

# A REPRESENTATIONAL THEORY OF ARTEFACTS AND ARTWORKS

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The artefacts produced by artists during their creation of works of art are very various: paintings, writings, musical scores, and so on. I have a general thesis to offer about the relations of artefacts and artworks, but within the confines of this article I shall mainly discuss cases drawn from the art of painting, central specimens of which seem to be autographic in Nelson Goodman's sense, namely such that even the most exact duplication of them does not count as producing the same work of art.<sup>1</sup>

My view will be that an artwork (such as a painting) and its associated artefact are not identical, and nor is the artefact in any sense part of the painting in question,<sup>2</sup> but that nevertheless it is still possible to maintain the view that paintings are autographic (which view I shall call the *autographic thesis*). I shall proceed initially through presentation of some counter-examples to common assumptions as to the relations of artefacts and artworks, and then present an alternative 'representational' theory of their relations.

My reason for concentrating on an autographic art-form in this article is because such art-forms potentially present the hardest cases for my 'representational' theory to handle; however, I shall also provide some discussion of non-autographic arts (such as literature

and movies) where relevant, that will also serve to show the potential viability of a representational theory as applied to any kind of artwork.

## I. ARTEFACTS, ARTWORKS AND COUNTER-EXAMPLES

Stephen Davies in his book *Definitions of Art* provides a useful overview of various positions on artefacts and artworks.<sup>3</sup> He defines one primary type of artefact as follows:

"In its primary (a) sense "artifact" means that which is modified by work, by contrast with that which occurs in its natural state."<sup>4</sup>

On Davies's view, an (a)-type artefact is material, in that its progenitor (for example, a piece of wood) is a locatable, modifiable individual, which becomes artefactualized in having a stool carved from it.<sup>5</sup> Davies assumes, as do many other writers, that at least some artworks are (a)-type artefacts.<sup>6</sup> As noted previously, I shall attempt to refute this view (in fact, via refutation of some weaker forms of it), initially through presentation of some counter-examples, and then by presenting an alternative theory of the relations of artefacts and artworks. Thus, as might be expected, I shall concentrate my discussion on (a)-type artefacts (and their associated artworks).<sup>7</sup>

I shall now proceed by showing, as promised, that three perhaps initially plausible claims concerning the relations of artefacts and artworks are false for paintings, but that nevertheless the autographic thesis for paintings can still be maintained. All three claims

to be investigated share a common assumption, namely that to each artwork there corresponds, at a given time, exactly one actual artefact.

The first claim is that an artefact is identical with its corresponding artwork. If this were true, then the identity-criteria for an artwork would be the same as those for its corresponding physical artefact, which would ensure the truth of the autographic thesis, since any physical object has distinct identity-conditions from any other (hence permitting unique identification of an original artwork as causally related to its creator, and thereby ensuring its distinctness from any copies, that will have their own different causal histories).<sup>8</sup>

Rather than attempting to directly provide counter-examples to this claim, I shall instead do so for the succeeding two weaker claims, whose falsity will entail the falsity of the identity claim. (However, the identity claim itself has already been thrown into question in the literature. For example, Danto's indiscernibility examples seem to show that there can be indiscernible artefacts, one of which is a work of art and the other of which is not, from which he concludes that a work of art and its associated artefact must be distinct).<sup>9</sup>

The second claim is that a necessary condition of the identity of a given painting is the inclusion (in some sense) in it of a given particular associated artefact. This could be called the *necessary artefact* claim.

As with the first identity claim for artefacts and artworks, the necessary artefact claim, if true, would also support the truth of the autographic thesis, in that each genuine artwork would be uniquely individuated by its corresponding necessary artefact.

An implication of the necessary artefact claim is that, for a given artwork X that includes artefact A, no other physically distinct artefact B could be substituted for A, on pain of X losing its identity as artwork X, even if B is qualitatively indistinguishable from A.

Another related implication of the claim is that two numerically distinct artefacts (whether or not they are indiscernible) must be parts of distinct works of art, even if each is given the same interpretation.<sup>10</sup>

The necessary artefact claim might initially seem unobjectionable, as a mere spelling-out of what is involved in claiming that a given physical artefact is in some way an integral part of its corresponding artwork. However, counter-examples to the claim can be produced, as I shall now show.

