

INTRODUCTION

Art, Metaphysics, & the Paradox of Standards

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I think it safe to say that philosophical aesthetics has had a less than stellar record of its principal work being actively and substantively informed by work in philosophical areas outside itself.¹ Although I'm not entirely sure what might fully explain the fact that aesthetics has for so long cultivated a disturbingly insular character (or at least why it has achieved such a reputation), I am quite certain that this protracted insularity has not only effectively hobbled progress and productivity within philosophy of art but also ostensibly poisoned any substantive and informative relationships aesthetics might cultivate with outside areas (further fueling moves toward insularity).

Of course, while I may share—or at least regard as neither hasty nor terribly uncharitable—the view that aesthetics has to some extent heretofore been a comparatively dim, unproductive, and deleteriously insular area of philosophical enquiry, this should by no means suggest that I also share the sadly not altogether uncommon outside sentiment that aesthetics is an at best second-rate philosophical field.

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¹ After all, one needn't look too hard to find a *standard* position within philosophical aesthetics that runs directly counter to the relevant standard (if not *received*) positions in some other field (e.g., dominant theories of art interpretation sharply diverging from the dominant theories of interpretation within philosophy of language, well-established conceptual accounts of art and the aesthetic being predicated upon highly controversial if not largely discredited theories of concepts within philosophy of mind, object-kinds considered standard for art ontology being conspicuously absent from and utter alien-looking within contemporary metaphysics). By contrast, consider the comparative ease in showing the principal work within meta-ethics routinely and productively to engage with, and be informed by, areas well outside itself (e.g., metaphysics, epistemology, philosophy of mind and language, philosophy of science).

In fact, I think such attitudes more often than not reflect in their holders either a thinly veiled contempt for the subject matter of philosophical aesthetics—and by extension the field itself—or at least a casual indifference towards the results of any philosophical enquiry conducted therein. I find the prevalence of such attitudes incredibly frustrating not just because I self-identify as a philosopher of art. To judge aesthetics but philosophical trifle requires either an utterly brazen and reckless philosophical arrogance or an abyssal (and a touch ironic) degree of philosophical ignorance—neither of which any self-respecting philosopher ought to abide. Likewise, to grant aesthetics philosophical legitimacy yet nevertheless remain indifferent to the results of its enquiries is to be guilty of the very same sort of counterproductive and philosophically irresponsible neglect of which aesthetics has been traditionally accused.

To be sure, I do not expect every philosopher to find art and its relation as philosophically captivating as I do; however, I do nevertheless expect them to take philosophy of art seriously. The problem, of course, is that the farther removed philosophers of art view their enterprise to be from philosophy's putative core, the fewer number of areas there are for those operating within that core to seriously and productively engage with philosophy of art. So, for the demand that philosophy of art be taken seriously to be other than empty requires that philosophy of art, at least in part, adopt a broadly philosophically informative approach to its central issues (e.g., shaping and testing putative art-theoretic commitments against the standard models employed within those relevant intersecting areas of enquiry such as philosophy of mind and language, metaphysics, philosophy of science, ethics, and so forth). The burden, however, ought not exclusively rest with philosophical aesthetics.

Although this volume chiefly focuses on the relationship between philosophy of art and contemporary metaphysics with respect to the overlap issue of abstracta, my aim is that what follows should nevertheless provide, at least in some small measure, a general methodological blueprint from which both those from within aesthetics and those from without can begin building responsible, and therefore mutually informative and productive, relationships between their respective fields.

Two Opposing Views

When philosophical aesthetics tends toward insularity, we shouldn't be surprised to find standard art-ontological categories incongruous with those standardly employed in contemporary metaphysics. Of course, when contemporary metaphysics tends to ignore aesthetic and art theoretic concerns, perhaps we likewise shouldn't be surprised to find

the climate of contemporary metaphysics inhospitable for a theory of art.² While this may seem to suggest at least a *prima facie* tension between our basic art theoretic commitments considered from within philosophical aesthetics and our standard ontological commitments considered from without, I think any perceived tension or antagonism largely due to metaphysicians and aestheticians at least implicitly assuming there to be but two available methodological positions with respect to the relationship between metaphysics and philosophical aesthetics in the relevant overlap areas. I call these two opposing views DEFERENCE and INDEPENDENCE.

THE DEFERENCE VIEW: In all cases of relevant overlapping areas, aesthetics ought to defer to contemporary metaphysics.

THE INDEPENDENCE VIEW: Art-ontological categories cannot be (or at least we shouldn't expect them to be) adequately carved out using only the tools provided by contemporary metaphysics.

According to DEFERENCE, the tools provided by contemporary metaphysics are (at least *prima facie*) both necessary and sufficient for carving out art-ontological categories, and as such, there ought be no *sui generis* art-ontological kinds. So, for example, repeatable artworks can be plausibly construed as abstract objects only if doing so entails no addition of a *sui generis* abstract kind. According to INDEPENDENCE, however, art *onta* need not and do not neatly conform to the ontic kinds standardly in play for contemporary metaphysics, such that, philosophers of art ought to expect that adequately, let alone fully, capturing the operative constraints, interests, practices unique to art-relevant domains requires carving out (perhaps from whole cloth) befittingly unique (*sui generis*) ontological categories.

I suppose that one quite understandably might think preference for either DEFERENCE or INDEPENDENCE tracks preference for either revisionary or descriptivist art-ontology respectively. For example, should we approach the ontology of art thinking that contemporary art practices and conventions are such that they cannot be adequately captured using only the ontological tools provided by contemporary metaphysics, we might understandably also think that the extent to which one endorses DEFERENCE is the extent to which one endorses a *revisionary* art ontology. So, perhaps those already harboring strong descriptivist loyalties may understandably thereby find themselves

² For example, if art-theoretic considerations originally prompt metaphysical inquiry into the nature of works of certain sort (e.g., music, film, literature), then the ontological conclusions drawn from such inquiry ought to be consistent with those art-theoretic considerations. So, should these art-theoretic considerations be promptly forgotten or ignored, we shouldn't be at all surprised when the resultant metaphysical inquiry answers with ontic models for works of that certain sort being at least indifferent to, if not fundamentally at odds with, being an artwork.

more inclined toward INDEPENDENCE. After all, to the extent philosophy of art seems to be relegated to the margins of philosophy, philosophers of art needn't be concerned with garnering approval from the implicitly if not explicitly uninterested and distanced core [No quantification without representation!]. Therefore, philosophers making art-ontological inquiries should take themselves primarily tasked with engaging in conceptual analysis aimed at best capturing the art-relevant practices and conventions and as such needn't be concerned whether or not the putatively available art-ontological terrain can be located on any contemporary metaphysical map.

