of art believe to be clarifying the status certain artefacts have, rather than attributing borderline status to them. However, the defended thesis proves this to be false. Given that many artefacts are accepted to belong to the category 'artful' and given that the way in which phenomena are treated depends on how they are classified, (NT) has implications for a broad collection of artefacts. Moreover, (NT) has implications for the project of defining art itself, as (NT) is a symptom of the inviability of the descriptive conceptual approach to defining art.

In the first section of this paper, I will situate (BC) within the broader context of philosophical analysis. The second section will illustrate that (BC) is widely applied, in other words, I am not attacking a straw man. In the third section, it will be argued that (BC) can only be adequate provided there is consensus over which instances are

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[3] Although there is a distinction to be drawn between definitions and theories of art, here I will use 'definition of art' and 'theory of art' more or less interchangeably: they both refer to attempts to clarify ' art' by formulating conditions for arthood, whether or not these conditions are supposed to be necessary and sufficient.

[4] One noteworthy exception comes to mind; Nick Zangwill does not accept that extensional adequacy should be philosophers of art's main concern, as such, he implicitly denies that a theory of art should be able to account for borderline cases of art (Zangwill, 1995).

borderline cases of art. In the fourth and fifth section, it will be demonstrated by means of two examples that there is no such consensus, and that, correspondingly (BC) should not be used. In the sixth section, the broader implications of (NT) will be identified. In the final section, the consequences of (BC) for the project of defining art will be elucidated and it will be shown which role borderline cases can play in the evaluation of definitions of art.

8.1   Borderline Cases and Philosophical Analysis

In analytic philosophy, it has long been accepted that philosophical definitions should be as precise as possible, and, correspondingly, that vagueness must be eliminated. Accordingly, definitions should settle the status of borderline cases: they should decide whether or not the concept applies to them. In the last decades, however, the view that 'a definition can be no more precise than the concept it defines, at the risk of shifting to a different concept' (Abelson, 1967, p. 315) has gained support. Roy Sorensen has given elaborate and clear support to this position:

> When we are giving a purely reportive definition, we must preserve both clear cases and borderline cases because they contribute equally to the meaning of the term. When we engage in definition governed by desiderata that are not restricted to meaning preservation, *both* clear cases and borderline cases are revisable and in any direction (including from clear to borderline). (Sorensen, 1991, p. 107)

Let me illustrate this position with a mundane and a less mundane example. The fact that, say, Brad Pitt is borderline tall, i.e. neither tall nor short, contributes as much to the meaning of 'a tall man' as the fact that Danny De Vito is not tall and Michael Jordan is tall. Therefore, under any adequate definition of 'a tall man', Brad Pitt must come out as a borderline case. Imagine that 'telling a white lie' is considered to be a borderline case of 'immoral behavior', then, in Sorensen's view, this contributes as much to the meaning of immoral behavior as clear cases of immoral behavior , such as murder or rape. Therefore, again, 'telling a white lie' should come out as a borderline case. Let us apply this reasoning to the project of defining art. If fashion is considered to be a borderline case of art, then this contributes as much to the meaning of 'art' as does the fact that Leonardo Da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* is considered to be a clear case of art. Therefore, fashion must come out as a borderline case of art.

Note that Sorensen does not claim that every kind of definition must preserve vagueness, only reportive definitions must do so. Reportive definitions equal what are often called *descriptive* definitions: such definitions do not aim to regulate or alter the

way in which a concept is used, they merely want to clarify the criteria that underlie common (folk or expert) usage, i.e. our classificatory practice. If we turn to the project of defining art, it is clear that most philosophers of art believe themselves to be engaged in a descriptive approach to defining art. George Dickie, for example, has argued that: 'What philosophical definitions of "work of art" are really attempting to do is then to make clear to us in a self-conscious and explicit way what we already in some sense know' (Dickie, 1997, p. 79). Similarly, Robert Stecker argues that the goal of the definitional project is 'normally to find a principle for classifying all artworks together while distinguishing them from all nonartworks.' (Stecker, 2010, p. 95). Stephen Davies argues that 'a definition must be exhaustive of all art and exclusive of all that is not art' (Davies, 2006, p. 45). It is important to stress, as Sorensen does, that normative definitions, these are definitions that set out to change our usage of the concept of art in light of certain goals, do not necessarily aim at precision, that is, they do not necessarily eliminate borderline cases. Nick Zangwill's normative theory of art, for example, tends to attribute borderline status to avant-garde art (see his 'second-order' strategy: Zangwill, 2002, pp. 112-113). However, borderline cases play a starkly different role in his theory. Here, the attribution of borderline status entails a normative recommendation: it is commendable not to accord full art status to avant-garde works. Meaning preservation, i.e. accordance with classificatory practice, is sacrificed in light of other goals Zangwill hopes to achieve, namely a metaphysical clarification of the nature of art. Correspondingly, he argues that to treat avant-garde works as non-art or artful does 'more justice to their actual nature', than accounts that make these works clear or central cases of art (Zangwill, 2002, p. 113). Put differently, since Zangwill is engaged in a metaphysical project, that means, he wants to investigate the nature of art, he is happy to revise our classificatory practice in light of his metaphysical findings.

Sorensen also carefully distinguishes between vagueness and disagreement, i.e. between borderline cases and disputed cases. Borderline cases are inherently unresolvable: nothing will settle whether or not the concept should be applied to them. Disputed cases, however, are cases where people are in disagreement over whether or not the concept applies. Disputed cases are potentially resolvable, and, therefore, a definition that can resolve these cases is superior to definitions that cannot resolve them. In the philosophy of art, Dominic McIver Lopes has distinguished hard (i.e. disputed) cases and borderline cases as follows:

> [...] hard cases need not be borderline or marginal; it is not some vagueness that makes them controversial. Theories according to which they are not works of art may pronounce them to be clearly and distinctly non-art, and theories that take them to be works of art may pronounce them to be central cases of works of art. (Lopes, 2014, p. 186)

Most philosophers of art agree that disputed cases invite definitions of art to *settle* their art status; they should 'adjudicate the dispute' (Gaut, 2000, p. 31). Borderline cases, as we have seen above, need to be accounted for by descriptive definitions: they should not be resolved by either including or excluding them. Nonetheless, this does not mean that it is impossible that there is disagreement over the borderline status of certain artefacts, as there is potential disagreement over the art status of many artefacts.

To summarize, most philosophers of art aim to give a descriptive analysis of 'art'. Consequently, they believe that the adequacy of a definition or theory of art can be measured by the way in which the theory deals with clear cases, as well as how it deals with borderline cases. Thus, the reasoning behind the application of (BC) goes as follows:

> (1) a satisfactory descriptive analysis of art must fit the facts about the concept of art, it must clarify how the concept is used;
> (2) borderline cases of art are a fact about the concept of art: people agree that specific artefacts are neither fully art, nor fully non-art;
> therefore (BC): under an adequate descriptive definition or theory of art, instances that are borderline cases of art must come out as borderline cases of art and not as either art or non-art.

In what follows, it will be shown that many philosophers of art openly support (BC) to be an adequate criterion for assessing the viability of a proposed definition or theory of art.

8.2   Adherence to the Borderline Criterion

In this section, it will be exemplified that the relevance of (BC) is widely accepted and that, accordingly, the borderline criterion is used to defend as well as to criticize proposed definitions.

One of the most notable examples of reliance on (BC) to defend a proposed theory of art can be found in Berys Gaut's exposition of his cluster account of art. He maintains his account is superior to other definitions of art because it can explain borderline cases of art. His anti-essentialist identification theory entails that there are no necessary and sufficient conditions for arthood. There are only criteria that are jointly sufficient, but not necessary (Gaut, 2000, p. 27). It follows that, firstly, if all criteria are fulfilled, the object is art and if some are fulfilled, then the object might be art. Secondly, not one of the proposed criteria is a necessary criterion for being art. Thirdly, the criteria are disjunctively necessary: at least some of them must be instantiated if the object is to fall

under the concept (Gaut, 2005, pp. 273-274). As such, when some, but not all, criteria are met, there is some indeterminacy; the artefact under consideration could be art, non-art or a borderline case of art. In this way, Gaut contends, the theory allows for and can explain borderline cases of art. He claims that

> [i]t is a signal advantage of the cluster account over the more straightforward definitions of art that it can preserve the hardness of such cases, and allow us to explain what it is that makes them hard; such cases can be shown to be genuinely borderline and indeterminate. (Gaut, 2000, p. 27)

Gaut's cluster account, in this view, does not only allow for borderline cases of art, it also explains why we categorize them as such, since 'clearly satisfied or unsatisfied criteria pull in different directions' (Gaut, 2005, p. 281). Therefore, we judge these artefacts to be neither fully art, nor fully non-art.

