Arthur C. Danto

(1 January 1924 –)

D. Seiple

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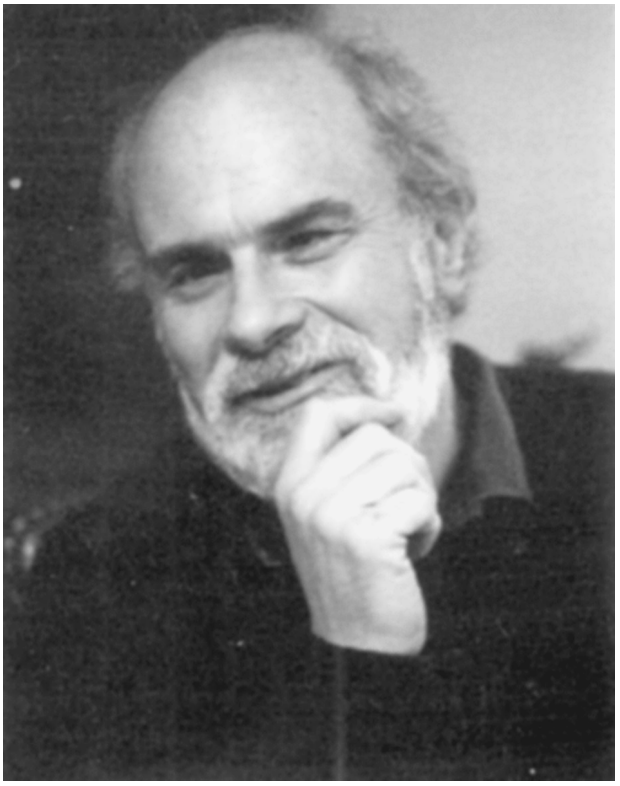

Arthur C. Danto (from the dust jacket for After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History, *1997*)

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The Madonna of the Future: Essays in a Pluralistic Art World (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2000).

OTHER: *Philosophy of Science: Readings,* edited by Danto and Sidney Morgenbesser (New York: Meridian, 1960);

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397 Chairs, text by Danto, photographs by Jennifer Lévy (New York: Abrams, 1988);

J. S. G. Boggs, *Smart Money (Hard Currency): An Exhibition Organized by the Tampa Museum of Art, Sponsored by Sunbank of Tampa Bay,* text by Danto and Bruce W. Chambers (Tampa, Fla.: Tampa Museum of Art, 1990);

Angel Chairs: New Works by Wendell Castle, text by Danto, Peter T. Joseph, and Emma T. Cobb (New York: Peter Joseph Gallery, 1991);

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Cindy Sherman, *History Portraits,* text by Danto (New York: Rizzoli, 1991);

Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Über Gewissheit/On Certainty,* edited by G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright, translated by Anscombe and Denis Paul, introduction by Danto (San Francisco: Arion Press, 1991);

Mark Tansey, *Visions and Revisions,* edited by Christopher Sweet, notes and comments by Danto (New York: Abrams, 1992);

Robert Mapplethorpe, *Mapplethorpe,* text by Danto (New York: Random House, 1992);

From the Inside Out: Eight Contemporary Artists, organized by Susan Tumarkin Goodman, text by Danto (New York: Jewish Museum, 1993);

Sean Scully, *The Catherine Paintings,* text by Danto, Carter Ratcliff, and Steven Henry Madoff (Fort Worth: Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, 1993);

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Steven S. High, George Cruger, and Randee Humphrey, eds., *Repicturing Abstraction,* text by Danto (Richmond: Anderson Gallery, Virginia Commonwealth University, 1995);

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Francesc Torres, *The Repository of Absent Flesh,* text by Danto (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT List Visual Arts Center, 1998);

Neal Benezra and Olga M. Viso, *Regarding Beauty: A View of the Late Twentieth Century,* text by Danto (Washington, D.C.: Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, 1999);

Howard Ben Tré, text by Danto, Mary Jane Jacob, and Patterson Sims (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1999);

Choice from America: Modern American Ceramics, text by Danto and Janet Koplos ('s-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands: Kruithuis Museums Collection, 1999);

Neustein, *Five Ash Cities,* text by Danto, Hilary Putnam, and Kristine Stiles (Chicago: Olive Production in association with Academy Chicago Publishers, 2000);

"Formation, Success, and Mastery: Eric Fischl through Three Decades," in *Eric Fischl, 1970–2000* (New York: Monacelli Press, 2000), pp. 11–24;

Jean-Marie Schaeffer, *Art of the Modern Age: Philosophy of Art from Kant to Heidegger,* translated by Steven Rendall, foreword by Danto (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000);

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Made in Oakland: The Furniture of Garry Knox Bennett, text by Danto, Edward S. Cooke Jr., and Ursula Ilse-Neuman (New York: American Craft Museum, 2001);

Peter G. Meyer, ed., *Brushes with History: Writing on Art from* The Nation, *1865–2001,* introduction and contributions by Danto (New York: Thunder Mouth Press, 2001);

Testimony: Vernacular Art of the African-American South. The Ronald and June Shelp Collection, text by Danto, Grey Gundaker, Edmund Barry Gaither, Judith M. McWillie, and Kinshasha Conwill (New York: Abrams, 2002).

