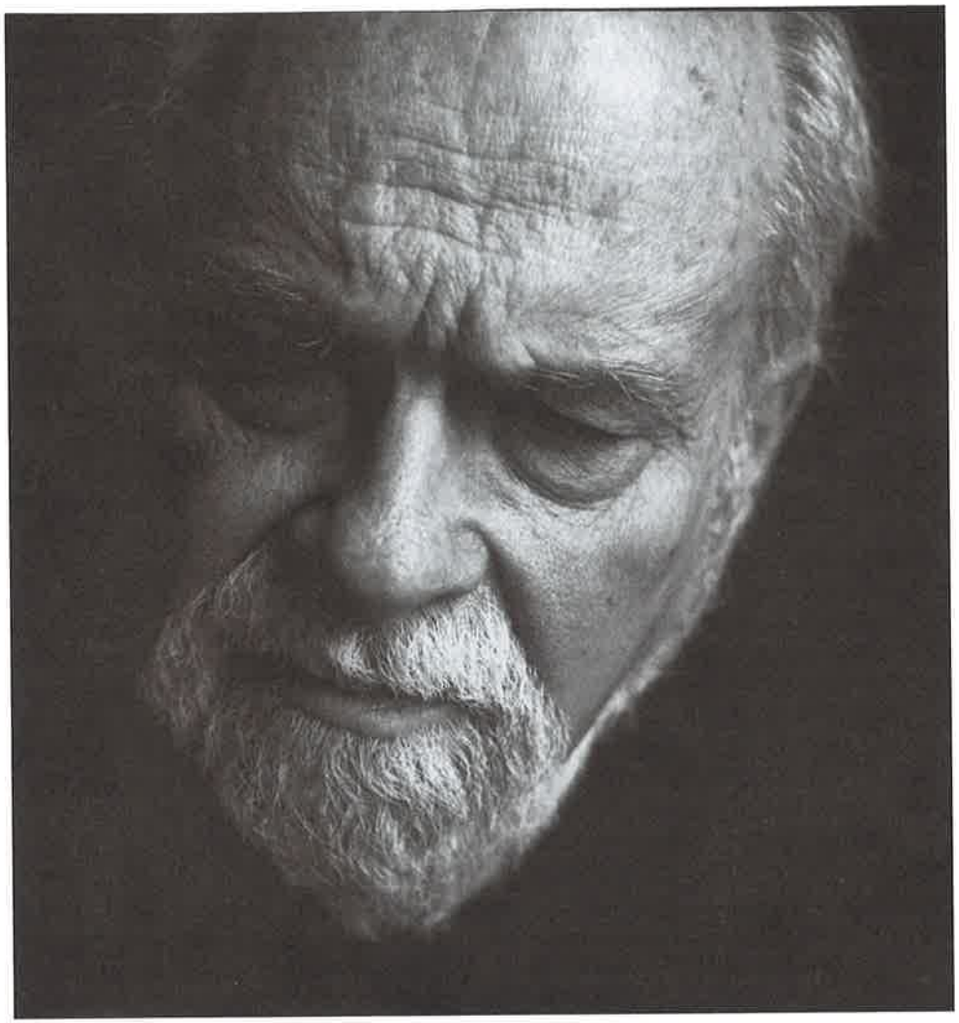

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THE PHILOSOPHY OF
ARTHUR C. DANTO

EDITED BY

RANDALL E. AUXIER
AND
LEWIS EDWIN HAHN
SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY CARBONDALE

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David Seiple

THE SPIRIT OF ARTHUR DANTO

The realm of spirit is dark and difficult terra incognita *so far as philosophical understanding is concerned, though it is as well, so far as human understanding is concerned, the most familiar territory of all. It is in the realm of spirit that we exist as human beings.*[1]

—Arthur Danto

There is a familiar story about recent philosophy. It tells how (through a series of amazingly parallel developments, more or less simultaneously occurring in more or less separate corners of philosophy) a common framework of concerns has at last emerged. These concerns have become articulated in a more or less shared vocabulary around one defining issue: the relation between historicism and ontology. And there is one line of reflection, on the rise since 1979 or so,which leads entirely out of ontology.[2]

There is, however, another philosophical option. This would be to combine historicism and ontology, in the spirit of Arthur Danto's work. And for Danto, "spirit" turns out to be a substantial notion, with features that might seem out of place in the kind of secularist philosophical vision that Danto has been formulating for decades. My purpose here will be to begin to unravel what is involved for Danto in this pairing of the secular and the spiritual, and to begin showing that Danto's work underwrites what might be called "spiritual autonomy."