One class of counter-examples can be generated from various contingencies arising in connection with the creation of paintings. For example, Leonardo's painting *Mona Lisa* has as its associated artefact a certain piece of stretched canvas A, currently located in the Louvre, in Paris. However, Leonardo might instead have used some other canvas B as the basis for this painting, and he might also have used different particular containers of paint with which to paint canvas B, so that artefacts A and B have no parts in common.

Nevertheless, it seems intuitively clear that the resulting painting (with associated artefact B in place of artefact A) would still be the same painting *Mona Lisa*.

As an argument in favor of this interpretation, consider how absurdly constricting it would be to a creative artist if even trivial choices about which particular samples of materials to use inevitably forced her into decisions about the identity of her artwork, quite independently of her specifically artistic decisions that are what most relevantly determines the identity of a resulting work of art. Such an artefact-constricted concept of artwork identity clearly is not one that is actually used by artists and critics.<sup>11</sup> Hence the necessary artefact claim should be rejected.

A second class of counter-examples to the necessary artefact claim is provided by cases of alterations to an initial artefact A (associated with artwork X), that gradually change it into an entirely different artefact B that has no parts in common with artefact A. For example, suppose that an artist finds to her horror that a favorite early work of hers has begun to deteriorate, with its cheap paint peeling off the canvas. She decides to restore it to its original condition, and does so by carefully removing the original paint, one section at a time, and then repainting each section exactly as it was originally.

Some time later she is also disconcerted to find that the original canvas (which was as equally cheap and perishable as the original paint) has deteriorated, so she carefully removes the old canvas from the layer of new paint, and replaces it with a new piece of canvas.

In this case, the resultant painting-artefact has no parts in common with the original painting-artefact, but it seems hard to deny that the resulting artefact is still the same painting (considered as a work of art), particularly since the artist herself authorizes and carries out each stage of the restoration work on her own painting to her own satisfaction.

In further support of this kind of example, it is commonly accepted that paintings may legitimately be restored in cases of deterioration, without the artwork in question being thereby compromised or destroyed. Usually this involves some limited change to some part or parts of the artefact in question (such as the removal of a surface layer of darkened varnish), but if change to some parts of an artefact is allowed, with no resulting compromise to the integrity and identity of the original artwork at any stage, it is hard to see how further incremental changes could be objected to, even if they have the result that eventually all of the parts of the original artefact have been replaced. Hence I conclude that such artefact-alteration cases too (as with the previous contingency cases) show that the necessary artefact claim should be rejected.

The two kinds of counter-example just given to the necessary artefact claim both depend on pointing out some kind of contingency in the relation of an artefact to its corresponding artwork: either the artefact might have been a different one, or it might have been replaced with a different artefact at different times. This suggests a need to examine a third claim, to be called the *contingent artefact* claim, which is immune to these kinds of counter-examples.

The contingent artefact claim states that a necessary condition of the identity of a given painting is the inclusion (in some sense) in it of *some* particular associated artefact. (This differs from the necessary artefact claim in that now *some* one artefact is necessary, rather than one given particular artefact.)

As with the previous two claims, the contingent artefact claim, if true, would also support the truth of the autographic thesis, in that each genuine artwork would have in actuality a unique artefactual causal history, even if artefactual changes were part of that causal history, and even if it is also true that the causal history in question could have been different.

However, the contingent artefact claim is also vulnerable to counter-examples, as I shall now demonstrate. These are based on a denial of the common factor in all three claims being considered, namely that to each artwork there corresponds, at a given time, exactly one actual artefact. In order to show that the contingent artefact claim is false (and hence the others too of course), it would be sufficient to find cases in which more than one artefact is simultaneously associated with a given artwork. This I shall now proceed to do.

The first case is that of an artist who paints artwork X (with associated artefact A), then subsequently comes to believe on good evidence that A, and hence X, have been destroyed in a fire. So the artist proceeds to recreate the same artwork X (with a new

associated artefact B.) However, as a matter of fact, by some fortunate chance the initial painting X was not destroyed after all; so after the re-creation of X by the artist, there are now not one but two distinct artefacts A and B associated with the given artwork X, hence showing the falsity of the contingent artefact claim.