SELECTED PERIODICAL PUBLICATIONS–
UNCOLLECTED: "The Artworld," *Journal of Philosophy,* 61 (1964): 571–584;

"Basic Actions," *American Philosophical Quarterly,* 2 (1965): 141–148.

The philosopher and art critic Arthur C. Danto has produced a body of work of a breadth that is unusual in an era of specialization. To the overriding philosophical question of the twentieth century–"What is philosophy?"–he has devoted two major texts: *What Philosophy Is: A Guide to the Elements* (1968) and *Connections to the World: The Basic Concepts of Philosophy* (1989). To the pop-art phenomenon Danto has addressed his groundbreaking essay "The Artworld" (1964), his book *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace: A Philosophy of Art* (1981), and several of the essays collected in *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art* (1986). His art criticism proper, produced regularly for *The Nation* magazine since 1984 and collected in several volumes, including *The State of the Art* (1987) and *The Madonna of the Future: Essays in a Pluralistic Art World* (2000), as well as his essays in exhibition catalogues, have carried many of his ideas into popular discussion and won him wider recognition than is generally afforded professional philosophers in the United States. Danto is anything but a mere popularizer, however, and his professional recognitions include election as president of the American Philosophical Association in 1983 and literary awards such as the Lionel Trilling Book Prize in 1982 and the National Book Critics Circle Award in 1990 for *Encounters and Reflections: Art in the Historical Present.*

Arthur Coleman Danto was born in Ann Arbor, Michigan, on 1 January 1924 to Samuel Budd Danto, a dentist, and Sylvia Gittleman Danto. He spent much of his childhood in Detroit. During World War II he served in the army in North Africa and Italy. He married Shirley Rovetch on 9 August 1946; they had two children, Elizabeth Ann and Jane Nicole.

Originally intending to pursue a career as a painter, Danto received a B.A. in art and history at Wayne University (now Wayne State University) in 1948 and an M.A. in philosophy at Columbia University in 1949. At Columbia he studied with Ernest Nagel, Suzanne K. Langer, and Justus Buchler. A Fulbright fellowship enabled him to study at the University of Paris in 1949–1950. He became an instructor in philosophy at the University of Colorado, Boulder, in 1950; in 1951 he accepted a similar position at Columbia, where he completed his doctorate in 1952 with a dissertation on the philosophy of history. He was promoted to assistant professor in 1954, associate professor in 1959, and full professor in 1966. He became Johnsonian Professor of Philosophy in 1975. His wife died in July 1978; on 15 February 1980 he married Barbara Westman, an artist. Danto retired in 1992 and is now Johnsonian Professor Emeritus.

For most of his career Danto was situated in the tradition of Anglo-American analytic philosophy, as is indicated by the titles of three of his books: *Analytical Philosophy of History* (1965), *Analytical Philosophy of Knowledge* (1968), and *Analytical Philosophy of Action* (1973). In *Nietzsche as Philosopher* (1965) and *Jean-Paul Sartre* (1975) he uses analysis to uncover the philosophical substance beneath the continental European style of these two figures. In *Mysticism and Morality: Oriental Thought and Moral Philosophy* (1972) he attempts to treat East Asian ethics in a similar way, though he is less sanguine about that project because the factual beliefs of those cultures are so different from those of the West that "their moral belief systems are unavailable to us." Danto's current work, however, like Richard Rorty's, emerges out of the convergence near the end of the twentieth century of the analytic and Continental traditions. As Jürgen Habermas observed in his review of Hans-Georg Gadamer's *Wahrheit und Methode: Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik* (Truth and Method: Chraracteristics of a Philosophical Hermeneutics, 1960; translated as *Truth and Method,* 1975), Danto had already come to some of the same hermeneutic conclusions as Gadamer by the orthodox analytic route of examining the logical form of narrative sentences. "Logical form" refers to the implicit limits of any such sentence. Historical narratives are stories: they have a beginning and an end that are threaded together by human action. Actions are intentional, and no account that ignores this fact can properly qualify as an

Painting by Danto's wife, Barbara Westman, of herself and Danto with their dogs, Charlotte and Emilio (photograph © 1988 by Barbara Westman; from Mark Rollins, ed., Danto and His Critics, *1993)*

historical one. A physicist describing a past event is not giving an historical account, because such a description lacks reference to human intentions. Gadamer's point, however, is that the meaning of historical events far surpasses the historical narratives that provide the raw materials for historians' larger assessments, and Danto makes the same point. For example, the conflict between Prussia and Austria that began in 1756 is today called "the Seven Years' War"; but the Prussian king Frederick II certainly did not march into Dresden that year and proclaim the opening of a seven-year conflict. Historical explanations, for Danto, are not reducible to the explanations typically offered by empirical science, because they cannot be exhaustively rendered in purely physical language. This contrast between the understanding of human culture and theories about the physical world has become a hallmark of Continental thought, and *Analytical Philosophy of History* is an analytic philosopher's argument for a Continental philosopher's perspective. Habermas commented to Danto in a private communication that the book, the impact of which was widely felt in Europe, had overcome the prevailing divide between those two major schools of thought. If Danto had never written anything beyond *Analytical Philosophy of History,* his place in the history of philosophy would have been assured. But he contributed, as well, to the discussions about action theory that arose in the early 1970s, and in the early 1980s he applied those results to develop an original view of art history.