Likewise, in their reformulation of Gaut's cluster account, Francis Longworth and Andrea Scarantino remain intentionally unclear about exactly which clusters of criteria are sufficient for arthood (Longworth & Scarantino, 2010, p. 164). They claim that this vagueness enables them to explain borderline cases of art. Accordingly, they distinguish three categories: items that satisfy clearly sufficient conditions, and are clearly art; items that satisfy clearly insufficient conditions, and are clearly non-art; and items that fall inbetween, and are best seen as borderline cases of art (Longworth & Scarantino, 2010, pp. 162-163). This is needed, they argue, since they follow Gaut 'in thinking that accounting for borderline cases is a requirement for any good theory of art' (Longworth & Scarantino, 2010, p. 164).

Denis Dutton, who defends a similar kind of cluster theory of art, also uses (BC). Like Gaut, he proposes a list of 'recognition criteria' for arthood. It is a benefit of cluster accounts, so Dutton maintains, that a borderline case, such as cooking, 'is not simply thrown in or out, but is analyzed in terms of the list' (Dutton, 2006, p. 375). Allowing for borderline cases, so Dutton agrees with Gaut, 'is not a loss for aesthetics, but a gain.' (Dutton, 2006, p. 375):

> To fault the list [of recognition criteria] because it does not decisively sort out every hard case is to wish that aesthetics not have hard, marginal, or borderline cases at all. As this will never be so, the best aesthetic theory is one that acknowledges it. (Dutton, 2006, p. 375)

Put differently, we should not wish for definitions that allow for only two categories of art, while there are clearly three categories.

It is noteworthy that while Gaut's and other cluster accounts have been critised from many different perspectives, these criticisms either leave the question of borderline cases unaddressed, or take the idea that a theory of art must be able to deal with them for granted. In the latter case, it is argued that cluster accounts are not able to meet this

requirement (Adajian, 2003, p. 382; Kamber, 2011, pp. 205-206). Thus, the idea that a theory of art must be able to account for borderline cases is left unchallenged.

The cluster account is not the only theory of art that is defended in these terms. Some aesthetic definitions of art are also seemingly reinforced based on their ability to clarify borderline cases. William Tolhurst's aesthetic theory of art is a case in point. Tolhurst proposes that arthood depends on primary design functions, and whether or not the aesthetic function is a primary design function. In other words, if a maker of an object intended it to function as an object for aesthetic contemplation, then the object is art. He states that

> [t]here is no definite line separating those functions which are primary from those which are not. Introducing this phrase renders the analysis vague, but not unclear. In this respect it is not unlike our ordinary concepts of being bald or of being a tall man. (Tolhurst, 1984, p. 266)

He suggests that his theory is superior to many other theories because of this vagueness; it shows why some artefacts are art, others are non-art and still others have an indeterminate status and are rightly called borderline cases of art (Tolhurst, 1984, p. 266).

Jerrold Levinson also believes that it is a benefit, and not a deficit, of his intentional-historical definition of art, that it allows for the category 'artful', besides 'art' and 'non-art'. He argues that many items falling under the rubric of folk art, primitive art, commercial art and artistic craft, belong to this category. In order to find out to which category such items belong, so Levinson argues, we should try to find out to what extent they are aimed at soliciting 'art regards'. He adds that:

> when we do so, we should naturally not expect to succeed either wholly or not at all; the intended regards distinctive of artmaking, as this has developed, will generally not be either fully present, or wholly absent, in such domains, but rather there to different extents. That is to say, in applying an intentional-historical criterion to activities such as these, one should expect to find it holding to various degrees, reflecting how related to those of historically paradigmatic artmaking are the creative or projective stances involved. On an intentional-historical account, as on any other viable one, arthood is not an all-or-nothing thing, and makings can be described as more or less unequivocally "artful". (Levinson, 1993, p. 422)

Note that Levinson suggests that it is 'natural' that there are items to which the concept of art does not fully apply. On the basis of being able to account for this category, Levinson's definition is 'viable'. Here again, reliance on (BC) is apparent.

In his Stanford Encyclopedia entry on The Definition of Art, Thomas Adajian explicitly lists the ability to account for borderline cases as a constraint on definitions of art. He states:

given that most classes outside of mathematics are vague, and that the existence of borderline cases is characteristic of vague classes, definitions that take the class of artworks to have borderline cases are preferable to definitions that don't. (Adajian, 2009)

Stephen Davies has defended the project of defining art against anti-essentialist attacks. Correspondingly, as should be clear from the examples above, (BC) is supported by essentialists as well as anti-essentialist in the definitional debate. The terms essentialism and anti-essentialism have been used in starkly different ways. In the context of defining art, however, essentialism usually signifies that 'art' can be clarified in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions, whereas anti-essentialism signifies that this is not possible. While anti-essentialists like Berys Gaut have emphasized that anti-essentialist theories of art are better at accounting for borderline cases, Stephen Davies has maintained that borderline cases do not constitute a problem for essential definitions:

> [...] that a concept is indefinite in some respects is no bar to its being defined. An adequate, essential definition of the concept will record the limits of the area in which the application of the term is equivocal. If it is part of the essence of the concept that it is indefinite in some ways and/or at some places and/or at some times and/or under some conditions, then the dimensions of this indefiniteness will feature within an essential definition of the concept. (Davies, 1991, p. 20)

In other words, if there are items to which the concept does not fully apply, that is, items that are neither fully art nor fully non-art, but 'artful', then a definition of art can and should account for this category.

To summarize, the ability to account for borderline cases of art is explicitly or implicitly seen as a requirement for any definition or theory of art. In other words, (BC) is widely accepted as a criterion to assess the viability of a definition of art. The next part of this chapter will focus on the assumptions that necessarily underlie the application of (BC).

8.3   Assumptions Underlying the Borderline Criterion

It has been shown that (BC) is a widely held criterion. Now, the assumptions underlying this criterion will be exposed and attacked. As stated in the first section, the reasoning behind the application of (BC) goes as follows:

(1) a satisfactory descriptive conceptual analysis of art must fit the facts about the concept of art, it must clarify how the concept is used;

(2) borderline cases of art are a fact about the concept of art: people agree that specific artefacts are neither fully art, nor fully non-art;

therefore (BC): under an adequate descriptive definition or theory of art, instances that are borderline cases of art must come out as borderline cases of art and not as either art or non-art.

Assumption (1) simply states what descriptive conceptual analysis entails. I will focus on assumption (2). The assumption asserts that there is consensus regarding which artefacts fall under the category 'artful'. This consensus is needed, otherwise, the ability to account for borderline cases cannot be seen as a valid criterion for assessing the viability of a definition of art. Let me explain this more clearly. If different artefacts are attributed borderline status by different philosophers, then this attribution does not depend on facts regarding the concept of art and there simply is no collection of agreed-upon borderline cases of art. Put differently; philosophers of art work from bottom up; they start from the instances that fall under the concept, that is, the extension of art, in order to build up their definitions or theories of art. However, if it can be shown that philosophers disagree over which artefacts are art, non-art or artful, then they all start from different extensions of art. Philosopher A cannot falsify the definition of art proposed by philosopher B, by arguing that B's definition does not accord borderline status to x, if B does not agree that x is a borderline case of art in the first place. If there is disagreement over which instances fall under the category 'artful', then the ability to account for borderline cases does not provide us with a valid criterion for assessing the viability of a definition of art. Correspondingly, it is important to stress that (BC) does not only mean that a definition must allow for the category of 'artful', it must also categorize the right items in this category (cf. Davies, 1991, p. 20). Accordingly, it is unsurprising that most philosophers assume that people generally agree on which artefacts are borderline cases of art. Jerome Stolnitz, for example, argues that '[i]t will be generally agreed that the avant-garde objects [...] are borderline cases of art' (Stolnitz, 1979, p. 406). Thus, he clearly postulates a broad consensus on their borderline status. Likewise, Jerrold Levinson argues that 'we have no trouble distinguishing' ceramic items that are clearly craft, ceramic items that are clearly art and all the ceramic items in-between that are 'not purely craft, and not wholly art' (Levinson, 1993, p. 422).