By contrast, should we approach the ontology of art with the default view of the sufficiency of the metaphysician's ontological tool box and the contents therein, we might understandably view endorsing INDEPENDENCE as simply trading one revision for another, protecting art ontology against being revisionary with respect to *art* in a manner ultimately ensuring its being revisionary with respect to *ontology*. That is, INDEPENDENCE may well be better suited to preserving our art practices and conventions (e.g., their semantic or referential coherence) but only in virtue of entailing some metaphysically revisionary program or other (e.g., positing otherwise *sui generis* ontic models). If fitting artworks into the world in a manner consistent with their surrounding practices and conventions requires revising the world, at least in terms of the categories into which its inhabitants may be placed, then we ought to expect any art-ontological account to be to that extent revisionary, such that, insofar as one wants artworks in the world, any art-ontologically required revision had better aim at (and be wholly exhausted by) those art-relevant surrounding practices and conventions. Contemporary metaphysics being unable to provide ontic models sufficient for descriptivist art-ontology results not from some failure within contemporary metaphysics but rather from a failure within the philosophy of art: either of the descriptivist project itself or of art-realism *tout court*. Simply put, regardless of the descriptivist's concerns, merely insofar as we have any non-passing sympathy for realism about artworks, perhaps we ought to endorse DEFERENCE.

Notice, however, at least in principle, that endorsing either DEFERENCE or INDEPENDENCE *itself* says nothing about whether one prefers their art-ontology revisionary or descriptivist. For example, one could coherently both be a descriptivist and adopt DEFERENCE; however, in so doing, one presumably would find any required revisions to art practice and convention to count against art-realism itself. Likewise, I suppose one could coherently both be a revisionist and adopt INDEPENDENCE; however, in so doing, one presumably would regard any required metaphysical revisions to be motivated by purely philosophical concerns (e.g., parsimony, logical consistency, art-

theoretic coherence) rather than the preservation of the relevant surrounding practices and conventions. To be sure, the principal conflict between DEFERENCE and INDEPENDENCE may be best located at the level of the principal conflict between revisionary and descriptivist art ontology. However, what matters for my purposes here not only has little to do with the revisionary/descriptivist debate but is ultimately philosophically and methodologically prior to such debates. That is, I am principally concerned with the view we ought to take with respect to the relationship between contemporary metaphysics and the philosophy of art.

Given the above, I suppose that any perceived tension between philosophical aesthetics and contemporary metaphysics looks quite simple to explain: most metaphysicians at least implicitly (or dispositionally) align with DEFERENCE while most aestheticians at least implicitly if not explicitly align with INDEPENDENCE. The problem with this dichotomy I take to be the following. The degree to which philosophical aesthetics aligns with INDEPENDENCE is the degree to which philosophical aesthetics distances itself from contemporary metaphysics and thereby the degree to which philosophical aesthetics insulates itself from the core of philosophy (i.e. neither properly informing nor being informed by that core). By contrast, the degree to which philosophical aesthetics aligns with DEFERENCE is the degree to which philosophical aesthetics holds its development and productivity hostage to a field in the main (if not wholly) unconcerned with art-theoretic considerations and thereby the degree to which philosophical aesthetics secures its status as a second-class philosophical field (i.e., one to which the core presumably contributes but from which presumably such contributions fail to be reciprocated). So, should metaphysicians largely ignore philosophy of art (though perhaps recently less so at least for a few peripherally related areas), philosophers of art may understandably see little reason to take their metaphysical strictures seriously for art ontology. Consequently, should the metaphysician take the occasional look at the art-ontological goings on within philosophy of art, she'll likely be confronted by all manner of non-standard ontic models if not also perhaps a few outright metaphysical monstrosities (e.g., causally efficacious abstracta, created things that necessarily cannot be destroyed, haphazardly stitched together object-kinds) and as a result see little reason to regard the philosophy of art as anything more than an island of misfit ontologies—thus beginning the cycle anew.

All things considered, I think philosophy of art does itself no favors either from without by endorsing INDEPENDENCE or from within by endorsing DEFERENCE. For interactions and exchanges between metaphysics and philosophy of art to be more than

sporadic and able to yield broadly productive results demands a re-evaluation of the way in which we view their relationship.

Art-Abstracta & the Paradox of Standards

In what follows, I target as an example the tension between philosophical aesthetics and contemporary metaphysics with respect to the broad account of abstract objects as standardly employed respectively therein. I show that the issue of art-abstracta appears to give rise to what I refer to as a paradox of standards: an art-ontological assumption, a metaphysical assumption, and an art-theoretical assumption, that though each be standard, if not foundational, within their respective domains of enquiry, when taken together nevertheless form an inconsistent set.

- I. There are such things as art-abstracta.
- II. Abstracta are non-spatiotemporal and causally inert.
- III. An artwork must be created.

What I call the paradox of standards arises when from any two of the above standard views we expect to arrive at the standard third view only to arrive instead at its denial (either explicitly as such or implicitly via or some inconsistent view non-standard within the same domain). Simply put, the paradox of standards occurs when we expect *standard & standard* to beget *standard* but instead find it to birth only *non-standard*.

Note, however, that my analysis of the constituent assumptions largely concerns their status as *standard* rather than their individual truth or falsity. That is, I take the philosophical point of the paradox of standards to be that the issue of art-abstracta represents an informatively illustrative point about the relationship between the philosophy of art and metaphysics, and not just as a potential source of philosophical tension but also as a potential source of productive philosophical exchange.

To that end, I provide a brief sketch of the three standard assumptions relevant to the paradox of standards. I then discuss the means by which it can be resolved (and the consequences thereof) for both those adopting DEFERENCE and those adopting INDEPENDENCE, showing the available methods of resolving the paradox according to either view incapable of doing so in a manner commensurate with a minimally responsible art-realism. From this, I suggest an alternative account as how best to view the relationship between philosophical aesthetics and contemporary metaphysics (what I call the RECIPROCITY view) and then discuss what consequences the relationship being so viewed may have for the ontology of art. However, before I begin, perhaps I should

say a bit more about why I think it productive and illuminating to view the issue of art-abstracta in terms of what I call the paradox of standards.