Throughout his work Danto makes use of "the method of indiscernibles." Indiscernibles–instances that are categorically distinct but empirically indistinguishable–provide the essential paradigm of what, in Danto's view, philosophy is supposed to do: look beneath the surface of things to discern their essential natures. He applies the method in *Analytical Philosophy of Action,* an expansion of his influential 1965 essay "Basic Actions," which did much to make the concept of action a major concern of Anglo-American philosophy. Danto asks his readers to consider the difference between the intentional raising of an arm–an action–and a physically indiscernible reflex motion. A "basic action" is a bodily movement

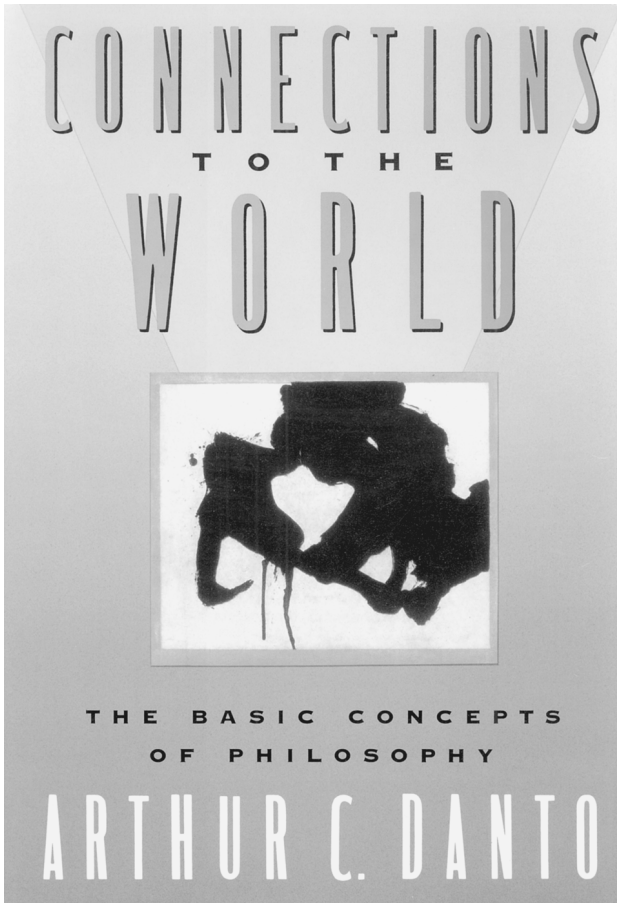
that is caused by an intention, which excludes reflexes, and that "satisfies" that intention, which excludes instances where a person intends to raise an arm but a cerebral misfunction triggers the twitching of the shoulder instead. Ever since Plato in the fourth century B.C., and even more since René Descartes in the seventeenth century, discussion of indiscernibles has been the standard starting point for distinguishing genuine knowledge from seductive but false claimants to that status. Danto has devoted considerable attention to the problem, most prominently in *Analytical Philosophy of Knowledge* and *Connections to the World,* and he has applied the method of indiscernibles to posit what he takes to be the essential questions of art theory.

For Danto, the method of indiscernibles operates as half of a methodological pair; the other half is representation. Considered from a physical point of view, an historically significant event would be indistinguishable from a trivial episode in the universal molecular flux. What makes it a human event at all is that a mode of representation–an intention–supervenes to raise its status above that of a mere atomic happening, and by being placed in a wider framework of intentionality the event becomes comprehensible. For example, Martin Luther might have initiated the Protestant Reformation by his intransigence before the Diet of Worms on 18 April 1521, when he said, "Here I stand; I can do no other"; but that utterance is of little interest if it was only the result of his chronic constipation. The difference lies in how Luther's action is represented to himself, to his contemporaries, and to posterity.

