

PHIL 4403: Philosophy of Art  
Prof. Funkhouser  
2/11/05  
Danto, "The Artworld"

\*Theory, on one interpretation of the Platonic/Socratic definition model, is superfluous: "Theories, on this account, are somewhat like mirror-images on Socrates' account, showing forth what we already know, wordy reflections of the actual linguistic practice we are masters in." (27-28)

--But Danto claims that it is not easy, nor common-knowledge, to successfully apply the term 'art' to objects.

I.

\*Danto's foil is the *Imitation Theory of Art* (IT).

--Danto compares modifying a theory of art (in light of anomalous data) to modifying a scientific theory (in light of anomalous data). (28)

--The emergence of post-impressionist paintings is an example of (then) anomalous data for theory of art (IT).

--These paintings "required not so much a revolution in taste as a theoretical revision of rather considerable proportions". (28) As a consequence, new items (e.g., formerly classified as merely anthropological, rather than artistic) were classified as art.

--RT, which states that artists are in the business of imitating real forms *or* creating new forms, was a replacement theory.

--But what makes these works of art, as opposed to just some real thing? "What, after all, prevents Oldenburg's creation from being a misshapen bed? This is equivalent to asking what makes it art, and with this query we enter a domain of conceptual inquiry where native speakers are poor guides: *they* are lost themselves." (29)

II.

\*Danto's "*is of artistic identification*", as in "That *a* is *b*": "...in each case in which it is used, the *a* stands for some specific physical property of, or physical part of, an object; and, finally, it is a necessary condition for something to be an artwork that some part or property of it be designable by the subject of a sentence that employs this special *is*." (30)

--The example of *Newton's First Law* and *Newton's Third Law*. (30-31)  
\*\*\*Note, in particular, the conclusions on the right hand column of p. 31.

“To see something as art requires something the eye cannot descry—an atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of the history of art: an artworld.” (32)

### III.

\*Warhol's Brillo boxes:

“Never mind that the Brillo box may not be good, much less great art. The impressive thing is that it is art at all. But if it is, why are not the indiscernible Brillo boxes that are in the stockroom? Or *has* the whole distinction between art and reality broken down?” (32)

--No, the distinction has not broken down, claims Danto. The difference between art and reality is made by a theory of art, which generates an artworld.

### IV.

\*Against RT, Danto argues that there is an art/reality distinction. Against IT, Danto argues that artworks are not imitations (shams, illusion, etc.).

[Skip everything but the first paragraph of this section.]