

PHIL 4403: Philosophy of Art  
Prof. Funkhouser  
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Dickie, "The New Institutional Theory of Art"

\*In this article Dickie is revising his *institutional theory of art*:

Institutional theory of art: "By an institutional approach I mean the idea that works of art are art as a result of the position they occupy within an institutional framework or context." (47)

--Dickie holds that only artifacts can be works of art. (He argues that even "the new conception of art" requires a primary class of art as artifacts.)

--This raises a problem for ready-made or found art (e.g., Duchamp). But Dickie claims that these become complex objects in virtue of being used in artistic settings. (49)

--Dickie contrasts his theory with: imitation theory, expression theory, and the new conception of art (Weitz and Ziff's Wittgensteinian approach).

\*Dickie concedes Beardsley's objection that the old institutional theory was mistaken in thinking that artistic status is *conferred*, as by a formal institution. Instead, being a work of art is simply to be understood as a certain status—occupying a certain position in the artworld. (50)

--Dickie recalls Danto's point that physical duplicates can differ with respect to being art, in virtue of whether they are embedded in an artworld.

--Dickie claims that a work of art is always created for a public, in the sense that art is the type of thing that is to be presented to an audience (and, this is one of the *goals* of art-production). This is the second necessity condition for a work of art (artificiality was the first). Dickie later writes that these two conditions are also jointly sufficient, so we have the following definition of 'art':

"A work of art is an artifact of a kind created to be presented to an artworld public." (53)

(But isn't his handling of the "playbill" example, on p. 53, a bit weak?)

\*But what is the nature of this public, which constitutes the artworld? Dickie says that this public must possess a certain kind of knowledge, and that there are different publics for the different arts. The artist and her artworld public jointly constitute a "presentation group".

--The artist and her public each have two aspects. First, there is an awareness of creating/viewing art. Second, there is a talent/sensitivity for producing/appreciating the particular kind of art at hand.

“What is primary is the understanding shared by all involved that they are engaged in an established activity or practice within which there is a variety of roles: artist roles, public roles, critic roles, director roles, curator roles, and so on. Our artworld consists of the totality of such roles with the roles of artist and public at its core.” (52)