For a nonphilosophical audience Danto's concern with indiscernibles and representation may not command much interest; but his art criticism in *The Nation* provides ready access to his general philosophical views. The historicism of the nineteenth-century German idealist philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel grounds almost all of Danto's writings on art. What art is, for Danto, depends on its historical context of production, and what the aesthetician can notice about art depends on his or her station along the trajectory of art history. These points might, at first sight, seem trivial: of course, one might say, art objects have an historical genesis, and of course, questions about a work's aesthetic properties are raised in response to what artists have actually produced. But Danto's Hegelian historicism puts a radical spin on these seemingly banal observations. That everyday objects such as Marcel Duchamp's ready-mades and Andy Warhol's *Brillo Boxes* (1964) have entered the field of art opens questions that not only have not actually been posed but also could not, even in principle, have been posed previously. What counts as "art" varies from one historical moment to the next. The point is not just the obvious one that one's understanding of art is not fixed; art itself is not fixed. Standards of "good" art, and even the criteria for "art" itself, do not eternally await human discernment. Once this point is understood, one can see that the use of such categories must appeal to some historical narrative tethered to the contemporary moment and, also, that productive discussions about past art must respect the art-historical vocabulary available to the culture of that day. Otherwise, Danto says, one would be in the absurd position of an historian, present at the defenestration of two Catholic councillors and their secretary in Prague on 23 May 1618, reporting that he had just witnessed the beginning of the Thirty Years' War.

According to Danto, the history of modern art until Warhol was an experimental expansion of creative horizons, achieving ever bolder results. But history does not go on in one direction forever: narratives have a natural structure that includes closure. In Warhol, art reaches a peculiar kind of end point in which a wooden reproduction of an ordinary box of Brillo scouring pads is "made" into an art object without any obvious perceptual alteration. Art, which had always been recognizably representational, suddenly became "indiscernibly" representational: Warhol's Brillo box is not "about" Brillo boxes, kitchen chores, or grocery-store shelves; it is about a further possibility that no one–except, perhaps, Duchamp–had exploited until then. It is not about how to make better, more beautiful, or more true-to-life works of art; it is about what distinguishes art from non-art. Art, with Warhol, became fully self-representational. For Danto, Warhol shows that a point has been reached at which anything can be "art"; therefore, nothing can be identified as art apart from "an atmosphere of artistic theory" that the eye or ear alone cannot negotiate.

One of the main complaints against pop art was that an achievement such as Warhol's does nothing for aesthetic sensibility; instead, it wins the viewer over only at the level of an intellectual tease. For Danto, that is precisely the point: one can appreciate this movement in art only by confronting the philosophical questions it raises. And because it raises the most perplexing and exciting question about art, further innovations cannot convincingly serve as the grand historical impetus to the next wave of the avant-garde. The last conceivable radical moment in art history has been accomplished. Previously, the avant-garde–Edouard Manet, Auguste Renoir, Paul Gaugin, Pablo Picasso, or Jackson Pollock–had been concerned with "moving beyond" where others had already been. But, Danto asks, how could an artist ever "move beyond" Warhol? Nothing more radical can even be imagined than the collapse of the perceptual difference between art and nonart. The creation of art objects has taken on a "transfigurational" aspect: at this point in history the artistic act can, for the first time, consist of nothing more than the construction of a perception-altering context, as when Warhol gives the impression of having simply moved the Brillo box from the supermarket to the exhibit space.



Dust jacket for Danto's 1989 study of the nature of philosophy (Richland County Public Library)

And, Danto says in a nod to Hegel, this phenomenon suggests that by the mid 1960s the spirit of philosophy itself must have entered the art world: only the philosophically sophisticated could divine what transformed the modest Brillo box into an epoch-shattering artwork, and only the philosophically sophisticated could recognize the sense in which art had come to an "end." With Duchamp, Warhol, and Robert Rauschenberg, art production is no longer preoccupied with specifically artistic questions; Warhol could have displayed a real Brillo box, rather than a replica of one. Doing so would have no specifically "artistic" point, which is what outraged the conservative critics. But doing it has a philosophical point that, for Danto, provides an almost uncanny illustration of his own methodological themes. Questions about indiscernibility generate philosophical reflection. At the "end" of art, according to Danto, lies philosophy—though he does not mean that philosophy replaces art.

Danto's "end of art" claim has probably been more misunderstood than any of his other theses; popular commentators have protested that galleries have not, after all, ceased acquiring new works. Even some of Danto's sophisticated critics portray him as proclaiming that everything produced under the name of "art" since 1964 is not art but philosophy. Danto's point is not that the production of art has stopped but that the modernist narrative about art has reached its culmination. Meanwhile, neoconservative rear-guard efforts to reinstate this narrative are a product of embittered nostalgia, like that of an historian who could not admit that the Thirty Years' War lasted only thirty years.