Art ontology looks to be the natural intersection between philosophy of art and metaphysics. Any general art-theoretic enquiry can be broadly understood as investigating the nature of art in terms of the conditions under which something is and is not (or can and cannot be) an artwork. Likewise, any general ontological enquiry can be broadly understood as investigating the nature of the world in terms of the categorization of its *onta*. Presumably then, any art-ontological enquiry can be broadly understood as investigating the nature of the *artworld* in terms of the categorization of its *onta*: artworks (i.e., things in the world satisfying (or having the capacity to satisfy) the conditions for being art, whatever those may in fact be). From this, presumably one would likewise expect the standard assumptions operative for any broad art-ontological enquiry to be derived from, predicted by, or at least consistent with the standard assumptions operative for any broad art-theoretic or general ontological enquiry. After all, if the ontology of art lies at the intersection of philosophy of art and metaphysics, then we should expect to locate the standard views within the former where the standard views within the latter two intersect—from the standard views within any of the two, we should be able to arrive at some standard view within the third. The paradox of standards (or at least the appearance of such) occurs when from the standard views within any two domains we seem unable, upon pain of inconsistency, to arrive at anything other than some decidedly non-standard view within the third domain. Of course, the precise implications of the paradox of standards (and the available resolutions thereof) vary according to the way in which one views the relationship between philosophical aesthetics and contemporary metaphysics.

Consider again the following assumptions that within their respective domains of enquiry appear to be not just standard but also at least *prima facie* plausible (if not *prima facie* evident).³

- I. There are such things as art-abstracta.
- II. Abstracta are non-spatiotemporal and causally inert.
- III. An artwork must be created.

³ Predicated on these basic, standard assumptions are several further specified and standard positions, out of which one can further construct several inconsistent sets. The main point here is that this threat of inconsistency in standards can be avoided only by either outright denying one of the more basic, standard assumptions at issue or implicitly doing so via adopting some non-standard position that itself cannot be coherently predicated upon one of those more basic, standard assumptions.

Let's begin by considering (I): the standard art-ontological assumption that *there are such things as art-abstracta*.⁴

The general impetus for and broad attraction to positing artworks of a certain sort as abstracta ought to be relatively easy to grasp. Should one be a realist about artworks, supposing putatively repeatable artworks to be in some way or other *abstract* seems to preserve one's art-realism in a manner largely congruous with the principal metaphysical and semantic assumptions as informed by the relevant history, practices, and conventions surrounding such artworks. In fact, most positions within art-ontology are at their foundations predicated upon the same basic art-ontological assumption and united under the same broad art-ontological consensus, specifically that repeatability and non-repeatability more or less track the broad ontic kinds *abstracta* and *concreta* respectively. As such, a basic art-ontological assumption is that the principal ontological joint at which the artworld must be carved lies squarely between traditionally repeatable (multiple-instance) works of art, construed as abstracta, and traditionally non-repeatable (single-instance) works of art, construed as concreta. Subsequently, for the art-realist, commitment to art-abstracta looks to be not just a standard position within art-ontology but a basic working assumption of any *prima facie* viable art-ontological enquiry.⁵

Of course, anyone holding prior commitments to some sweeping general anti-realism (or at least harboring such anti-realist sympathies with respect to art) will obviously have little trouble denying that there are such things as art-abstracta. Likewise, those already in possession of general nominalist commitments (or sharing such thoroughgoing sentiments) should find themselves no more inclined to endorse abstracta for novels, poetry, or concertos than for numbers, propositions, or concepts.⁶

⁴ The basic art-ontological argument for this I take to be pretty straightforward:

1. There are such things as artworks (*Art-Realism*).
2. Artworks are either repeatable or non-repeatable.
3. Repeatable artworks (or at least those of certain sorts) cannot be coherently or viably construed as concrete things.
4. So, if there are such sorts of artworks, then those artworks must be abstract things.
5. There are such artworks.
6. So, there are such things as art-abstracta.

⁵ Of course, within art ontology compete a wide variety of models of abstracta (e.g., unstructured universals, indicated/initiated types, action types, etc.). However, as to the general art-ontological commitment to abstracta, any substantive debate has heretofore been largely and conspicuously absent.

⁶ Others may find art-abstracta inconsistent with the peculiarities of some pet theory of art with which they have previously aligned (e.g., a particularly spartan aesthetic theory of art according to which aesthetic properties are strictly perceptual, strictly supervene on the physical, and are strictly uninheritable from token to type). Others still may simply suspect such construal to have little to do with objects *as art*. That is, while some members of the broad class of repeatable works appear patently to be artworks (e.g. *Moby Dick*, *Hamlet*, *The Magic Flute*, *Piano Concerto No. 9*), the class of repeatable works nevertheless remains a class for which being a member *itself* neither

However, what matters for present purposes is that for those already located on the realist side of the debate, commitment to art-realism standardly entails commitment to art-abstracta.

Now consider (II): the standard metaphysical assumption that *abstracta are non-spatiotemporal and causally inert*. To be sure, there are lively debates within contemporary metaphysics about the precise nature of abstract objects (including the method by which their natures ought to be characterized). However, should any general characterization of abstracta have a plausible claim to being standardly held, it clearly must be that abstracta are non-causal (especially given the standard, broad characterization of *concreta* as causally-efficacious material inhabitants of space-time).⁷

Lastly, consider (III): the standard art-theoretic assumption that *an artwork must be created*. Presumably this can be best viewed as the standard expression (or derivation) of one of the most basic and fundamentally intuitive necessary conditions for something's being art: *an artwork must be the product of intentional action*.⁸ As such, any art-theoretic enquiry—either in terms of the supporting claims therein or the resultant claims thereof—to be even *prima facie* viable as such must be consistent with artworks being created things. Furthermore, creation looks to require causation in the form of a causal chain from creator to created—the standard sense of 'create' and its cognates is one indicating a causal (if not causal-intentional) relation. As such, for any created thing, the manner in which that thing comes into existence ought not be metaphysically mysterious—in the case of artworks, they are the causal (causal-intentional) products of some agential action.⁹

The source of the tension between the above three standard assumptions should

entails nor suggests being an artwork (e.g., cookbooks & stereo-instruction manuals, Muzak & doorbell chimes, office memos & grocery lists). So, the worry would then be what may be ontologically fertile for repeatable works *simpliciter* may turn out to be decidedly toxic for those works *as art* or perhaps more simply that all of the philosophical gravitas with which ontological debates about repeatable works of art (e.g., poems and symphonies) are conducted would quickly turn into abject philosophical absurdity for any similarly conducted debate about repeatable works of non-art (e.g., ringtones, wedding invitations, the Big Mac, the Corvette, and so forth).

⁷ For instance, Gideon Rosen (2001) considers the view of abstracta as causally inert to be more or less the standard view and so would presumably take his own contrarian account of abstracta (Burgess & Rosen 1997) to be to that extent non-standard.