It might be wondered, however, what kind of consensus is needed here; among whom must there be consensus? Conceptual analysis usually presupposes consensus among competent users of the concept under consideration and this often includes so-called folk intuitions. However, philosophers of art often seem to narrow this group of competent users down to people involved in the artworld. In other terms, they take into account 'expert intuitions'. If it can be shown that expert intuitions conflict, this is

sufficient to confirm (NT) since then it is demonstrated that (2) is false. The 'experts' that will be considered here are philosophers of art themselves. If it can be shown that even they have conflicting intuitions over which instances are artful, then the reasoning behind the application of (BC) is effectively undermined.

There is a very wide collection of items that are considered to be artful by different philosophers of art. The borderline cases put forward by different philosophers range from Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* to folktales, from cooking to 'Outsider Art', from children's drawings to chimpanzee's scribbles and from ritual objects to jokes (Cohen, 1973, pp. 78-79; Dutton, 2006, p. 368; Gaut, 1998, p. 65; 2000, p. 36; Levinson, 1993, p. 422; Silvers, 1976, p. 446; Winner, 1982, p. 8; Zangwill, 2002, p. 113). This in itself constitutes no problem for (2), as long as there is agreement over the borderline status of all of these items. However, by examining two important examples, namely avant-garde art and remote art, it will be demonstrated that this is by no means the case. A consensus over whether or not these items are artful is simply non-existent.

Three objections against my claim that disagreement over which items are borderline cases of art implies the deficit of (BC) come to mind. Firstly, it could be argued that if a concept allows for borderline cases, it is only to be expected that there will be some disagreement regarding whether or not an item is a borderline case. That is to say, it might be argued that the disagreement is only superficial and not fundamental: some might draw the line a bit closer, others a bit further.[5] We might, to return to the example of 'a tall man', disagree over whether Tom Cruise is a borderline case of a tall man or whether he is not a tall man at all, i.e. a short man. Commentators on borderline cases have argued that often people do give verdicts, i.e. Tom Cruise is or is not a tall man, regarding borderline cases, but that such verdicts are *hesitantly* made (Lopez de Sa, 2010, p. 338; Wright, 2003, pp. 92-93). If disagreements regarding borderline cases of art boil down to these kinds of disagreements, then not much hinges on the fact that there is disagreement over which items are borderline cases of art. However, if disagreement about which artefacts are borderline cases of art is fundamental, then (BC) is invalidated. There is fundamental disagreement when one party unhesitantly argues that *x* is a borderline case of art, while another party unhesitantly argues that x is a clear case of art. In the next sections, it will be shown that disagreement over borderline cases of art is fundamental.

A second objection could be that a commitment to descriptivism does not need to entail agreement over the extension of the concept.[6] A descriptive account might try to clarify the way in which the concept is applied, not the applications themselves. The

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[5] I thank Maarten Boudry for raising this objection.

[6] I thank Eric Schliesser for raising this objection.

philosophers of art under consideration, however, start from the extension of art in order to formulate their definitions, in order words, they presuppose consensus regarding which instances fall under art, artful and non-art.[7] Therefore, (BC) does require agreement over what falls under the category 'artful'.

A third objection entails that most proposed definitions of art are not intended to be fully descriptive: they try to offer a 'rational reconstruction' (Stecker, 2000, p. 60) of the concept of art by striving for a reflective equilibrium between our categorization judgments or intuitions and the proposed definition of art. This approach grants that agreement over the application of art is not always univocal. From this perspective, then, there need not be consensus over which cases are borderline cases of art. This defence against (NT), however, does not work, since (BC) is used as a criterion for *descriptive* adequacy. Descriptive adequacy entails that a definition or theory of art includes what is generally seen as art, excludes what is generally seen as non-art and neither fully includes nor fully excludes what is generally seen as 'artful'. However, descriptive adequacy can only be evaluated when the status of certain artefacts is 'generally accepted'. Thus, granted that the method of reflective equilibrium can be used to define art, definitions of art can put forward certain artefacts as borderline cases of art in order to provide us with a rational reconstruction of the concept of art. Yet, in this case, they cannot use (BC) as a criterion for assessing the descriptive adequacy of definitions of art. In other words, philosophers cannot have it both ways: they cannot put forward normative recommendations in light of a rational reconstruction of the concept of art and then argue these recommendations are based on the generally accepted usage of 'art' and subsequently maintain that their definition or theory is descriptively adequate.

In the next two sections, it will be shown that disagreement over borderline cases is fundamental, i.e., it constitutes a fatal problem for (BC). Firstly, I will focus on the case of avant-garde art.

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[7] To my knowledge, there is only one theory that aims to be descriptive, yet does not start from (a presupposed consensus over) the extension of art, namely Alessandro Pignocchi's intentional characterization of art. Arguably his account is purely descriptive, since it merely has a theory of disagreement, but not a theory of error. However, he arguably is engaged in a different project altogether than the philosophers that have been discussed here. See (Pignocchi, 2012).

8.4 Avant-Garde Art

Avant-garde artworks are often seen as borderline cases of art. As noted above, some aesthetic theoreticians of art invoke the notion of borderline case of art in order to marginalize most avant-garde art within the domain of art. Jerome Stolnitz's claim that avant-garde artworks are borderline cases of art provides a good example. His disdain for avant-garde art can hardly be ignored, when he maintains that '[s]ome recent avant-garde art is like the jokes that are used up once one knows the punch line' (Stolnitz, 1979, p. 403). According to Stolnitz, avant-garde art is virtually only interesting as a symptom. Consequently, a definition of art should not concern itself with being inclusionary towards avant-garde objects whose value does not depend on their exhibited aesthetic properties. The concept of art can only be clarified adequately through an aesthetic theory (Stolnitz, 1979, p. 406). Likewise, Nick Zangwill proposes that the unique value of art lies in its aesthetic value.[8] Accordingly, anti-aesthetic art is best seen as second-order art (Zangwill, 2002, p. 113). The art status of such works depends on first-order, that is aesthetic, art. Therefore, avant-garde artworks should be approached as art to a lesser degree. In general, aesthetic theories aim to show that aesthetic properties or aesthetic experience are essential to arthood. Therefore, the marginalization of supposedly anti-aesthetic avant-garde artworks simply follows from their theories.[9] For a descriptivist, this constitutes no problem as long as it is agreed upon that specific avant-garde artworks are borderline cases of art.

From a quite different perspective, Ted Cohen also adheres to the view that avant-garde artworks like Duchamp's *Fountain* are borderline cases of art. He criticizes George Dickie's institutional definition of art, because this definition renders the inclusion of avant-garde art into a primary concern. However, Cohen does not aim at diminishing the importance of such works. Rather, he suggests that when a definition of art can easily accommodate such artworks, it actually misperceives them. According to Cohen, *Fountain* is an unclear case of art. Hence, philosophers of art should not try to show that *Fountain* is a clear example of arthood, but should discuss the ways in which *Fountain* is

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[8] As noted above, Zangwill does not think that descriptivism is worthwhile or even possible. Correspondingly, he is fully aware of the fact that his views on avant-garde art are not generally agreed upon. However, descriptivists need to presuppose that Zangwill's expert intuitions converge with those of other experts.

[9] Not all philosophers who defend the importance of the aesthetic for arthood marginalise avant-garde art. James Shelley, for example, suggests that so-called non-aesthetic avant-garde artworks do not exhibit perceptual aesthetic properties, yet they do possess non-perceptual aesthetic properties. Therefore, avant-garde artworks have aesthetic properties and are clearly art. See (Shelley, 2003).

like normal art and unlike normal art. They should do this to clarify the specific character of Duchamp's act of putting *Fountain* forward and having it called art (Cohen, 1973, pp. 81-82). Thus, Cohen seems to attribute borderline status to avant-garde objects in order to be able to correctly appreciate these artistic endeavours.