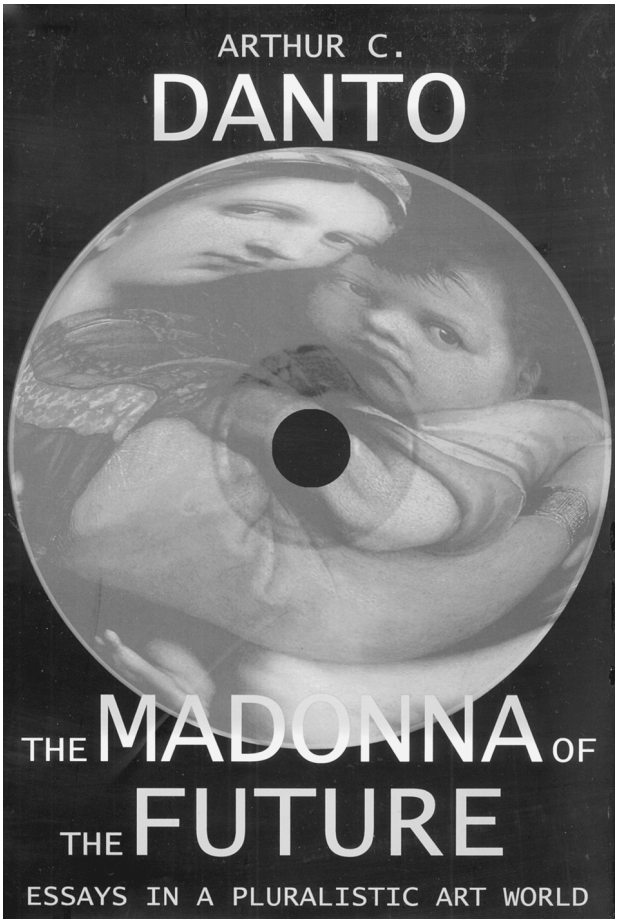
Warhol has frequently been interpreted as a cultural mirror in which the boredom of late-twentieth-century cultural life is reflected. This claim, whatever its merits, does not capture Danto's point about the "end of art." That moment in art history signals neither the termination of art production nor its enervation but, rather, its closure and consummation, "where the need for constant self-revolutionizing of art is now past." The remaining prospects for art may strike some as boring, and the resulting transformation of museum space may offend critics such as Hilton Kramer, who has denounced both Warhol and Danto. Danto sees the end of art as an era of great promise in which artists have finally been freed from the onus of membership in the latest avant-garde movement. Excesses will still be committed by artists entranced by media attention and commercial prospects; the result will be what Danto has called "Importance Art." But the "end of art" lifts artists out from under the burden of history: "There can and should never again be anything like the astonishing sequence of convulsions that have defined the history of art of our century," with "its vertiginous succession of movements and its waspish intolerances." This "post-historical atmosphere of art" will bring art back to where it belongs, as the vehicle for the satisfaction of those "human ends" that define the legitimate preoccupations of cultural life and redefine the social function of museums.

Thus, as an art critic Danto is not, as some of his critics suppose, an academic brandishing his cleverness in the popular press. He is a humanist who has always tried to place art in a wider context than the one the isolated art world provides. In his contributions to the left-leaning *Nation* magazine he has reflected on a wider range of topics than art criticism has typically presented. His aim has been to connect art to the concerns of educated ordinary people and to describe the moral and philosophical considerations that illuminate a world that produces the art he addresses. He has not shrunk from dealing with some of the more unseemly issues that have found their way into postmodern culture. At a time when most academic commentators were keeping their distance, he began to address the efforts of AIDS activists to find a voice through displays of art that were meant to inspire a political response as well as to express their personal agony. Danto points out that these two aims can be incompatible,

since the rapport required for political inspiration is often shattered by the shrillness of the personal testimony: "activist art should fulfill itself through convincing those it reaches to attack its targets, not itself."

Danto's boldness is especially evident in the attention he has given to the controversial late gay photographer Robert Mapplethorpe, resulting in the publication of *Playing with the Edge: The Photographic Achievement of Robert Mapplethorpe* (1996). Here, Danto describes a body of work that is virtually inaccessible to anyone uninterested in or upset by sadomasochism or gay culture in general, and he does so through a vocabulary and sensibility that few outside or even inside the gay world have mastered. He makes apparent why Mapplethorpe's kind of art, which approaches what Danto earlier called "disturbational art," deserves to be respected rather than vilified: though it appears to sanctify practices that inflict suffering on willing recipients, such as the insertion of a fist or a whip handle into a rectum, it imbues those acts with "an edge of meaning" that sets them apart from the meaningless horrors that headline the nightly news. Its power confirms the enduring function of at least one element of the modernist repertoire: its capacity to challenge people's most sacred preconceptions. The effect of Mapplethorpe's work is all the more poignant when the images are disclosures of the trust that can hold between lovers and even of the dark fantasy side at work in the psychology of the astounded viewer. Whether the viewer is brought to the edge of sexual excitement or to moral revulsion is an individual response to the content of Mapplethorpe's photographs; Danto takes the reader beyond that kind of response so that he or she can begin to view those photographs as artistic accomplishments that "beautify what is initially remote from beauty." Mapplethorpe's work does what is characteristic of art as a human activity: it exploits its mode of representing its content, and so, in Hegelian terms, the content is *aufgehoben* (transcended and raised to a higher level).