The second case addresses a doubt that some may have concerning the first case, based on the temporal separation of the creation of the two different realizations of the given artwork. In this second case, a painter has an excellent recollection of what he intends to paint, but (perhaps because of illness or senility) has only a very poor memory of his recent actions in the last day or so. Noting this, an assistant of his hits on an ingenious scheme by which to ensure that the artist will produce not one but two concurrent realizations of the same artwork.

On day one the assistant gives the artist artefact A, who then performs some initial painting on it. On day two the assistant instead produces artefact B for the artist to work on, perhaps quieting any doubts that the artist might have (based on vague memories of the first day's work) by saying that the artist must be remembering some preliminary sketches rather than an actual start on the work. So the artist proceeds to carry out the same initial painting activities on artefact B as he had initially carried out on artefact A on day one.

On day three the assistant again produces artefact A for further painting, with day four involving the same further painting activities as applied instead to artefact B, and so on

for subsequent days, until each of the identical realizations is finished. The result is two artefacts A and B, each of which is associated with the same artwork X, and each of which was produced concurrently, with the artist intending for each of them that it should be the same unique work of art.

This case is also perhaps harder to deny than the first, in that any doubts as to whether each artefact is the *same* work of art can be put aside. For each artefact A and B, it is true that the painter intended *it* to be the first and only realization of artwork X, and neither has more or less claim to be a realization of artwork X than the other. In addition, for either A or B it would be true that, had the assistant not brought in the other, the creation of artwork X would have proceeded as normal, with exactly the same stages of intentions and painting activities applied to the chosen artefact as those that actually were applied to it, the only difference being the irrelevant one of the similar activities being performed, on intervening days, upon the other artefact. (Surely we cannot impugn an account of artistic identity for a given artefact, merely on the grounds that the artist was also doing other things during the period in question, and that he tended to be forgetful about some things).

There might be an attempt to evade the force of these counter-examples to the contingent artefact claim in the following two ways. First, it might be claimed that, since several distinct artefacts are found in some such cases, then this simply shows that the artworks in question are types rather than particulars. However, I shall demonstrate the inadequacies of a type-view in Section II, and also provide an alternative view that can

maintain the particularity and autographic status of a work of art in spite of its having multiple cases, and hence reinforce my view that the above counter-examples are legitimate.

A second way of evading the counter-examples might claim that in the 'multiple' cases the paintings in question are, simply in virtue of their multiplicity, thereby shown not to be examples of autographic art after all, and so in effect the examples merely demonstrate the truism that non-autographic or 'allographic' art (in Goodman's terminology)<sup>12</sup> can have multiple instances. However, Goodman acknowledges that some autographic art-forms permit multiple instances (for example, a Rembrandt etching can exist in multiple copies, each of which is a genuine, original Rembrandt etching).<sup>13</sup> Therefore the mere existence of multiple copies of an artwork does not debar a work from being autographic.

Nevertheless, there is a legitimate deeper concern here, namely that a painting is normally intended to be a single, unique artwork by its artist, and so at least this feature should be preserved in any account of the manner in which a painting (as opposed to an etching) is autographic.

However, in the examples given, each artist did intend, for each artefact worked upon, that it should be the sole artefact associated with the corresponding artwork. Also, a distinction can still be preserved between the artist's original artefacts associated with artwork X, and any other mere copies or forgeries of those original artefacts, so that such multiple realizations of a given artwork still conform to Goodman's definition of

autographic art, in that even the most exact duplication of them does not count as producing the same work of art.

Thus, in summary, all three claims (the identity, necessary artefact, and contingent artefact claims) have been shown to be false. Yet in spite of their falsity, the autographic thesis as applied to paintings has been maintained.<sup>14</sup>

## II. TYPE-TOKEN THEORY VERSUS REPRESENTATIONAL THEORY

Given the falsity of the three claims considered in Part I, there remains a significant open issue, namely that of finding some logic and ontology of works of art that is consistent with the falsity of the three claims concerning the relations of artworks to their associated artefacts.

One possibility sometimes invoked in such contexts is the view that works of art (and hence paintings) are types or kinds. If they were types or kinds (proponents would say), then multiple artefacts associated with a work of art would become unproblematic, because each artefact could be regarded as a token of the type in question, or as an instance of the relevant kind.<sup>15</sup>

However, this view is inadequate for several reasons. I shall not claim to decisively refute this view here, but I hope to throw enough initial doubt on it so that the desirability of finding an alternative view becomes evident.<sup>16</sup>

One problem is that types and kinds are 'general' entities rather than individuals.