I. Danto's Spiritual Turn

By the mid-twentieth century, philosophy seemed irreconcilably polarized around a range of problems that defined its professional tasks. An analytic philosopher was most likely preoccupied with issues like "universalizability" and "objectivity" and "reference," while his typical continental counterpart was more drawn to notions like "particularity," "historicism," and "signification." (For quite a while, American pragmatism seemed to have been set off to the side of the main discussion, by a generation saturated already with the "platitudinous maxims"[3] and moralistic "tirades"[4] of John Dewey's less inspired moments.) There was some overlap (around the status of "meaning," for example),[5] but the discussions most typical of each tended to proceed with sparing attention to what might lie beyond those categorical boundaries. This did not of course mean that *no* deep, universal issues were crowding at those margins—but it did make addressing them a more exotic and rarefied affair, one that tended to attract only a minority of adventuresome participants.

Then, in the mid-1960s, the Parisian inheritors of Descartes began to invade those margins, with naughty-sounding pronouncements like: "Universality, which is nothing but *current usage*, is faked."[6] And by the late 1970s, those very boundaries between analytic and continental philosophy had begun to dissolve—though the assumption of irreconcilability that had sustained them did not always disappear. Rorty, in the spirit of a later Wittgenstein or a secular Nagarjuna, dissolved them by virtually giving up on the analytic project altogether, even as he employed analytic arguments to accomplish it.

So goes the story. And as far as it goes, it is obviously right. Given the way twentieth-century philosophy played out, Rorty does offer one apparently natural way of doing (something like) philosophy. It is easy to miss the fact that there is another story to be told, having to do with another way for the philosophical convergence of the Anglo-American and the continental to play out—viz., at the boundaries between sacred and secular.[7] As Danto tells it, the distinction between analytic and continental can actually be *aufgehoben,* rather than subjugated by one side or the other, and this is accomplished (he thinks) through "spirit."

To announce a "convergence" *tout seul* is not to announce anything too specific. One is always hearing from sources friendly to the Vatican or the Campus Crusade for Christ that the world is being won over to the Lord—which would be one kind of convergence. Rorty too has welcomed a convergence—a triumph *entière* of history over ontology. Danto's analytic/continental convergence, however, is of a different realm. His final word on this in *Connections to the World* is this: "It is in the realm of spirit that we exist as human beings."[8] This suggests for Danto something "close to what Hegel meant by 'objective spirit,'"[9] and two of Danto's recent commentators have celebrated this in the most radical terms: Danto "has left behind 'Philosophy' for what Hegel called the 'realm of spirit,' and this is, we believe, where he will make his lasting mark as a philosopher."[10]

All this is certainly going to strike some as very surprising, given current reticence toward speculative metaphysics. (At least one anguished editorial reader of *Connections* considered it nothing but a sham effort to appease the continentally minded.)[11] After all, can the realm of the supposedly spiritual be anything *but terra incognita*, for a "secularist" like Danto? But here is Danto, signatory to Paul Kurtz's "Secular Humanist Declaration,"[12] treating spirit as "the most familiar of all" human arenas.

Though Danto himself does not regard his spiritual turn as an especially radical departure from his earlier work, there is something thoroughly radical about it.[13] For here we have a substantial claim, at least implied on Danto's part—that into such a "dark and difficult *terra incognita*" *we do nonetheless see*.[14] In this "most familiar" realm of spirit, what we have is not opacity but a stubborn translucency.