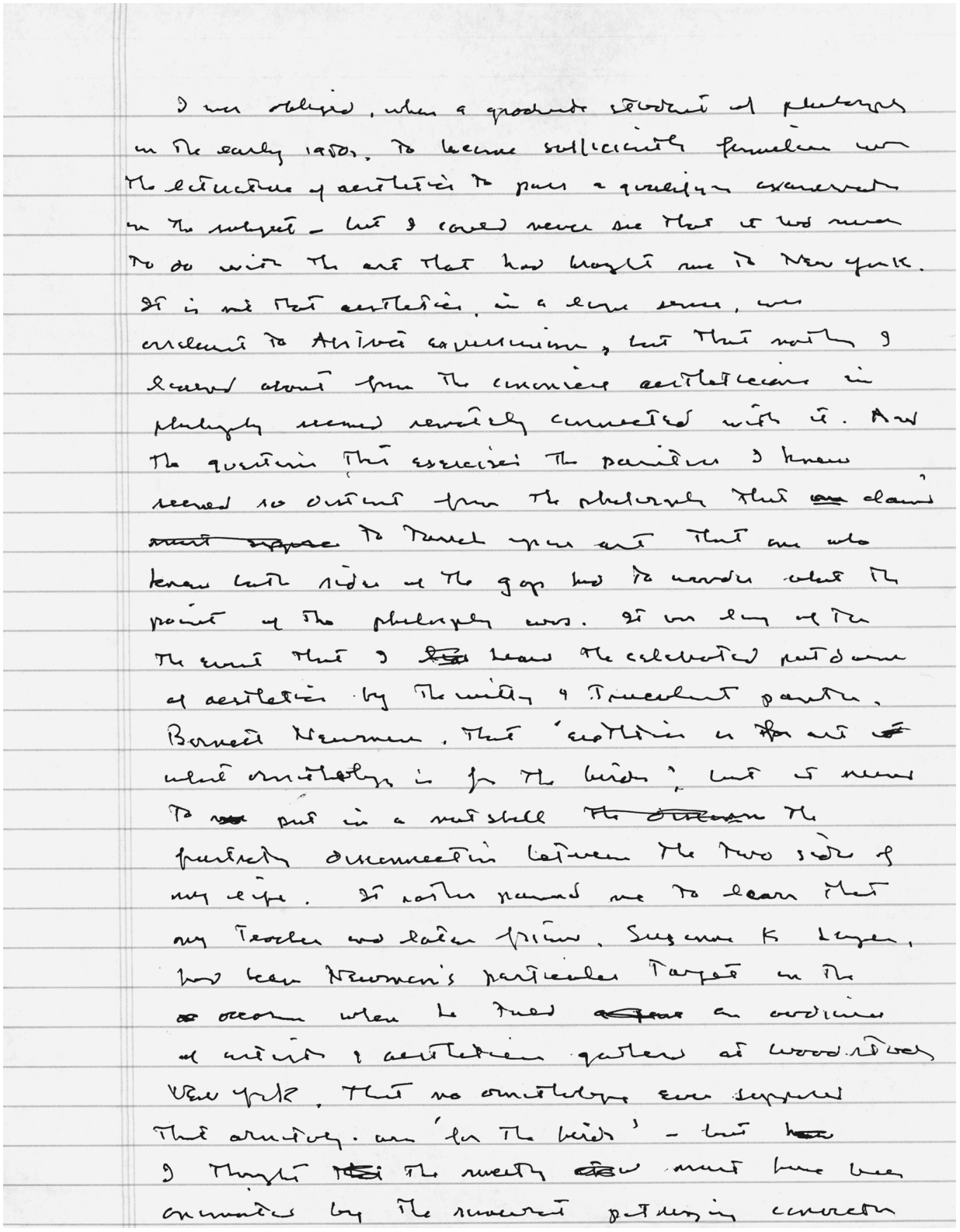
Even so, given the social considerations that many believe override purely artistic merit, the question remains why one should concern oneself with such images–as well as why public funding should be provided for their exhibition, as the National Endowment for the Arts had initially done. The venom that greeted Mapplethorpe's work on the floor of the U.S. Senate in the late 1980s had not yet surfaced when Danto reviewed the Mapplethorpe retrospective at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City in 1988; the press had not yet addressed the explicitly sexual side of the work. In the years that followed, the questions of government subsidy and censorship of the arts took on a political edge not matched since the publication of James Joyce's *Ulysses* in 1922. Danto has expressed himself forcefully on both issues, holding that government should subsidize art because it promotes



Dust jacket for the 2000 collection of Danto's art criticism for The Nation *magazine (Richland County Public Library)*