⁸ For a more detailed discussion of the nature of art's intention-dependence, see (Mag Uidhir 2010).

⁹ For example, [Mid-Atlantic Ridge volcanoes were created by divergent tectonic plates] is standardly taken to entail Mid-Atlantic Ridge volcanoes being caused by divergent tectonic plates. Likewise, [Sara created a doghouse] is standardly taken to entail Sara having successfully engaged in such-and-such activities directed by so-and-so intentions, the causal product of which was a thing satisfying the conditions for being a doghouse, whatever those may be.

now be obvious if not also familiar.¹⁰ The standard art-ontological story tells us that given but the simplest investigation of and reflection upon the nature of putatively repeatable artworks and the relevant surrounding practices and conventions (both linguistic and otherwise), any minimally defensible and coherent art-realism must construe repeatable art as abstract such that any minimally adequate art-realism must entail that there are such things as art-abstracta. However, from the standard metaphysical story about abstracta it follows not only that such things must be causally inert but also that if such things exist, then there can be no time at which those things do not exist—if they exist, they exist eternally. Furthermore, from the standard art-theoretic story about artwork creation, it follows that if something is a created thing, then there must be a time at which that thing did not exist—a created thing cannot exist prior to its creation and so cannot exist eternally. Further follows yet another standard assumption about creation, namely that creation requires causation—created things must stand in a causal (if not causal-intentional) relation to their creators.¹¹ However, if abstracta must be causally inert, then as such, abstracta must be things incapable of standing in any causal relation whatsoever, let alone one in the robust causal-intentional sense of creation standardly assumed to underwrite the art-theoretic commitment to artworks being the products of intentional actions.¹² Accordingly, there can be no such thing that is a created abstracta (an exclusionary fact which the standard characterizations of abstracta and creation clearly overdetermine). So, if there are such things as artworks and artworks must be created things, then artworks cannot be abstracta.

Clearly an inconsistency is afoot. More importantly, however, the rather surprising, if not also disturbing, philosophical consequence of this inconsistency is that what actually lies at the intersection between our standard art-theoretic commitments and our standard metaphysical commitments is not some standard art-ontological commitment but instead the explicit negation of such.¹³ Again, the most interesting feature of the

¹⁰ A standard debate within the ontology of music centers around how to resolve the paradox of creation: i) musical works are abstracta, ii) musical works are created, iii) abstracta cannot be created.

¹¹ It would then also follow that when considered relationally, *creating* any one kind of artwork (e.g., those of the standardly repeatable variety such as novels, symphonies, operas) ought to be metaphysically indistinct from *creating* an artwork of any other kind (e.g., those of the standardly non-repeatable variety such as painting, sculpture, drawing).

¹² This would also be the view of creation standard within contemporary metaphysics (French & Vickers 2011).

¹³ Consider the following crude but useful analogy. Suppose we have what appears to be a perfectly standard and straightforward recipe for gazpacho soup. However, when we follow this recipe perfectly step-by-step the result is not as expected—a chilled vegetarian soup—but instead something surprisingly far from it—a piping-hot beef stew. Furthermore, despite the fact that each step in our recipe for gazpacho soup at no point seems anything other than perfectly

paradox of standards lies not in the nature of the inconsistency itself but rather in what that inconsistency—both itself as well as the available means by which it can be resolved—reveals about the current state of art ontology.

Ultimately, the available means by which one may resolve the paradox of standards (and the implications thereof) depends entirely upon how one chooses to view the relationship between philosophy of art and contemporary metaphysics. In what follows, I discuss the resolutions to the paradox of standards consistent with preserving the standard art-ontological commitment to art-abstracta presumably available to those adopting DEFERENCE and to those choosing INDEPENDENCE. I then show that neither view can offer any adequate resolution to the paradox consistent with commitment to art-abstracta at least proportional to what is philosophically at stake (e.g., resolving the paradox by either bankrupting art-realism or by making all artworld *onta* hopelessly *sui generis*). As such, I claim we ought to adopt a third view regarding the relationship between philosophy of art and contemporary metaphysics—what I call the RECIPROCITY view. This view allows us to dissolve rather than resolve the paradox of standards as from RECIPROCITY it looks as if putatively standard art-ontological enquiry concerns neither art nor ontology and therefore to that extent is an ‘ontology of art’ in name only.

Resolutions from DEFERENCE & INDEPENDENCE

How might those inclined toward DEFERENCE resolve the paradox of standards so as to preserve standard art-ontological commitments? More importantly, given the nature of DEFERENCE, what might we reasonably expect to follow art-theoretically given commitment both to there being art abstracta and to abstracta being causally-inert non-spatiotemporal things?

For example, Julian Dodd’s sonicist view¹⁴ of musical works can be characterized as a DEFERENCE resolution to the paradox of standards that preserves standard art-ontological commitment to art-abstracta. According to Dodd, a musical work just is an unstructured universal, and such universals are nothing more than the standard sorts of abstracta—non-spatiotemporal and causally-inert eternal existants—with which we all ought to be already familiar. As such, Dodd concedes that it follows from this that musical works cannot be created things. Clearly what principally motivates Dodd’s

standard and straightforward, we nevertheless find that actually making gazpacho soup requires us at some point to deviate from that recipe, specifically by replacing one of its seemingly standard and straightforward steps with a decidedly non-standard and counter-intuitive alternative (or simply by skipping some such standard step altogether).

¹⁴ Most notably defended in Dodd (2007).

sonicism is not just commitment to the standard art-ontological assumption that musical works must be abstracta but also a strict alignment with DEFERENCE. That is, should preserving our standard art-theoretic commitments (i.e., artworks must be created things) conflict with the preservation of our standard metaphysical commitments (i.e., abstracta must be non-spatiotemporal causally-inert things), then insofar as we take Dodd to adopt DEFERENCE, the standard metaphysical commitments must win out, regardless of how large the art-theoretical bullet we may be required to bite.