Although different reasons are given for attributing the status of borderline case of art to avant-garde artworks, the examples above suggest that there is substantial consensus on their borderline status. Moreover, if we go outside the field of philosophy, there are many people who are doubtful about avant-garde objects' full art status. Yet, agreement on their borderline status is, as is well-known, not at all general. Avant-garde art occupies a major place in the contemporary artworld. This fact is also mirrored in the philosophy of art. Arthur Danto, for example, unambiguously grants full art status to avant-garde artworks (Danto, 1997). In fact, his philosophy of art centers around avant-garde artworks, most prominently Andy Warhol's *Brillo Boxes*. That avant-garde artworks are artworks is beyond doubt, according to Danto. What these artworks reveal about art's essence is Danto's main concern. Danto is by no means the only philosopher who grants full art status to avant-garde art. Most so-called relational definers of art, such as Jerrold Levinson, Noël Carroll and George Dickie (Carroll, 1993; Dickie, 1997; Levinson, 1979), are very concerned about being able to fully include avant-garde art. This does not imply that relational theorists would include anything that is presented as 'avant-garde' into the domain of art: Noël Carroll, for example, would exclude avant-garde items that cannot in any way be understood as an intelligible response to the present-day art context (Maes, 2012). Jerrold Levinson would also be wary of calling such items art, since a maker must rationally intend to make art, and if one fails in this intention, then one is not making art. Arguably, these philosophers attribute non-art or borderline status to items whose art status is contested or controversial in the art world. What is important here, is that philosophers mentioned above do not only accord borderline status to items that have a controversial status in the artworld, but also to paradigm cases of avant-garde art, like Duchamp's *Fountain* and John Cage's *4'33'*. Still, it could be argued that philosophers like Stolnitz and Cohen belong to an older generation that had not yet come to terms with the avant-garde. Nonetheless, the view that even paradigm avant-garde works are best seen as situated on the margins of the domain of art can also be found in the work of Paul Crowther, Denis Dutton, Julius Moravcsik and Nick Zangwill (Crowther, 2004; Dutton, 2006; Moravcsik, 1993; Zangwill, 2006). Thus, the disagreement over attributing borderline status to avant-garde items remains substantial and (2) is falsified.

8.5 Remote Art

Another set of artefacts often considered to be borderline cases of art, are historically and culturally remote artworks. Within the field of the arts, they often occupy a marginal place: remote artworks, such as non-Western artefacts, are not granted much space in art history and they are not often largely represented in general art museums. Philosophers like Jerrold Levinson, argue that much remote art is rightly seen as neither fully art, nor fully non-art. Levinson defends a historical-intentional conception of art; this conception roughly entails that art must be intended for similar regards as past uncontested art (Levinson, 1979, 1989, 1993, 2002). He allows that his theory cannot fully accommodate many historically and culturally remote artworks, since many of these artworks are not obviously related to past uncontested art. Levinson suggests that if culturally and historically remote practices are aimed at similar regards as our artistic practices or show the same kind of connectedness, we can grant these artefacts the status of artful. As seen above, Levinson does not perceive this as a problem, since on any viable definition of art, art is not an all-or-nothing matter, and allows for the category of 'artful' (Levinson, 1993, p. 422). What is significant is that their status as artful or borderline case depends on the fact that the historical-intentional conception of art cannot wholly accommodate them. Still, a consensus regarding their borderline status is presupposed.

Contra Levinson, there are many philosophers who grant full art status to the historically and culturally remote artefacts that Levinson calls 'artful', like sculpted masks or ritual music. Broadly two kinds of theories do not in the slightest doubt their full art status. Firstly, there are philosophers like Denis Dutton and Richard L. Anderson who aim at characterizing art cross-culturally (Anderson, 1989; Dutton, 2006). For this reason, they start from a broad range of worldwide examples of art: they take remote art, most notably non-Western art, to be central cases of art. These artworks are, along with Western canonical art, the starting points of their definitions and theories of art. Consequently, historically and culturally remote artworks are granted full art status (Dutton, 2006). Secondly, most aesthetic theories of art grant full art status to certain historically and culturally remote artefacts.[10] Aesthetic theories broadly define or identify art in terms of aesthetics; whether it is the capacity to convey or provoke aesthetic emotion or the exhibition of aesthetic properties. Culturally and historically remote artefacts that meet these criteria are seen as full blown artworks. Although

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[10] Old as well as new aesthetic theories argue this, see for example: (Bell, 2003, p. 109; Crowther, 2003; Fry, 1937, pp. 88-89; Iseminger, 2004, p. 74).

aesthetic theories do not necessarily take these kinds of artefacts to be paradigmatic artworks, they usually have no problem with according full art status to them.

This example again shows that there is no consensus regarding the borderline status of culturally and historically remote artworks and the presupposed consensus over which items are seen as 'artful' is once more falsified.

The two analyzed examples have sufficiently shown that (2) is false. Since (BC) can only be used if there is agreement over the extension of the categories of art, artful and non-art, the viability of a definition of art cannot be judged on account of its ability to account for borderline cases of art. (NT) does not merely entail that we cannot evaluate definitions of art on account of their ability to allow for borderline cases, but also has consequences for the artefacts that are attributed this status. It is to these consequences I will turn now.

8.6   Consequences for Borderline Cases of Art

Although (BC) is widely accepted as valid, if (NT) solely implies that we have one less evaluation criterion for definitions of art, the issue is not overly relevant. However, borderline cases of art concern a large amount of artefacts: as seen above, many items have been labeled 'artful'. What does it mean to attribute the status 'artful' to an artefact?

Whatever view one holds about what concepts are and how they can be illuminated, it can hardly be denied that concepts, as Richard Miller has pointed out, 'are ways of discriminating things into classes so that we can treat different things differently' (Miller, 2000, p. 238). Categorizing an artefact under a concept has obvious consequences for the way in which the artefact will be used and evaluated. Let me illustrate this idea with the concept 'chair'. Although a low table and a chair might both be fitted to sit on, we are urged to sit on the chair and not on the table. Tables are treated differently than chairs. Also, while the low table might be a better sitting device than the chair, the table will not be evaluated in these terms, since it is supposed to be a table, not a chair. Moreover, 'borderline cases of chairs', say, for example, chairs that are believed to fall in between chairs and decoration, will not be valued as much as a chair, that is as an object for sitting on, than a regular chair. We will care less about its prototypical 'chair value', that is the sitting value, than that of other chairs, regardless whether or not the borderline case of chair, that is the decorative chair, functions well as a chair.

This view of concepts is explicitly accepted by philosophers of art like Noël Carroll. He argues that the classification of an object as art or non-art is crucial for ascertaining

how we should respond to it, since 'how we respond to an object – interpretively, appreciatively, emotively and evaluatively – hinges crucially upon whether or not we categorize it as an artwork' (Carroll, 2000, p. 13). Carroll also thinks through the more practical consequences of applying the concept of art to artefacts, such as eligibility for an award from a government and for tax exemption (Carroll, 1999, p. 207). Thus, defining art correctly is important, since how an artefact is treated rests on how it is classified. Carroll does not address borderline cases of art in this context. Hence, let us apply this view on concepts to borderline cases of art. The prototypical value of an artwork is its artistic value. If an artefact is seen as neither fully art nor fully non-art, since, for instance, it is claimed to be situated on the borderline between artworks and religious artefacts, then it is likely that less attention will be paid to its artistic value than when it is seen as fully art. In other words, the artistic value of borderline cases of art is usually considered to be of less importance than the artistic value of artefacts with full art status.

What does it mean to consider the artistic value of certain artefacts of marginal or lesser importance? Firstly, there are potential implications for the way in which the artefacts under consideration will be presented and appreciated. Let us consider the example of non-Western art. When non-Western artefacts are treated as art, then they are in art museums. Art museums usually grant the artworks lots of space, so the audience can see the artwork from many different angles and distances. When these artefacts are seen as 'artful', they are presented in historical and anthropological museums more so than in art museums. Usually, many artefacts are packed together in large cabinets. In such contexts, more attention will be paid to functional and ritual concerns, as separated from the artistic values the artefact might have. Secondly, as Carroll rightly has noted, there are also legal consequences. When, for example, certain textile designs are accepted as art, then they are eligible for art grants and legal protection against forgery. It is not so clear whether these (beneficial) treatments apply when these textile designs are categorized as 'artful'. Thirdly, categorizing something as art has a different normative weight than categorizing something as, say, a chair. While categorizing an item as art does not necessarily entail categorizing it as good art, the category of art is meaningful only because of the values that we believe to be realized by good artworks. Correspondingly, by attributing art status to certain artefacts, these artefacts are elevated over other cultural practices (Crowther 2003, 121; Dean 2006, 27; Lopes 2014, 31). By systematically marginalizing certain artefacts in the domain of art, i.e., by implicitly advocating that their artistic value is of minor interest, it is suggested that the makers of these artefacts have made no noteworthy contribution to what is believed to be among the world's most valuable cultural practices.