But works of art such as paintings or (many) sculptures seem to be paradigm cases of particular individuals, so it is unclear how a type theory could give a satisfactory account of them.<sup>17</sup>

A grammatical argument can reinforce this point. With ordinary types or kinds, such as in the case of two animals that are cows, we would say of them that each is a distinct cow, even though each is the *same kind or type* of animal (namely, a cow). Thus in usual contexts, cases of kinds are 'flagged' with respect to their kindhood by it being explicitly said that the sameness in question is with respect to (some specific) kind or type.

However, in the case of a work of art, the type analyst is in effect claiming that no such flagging is necessary: the theory presumably asserts that two tokens or instances of an artwork are the *same artwork* (not the *same type of artwork*).

But the most such analysts are entitled to claim is that the two instances or tokens are *tokens* of the same *type* of artwork. However, just as two cows are distinct cows even though each is a token of the type 'cow', so also (on a proper type analysis) we would have to say that there are two distinct artworks, even though each is a token of the same 'type' artwork in question. Hence a type theory fails to account for how several artefacts

(as discussed in my counter-examples) could be such that each can, in usual contexts, be correctly described as being *the same* work of art as the others.

Type theorists might reply that such apparent failings are unimportant, in that the main persuasiveness of a type view is to be found in cases of artworks that naturally exist in multiple copies (paradigm cases of which include movies and literary works), and that the strength of a type analysis in such cases could make it acceptable to overlook a certain awkwardness in a type analysis of paintings and other such individual artworks.

However, a type analysis of movies and literary works is open to at least one significant criticism that is perhaps even harder to deflect than those just given for paintings. This criticism could be called the 'diversity of tokens' problem: a movie, for example, can exist in many different forms, that include the original film negative which results from the shooting of the movie, positive film copies taken from the negative, screen images caused by the projection of positive copies, videotaped or digital video disk (DVD) copies of the movie, displays on TV screens or other video display units, computerized copies stored in an encrypted form on a computer hard drive, displays of such on a computer screen, and so on. Or a work of literature such as a novel can also exist in a great variety of forms: as a handwritten manuscript, as typed, as printed in various editions, as translated into other languages, and in spoken form as well.

Thus a question for the type theorist arises, namely, how could each of this great diversity of items possibly be tokens of the same type, given that the tokens themselves are so

different in each case? Or in more traditional terms, if a movie or work of literature is a kind that has many instances, how could such diverse instances each count as instances of the same kind?

This problem for the type theorist is initially easy not to notice, for after all we know (or assume) that there must be *some* relation between a movie or work of literature and their diverse cases that makes each of them a case of the artwork in question, and in the absence of an alternate theory it is assumed that the relation in question must be that of type to token (or kind to instance). However, the assumption with respect to types only needs to be questioned for its problematic status to be revealed.

Given the (at least initial) failure of type-based views of the ontology and identity of artworks, what other possibilities remain? There is one, perhaps unexpected, possible solution to the ontology and identity problems being discussed, that seems not to have been investigated previously in the literature. This involves postulating that the relation between an artefact and an artwork, such as a painting, is one of *representation*: on such an account, an artefact represents or depicts an artwork, rather than being part of it or a token of it. Call this view the *Representational Theory*.

With respect to movies and literary works, a representational theory has a ready solution to the 'diversity of tokens' problem as discussed above. The great differences between movie negatives, prints, screenings and so on can be explained by the fact that each *represents* the movie in its own way, using its own characteristic mode of representation.