The DEFERENCE resolution to this paradox of standards is to reject our standard art-theoretic commitment to art's intention-dependence, heading-off any threat of inconsistency or incoherence by rejecting a standard, basic art-theoretic assumption presumably in favor of some non-standard alternative according to which artworks needn't be intention-dependent whatsoever, let alone in a manner consistent with their being robustly created things. Of course, despite our frequent willingness to attempt as much, not all bullets can be bitten, especially in cases where the bullet in question is sufficiently non-standard so as to be Howitzer-sized.¹⁵ As such, standard art-ontological enquiry guided by DEFERENCE looks to be metaphysically responsible at the cost of being art-theoretically *irresponsible*. Consequently, for those wishing to preserve their standard art-ontological commitments, the DEFERENCE resolution to the paradox of standards seems to secure a metaphysical tidy art-ontology only to fill it with things that simply cannot be artworks.¹⁶

Perhaps the appearance of the paradox of standards is best taken not as evidence of something rotten in the current state of art ontology but instead as evidence of the current state of art ontology being more or less on the right track. That is, presumably an at least implicit assumption behind the paradox of standards, and any non-trivial philosophical consequences thereof, is that art and its various relata are in some relevant sense "standard" sorts of things. Should we assume as much, then of course we should likewise expect ontological enquiry directed at artworks (e.g., paintings, sculptures, novels, symphonies) to proceed more or less in the same general lines as ontological

¹⁵ The assumption that art needn't be intention-dependent is art-theoretically *non-standard* in precisely the same way the assumption that murder is wholesale morally permissible or even obligatory is *non-standard* within normative ethics.

¹⁶ Of course, for positions such as Dodd's sonicism to be consistent with standard art-theoretic assumptions, one need only qualify the relevant domain at issue. That is, if musical works must be construed according to the characterization of abstracta standard within contemporary metaphysics, then musical works cannot be artworks. So, for Dodd's sonicism to be art-theoretically responsible, he need only claim its domain to extend no further than *musical works simpliciter* such that sonicism is a position within *musical* ontology rather than a position within the ontology of *art*. Whether the addition of the claim that musical works cannot be artworks would somehow now render his view untenable is a matter best discussed elsewhere.

enquiry directed at any relevantly similar non-art thing (e.g., tables, chairs, phone books, ringtones). However, should such an assumption be absent if not explicitly denied, we ought not be surprised to find that supporting art-realism in a manner consistent both with standard art-theoretic commitments as well as with standard art-world practices and conventions requires art-world *onta* be *sui generis* (or at least diverging to some non-negligible extent from their more ordinary “standard” non-art kin). In fact, the more *sui generis* art appears to be the more we should expect art ontology to be populated not just with categories standardly unavailable on the ontological menu within contemporary metaphysics but with *sui generis* categories by definition off-menu (standardly or otherwise). As such, from the point of view of INDEPENDENCE, the appearance of the paradox of standards is not the result of art-ontological enquiry having made some meta-ontological mistake or cultivated some pernicious methodological insularity from contemporary metaphysics. Instead, the appearance of the paradox of standards is nothing more than the result of art-ontological enquiry being correctly adjusted so as to capture the radical ontic “insularity” of its subject.¹⁷

Given the above, how might those inclined toward INDEPENDENCE resolve the paradox of standards so as to preserve their standard art-ontological commitments? That is, what might one reasonably expect to follow for our general ontological commitments given both that artworks must be created things and that there can be such things as art abstracta? From the point of view of INDEPENDENCE, should our basic art-ontological aims require for their satisfaction some degree of departure from the standard characterization of abstracta, such departures then are not only warranted but required. Consequently, the good-making features of any art-ontological position should principally concern not those traditionally recognized as such within metaphysics (e.g., internal coherence, ontological parsimony, etc.) but instead those concerning the theory’s descriptivist pedigree (e.g., the extent to which it explains, supports, makes sense of, or is at least consistent with, the relevant surrounding practices and conventions).

Perhaps in order to preserve commitment to art-abstracta, rather than endorse some radically non-standard metaphysical or art-theoretic claim so as to resolve the paradox of standards, one might instead more cautiously split the difference between the two. That is, one might endorse some moderately non-standard view according to which

¹⁷ Perhaps what the previous analysis has shown with respect to DEFERENCE and the ontology of art is that the degree to which art-ontology is deferential to the standard characterization of abstracta within contemporary metaphysics is the degree to which there being artworks so construed either runs afoul of basic art-theoretic considerations or fails to make adequate sense of the relevant surrounding art practices and conventions.

there are certain sorts of abstracta (e.g., impure sets, indicated types) that can come into, if not also go out of, existence so as thereby to preserve abstracta as causally inert while nevertheless denying that if abstracta exist, they must do so eternally. One need then simply deny that creation strictly requires causation via committing to some non-standard (and likely stipulative) sense of *create* according to which creation minimally need be neither causal nor causal-intentional but merely a matter of ontological-dependence (e.g., *Moby Dick* names some impure abstractum that Herman Melville *created* in virtue of his having created some concrete thing—the manuscript—upon which that impure abstractum coming into existence ontological depends).

Of course, absent some strict causation requirement, this non-standard (stipulative) sense of creation looks to trade a basic and substantive art-theoretic necessary condition [artworks must be the products of intentional actions] for its comparatively trivial cousin [artworks must be ontologically dependent upon the products of intentional action]. Furthermore, absent some principled, non-arbitrary distinction between ontologically-dependent things that are *creation-compatible* (e.g., the manuscript) and those which are *creation-incompatible* (e.g., its impure singleton), appeal to non-causal creation threatens an unchecked, rampant proliferation of creation, such that, given even a moderately permissive realism about impure abstracta, from but few acts of artistic creation would likely flow *transfinitely* many created things. Additionally, without a strict causal requirement for creation, the precise nature of how such abstracta could come into existence—whether in number modest or absurd—would nevertheless conspicuously remain metaphysically mysterious.

Alternatively, one might adopt a more radically non-standard account of abstracta, specifically one according to which abstracta can themselves, not just by some causal proxy, enter into causal relations with other things.¹⁸ By holding art-abstracta to be causally efficacious, one can then retain the standard causation sense of artistic creation so as to provide not only a decidedly non-mysterious explanation as to how such things can come into and presumably go out of existence but also the means by which to preclude their unchecked proliferation. Trouble is, however, that the extent to which this method successfully resolves the paradox of standards appears to be the extent to which putatively repeatable artworks look to be construed less and less as abstracta and more and more as concreta.¹⁹ After all, if *Moby Dick* names the causal product of certain of

¹⁸ To be sure, there are those within contemporary metaphysics who argue for alternative (non-standard) views of abstract objects: e.g., see Hale (1987) and Burgess & Rosen (1997).