To summarize, since philosophers of art believe that they are giving a descriptive analysis of art, they present their borderline cases as a descriptive fact about the concept of art: this is simply the status these artefacts have. However, given that there

is no fact of the matter, that is, there is no pre-theoretical agreement on which artefacts are borderline cases of art, when an artefact comes out as a borderline case of art under a definition, this entails a normative recommendation. Consequently, a normative attribution of borderline status is presented as a descriptive clarification of the status an artefact has. The misrepresentation of the attribution of borderline status as a descriptive fact about the concept of art constitutes a fundamental problem for the field of the arts. As explained above, attributing borderline status to artefacts prima facie implies marginalizing them in the domain of art, since calling an artefact a borderline case of art urges us to pay less attention to the artistic value of the artefact and treat them accordingly.[11] Correspondingly, not only can borderline cases of art no longer be used as criterion for assessing the viability of definitions of art, moreover, attribution of borderline status can no longer be justified in terms of our implicit knowledge of art's extension. Rather, philosophers should formulate arguments in favour of their categorizations: they have to show us *why* these artefacts are best seen as artful. What role, then, can borderline cases legitimately play in a definition of art?

8.7   Borderline Cases and Normative Theories of Art

Disagreement over borderline cases of art does not only entail that (BC) should not be used. but also reveals the impossibility of a descriptive conceptual analysis of art. Let me spell this out more clearly. Descriptivism assumes that we have implicit knowledge of our concepts that can be attained through using our intuitions or examining our classificatory practice. It needs to be presupposed, then, that philosophers share the same intuitions or that there is a more or less uniform classificatory practice, although they might differ over how to explain these intuitions or this classificatory practice.

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[11] It might be objected that these claims presuppose a very naïve, and ultimately wrong, estimation of the influence definitions of art have within the broader field of the arts. Reference to analytic definitions of art is extremely scarce in other domains concerned with the arts, such as art history and artistic practice. Therefore, it would be flat-out wrong to suggest that when philosophers of art declare that an item is a borderline case of art, the field of the arts will take their word for it. Nonetheless, the fact that other inquirers in the field of the arts do not take much interest in definitions of art does not mean that philosophers of art should not care for what their definitions entail for the evaluation of artworks, non-artworks and borderline cases of art. This is especially important since philosophers of art themselves have argued that their efforts are and should be relevant for the broader field of the arts (see for example: Beardsley, 1982, p. 304; Carroll, 1999, p. 5). I thank Hans Maes for raising this objection.

Indeed, defenders of descriptive conceptual analysis argue that philosophers agree on what the relevant intuitions are regarding philosophically interesting concepts, yet disagree over what the correct theory is to explain these intuitions (Pust, 2012). George Dickie has clarified the project of defining art in a similar vein, by stating:

> What philosophical definitions of 'work of art' are really attempting to do is then to make clear to us in a self-conscious and explicit way what we already in some sense know. That philosophers' definitions have been so frequently misdirected testifies to the difficulty of saying precisely what we in some sense already know. (Dickie, 1997, p. 79)

Dickie suggests that we 'in some sense already know' the extension of art. He explicitly states that we are not in need of a definition in order to identify art, what we do not know, however, is how to theorize about this extension (Dickie, 1997, pp. 78-79). Since philosophers substantially disagree over which instances fall within the category artful, the foundation on which the descriptive project is built, namely agreement regarding the extension of art, i.e., over clear as well as borderline cases, is flawed. It follows that a descriptive analysis of the concept of art cannot be attained by employing the methods of conceptual analysis. Correspondingly, the descriptive project of defining art should be given up.

In other words, this chapter argues that philosophers of art cannot use (BC) for assessing the descriptive adequacy of a definition of art, given that descriptive adequacy is unattainable and, correspondingly, the descriptive conceptual approach to defining art is impossible. However, as has been noted above, this does not signify that definitions of art cannot put forward borderline cases of art and that the category 'artful' cannot play a meaningful role in definitions of art.

The previous sections indicate that when philosophers of art put forward borderline cases of art, this constitutes a normative recommendation, not a clarification of a descriptive fact. Normative recommendations in themselves are not problematic, as long as they are presented as such. A descriptive approach cannot put forward normative recommendations. A normative approach, on the other hand, sets out to offer us recommendable concepts of art. Correspondingly, as Sorensen already noted, non-descriptive definitions can put forward borderline cases of art depending on the goals these definitions aim to fulfill.[12] The purposes one may hope to realize fall broadly into two kinds: pragmatic and metaphysical.[13] The question that is relevant with respect

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[12] Note that Sorensen does not applaud such approaches (Sorensen, 1991, p. 101).

[13] These two kinds of purposes are not mutually exclusive, yet, do not necessarily imply each other. Sally Haslanger's ameliorative approach is a clear example of a non-metaphysical pragmatic approach (Haslanger,

to the vagueness of the concept of art for normative theories is the following: is the category 'artful' a useful category (cf. pragmatic purposes) or a truthful category (cf. metaphysical purposes)? An example of a metaphysical theory of art that puts forward borderline cases of art already has been given. As we have seen above, Nick Zangwill tends to attribute borderline status to much avant-garde art. This is useful, so he argues, to examine the nature of art. In his view, examining the nature of art entails giving a rational explanation of the phenomenon of art (Zangwill, 2006, pp. 87-88). Whether or not one agrees with Zangwill regarding the marginal status avant-garde art should be given, is not what matters here. The example illustrates how the category 'artful' can be used within a metaphysical approach to defining art. In what follows, I will focus on how the category can be used in pragmatic approaches to the definition of art.

The aims of a pragmatic approach center around practical and/or theoretical utility: the normative theories that follow from this approach allow us to evaluate existing concepts of art and propose new concepts in light of attaining certain purposes that people may have.[14] Let us take a closer look at what such practical or theoretical purposes might entail. With regard to the concept of art, several possible purposes come to mind[15]: aestheticians might need a concept of art that allows them to explain why we value art; art historians might need a concept of art that enables them to justify the selection of their study objects; anthropologists might need a concept of art that helps them investigate similarities and dissimilarities between different cultural practices; cognitive psychologists might need a concept of art that enables them to study certain kinds of perception; lawyers might need a concept of art to judge cases of forgery, copyright and vandalism. The questions, then, that arise with respect to the category 'artful' within this approach are: (1) what implications follow from attributing borderline status to an artefact (in a specific context)?; (2) are these implications warranted in light of the purposes we aim to realize (in this specific context)? If, in a legal context, attributing borderline status to artefacts entails that judges will be unable to give a non-arbitrary verdict, then there are good motivations for employing a concept of art that does not allow for the category 'artlike' in this context. If, in a governmental context, attributing borderline status entails being eligible for some, but not all art grants, the category might have a legitimate function. For example, we might

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2000), while P.D. Magnus' work on natural kinds, on the other hand, involves pragmatic as well as metaphysical commitments(Magnus, 2012).

[14] Similar approaches have been defended in divers fields of philosophy, like causation, race, gender and free action (Fisher, 2014; Hall, 2006; Haslanger, 2000; Weber & De Vreese, 2009).

[15] Note that there are significant similarities between this approach and what Mag Uidhir and Magnus have called 'Art Concept Pluralism' (Mag Uidhir & Magnus, 2011). I do not have space to discuss these similarities here.

want to categorize some commercial aesthetic practices as artful in this context: these practices usually are financially supported by the private sector. However, state funding might be needed to preserve commercial art works in museums or archives. Note that these are all quick proposals. Clearly, a lot of work needs to be done to confirm or disconfirm them: it needs to be investigated what role the concept of art plays in these contexts; what purposes we want to realize with the concept; whether or not these purposes are legitimate, and; which criteria a concept of art must fulfill to realize these purposes. What is important here, is that borderline cases *can* play a legitimate role in the project of defining art, since it is potentially recommendable to treat certain artefacts as borderline cases of art in specific contexts. However, borderline cases can only play this role when a normative approach with regarding to defining art is chosen.