II. Indiscernibility

This stubborn translucency, Danto thinks, involves the very nature of the philosophical enterprise. For Danto, philosophy is an articulation of "philosophical kinds," of which there is a limited array of possible configurations.[15] This would account for the strange cadences of the history of philosophy, where the same disputes seem to reoccur over and again, as if choreographed within a narrow repertoire of what is logically available. This philosophical repertoire is comprised of a trinity of doctrines—of Understanding, Knowledge, and Being (i.e., "the world")—which are renderings of the relation between subject and representation (understood meaning), the relation between representation and world (knowable truth) and the relation between subject and world (empirical causation).[16] Philosophical inquiry depends on the fact that these can of course be variously portrayed. Berkeley erased the world, by rendering it translatable into the content of representations had by subjects; Hume eliminated even the subject, so that only representations remained; and so on.

But through all this, according to Danto, things remain unchanged in two important respects. First, one's *philosophical options* have remained the same: the task is to address (even if by erasure) these same three components of subject, representation, and world, and though historical circumstances may not reveal the full array of detailed possibilities to any individual

philosopher, these remain, in some possible permutation or other, the only components to be assembled.

And secondly, just because no empirical discovery can decide this kind of matter, *the actual world* also remains as it is to us, whether there are Platonic forms or mere bundles of sensations or whatever. Regardless of which philosophical portrayal we choose, theoretical anomalies can always be fitted to the prescribed philosophical vocabulary, and the history of philosophy is virtually defined as the story of the imaginative efforts to do that by the intellectuals of the day. One philosopher's "ad hoc" adjustment is another's pivotal insight.

This kind of observation has prompted an entire outlook, which has inspired some "postmodernists" to give up on philosophy altogether, in favor of literary or cultural studies. Danto is not one of these. Among all that fits under the rubric of "philosophical claim," there may be strictly philosophical reasons for holding to one rather than another of them, and Danto's most characteristic philosophical move is a direct consequence of drawing this conclusion. With respect to the actual world, once philosophical problems have to be formulated in terms of *indiscernibility,* then what can be philosophically known can be discerned, since our construals of the actual world are placed, for a time, out of play. We are left, then, with philosophy.

The indiscernibility problem has set philosophy's agenda from the very outset: Plato's whole theory in a way sprung from this.[17] But the many who followed Plato here may have asked the right kind of question in the wrong kind of way, led astray by a certain view about indiscernibility.[18] What bothered Plato was that the kind of distinction which he thought to hold between the Forms and everyday experience was somehow blurred by mimetic art, and so (he thought) we should resist her appeals, fearing for the "polity" of our souls.[19] For Plato, the Forms were entities to which ordinary objects were somehow *similar.*

This Platonic mistake has had serious and lasting consequences. As a secularist, Danto could argue that this simplistic notion of representation—as resemblance—has helped set philosophy and perhaps even cultural life itself on an unfortunate track. Major strands of Christianity have been heavily influenced just in this way by the Middle Platonic reading of texts like *Republic* 509b. Jonathan Edwards was an avid reader of John Locke,[20] who—at least if Berkeley was right—held that ideas are supposed to be pictures that resemble their representations. And in America ever since, fire-and-brimstone fundamentalists have been impressed by mimetic literalness, where the language of scripture is thought to give an objective picture of God's will. From Danto's perspective it's hard not to see religious fundamentalism as a kind of linguistic idolatry, and here Danto might even

be said to be acting in the purest of spiritual motives—by resisting the temptation to mistake the image for the reality.

Danto's rejection of mimetic representation operates at a level more basic even than epistemological foundationalism. Epistemically, in fact, Danto has—somewhat reluctantly—come over to the antifoundationist camp.[21] But even though indiscernibility's privileged problematique underwrites only the most minimalist metaphysic for Danto, entirely nonspecific after a certain level of description, it is nonetheless specific to the extent that human beings are taken to be representational creatures.[22] This is a minimalist observation with maximum philosophical significance. For it means that the representational content humans generate has to be about more than just itself: it has to be externally referential. And this is a world in which even postmodernists live.

III. Intelligibility and Persons

There are various forms of secularist resistance to fundamentalisms. One way of responding to them is to deny that representations can refer beyond themselves at all. This is the kind of move convenient to those victimized by hegemonic cultural regimes, and it rests (often in Foucauldian formulation) upon the Deweyan-style instrumentalism admired by Rorty.[23] The point would be this: there are always socio-cultural, economic, and psychological factors at play in the vocabularies being employed, and we might simply reduce meanings to functional components of these.