¹⁹ It would then also follow that when considered relationally, *creating* any one kind of artwork (e.g., those of the standardly repeatable variety such as novels, symphonies, operas) ought to be

Herman Melville's successfully executed intention-directed activities, then *prima facie* *Moby Dick* looks name some concrete thing, the ontological particulars of which would be a matter of debate between competing variants of *concreta*.²⁰

From the point of view of INDEPENDENCE, resolution to the paradox of standards so as to preserve our standard art-ontological commitments demands rejecting the standard characterization of abstracta in favor of some non-standard characterization more commensurate with both our standard art-theoretic commitments as well as those relevant surrounding art practices and conventions. The degree to which this can be successful is the degree to which the alternative characterization of abstracta is non-standard (i.e., abstracta as located causally-efficacious created things); however, such non-standard sorts of 'abstracta' can quickly seem more and more like *concreta* (e.g., from standard sorts of physical objects, events, processes, to the non-standard mereological fusions or four-dimensional space-time compositions thereof). As such, the appeal to non-standard characterizations of abstracta doesn't so much preserve realism about art-abstracta as collapse it into art-ontological nominalism (though likely one with some comparatively exotic variant of *concreta* in tow).

Given the options from DEFERENCE and INDEPENDENCE, resolving the paradox of standards so as to preserve our standard art-ontological commitments looks entail an art ontology that is either art-theoretically irresponsible—likely one having a domain unrestricted by even the most basic of art-theoretic constraints—or radically *sui generis* metaphysically—likely predicated (if only partially so) upon some sweeping, general metaontological view commensurate with a rampant art-ontological promiscuity.²¹ Although art ontology ought to be ideally located at the intersection of aesthetics and metaphysics, the extent to which art ontology, in its actual current state can be located thusly depends entirely upon the extent to which the paradox of standards can be coherently resolved. Regardless of the option one chooses to preserve standard art-

at least broadly metaphysically indistinct from *creating* an artwork of any other kind (e.g., those of the standardly non-repeatable variety such as painting, sculpture, drawing).

²⁰ For example, Amie Thomasson—most notably in (1999)—claims fictional characters to be abstract artifacts. However, the more such accounts employ (or are at least implicitly predicated upon) standard notions of *create* and *artifact* the less fictional characters look traditionally abstract and the more they instead look to be *concreta* (if not of the traditional sort then at least some exotic variant thereof).

²¹ For example, Amie Thomasson (2010, 2008, 2007) advances a meta-ontological position according to which ontological enquiry ought to be a combination of conceptual analysis and empirical investigation. My worry here is that philosophers of art already sympathetic to INDEPENDENCE may unreflectively consider Thomasson's work in art-ontology (2010, 2006) to license appeal to putatively *sui generis onta* within their own work and thereby neglect to consider the fact that doing so entails some pretty hefty and sweeping meta-ontological consequences that extend well beyond the domain of ontological inquiry into art.

ontological assumptions, the result nevertheless remains the same: an ontology of art that suspiciously looks to be about neither art nor ontology and to that extent, 'ontology of art' in name only. That such results are less than philosophically palatable I take to suggest that we should view the relationship between philosophy of art and metaphysics in a manner other than that of DEFERENCE or INDEPENDENCE. Instead, we ought to adopt the view from which the most art-theoretically and metaphysically responsible ontology of art can follow.²²

An Alternative View

As an alternative to DEFERENCE and INDEPENDENCE, I advance a third option that I take to be a far more productive and eminently more reasonable view about the relationship between metaphysics and philosophical aesthetics. I call this the RECIPROCITY view.

THE RECIPROCITY VIEW: Any responsible art ontology should be grounded in a responsible metaphysics, and any responsible metaphysics, at the end of the day, ought to be able to make sense of art.

That is, aesthetics ought to inherit its art ontological categories from a responsible metaphysics, and all things considered, a responsible metaphysics ought to carve out ontological categories capable of coherently grounding central issues in philosophical aesthetics (e.g., aesthetic properties, the ontology of art, etc.).

Consider that most, I assume, hold something like RECIPROCITY with respect to the relationship between philosophy of science and metaphysics, such that, presumably whatever one's metaphysical commitments, if at the end of the day those metaphysical commitments are incompatible with a coherent account of *species*, then one ought to seriously rethink those metaphysical commitments. Likewise, any account of *species* in philosophy of biology ought to be compatible with the ontological categories in play for

²² A metaphysician might wonder why philosophers of art do not simply abandon the appeal to abstracta in favor of a neo-Aristotelian account of universals such as D.M. Armstrong's (1978) view according to which universals are multiply located but nevertheless concrete, which would allow for repeatable artworks to be both spatiotemporally located and causally active without thereby collapsing into art-ontological nominalism (thanks to L.A. Paul for suggesting this). Of course, given that *ante rem* realism (i.e., universals wholly exist outside their instantiations) promises no improvement over the abstracta model, one must be an *in re* realist about repeatable artworks (i.e., that they wholly exist within their instantiations) in order to avoid the paradox of standards. However, the *in re* realist position looks no less potentially revisionary with respect to the way in which the folk talk about artworks than would any standard nominalist construal. More precisely, if making sense of the relevant surrounding practices and conventions explain the appeal to abstracta in the first place, then I suspect that an ontic model according to which *Moby Dick* is currently (and simultaneously) located in Paris, Dallas, Angkor Wat, and Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station would likely prove ill-suited for those with descriptivist inclinations.

any responsible metaphysics. So too then I suggest RECIPROCITY as how to view the relationship between philosophy of art and metaphysics. That is, if at the end of the day, one's metaphysical commitments preclude a coherent account of *art*, then one should seriously reconsider one's metaphysical commitments.²³ Likewise, any specification of art-realism in philosophical aesthetics ought to be compatible with the ontological categories in play for any responsible metaphysics.²⁴

Of course, RECIPROCITY should *not* be taken to entail or even to suggest that the relationship between aesthetics and metaphysics must be one of *equal* influence—that there are points of exchange doesn't suggest that such exchanges must by any means be equal in both directions. This shouldn't be surprising. That is, we really ought to expect exchanges with metaphysics to be frontloaded for aesthetics and exchanges with aesthetics to be at the backend for metaphysics (hence the presence of the 'at the end of the day' clause for metaphysics). Although according to RECIPROCITY, aesthetics bears the heavier burden in the relationship (contra INDEPENDENCE), it nevertheless constitutes a non-negligible burden on metaphysics (contra DEFERENCE)—at least in this respect, aesthetics appears no different than ethics. Moreover, adopting RECIPROCITY doesn't mean that the metaphysician must pause to consider the consequences of her view for (or whether her view aligns with) any and all issues central to aesthetics and its cognate areas; nor does it mean that the philosopher of art must pause to consider whether her view is compatible with all issues central to contemporary metaphysics. Rather, the principal thrust of RECIPROCITY simply is that there are at least some substantive and critical issues about which both would do well to pause and consider the other.²⁵ It is precisely at these substantive and central points of commonality that productive and

²³ For example, should standard metaphysical commitments preclude coherent realism about the sorts of things standardly taken to be paragons of human achievement (e.g., *Moby Dick*, *Hamlet*, *The Magic Flute*, *The Eroica Symphony*), those commitments nevertheless being consistent with some banal realism about tables, chairs, and lumps of clay should provide any metaphysician naught but cold comfort. Similarly, any responsible philosophy of language conducting inquiry into aesthetic or taste predicates ought to be consistent with and be informed by the very domain within which such predicates are standard parts of the critical discourse.