Conclusion

This paper has attacked the thesis that any viable definition of art must be able to account for borderline cases of art. This thesis presupposes that definitions of art are descriptive conceptual analyses. A descriptive analysis must fit the facts about our concept of art. Since borderline cases are a fact about our concept of art, a definition should be able to account for them, so the reasoning goes. This thesis is only sustainable insofar as there is agreement regarding the instances that fall under this category of artful, otherwise a descriptive analysis cannot be verified on account of (BC). The examination of two proposed borderline cases of art, namely avant-garde art and remote art, has shown that there is no such consensus. The borderline status of these artefacts depends on the theory that is defended and not the other way around. In this way, the applicability of (BC) is adequately undermined. (NT) does not merely entail that (BC) must be rejected as an adequate criterion for assessing the viability of definitions of art. Moreover, it shows that philosophers must provide us with adequate reasons to attribute borderline status to certain artefacts. When attribution of borderline status is presented as a descriptive fact, artefacts are marginalized within the field of the arts without providing adequate justification.

Acknowledgements

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Conclusion

In this PhD dissertation, I have examined the metaphilosophical assumptions underlying the project of defining art. Contemporary philosophers of art have expressed fundamental and urgent worries regarding the viability and fruitfulness of proposed definitions of art. I maintained that metaphilosophical investigation was necessary to shed light on and respond to these worries. Correspondingly, my two main objectives were the following: (1) to clarify and evaluate the methods philosophers use to define art and the aims they hope to fulfill by their proposed definitions of art (cf. Part I and Part II); (2) to offer positive recommendations on how to proceed (cf. Part III).

In Part I, I have examined the methods philosophers of art use to define art. On the one hand, I have focussed on philosophers' self-image: which methods do they believe to be using and are these methods adequate? On the other hand, I have investigated whether or not philosophers' self-image is accurate, in other words, do they use the methods they believe to be using? Many philosophers of art believe to be using intuitions as evidence for definitions of art. In Chapter 1, it has been shown that this methodology is problematic: intuitions should not be accorded evidential status since they are not shared. In Chapter 2, I have demonstrated there is a tension between self-image and practice: it turns out that, in their practice, philosophers of art do not treat intuitions as evidence. This inadequate self-image is, so I have argued, not harmless, since, on the one hand, talk of intuition can mask incomplete or unconvincing arguments, and, on the other hand, reliance on intuitions seems to suggest that philosophers try to define the *concept* of art in a *descriptive* manner. However, since philosophers do not treat intuitions as evidence, it is unclear what definitions of art offer us.

In Part II, I have investigated the aims philosophers of art hope to fulfill with their definitions of art. In Chapter 3, it has been shown that, while many philosophers suggest that they are merely interested in elucidating the extension of art, that is to say, they have pure descriptive aims, several philosophers of art rightly state that they have descriptive as well as normative aims. It has been demonstrated, however, that these aims are incommensurable: the method that is used to realize both aims, namely

reflective equilibrium is not applicable to the project of defining art. Consequently, even if philosophers of art adjust their self-image, and acknowledge that they are aiming at both descriptive and normative adequacy, methodological problems still arise. Moreover, as Chapter 4 (and Chapter 1) has argued, philosophers of art cannot choose to adjust their practice to their purely descriptive self-image, since the descriptive conceptual approach, insofar as it starts from the extension of art, is untenable. This is so, because intuitions are not shared, classificatory practice is not uniform and the charge from psychology is applicable to purely descriptive definitions.

In Part III, I have examined ways to proceed. In Chapter 5, I have systematized the findings of Part I and II. Subsequently, two options were claimed to be still available for philosophers of art who aim to theorize about art: art reductionism and the normative conceptual, also called the pragmatic, approach. The former option was criticized in Chapter 6. I have argued that art reductionism is neither more viable nor more fruitful. In other words, this approach encounters the same problems as traditional theories of art. In Chapter 7, I have substantiated and defended a pragmatic approach to defining art. On the one hand, this approach turns out to be viable, given that it does not start from the assumption that there is a robust concept to be analyzed. Moreover, there are clear evaluation criteria for the normative theories of art that follow from this approach; these criteria are derived from the purposes one hopes to see fulfilled by a theory of art. On the other hand, this approach is potentially fruitful since it starts from the roles the concept of art can fulfill in specific contexts, unlike the descriptivists who start from the way in which the concept is commonly used.

In Part IV, I have illustrated the main arguments in this dissertation by means of an examination of the role of borderline cases of art in the project of defining art.

In conclusion, this dissertation has called attention to the fact that preoccupation with the extension of art and, accordingly, with descriptive adequacy, has led to deep methodological problems, and, has driven attention away from more fundamental issues concerning the concept of art, namely what roles does the concept play in our commerce with art in different contexts. Therefore, I urge that we should offer concepts of art that are advisable in domains in which the concept of art is important. It is my hope that in this way, the project of defining art will gain philosophical and societal relevance.

Summary

This PhD dissertation consists of a metaphilosophical investigation into the project of defining art. By and large, debates regarding art's definition are carried out within analytic philosophy of art. Philosophers of art engaged in this project aim to answer the question 'What is art?' by proposing conditions or criteria for art. In the 20th century, especially in the second half, many definitions and theories of art have been developed and philosophers continue to propose new answers to the question 'What is art?'. Nonetheless, interest in definitions of art has decreased in recent decades, because fundamental worries regarding the viability and fruitfulness of the enterprise have not been answered adequately. Firstly, there is much disagreement regarding the application of the concept of art, i.e. there are many artefacts that have a contested art status, yet there are no plausible ways in which these disagreements can be resolved or explained away. It follows that it is unclear how definitions and theories of art can be justified. Secondly, it is not obvious what proposed definitions of art have to offer. They have neither proven to be very useful for our understanding of art, nor attracted much interest from relevant outsiders, namely agents within the broader field of the arts, such as artists, art historians and curators.

In this dissertation, it was not my goal to formulate yet another answer to the question 'What is art?' in hope to overcome these worries. Rather, I wanted to shed new light on and ultimately resolve these worries by examining the metaphilosophical assumptions underlying philosophers' definitions of art. I believed this to be valuable given that the viability and fruitfulness of definitions of art can only be assessed when it is clear what philosophers of art aim to achieve with their definitions and how they hope to achieve these aims. Hence, my two main objectives were the following: (1) to clarify and evaluate (a) the methods philosophers use to define art and (b) the aims they hope to fulfill by their proposed definitions of art; (2) to offer positive recommendations on how to proceed.

There is limited substantial metaphilosophical reflection in the philosophy of art. In order to be able to systematically examine the explicit and implicit metaphilosophical commitments of philosophers of art, I have distinguished between four possible

approaches to the question 'What is art?' (see: Preliminary Chapter): the descriptive conceptual approach, the normative conceptual approach, the descriptive metaphysical approach and the revisionary metaphysical approach. These different approaches have different aims and imply distinct methodologies. *Descriptive conceptual analysis* entails clarifying the conditions under which the concept of art is commonly applied. In other words, a descriptive conceptual analysis of art aims to reveal the demarcation criteria we use to distinguish art items from non-art items. Such an analysis is refuted when it excludes instances that are intuitively or generally accepted as art, and, when it includes instances that are intuitively or generally accepted as non-art. A *normative conceptual analysis* aims to establish how the concept of art *should* be used, regardless of how it *is* used. Rather than exposing the demarcation criteria we use to distinguish art from non-art, a normative conceptual analysis proposes novel or revised demarcation criteria. Demarcation criteria are revised in light of practical and/or theoretical utility (cf. the pragmatic stance) or in light of the actual structure of the world (cf. the metaphysical stance). *Descriptive metaphysicians*, like descriptive conceptual analysts, want to clarify the way in which the concept of art is generally used. However, unlike descriptive conceptual analysts, they do not merely want to illuminate the demarcation criteria we use to apply the concept of art, they also want to clarify what people believe to be the nature of art, i.e. the meaning of art. *Revisionary metaphysicians* try to reveal what art really is, independent of what people believe our concept of art to entail. Such a definition determines what exists in the world, regardless how we label phenomena. These philosophers are not primarily interested in how we distinguish between art and non-art, but in how they should be distinguished given the actual structure of the world.