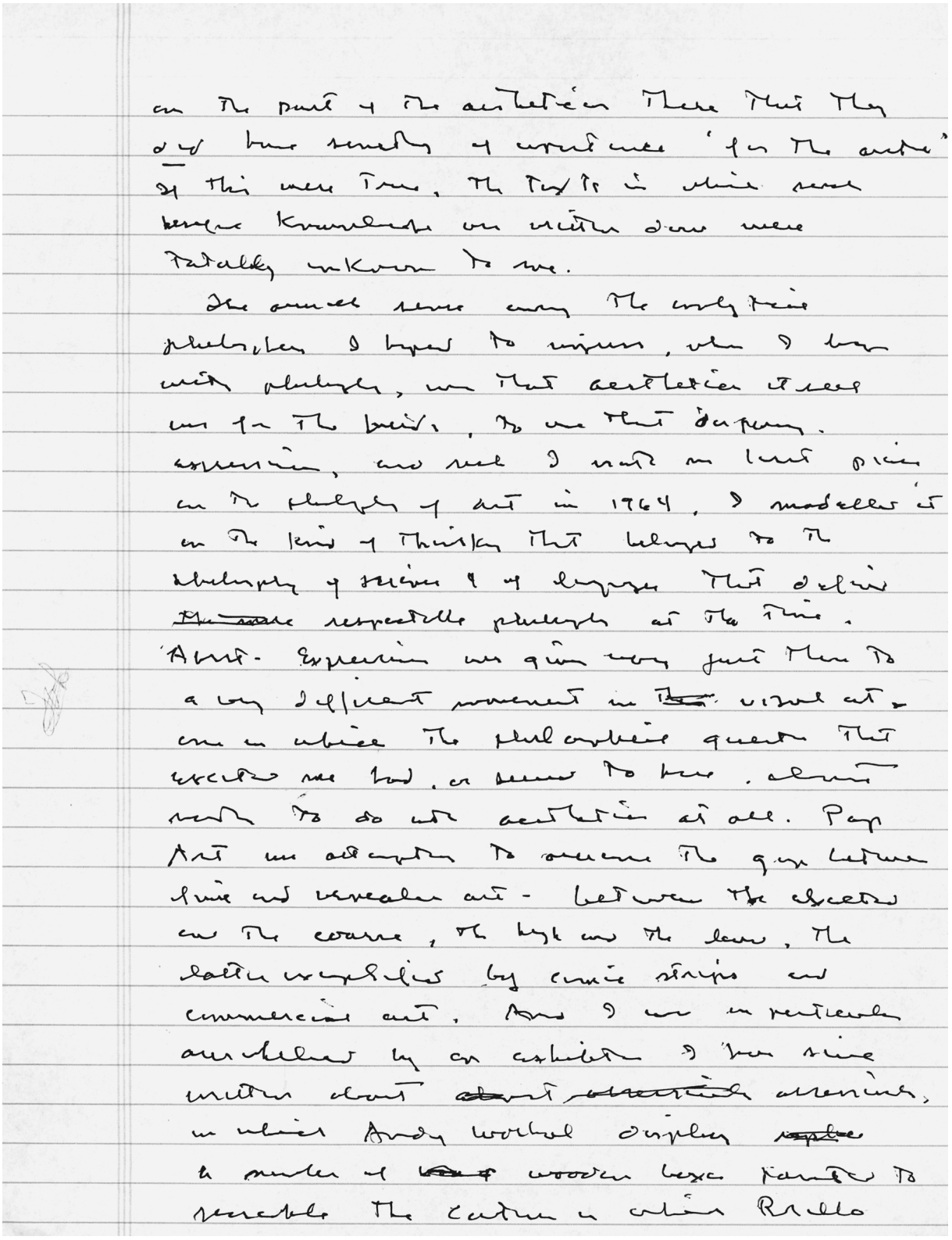
social good and that censorship has a chilling effect on the healthy pluralism that art promotes. Thus, art, like philosophy, leads one to a consideration of politics, history, and philosophical method. For Danto, as for Hegel and the American pragmatist philosopher John Dewey, what one can interestingly say about art becomes both a testing ground for and a stepping stone to other concerns.

Inspired by the parallels between his theories of art and certain issues in the psychology of perception and cognition, Danto for years team-taught several courses at Columbia with members of the psychology department. The result has appeared at various points in his writings. To make plausible his observations on historical narrative as they apply to art history, Danto needs to allow for one's ability to view past artworks relatively uncorrupted by subsequent culture. What is required for historical narrative in general also applies, according to Danto, to art history. A painter's work must be explainable in vocabulary that is translatable into terms the artist could plausibly have used. Thus, the paintings of Annibale Carracci (1560–1609) are explained through those of Antonio Alle-



I was obliged, when a graduate student of philosophy in the early 1950s, to become sufficiently familiar with the structure of aesthetics to pass a qualifying examination in the subject – but I could never see that it had much to do with the art that had brought me to New York. It is not that aesthetics, in a large sense, was irrelevant to Abstract Expressionism, but that nothing I learned about from the conventional aesthetic theories in philosophy seemed remotely connected with it. And the questions that exercised the painters I knew seemed to originate from the philosophy that ~~was~~ claimed ~~to expose~~ to furnish what art that was who knew both sides of the gap had to wonder about the point of the philosophy was. It was by way of the fact that I ~~first~~ learn the celebrated put-down of aesthetics by the witty & flamboyant painter, Barnett Newman, that 'aesthetics is to art what ornithology is for the birds', but it seemed to ~~me~~ put in a nutshell ~~the problem~~ the practically disconnection between the two sides of my life. It rather pained me to learn that my Teacher and later friend, Susanne K Langer, had been Newman's particular Target on the ~~one~~ occasion when he found ~~himself~~ in conditions of artists & aesthetician quarrels at Wood Island New York. That no ornithology ever supported that activity, was 'for the birds' – but ~~how~~ I thought ~~that~~ the matter ~~now~~ must have been overlooked by the somewhat pat thesis in connection

First two pages of the draft for the introduction to Danto's forthcoming book "The Abuse of Beauty" (Collection of Arthur C. Danto)



on the part of the aesthetician. There that they do not have sensibility of works like 'for the artist' If this were true, the fact is since most because knowledge on which I was were totally unknown to me.