²⁴ Interestingly from this it seems to follow that one method aestheticians could employ to ensure purchase in a responsible metaphysics is to model ontological categories for *art* after those responsibly in play for *species* which perhaps suggests that any aesthetician holding a dim view of contemporary metaphysics should consider instead adopting RECIPROCITY with respect to the relationship between aesthetics and philosophy of science. For related issues in the relationship between metaphysics and philosophy of science, see Paul (forthcoming).

²⁵ After all, the ontic categories standardly available within contemporary metaphysics being insufficient to support anything other than a bankrupt art-realism rather strongly suggests their being likewise insufficient to support realism about any other product of intention action—if there are no such things as films, novels, paintings, plays, poems, sculptures, songs, and symphonies, then surely just as equally unreal must be such things as chairs, commercials, governments, grocery lists, instruction manuals, nations, office memos, ringtones, and tables.

informative exchanges can occur, and it is precisely around such points of commonality that philosophy of art ought to principally revolve.

Consider the consequences for art ontology on RECIPROCITY. Presumably, those inclined toward such a view would resolve the paradox of standards by restricting art-world *onta* to those standard within contemporary metaphysics checked against standard art-theoretic assumptions. That is, if what it is to be an artwork is minimally to be such-and-such a thing, then art-ontological enquiry ought to be circumscribed according to those ontic categories standardly available within contemporary metaphysics under which such-and-such things may coherently fall.

Should one quite reasonably think art theory is prior to (and ought to act as a constraints upon) art-ontology, then in cases of conflict with respect to the mutual preservation of the standard commitments within, art theory must win out. From the point of view of DEFERENCE, there arises a conflict between our commitment to art-abstracta and our commitment to artwork creation, and as such, anyone privileging our art-theoretic commitments must reject art-abstracta. Likewise, those endorsing DEFERENCE can take no methodological solace in the fact that the ontology of art may productively appropriate (in lieu of fashioning their own) such non-standard accounts—after all, DEFERENCE demands philosophy of art be deferential to abstracta within contemporary metaphysics *as standardly conceived*, such that, the extent to which adequately answering art-ontological inquiries requires endorsing a non-standard account of abstracta—and thereby rejecting abstracta as standardly conceived as an object-kind permissibly admitting art-objects—just is the extent to which art-ontological enquiry demands a broadly metaphysically revisionary answer. Although no doubt an in-principle option, absent some controversial and sweeping meta-ontological position sufficiently underwriting INDEPENDENCE, solving for art-ontological worries by denying the standard view of abstracta in contemporary metaphysics should strike us as a wildly disproportionate, counter-productive, and likely *ad hoc* method of preserving realism about artworks.

This suggests that there are but two ways in which to secure an art-realism that is both art-theoretically and metaphysically responsible. The first is to endorse a thoroughgoing art-ontological nominalism, such that, if there are such things as artworks, then artworks must be concrete things. The second simply is to abandon our commitment to art-realism (at least insofar as putatively repeatable artworks are concerned) and instead embrace a radical art-ontological/art-theoretic eliminativism or adopt an anti-realist fictionalism, such that, for any problematic art *onta* purged from the world there is some useful art *ficta* ready to take its place.

The broad methodological implication of RECIPROCITY for philosophy of art I take to be this: prior to declaring abstracta essential fixtures in the art-ontological fundament, we ought to make sure that the sort of thing an artwork must minimally be can coherently be the sort of thing that an abstract object must minimally be, at least as standardly conceived in contemporary metaphysics. That is, in order to secure a responsible art-ontology, we ought not blithely commit to art-abstracta. Instead, a responsible ontology of art, in addition to requiring us to ensure our art-theoretic houses are in order, also demands that we philosophically reflect on the nature of abstract objects from outside so that we can then responsibly reflect on the nature of abstracta against some fixed art-theoretic background.

Perhaps adopting RECIPROCITY will ultimately change little about the way we think about art ontology other than justifying or increasing our warrant for thinking it that way in the first place. Alternatively, and far more likely), perhaps a responsibly constructed art-ontology would look quite different. For example, it might be the case that the principal work done under the auspices of RECIPROCITY ultimately reveals nominalism to win out.²⁶ Or less drastically, perhaps we'll simply find artworks to be no more special an ontic sort than the relevant works of any putatively more mundane sort (e.g., poems no more ontologically special a thing than office memos, novels no stranger sort an object than stereo-instruction manuals, and symphonies no more metaphysically complex than advertising jingles) and thereby accordingly expect the ontology of art and the ontology of ordinary objects to be similarly populated at least with respect to the models their respective study takes to be available.

Of course, we can further specify the implications of RECIPROCITY by taking it together with the preference for either revisionary or descriptivist art-ontology. For instance, were we to endorse RECIPROCITY along with a descriptivist model, it would follow that we ought to count as legitimate ontic kinds for art-ontology all and only those ontic kinds standard within contemporary metaphysics sufficiently able to adequately capture art practices and conventions. Notice, however, that on such a view, the likely consequence of the ontological categories standard within contemporary metaphysics proving insufficient for adequately capturing basic art practices and conventions is a bankrupt realism about artworks. Of course, no matter how deeply held our art-realism may be, it surely must have some threshold that once crossed (e.g., via recourse to ontological gerrymandering and *sui generis* ontic kinds) can no longer be

²⁶ On a purely speculative front, I think that should aesthetics experience anything approximating a philosophical upheaval in the near future, it most likely will be in the form of nominalism establishing itself as the dominant art-ontological position.

held without revision (i.e., any *prima facie* viable realism for artworks must entail nominalism about art-abstracta) or cannot be held *simpliciter* (i.e., there can be no viable realism for artworks and so, there can be no such things that are artworks). By contrast, were we to endorse RECIPROCITY along with a revisionary model, we ought, *all else being equal*, to count as legitimate ontic kinds for art-ontology all and only those ontic kinds standard within contemporary metaphysics sufficiently able to adequately capture basic art-practices and conventions. All else *not* being equal, however, we ought to hold purely metaphysical/logical considerations (e.g., ontological parsimony) as trumping any subsequently accrued revisions to art practice and convention.