The advantage of this is obvious. If we flatten the relation between representation and truth perhaps into a situational relation between subject and world[24]—thus completing in one way the slots within Danto's trinitarian division—then we have resisted the notion that someone else's authoritarian formulations can have application over "subjugated knowledges."[25] We have expunged the fundamentalism problem. Scripture could not depict God's will after all, because meanings, either atomically or holistically, could not refer. Meanings would be simply functional tools for contextual use. What we "know" would remain internal to the content of our historically driven ideas, as historicity trumps ontology (including of course theology).

But Danto thinks that such a hyper-secular response is deeply unintelligible, just because it remains so radically internalist; for whatever could be known would allegedly be known only within the contents of consciousness (or, nowadays, within the semiotics of language).[26] Here he deploys what I will call the "Argument from Intelligibility." Many commentators have thought that even a deconstructionist's *écriture* seems intelligible, in some sense, only if its language preserves a fundamental distinction

between truth and falsity, "at right angles" (as Danto always wants to put it) to the distinction between meaningful sign and discursive insignificance. If a writer will not admit this, then is she really saying anything at all? Or consider the (related) idea that meaning is entirely governed by social practice. For even if we flatten out reference into use in this way, we still have the problem of deciding whether or not a given usage is correct, and so the problem of truth reappears. This is a failure of self-inclusion. If anyone "puts forward a theory that makes it impossible that the putting forward of that theory could be understood, then there is something internally wrong about that theory, just as there is a fault in a philosophy that argues that philosophy, itself included, is unintelligible."[27]

But can this really be the point? Is there not something wrong here—or at least, something not yet said? For here it is easy to miss the impact of Danto's entire argument. Danto's point is only partly a claim just about the reach of theories, and it is more than just a claim about theoreticians who simply leave out some fact about beings who, by the way, happen to be themselves. Danto's real point, as we will see in a moment, has to do with exactly *how* this would be deeply unintelligible.

First, however, some are going to object to such a stringent view about intelligibility, because it already presupposes belief in the "truth" of a statement rather than just its "warranted assertability."[28] A thorough-going contextualist account might perfectly well allow for a distinction between correct and erroneous usage—but whether this also requires Danto's semantic ligature between representation and world is not settled simply by noticing that people make mistakes. So, to turn the tables here, is Danto's own claim intelligible? Do things not remain just as they are, whether or not Danto's own philosophical point is right? So what then is the point?

For Danto, the point is this: The fact that the world remains as it does, regardless of the philosophical answer, does not mean that all philosophical answers are equivalent. It is, for example, one thing to say that Berkeley was right about our relation to the world, another to say that Locke was. And Danto thinks that one configuration of the philosophical trinity is actually *correct*—one that takes account of linguistic self-reference through the notion of self-representation. Danto, in other words, is an essentialist when it comes to the philosophical fact that humans are languaging creatures who are both users and referents. Though we occupy a space internal to our own representations of ourselves, our linguistic performances do not confine us entirely to that. We have a connection both to the world *external* to us, and to some (minimalist) rendering of ourselves within that world.

But philosophical disagreements do not have a decision-procedure for arbitration, and Danto denies he has an "immediate proof" for his own view. "It is impossible to emphasize too heavily the sheer incommensurability of

an externalist and an internalist approach,"[29] and no argument whatever is really going to settle this—certainly not simply by pointing out, as in the case of the positivists' verification principle, that some internalist theory is making a claim its content disallows. All its user needs to do is to revise the intended force of the claim itself, into some form of ironism. This is just what led Wittgenstein to his view about philosophy as literal nonsense—a view that survived his otherwise dramatic and famous "turn" away from his own *Tractatus*.

So who has the last word on this? In a theoretical discussion about the viability of ontological commitments, Danto's view can sound merely oracular. But we are about to see that Danto's point is not so much about theories as about persons, and for those who have ears to hear, this is where its real impact takes hold.

