

PHIL 4403: Philosophy of Art
Prof. Funkhouser
2/9/05
Davies, "Weitz's Anti-Essentialism"

*Recall Weitz's argument:

--Weitz denies there is any necessary condition for being an artwork (not even artifactuality). So, obviously he denies there are jointly necessary and sufficient conditions.

--Weitz offers an explanation for the lack of any such necessary condition. He claims that the creativity of art, its innovativeness and rebelliousness, closes off the possibility of a definition.

--Instead, artworks are related by a "family resemblance".

[Graduate students: Think hard about the opening line of the last full paragraph on p. 64.]

*Objections...

To Weitz's positive account:

--But does family resemblance *explain* the unity of a kind?

"The recognition of a resemblance among family members presupposes, and does not explain, the basis for that membership." (65)

--There must be an alternative account for the first artworks.

--Readymades and conceptual art do not have a family resemblance to other art, and non-art items (e.g., other pieces of driftwood, urinals, etc.) bare a striking resemblance to readymades and conceptual art.

To Weitz's negative project (of denying an essence):

--Creativity can be built into the definition of art. So, a definition doesn't necessarily limit creativity.

"How could such a definition foreclose on future creativity, since it does not tell artists what to do, although it insists that, whatever they do, they do it creatively?" (66)

--There can be creativity within rule-following.

--Borderline cases do not establish the absence of an essence. (67)

--Weitz's "look and see" challenge supposes, perhaps falsely, that the essential properties of art would be intrinsic and perceptible.