Hence the differences can be explained as differences in mode of representation, rather than in what is represented.<sup>18</sup>

In the case of literature, a representational theory potentially has even greater advantages over a type theory. Linguistic symbols are of course largely conventional, and so in addition to the 'diversity of tokens' problem, there is also the issue of how any *one* of the supposed tokens could indeed be a token of some relevant literary (as opposed to merely linguistic) type. To illustrate the problem, the claim of a type-theorist that a token word such as 'pig' is a token of the type-word 'pig' does nothing to explain how either the tokens, or the type, denote or refer to actual pigs (or the kind 'pig'). Denotation is a semantic concept, an integral part of the many ways in which linguistic symbols are, of course, symbolic or representational (in a wide sense). Thus in the case of literature, a (suitably wide) representational theory framework could be viewed as providing an intuitively natural starting-point for investigations into the nature of literature. (However, space does not permit pursuing this issue further here).<sup>19</sup>

Returning to the main issues of this article, concerning paintings and other autographic art-forms, a representational theory can also explain the sense in which two copies or cases A and B of the same painting are indeed the *same* painting (and not merely: tokens of the same type of painting). The logic of representation is such that if artefact A represents painting X, then A can be seen or recognized as X.<sup>20</sup> Reports of such a recognition could naturally be described as cases in which one sees that 'A is X'. A similar recognition in the case of artefact B (which, recall, is another copy of the painting

in question) supports the claim that 'B is X'. This joint situation (of A being seen as X, and B being seen as X) is naturally described as one in which one sees the *same* painting X in each case.

The representational theory analysis of this situation is that the 'is' in 'A is X' is really an 'is' of representation, so that 'A is X' is analyzed as 'A represents X' (or as 'A is seen as representing X'). Thus artefacts A and B both represent the same painting X, hence supporting the claim that one sees the same painting X when looking at either A or B.

### III. FEATURES OF A REPRESENTATIONAL THEORY

First I shall briefly motivate a representational theory of art as applied to paintings.

There are already familiar cases in which we talk of a representation of a painting, for example in the case of Velasquez's work *Las Meninas*, in which a representation of his own painting is included as part of the subject-matter of the work. Now imagine another painting in which the depicted or represented painting no longer occupies just one small part of the canvas, but where instead it is first spatially rotated so as to be perpendicular to the line of sight, and then enlarged so that the represented painting (minus its frame) occupies the *whole* of the area of the canvas. But surely, if it was a representation of a painting when it was unrotated, and occupied less than the whole of the canvas, it will not cease to be thus merely because it has been rotated and enlarged. Thus there is nothing inherently mysterious or problematic about a representational theory of paintings and

other artworks, because such representations are already recognized to have a familiar (though limited) role in our current artistic culture.<sup>21</sup>

Now I shall make a (necessarily brief) start on investigating the basic features of a representational theory of art. One useful approach to this task is to show how a representational theory can provide solutions to the various problems raised in the first section concerning the ontology and identity of works of art. Recall that the criteria for a satisfactory solution include: a) works of art are individual rather than general entities; b) artworks have a doubly contingent relation to their corresponding artefacts, in that a given artefact is only contingently connected with a given artwork, and also that it is a contingent matter how many artefacts are thus connected with a given work; and c) more than one artefact may be associated with a given artwork, depending on its history of production, but that in any case the work in question should still count as autographic (hence permitting a distinction between genuine and forged cases of the work).

The first requirement a) is that works of art are individual rather than general entities. This requirement is easy for a representational theory to satisfy, because paradigm cases of things that can be represented are themselves particulars (real historical personages, a particular actual landscape, and so on).

The second requirement b) is that artworks have a doubly contingent relation to their corresponding artefacts, in that a given artefact is only contingently connected with a given artwork, and also that it is a contingent matter how many artefacts are thus

connected with a given work. This requirement also is easy for a representational theory to satisfy, because contingent alterations to the properties of some artefacts can of course affect whether or not one of them counts as a representation of X (hence satisfying the first part of the requirement), and also there can be any number of different representations of a given thing X (satisfying the second part of the requirement).

The third requirement c) is that more than one artefact may be associated with a given artwork, depending on its history of production, but that in any case the work itself should still count as autographic (hence permitting a distinction between genuine and forged cases of the work). This requirement can also be satisfied by a representational theory, but it does require more discussion than the previous two requirements.

To begin with, it is usually assumed that cases of forgery are cases in which an artwork itself is forged. However, from the vantage point of a representational theory, there is another candidate to consider, namely some *artefact* which *represents* that artwork. I shall argue that forgery of artworks is best viewed as primarily consisting in the forgery of a special or privileged artefact, namely that artefact which is usually considered to be the original artwork itself in the case of the visual arts (which work is also usually assumed to be autographic in Goodman's sense), or of (what I shall call) the *originative representation* in the case of arts usually assumed to be allographic, such as music, theatre and literature.