The second sense using the word from philosophers I hoped to inform, when I began with philosophy, was that aesthetics it was was for the birds, to use that despairing expression, and such I would on least plan on the philosophy of art in 1964, I modelled it on the kind of thinking that belongs to the philosophy of science & of language that deals respectable philosophy at the time.

Art. Expression was given very just then to a very different movement in the visual art. one in which the philosophic question that excited me had, or seemed to have, almost nothing to do with aesthetics at all. Pop Art was all taken to overcome the gap between life and revealed art - between the objects on the counter, the light on the lawn, the bottle manufactured by comic strips and commercial art. And I was in particular overwhelmed by an exhibition I saw since written about about American, in which Andy Warhol displayed a number of wooden boxes painted to resemble the cartons in which Brillo

gri di Correggio (1494–1534), and not vice versa, because of their relative positions in history: no painter could have an historical impact on his or her predecessor. On the other hand, people today occupy even more distance from Correggio than Caracci's contemporaries did, and if the forms that appear in Correggio's paintings were unavailable to culturally unimpacted perception, no interesting account of Correggio could even be written. If those forms are available, then some level of human perception, at the innate level, has to be impervious to cultural influence. A body of psychological literature offers support for Danto's thesis: pigeons, monkeys, and sheep respond by innate programming to environmental features, and humans are subject to optical illusions such as the Muller-Lyer illusion, in which the observer cannot see two lines, one above the other, as identical in length, even though he or she knows by measuring them that they are identical. There may be more to perceptual constancy than humans acquire from their culture alone and, if Danto is right, enough to outweigh the more-radical historicist arguments that achieved prominence in the last quarter of the twentieth century.

Danto's views on art are emblematic of his overall philosophy: he has managed to reconcile apparently conflicting philosophical sensibilities without slighting either of them. Though he appreciates historicism in general and postmodernism specifically, his views are a good deal less radical than those of most postmodernists. Though he agrees with Hegel that not all things are possible at all times, and that historical circumstances prepare the way for consciousness to represent reality in new ways, he holds that such representations attain a connection to a world that was there all along but simply hidden from view. Thus, Danto rejects the idealism implicit in deconstructionism: the world is more than the linguistic web that is presupposed in describing it. In this sense, Danto denies that philosophy is a radically historicist enterprise. Its genuine options are limited by more than the linguistic habits of its practitioners: they are also limited by the ways in which the world really could not be, whether those limits are entirely apparent at any historical moment. Ascertaining those limits is the task of philosophy. Danto regards the most important philosophical problems as truly deep and their solutions as genuine discoveries, and he remains an "unabashed essentialist." Even now, he thinks, intriguing findings may remain to be made–such as his own thesis about the end of art, which, he claims, follows "almost" as a logical necessity once the priority of the narrative form has been established for art history, "since narratives cannot be endless." As he puts it in the "Responses and Replies" section of Mark Rollins's *Danto and His Critics* (1993), philosophy remains "always the same and always totally present to itself–a finite array of positions on representation, truth, and causality." Though unperturbed by the notion of art's "end," Danto does not follow Rorty and Jacques Derrida in consigning philosophy to the same fate.

In the view of many who know him, Arthur C. Danto manifests his philosophy in his personal qualities. Among these qualities is the generosity he displays toward critics. To those who contend that his treatment of art is too self-consciously clever, lacking–as one critic put it–sufficient "aesthetic passion," Danto replies that in the scale of human joys and agonies, art itself is not all that important; after Warhol, especially, it is certainly not important enough to bear the world-historical significance that was once thought to be its peculiar burden. To those who complain about his "reductionistic" treatment of Continental or East Asian thought, Danto in a way concedes the point but challenges its impact by replying that philosophy itself is not all that there should be, even within the domain of the professional philosopher. Danto is a humanist and offers a balanced view of the place of philosophy in human life. Philosophy, like art, has an indispensable, but by no means the only, privileged role in human thinking, and any cultural feature that fails–even as a philosophical category–is not rendered inconsequential to those for whom it still has meaning.

Interview:

Giovanna Borradori, "The Cosmopolitan Alphabet of Art: Arthur C. Danto," in her *The American Philosopher: Conversations with Quine, Davidson, Putnam, Nozick, Danto, Rorty, Cavell, MacIntyre, and Kuhn,* translated by Rosanna Crocitto (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1994), pp. 86–102.

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