Ultimately, the general methodological implication of RECIPROCITY, at least with respect to art and abstracta, is that if works of a certain sort, absent art-theoretic considerations, are best construed as abstracta, then it *does not* likewise follow that the putative art status of works of that certain sort thereby entails or suggests abstracta as a legitimate ontic kind for artworks. Simply put, our principal methodology should *not* consist of i) inquiring as to the putatively art-relevant sorts of works, ii) constructing ontic models best suited for works of those sorts (not as artworks but as works of those sorts *simpliciter*), iii) declaring the resultant constructed ontic kinds legitimate kinds for art ontology, then iv) deflecting charges of practicing capricious metaphysics via an unreflective, cherry-picked appeal to some controversial and sweepingly revisionary methodological or meta-ontological indictment of general ontological enquiry itself at least as standardly conducted.²⁷ Rather, we must first inquire as to the sort of thing an artwork must minimally be (e.g., the product of intentional action), look to contemporary metaphysics to find the general ontic kinds consistent with that minimal account, and then, and only then, can we responsibly ground a legitimate art-ontological domain (and declare those ontic kinds exhaustive of its limits).

The principal methodological lesson that follows, should we decide to adopt RECIPROCITY, is that the more we find art-ontology to reckon as legitimate metaphysically queer or *sui generis* kinds of things, the more we ought to suspect art-ontology of being either blind to basic art-theoretic considerations or principally motivated by considerations well beyond the purview of contemporary metaphysics—either way an ‘ontology of art’ in name only. This suggests that at least insofar as we want to be art-realists, adopting RECIPROCITY may well require seriously reconsidering, revising, or perhaps even outright rejecting many of our basic art-ontological assumptions. Any sustained fruitful exchange between philosophy of art and

²⁷ After all, we should be shocked to find that merely something’s being art requires it to be radically ontically distinct from its nearest non-art kin.

contemporary metaphysics must be located at the points within each where the one takes the other seriously, and as such, the extent to which we allow these points of exchange to remain absent is the extent to which the methodologies guiding the relevant enquiries remain philosophically irresponsible and *ipso facto* the extent to which the result of any such enquiry so guided is not itself worth taking seriously.²⁸

Where DEFERENCE and INDEPENDENCE marginalize, enervate, and insulate the philosophy of art, RECIPROCITY legitimizes, invigorates, and integrates. It is through RECIPROCITY that philosophy of art must be taken seriously because it is from the point of view of RECIPROCITY that it becomes capable of grounding productive and informative exchanges with other philosophical fields—no more able to be neglected, ignored, or outright dismissed than philosophy of science. For our view of the relationship between philosophical aesthetics and other areas of philosophy to default to anything other than RECIPROCITY is for the philosophical enquiry we conduct at the relevant intersections to be ultimately self-undermining. To neglect or ignore the ways in which, or outright deny the very fact that, issues within aesthetics can substantively and productively inform issues without requires favoring negligence, ignorance, and unmitigated arrogance over philosophical progress.

A responsible metaphysics is one for which its standard commitments in the relevant areas of overlap are themselves informed by and consistent with standard art-theoretic considerations and commitments. As such, the extent to which metaphysics is irresponsible is the extent to which its standard metaphysical inquiry conducted at the relevant areas of overlap ignores, neglects, or dismisses standard art-theoretic considerations and commitments. RECIPROCITY entails that philosophers of art must defer only to a *responsible* metaphysics, such that, the extent to which metaphysical enquiry at the relevant overlap conducts itself irresponsibly is the extent to which philosophers of art needn't defer to the results thereof. To be sure, RECIPROCITY entails that philosophy of art must be deferential, but this is not some mealy-mouthed

²⁸ To be sure, the last decade or so has seen a dramatic increase in the number of significant and exciting exchanges between aesthetics and putatively core philosophical areas, not just in the more obvious overlap areas (e.g., the nature of fiction & theory of depiction) but also in areas traditionally considered to be largely in the domain of philosophical aesthetics (e.g., the ontology of music, aesthetic concepts, predicates, judgments, and testimony). Ideally this recent increase in philosophy of art's exchange rate would be the product of some newly fashioned methodology driven by a heretofore largely absent general, serious, and substantive philosophical concern for all things art and aesthetic. However, the less than ideal fact of the matter is that often such exchanges seem to progress in a manner incommensurate, if not outright inconsistent, with their being substantively, let alone principally, motivated or constrained by basic art-theoretic considerations. As such, this increase is perhaps best viewed not so much as the product of a philosophical *appreciation for* aesthetics as a philosophical *appropriation from* aesthetics.

deference to metaphysics *simpliciter* but instead a properly earned deference to a responsible metaphysics. Just as only in the presence of such a fully responsible metaphysics does RECIPROCITY collapse into DEFERENCE, should such a responsible metaphysics be fully absent, does RECIPROCITY collapse into INDEPENDENCE,²⁹ and just as DEFERENCE seems well-earned when underwritten by a responsible metaphysics, INDEPENDENCE looks far less radical a position when underwritten by the irresponsibility of metaphysics than when underwritten by the deep metaphysical queerness of artworks.

Conclusion

In the end, I take the paradox of standards (or at least the appearance thereof) neither to impugn the general philosophical merits of work currently being done within the ontology of art nor—despite my own thoroughgoing art-ontological nominalism—to vindicate any particular view therein. What the paradox of standards ultimately reveals is that insofar as philosophers of art and metaphysicians view the relationship between their respective domains in terms of INDEPENDENCE or DEFERENCE, neither can responsibly conduct philosophical enquiry at what would otherwise be eminently productive and informative points of exchange. Absent the move toward RECIPROCITY, metaphysicians will likely continue to inexplicably neglect the paragon sorts of human achievement (whilst fretting over how best to make sense of its utterly banal kin) and philosophers of art will likely respond in similar fashion by defaulting to the metaphysical queerness of art (thereby further retreating into insularity and obsolescence).

For any philosophical enquiry at the relevant overlap areas between aesthetics and other domains to be responsible and productive comes at a price, a price all participating sides must pay. To be sure, philosophy of art looks to bear most of the expense; however, the other side nevertheless incurs a non-negligible cost in that at the end of the day, *it must make sense of art*.³⁰

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²⁹ The difference, of course, being that to move from RECIPROCITY to INDEPENDENCE no longer requires that art be in principle ontologically *sui generis*.

³⁰ In this minimal yet substantive sense, for example, ought philosophy of art itself inform contemporary metaphysics, and in so doing might philosophy of art then come to stand in the same sort of relation to metaphysics (with all due respect and apologies to philosophy of science) as applied ethics does to meta-ethics.

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