Starting from these four different approaches, firstly, I have examined the methods philosophers of art use to define art (see: Part I – cf. objective 1a). On the one hand, I have focussed on philosophers' self-image, i.e. on their explicit metaphilosophical commitments: which methods do they believe to be using and are these methods adequate (see: Chapter 1)? On the other hand, I have investigated whether or not philosophers' self-image is accurate, alternatively, do they use the methods they believe to be using (see: Chapter 2)? Many philosophers of art believe to be using descriptive methods: they assume that intuitions on what is art or facts about our classificatory practice are and can be used as evidence for definitions of art. In Chapter 1, it has been shown that this methodology is problematic since people's intuitions on what is art are conflicted and our classificatory practice is not consistent. It follows that there are many artefacts whose art status is contested or disputed. Correspondingly, there are no clear descriptive demarcation criteria to be clarified. In Chapter 2, I have demonstrated that there is a tension between philosophers' self-image and practice: it turns out that, in their practice, philosophers of art do not treat intuitions or facts about our classificatory practice as evidence. Rather they use normative and metaphysical

arguments to justify their solutions to contested cases. This inadequate self-image is, so I have argued, not harmless: talk of intuition or classificatory practice can mask incomplete or unconvincing arguments and creates confusion over what definitions of art offer us: a descriptive analysis of the concept of art; recommendations on how to use the concept of art; or, a metaphysical clarification of the phenomenon 'art'?

In Part II, subsequently, I have investigated the aims philosophers of art hope to fulfill with their definitions of art (cf. objective 1b). In Chapter 3, it has been shown that while many philosophers of art suggest that they are merely interested in elucidating the extension of art, that is to say, they have pure descriptive aims, several philosophers of art rightly state that they have descriptive as well as normative aims. They claim to be able to realize both aims by employing the method of reflective equilibrium. In a reflective equilibrium, disagreements regarding the application of a concept can be resolved by mutually adjusting the proposed definition and the hypothesized extension of the concept. I have demonstrated, however, that descriptive and normative aims are incommensurable because the method of reflective equilibrium cannot be used to define art. Consequently, even if philosophers of art adjust their self-image, and acknowledge that they are aiming at both descriptive and normative adequacy, methodological problems still arise. Moreover, as Chapter 4 (and Chapter 1) has argued, philosophers of art cannot choose to adjust their practice to their purely descriptive self-image either, since the descriptive conceptual approach, insofar as it starts from the extension of art, is untenable. This is so, because intuitions are not shared, our classificatory practice is not substantially uniform and purely descriptive definitions of art wrongly presuppose that the concept of art has a classical structure, i.e., that art can be clarified in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions. In summary, the findings of Part I and II entail the following three theses: (1) there is a conflict between the self-image of philosophers of art and their practice; (2) there are fundamental objections against the practice of philosophers of art; (3) the metaphilosophical views philosophers of art (often implicitly) hold are untenable.

In Part III, I have examined alternative ways to answer the question 'What is art?' in order to realize the second objective, namely to offer positive recommendations on how to proceed. Two options were claimed to be still available: art reductionism and the pragmatic approach. The former option was criticized in Chapter 6. Art reductionism entails that we do not need a theory of art, but merely theories of the individual arts. I have argued that art reductionism is neither more viable nor more fruitful than traditional theories of art. Disagreements regarding which artefacts fall under an individual art kind, such as dance or painting, cannot be resolved in plausible ways either. Moreover, it is unclear how it can be determined, in a non-arbitrary way, which practices are arts and which are not. In Chapter 7, I have substantiated and defended a pragmatic approach to defining art. The aims of a pragmatic approach center around practical and/or theoretical utility: the normative theories that follow from this

approach allow us to evaluate existing concepts of art and propose new concepts in light of attaining certain purposes that people may have. Why is the pragmatic approach preferable to other approaches? On the one hand, this approach turns out to be viable, because it does not start from the assumption that there is a robust concept to be analyzed. Consequently, the fact that intuitions on what is art conflict, that our classificatory practice is not uniform and that the classical theory of concept does not apply to 'art' does not constitute a problem for this approach. Moreover, there are clear evaluation criteria for normative theories of art: these criteria are derived from the purposes one hopes to see fulfilled by a theory of art. On the other hand, this approach is potentially fruitful for the broader field of the arts since it starts from the purposes the concept of art enables us to realize. Normative theories of art will allow us to criticize, defend and optimize the concepts of art that are used within specific contexts.

In Part IV, I have illustrated the main arguments in this dissertation by means of an examination of the role of borderline cases of art in the project of defining art.

In conclusion, this dissertation has drawn attention to the fact that philosophers of art's descriptive self-image has led to deep methodological problems and has driven focus away from more fundamental issues concerning the concept of art. Moreover, it is my hope that the pragmatic approach I have defended, will enable philosophers of art to develop and materialize new fruitful ways to answer the question 'What is art?'.

Samenvatting

Deze doctoraatsscriptie bestaat uit een metafilosofisch onderzoek betreffende definities van kunst. Debatten omtrent de definitie van kunst vinden meestal plaats binnen de context van analytische kunstfilosofie. Kunstfilosofen die deelnemen aan deze debatten trachten de vraag 'Wat is kunst?' te beantwoorden door voorwaarden of criteria voor kunst voor te stellen. In de 20ste eeuw, voornamelijk in de tweede helft, werden veel definities en theorieën van kunst opgesteld. Tot op de dag van vandaag blijven kunstfilosofen nieuwe antwoorden op de vraag 'Wat is kunst?' ontwikkelen. Toch is interesse in definities van kunst tijdens de laatste decennia afgenomen, omdat kunstfilosofen geen bevredigende antwoorden hebben kunnen bieden op twee fundamentele bezwaren tegen de onderneming. Het eerste bezwaar behelst dat de onderneming onhaalbaar is: er is veel onenigheid over het gebruik van het concept kunst – veel artefacten hebben een betwiste kunststatus – en er zijn geen adequate manieren om deze onenigheid op te lossen of weg te verklaren. Zodoende is het onduidelijk hoe kunstfilosofen hun definities van kunst kunnen rechtvaardigen. Het tweede bezwaar houdt in dat de onderneming futiel is: het is onduidelijk wat definities van kunst ons te bieden hebben. Definities lijken niet bij te dragen tot een betere omgang met en een beter begrip van kunst. Bovendien tonen mensen uit de kunstwereld, zoals kunsthistorici, kunstenaars en curatoren, weinig belangstelling voor filosofische definities van kunst.

Deze doctoraatsscriptie beoogde deze bezwaren op te lossen, niet door een nieuw antwoord te formuleren op de vraag 'Wat is kunst?', maar door de metafilosofische vooronderstellingen die ten grondslag liggen aan definities van kunst te onderzoeken. Ik geloofde dat zo'n metafilosofisch onderzoek waardevol zou zijn, aangezien we enkel de haalbaarheid en de vruchtbaarheid van definities van kunst kunnen toetsen indien de doelstellingen en methodes van kunstfilosofen gekend zijn. Bijgevolg waren mijn twee hoofddoelstellingen: (1) de methoden die filosofen gebruiken om kunst te definiëren (a) en de doelstellingen hopen ze te vervullen door hun voorgestelde definities van kunst (b) verduidelijken en evalueren; (2) positieve aanbevelingen doen met betrekking tot het definiëren van kunst.

Binnen het domein van de kunstfilosofie is er weinig substantiële metafilosofische reflectie. Om systematisch onderzoek naar de expliciete en impliciete metafilosofische aannames van kunstfilosofen te bewerkstelligen, heb ik een onderscheid gemaakt tussen vier mogelijke benaderingen tot de vraag 'Wat is kunst?'(zie: Preliminair Hoofdstuk): de descriptieve conceptuele benadering, de normatieve conceptuele benadering, de descriptieve metafysische benadering en de revisionistische metafysische benadering. Deze verschillende benaderingen impliceren verschillende doelstellingen en methoden. Een *descriptieve conceptuele analyse* wil de voorwaarden die ten grondslag liggen aan de algemene toepassing van het concept kunst verhelderen. Met andere woorden, een descriptieve conceptuele analyse beoogt de afbakeningscriteria die we hanteren om kunst van niet-kunst te onderscheiden bloot te leggen. Zo'n analyse is ontoereikend indien ze artefacten die intuïtief of algemeen worden aanvaard als kunst uitsluit of indien ze artefacten die intuïtief of algemeen niet worden aanvaard als kunst insluit. Een *normatieve conceptuele analyse* ambieert aan te tonen hoe we het concept kunst *zouden moeten* gebruiken, onafhankelijk van hoe we het concept gebruiken. Eerder dan de afbakeningscriteria die we gebruiken om kunst van niet-kunst te ontscheiden te onthullen, stelt een normatieve conceptuele analyse nieuwe of aangepaste afbakeningscriteria voor. Normatieve filosofen verantwoorden de voorgestelde afbakeningcriteria in het licht van praktisch en/of theoretisch nut (cf. de pragmatische benadering) of in het licht van de reële structuur van de wereld (cf. de metafysische benadering). Net zoals descriptieve conceptuele analyse, beoogt *descriptieve metafysica* een uiteenzetting van de manier waarop het concept kunst in het algemeen wordt gebruikt. In tegenstelling tot conceptuele analisten, willen descriptieve metafysici niet enkel de afbakeningcriteria die we gebruiken bij de toepassing van het concept kunst verhelderen, zij willen ook aantonen welke betekenis we toekennen aan het fenomeen kunst. *Revisionistische metafysica* wil aan het licht brengen wat kunst echt is, onafhankelijk van onze overtuigen met betrekking tot het fenomeen 'kunst'. Zo'n definitie stelt vast wat er bestaat in de wereld, onafhankelijk van hoe we fenomenen benoemen. Revisionistische metafysici zijn niet zozeer geïnteresseerd in hoe we een onderscheid maken tussen kunst en niet kunst, maar in hoe we dit onderscheid zouden moeten maken in het licht van de reële structuur van de wereld.