By an *originative representation* I have in mind items such as the original score of a musical composition by Beethoven, penned in his own hand, or the original typed or handwritten manuscript of a play or novel as typed or written by its author. As the name suggests, an originative representation usually originates or initiates a series of other representations of the same work, but only the originative representation is privileged, in that it alone is the direct causal outcome of the artist's successful creative efforts with respect to the artwork in question.<sup>22</sup>

This account of forgery, according to which forgery primarily consists in attempts to forge either an original representation (in the case of autographic arts) or an originative representation (in the case of allographic arts) has the advantage that it can explain both standard or typical examples of allographic arts, and also certain atypical cases in which it does seem reasonable to say that an (otherwise) allographic artwork can be forged.<sup>23</sup>

Typical cases such as printed copies of a musical score (or performances thereof) cannot be forged, on my account, because they are not originative representations of the work in question.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, in an atypical case such as that of someone attempting to forge the lost original score for some musical work of Mozart, it does seem reasonable to regard such attempts as possible and even potentially successful, because in such a case it is an *originative representation itself* of which forgery is being attempted.

One special kind of case must be noted. Peter Kivy in 'How to Forge a Musical Work' points out that "...a work can perfectly well be forged without the added difficulty of manuscript forgery if a proper narrative is concocted for the source of the work forgery."

(p. 234), such as a claim by the forger that he had copied the work from a now-destroyed original source which was the originative representation. I would analyze such a case as one in which an item is claimed to be a *representation* of an originative representation, so that such second-order representations also can be forged (as a means to forging that which they represent). Thus the category of forgeable artwork items must be enlarged to cover both originative representations, and representations (or purported representations) thereof.

This categorical enlargement applies also to autographic art forms, in that it would be admittedly unusual, but not inconceivable, for a forger to forge, not an original work itself, but a *copy* of that original work, for example if he claimed to have copied a certain painting of his from a supposed, otherwise unknown original painting by some famous artist. In such a case it is a *representation* of an original representation that is forged, as an indirect way of forging a (supposed) original painting.<sup>25</sup>

Now for some further defense of my views on forgery, which will also serve to defend my representational view of artworks generally. Kivy in 'How to Forge a Musical Work' has a view according to which it is possible to forge an item which pretends to be a new version of a musical work, but if an authentic, original instance of that very same version were to turn up, then it would turn out that the supposed forgery was not a forgery after all (since on his view it is the same version of the same music).<sup>26</sup> This is surely counter-intuitive, as he in effect acknowledges by mentioning an alternative interpretation due to Jerrold Levinson, who writes: "If you believe you are concocting something, and

represent the result as other than what you believe it to be (that is, your concoction), then I don't see why that isn't forgery, even when the result is, by 'improbable coincidence', a 'happy' one [in that the putative forgery happens to coincide note-for-note with the newly discovered original version]."<sup>27</sup> I agree with Levinson's intuition here, and my representational account (whether of first or second-order forgeries) has the advantage that a forger's attempt at forgery remains a forgery whether or not a genuine original or originative representation of the work in question is ever found.

As an additional argument in favor of my account of second-order forgeries, consider an alternative account that tried instead to extend my concept of an original or originative representation being the *direct causal outcome* of an artist's successful creative efforts with respect to the artwork in question. On such an extended account, in the (supposed) absence of such a direct causal link, a secondary (supposed) causal link might be invoked (such as a supposed act of copying an original or originative representation), which on this view would make such a copy count as a forgery because it was the *best* or *most direct* causal link to the artist's original creative activity that is *currently available* (given the assumed contemporary non-existence of the copied artwork). However, if the original or originative representation were to be actually found, this view has the crippling flaw that under those conditions the copy would no longer count as a forgery, since its indirect causal link to the artist's creative activity would no longer be the most direct causal link currently available to us. This failure underlines the importance of regarding secondary forgeries as *representations of* original or originative representations, rather than merely as being causally derivative from them.

#### IV. REPRESENTATIONAL THEORY VERSUS DANTO

Now that the initial outlines of a representational theory solution to the artwork definition problem have been presented, I shall bring out some initial contrasts between a representational theory and a representative non-representational theory. Also, for simplicity I shall restrict my account to paintings that are representational in the conventional sense, that is, which are about something or that have a recognizable subject-matter.

To begin with, on both representational and non-representational theories, there are two basic entities or kinds of concept involved in the definition of an artwork (i.e., an account of its ontology and identity-conditions), namely artefacts and artworks. On the other hand, the ancilliary concept of the subject-matter of artworks will naturally receive somewhat different treatment under each kind of theory.

I shall use Danto's theory as one well-known exposition of a non-representational theory. His theory is a good choice for a comparison, because he also rejects type/token approaches to artwork identity, and he is also sensitive (in some ways) to distinctions

between artefacts and artworks. According to Danto, an artwork results when an artefact (which is a 'mere real thing' on his treatment) is given an interpretation, so that the resulting artwork may be identified with the whole whose parts are the artefact and its interpretation.<sup>28</sup>

On Danto's account, such artefact-plus-interpretation artworks are representational in the conventional sense already discussed, in that they have a subject-matter or are about something.<sup>29</sup> However, there is an awkward logical problem with this approach, in that on Danto's account, strictly speaking it is only the *artefact* that (after being interpreted) acquires a subject-matter or becomes about something, rather than its being the (whole) artwork itself that may be so characterized. Indeed, it looks like a fairly fundamental category mistake to predicate of the whole (the artwork) what properly can be predicated only of one of its parts (the artefact).

This problem is not a trivial or isolated case, because such category mistakes will arise for any claims Danto makes about the non-ontological or non-formal characteristics of works of art. The root cause of this problem is that Danto gives us no conceptual resources with which to understand how in general true statements can be made about the properties or characteristics of works of art themselves, whenever such statements go beyond a bare listing of the basic structure of artworks.

To return to the specific topic of subject-matter of artworks, a representational theory would in contrast handle the issue in a much more straightforward way than does Danto.

On a representational theory, an artefact represents an artwork, and that artwork in turn represents its subject-matter. (Thus on a representational theory, representational cases of art involve two stages of representation rather than just one.)

A related issue on which Danto's account is problematic is that of predications of artefacts making use of (what he calls) the 'is' of artistic identification.<sup>30</sup> Here is a central paragraph from his initial account of this special 'is':

'There is an *is* that figures prominently in statements concerning artworks which is not the *is* of either identity or predication; nor is it the *is* of existence, of identification, or some special *is* made up to serve a philosophic end. Nevertheless, it is in common usage, and is readily mastered by children. It is the sense of *is* in accordance with which a child, shown a circle and a triangle and asked which is him and which his sister, will point to the triangle saying, 'That is me'; or, in response to my question, the person next to me points to the man in purple and says 'That one is Lear'; or in the gallery I point, for my companion's benefit, to a spot in the painting before us and say 'That white dab is Icarus'. We do not mean, in these instances, that whatever is pointed to stands for, or represents, what it is said to be, for the *word* 'Icarus' stands for or represents Icarus; yet I would not in the same sense of *is* point to the word and say 'That is Icarus'. ... For want of a word I shall designate this *the is of artistic identification*; ... 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*.<sup>31</sup>

Danto has never succeeded in clarifying this sense of 'is' to any greater degree than he achieves here.<sup>32</sup> My diagnosis as to why this is so is that he too quickly dismisses an alternative that he himself suggests in the paragraph, namely

‘We do not mean in these instances, that whatever is pointed to stands for, or represents, what it is said to be, for the *word* ‘Icarus’ stands for or represents Icarus; yet I would not in the same sense of *is* point to the word and say ‘That is Icarus’.’

Danto is right about the word 'Icarus', but he does not consider that there might be other, non-linguistic forms of representation for which this account would be exactly what is needed. As noted at the end of Section II, a representational theory would analyze a claim such as 'That is Icarus' as 'That represents Icarus', which captures both that no identity-claim is being made, and that the object in question can be seen as Icarus, because pictorial representations are specifically designed so as to be identifiable as that which they represent.<sup>33</sup>

This initial representational analysis has not yet gone deep enough to distinguish the two stages of representation mentioned above, in the first of which in which an artefact represents an artwork, and in the second of which an artwork represents its subject-matter. As an entry-point to doing so, another lacuna in Danto's theory will be discussed.