Op basis van deze onderscheiden heb ik eerst de methoden die kunstfilosofen gebruiken om kunst te definiëren onderzocht (zie: Deel I – cf. doelstelling 1a). Enerzijds heb ik me geconcentreerd op het zelfbeeld van kunstfilosofen, d.w.z. op hun geuite metafilosofische aannames: welke methoden denken ze te gebruiken en zijn deze methoden toereikend (zie: Hoofdstuk 1)? Anderzijds heb ik onderzocht of dit zelfbeeld accuraat is: gebruiken kunstfilosofen de methoden die ze expliciet aanhangen (zie: Hoofdstuk 2)? Veel kunstfilosofen geloven dat ze descriptieve methoden gebruiken: ze veronderstellen dat intuïties over welke artefacten kunst zijn of data over de manier waarop we artefacten classificeren, worden en kunnen worden gebruikt als bewijsgrond

voor definities van kunst. In Hoofdstuk 1 heb ik aangetoond dat de methodologie gebaseerd op intuïties problematisch is: we mogen geen bewijswaarde toekennen aan onze intuïties, aangezien intuïties betreffende het concept kunst niet overeenstemmen. Eveneens zijn er veel geschillen over welke artefacten kunst zijn. Er is dus veel onenigheid over de toepassing van het concept kunst. Daaruit volgt dat er geen heldere descriptieve afbakeningscriteria *zijn* die filosofen kunnen verhelderen. In Hoofdstuk 2 heb ik aangetoond dat er een spanning bestaat tussen het zelfbeeld van kunstfilosofen en hun praktijk: in hun praktijk kennen filosofen geen bewijswaarde toe aan hun intuïties of aan hoe het concept kunst in de praktijk wordt gebruikt. Ze gebruiken daarentegen normatieve and metafysische argumenten om hun oplossingen voor bestwiste gevallen te rechtvaardigen. Hun inaccuraat zelfbeeld is niet onschadelijk: het gebruik van de term 'intuïtie' kan incomplete en onovertuigende argumenten camoufleren en schept verwarring omtrent wat definities van kunst ons bieden: een descriptieve analyse van het concept kunst, aanbevelingen met betrekking tot het gebruik van het concept kunst, of, een metafysische verheldering van het fenomeen 'kunst'.

In Deel II heb ik vervolgens de doelstellingen die kunstfilosofen hopen te bereiken onderzocht (cf. doelstelling 1b). Veel kunstfilosofen suggereren dat ze enkel geïnteresseerd zijn in een verheldering van de extensie van kunst, d.w.z. dat ze puur descriptieve doelstellingen nastreven. Anderen hebben terecht aangegeven dat ze zowel descriptieve als normatieve doelstellingen nastreven. Zij stellen dat meningsverschillen over de toepassing van het concept kunst kunnen worden opgelost door de voorgestelde definitie en de veronderstelde extensie van kunst onderling aan te passen, cf. de methode van het reflectief evenwicht. In Hoofdstuk 3, echter, heb ik aangetoond dat descriptieve en normatieve doelstellingen niet verenigbaar zijn: de methode van het reflectief evenwicht is niet toepasbaar op het definiëren van kunst. Daaruit volgt dat kunstfilosofen niet zomaar hun zelfbeeld kunnen aanpassen aan hun praktijk om methodologische problemen te vermijden: hun praktijk zelf is problematisch. Daarenboven, zoals werd aangetoond in Hoofdstuk 1 en 4, kunnen filosofen er ook niet voor kiezen hun praktijk aan te passen aan hun descriptief zelfbeeld, aangezien descriptieve conceptuele analyse een onuitvoerbare benadering is. Dit is zo omdat intuïties over wat kunst is niet overeenstemmen, er geen uniform gebruik van het concept kunst is, en, omdat puur descriptieve definities foutief veronderstellen dat het concept kunst een klassieke structuur heeft, m.a.w. kunst niet kan worden verklaard in termen van noodzakelijke en voldoende voorwaarden.

Samengevat: de bevindingen van Deel I en II bevatten de volgende drie thesen: (1) er is een conflict tussen het zelfbeeld van kunstfilosofen en hun praktijk; (2) er zijn fundamentele bezwaren tegen de praktijk van kunstfilosofen; (3) de metafilosofische positie die kunstfilosofen (vaak impliciet) aanhangen is onhoudbaar.

In Deel III ben ik op zoek gegaan naar nieuwe en betere manieren om kunst te definiëren (cf. doelstelling 2). Ik heb betoogd dat er twee opties zijn voor kunstfilosofen die zich willen buigen over de vraag 'Wat is kunst?': kunst reductionisme en de pragmatische benadering. De eerste optie heb ik bekritiseerd in Hoofdstuk 6. Kunst reductionisme behelst dat we geen kunsttheorie nodig hebben, maar enkel theorieën van de individuele kunsten, zoals een theorie van schilderkunst en een theorie van dans. Ik heb beargumenteerd dat kunst reductionisme noch meer haalbaar noch vruchtbaarder is dan traditionele kunsttheorieën. Meningsverschillen over welke artefacten deel uitmaken van individuele kunsten, zoals dans of schilderkunst, kunnen ook niet op een bevredigende manier worden beslecht. Daarenboven is deze benadering niet in staat om op een onwillekeurige manier te bepalen welke praktijken kunstpraktijken zijn en welke niet. In Hoofdstuk 7 heb ik de pragmatische benadering onderbouwd en verdedigd. De pragmatische benadering streeft naar een maximalisering van het praktisch en/of theoretisch nut van het concept kunst: de normatieve theorieën die volgen uit deze benadering maken het ons mogelijk om bestaande concepten van kunst te evalueren en nieuwe concepten te ontwikkelen in het licht van mogelijke doelstellingen. Waarom is de pragmatische benadering verkiesbaar boven andere benaderingen? Enerzijds is deze benadering haalbaar, aangezien ze niet veronderstelt dat er een robuust concept van kunst voor handen is dat kan worden geanalyseerd. Daarenboven zijn er duidelijke evaluatiecriteria voor normatieve kunsttheorieën: deze criteria zijn afgeleid uit de doelstellingen die iemand wil realiseren door middel van een kunsttheorie. Anderzijds is deze benadering potentieel vruchtbaar voor het bredere veld van de kunsten, aangezien de benadering vertrekt vanuit de functies die het concept van kunst kan vervullen. In Deel IV heb ik de hoofdargumenten van deze dissertatie geïllustreerd aan de hand van een onderzoek naar de rol van randgevallen van de kunst bij de evaluatie van definities van kunst.

Tot besluit, deze dissertatie heeft aandacht gevestigd op het feit dat het descriptieve zelfbeeld van kunstfilosofen methodologische problemen met zich heeft meegebracht en de belangstelling heeft weggedreven van meer fundamentele kwesties omtrent het concept van kunst, met name, welke rollen het concept speelt en kan spelen in onze omgang met kunst. Bovendien hoop ik dat de pragmatische benadering die ik heb verdedigd kunstfilosofen in staat zal stellen om nieuwe vruchtbare antwoorden te ontwikkelen op de vraag 'Wat is kunst?'.