Remarkably, Danto never considers what would seem to be a prime class of candidates requiring analysis using the 'is' of identification, namely those in which it is asserted of an artefact that 'this is a painting' (or in general, 'this is a work of art'). On Danto's own account, such cases cannot involve a normal use of 'is', because on his analysis they would literally be false (since artefacts are neither identical with artworks, nor can they correctly be described as being artworks).

Indeed, such cases could reasonably be taken as paradigm cases of artistic identification--of identifying something as a work of art--from which other cases are derivative in some way. Thus, it is arguable in artistic cases that in order to identify a white dab of paint as Icarus, and hence of assenting to 'That white dab is Icarus', one must have already identified (or assumed an identification) of the artefact in question as being associated with a painting or work of art. For without such a prior identification (or assumption, or context-setting), an assertion such as 'That white dab is Icarus' would merely be mystifying. It is only in the context of further description of an object already taken to be a picture that such remarks make any sense.<sup>34</sup>

Returning to Danto, my diagnosis of why Danto does not consider these artwork-identification cases is because if he did so, they would likely raise doubts concerning his own theory, by showing that it is too simple and leads to distortions.<sup>35</sup> As noted previously, Danto's account of the 'is' of identification closely ties it to the concepts both of interpretation and of aboutness, in such a way that to interpret an artefact is to take it as being about something. However, if he were to accept that identifying an artefact as a

work of art is at least one kind of paradigm case of artistic identification, he would then be forced to acknowledge that there are in reality two logically distinct cases of artistic interpretation or aboutness to be considered: first, that in which an artefact may be interpreted as (or as being about) a work of art, and secondly that in which a work of art may be interpreted as (or as being about) some subject-matter. It is precisely this distinction that a representational theory respects in holding that artistic cases of representation involve two stages of representation (in which, of course, the artefact represents an artwork, which then in turn represents its subject-matter).

## V. OVERCOMING AN OBJECTION

One further issue should be considered before closing, which can be put in the form of a possible basic objection to a representational theory. There might seem to be something distinctly counter-intuitive in the claim that, when an artist paints a painting, the outcome of her efforts is, not the painting itself, but instead (only) a *representation* of the painting in question.

However, a basic intuition can be countered with another basic intuition, as I shall now proceed to do. For much of the history of painting, painters would often produce, prior to painting a finished work, various sketches, studies, or draft versions of the painting, as guides as to how they should proceed with the final, finished version of the painting in question. Now intuitively, it seems undeniable that a sketch of the final painting is indeed

a representation or depiction of that painting, or of what it will look like; indeed, one primary reason for painting a preliminary sketch or study is to produce something that (when the sketch etc. is successful) shows some aspect of the final painting (or of how some aspect of it will look, or be seen as--still a representational notion).<sup>36</sup>

Suppose then that an unusually diligent artist produces a whole series of such representational sketches, each of which approaches closer and closer to how the final version should be. Such an artist might naturally adopt a mode of working in which the final version of the painting is simply the last and most acceptable of these sketch or draft versions. But then that final version (as with all of the previous versions), must itself be a *representation* of the painting rather than the painting itself. Or in other words, the intuition that drafts are representations, plus the open possibility that a maximally satisfactory draft could be accepted by an artist as being *itself* the final version of the painting, validates the intuition that the finished painting after all *is* a representation of the painting in question.

A logical or grammatical argument can also be appealed to. It seems unavoidable (as above) that when discussing drafts of a painting in relation to a final outcome, that one talks about, not the painting itself *tout court*, but instead of various *versions* of a painting, from relatively sketchy or unfinished versions to the final fully-finished version. But if the final, fully-finished version of a painting is indeed a *version* of the painting, then it seems that 'the painting' itself cannot be identified with any one of its versions (including the final version). A representational theory can explain this logical feature of discourse

about versions, as being a matter of a progression from sketchy and incomplete representations of a painting, through more adequate and complete representations, and culminating in a final, fully adequate and complete representation of the painting in question.<sup>37</sup>

In conclusion, clearly there are many questions about a representational theory that have not been discussed here, including issues about the ontological status of artworks. But I have attempted to address such issues elsewhere,<sup>38</sup> and after all, only so much can be achieved within the confines of a single article.<sup>39</sup>

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