This returns us to the intelligibility issue, which is no less a matter of ethics than of interpreted meaning. For Danto is in effect asking: What kind of *person* would this Wittgensteinian internalist have to be, who puts forth a theory that "can only be gotten to go through on the back of the theory it means to overthrow"?[30] We can give an instrumentalist theory about this kind of event, but Danto insists that it would not account (in some important way) for its performer's own activity of doing this. It would seem *performatively unintelligible*, at the level of what Patrick Nowell-Smith used to call "contextual implication"—at the level of saying 'I know that P but do not believe that P,' as if one were to say, ironically, 'I assert that P but do not really mean that P.'[31]

Admittedly, this is not an impossible stand to take. But it is "logically odd." Lately in fact logical oddity has apparently become respectable as ironism.[32] Even neurophilosophy might be seen as a variation of this, in a way.[33] We all use predicates from folk psychology every day of our lives, but (neurophilosophically speaking) accuracy might perhaps be enhanced dramatically if we could be taught to report our brain states directly, like a self-scanning computer. This view was originally called "eliminative materialism,"[34] to describe the position of Rorty as it was emerging in the late 1960s, after brain research had made it philosophically interesting to imagine future (post)humans, who report "pains" in strictly neurological terms (such as "c-fiber firings. . ."). [35] Though this is not of course what we ourselves do (even if we are neurophilosophers or brain researchers), there is no guarantee that our descendants will not, and one aim of the neurophilosophical program is to help us imagine what that might be like—that we should no more cling to the raw feels of current psychology than we should to the incorrigibility of a private language.[36]

Now here is where Danto plays the intelligibility card. The problem he sees is not that we cannot imagine very clearly what that future might be

like for those Antipodeans—though of course we cannot. (Our picture of that future is bound to be unintelligible, or at least very likely to be inaccurate; they are too different from us for it to be otherwise.) The point Danto wants to make concerns the putting forth of that theory, here and now. For "I am insisting that psychologists are human beings, and that it is with their humanity that they should begin or at least end."[37] His point is about persons, not theories, and "to be a person at all is at the very least to be a system of representations."[38] Not to employ representations would be to *fail to be a full person.* And not to employ folk-psychological representations would be failure of personhood in an important way.

To see this, notice that though philosophy of mind has not been notably successful at reaching consensus on the status of mental properties—crude identity theories have not turned out to be very convincing[39]—nonetheless, the mere fact that type-identity reduction to neurological states is unlikely does not imply that folk psychology should be discarded. It might mean that the operation of higher-level categorization occurs through principles different from those governing the collision of billiard balls, and "as a result, higher-level entities might be multiply realized by lower-level entities."[40] If this is so, then failure to recognize oneself as a fully representational creature is, arguably, more than an instance of bad faith. As a guiding principle of psychology, it would be a failure to engage fully the higher-level motivations of one's own behavior.[41] Personhood itself would be truncated—as we shall see more fully when we turn to Danto's notion of basic action.

There is, in short, something almost inhuman about what is happening in some quarters of philosophy these days. And this is not a pretty argument to make. Putting it this way runs the risk of offending one of the few firm philosophical principles even Rorty recognizes.[42] Cruelty like this seems the worst thing a philosopher can do professionally. It reeks of an *ad hominem.* (It is enough to drive one to writing art criticism instead.) Can such a dour argument be made more congenial to collegial discussion, despite its unsavory resemblance to, say, the language of rabid Christian activists confronting a same-sex couple? "Persons" after all are frequently deemed to deserve respect *ipso facto*, and it is natural to suppose, when hearing personhood denied of oneself in some way, that respect is being denied as well.

But in fact this need not be a strident argument. For is being a person an all-or-nothing affair? Only forensically. Otherwise, being a person is normally a partial achievement along a graduated continuum. The respect one deserves as a person in interaction with others does not depend on her having perfected self-development as a full person. It may even be a mark of one's own fuller personhood to discern the foreshadowings of personhood in others, even in those who might not see it in themselves,

and this is a level of respect that anyone might cherish. This is the way an enlightened therapist deals with a client, and it need not be condescending in the least to do so, because the aim of the therapist ought to be to help the client to embrace her own *autonomy.* And, as it turns out, autonomy is the key issue in all this.

IV. Inspirited Autonomy

Danto (along with his Columbia colleague Bernard Berofsky)[43] hails from the liberal tradition, in which autonomy is deemed a quintessential human virtue. This connection with autonomy is not something Danto explicitly emphasizes very much, but it would take no grand theoretical leap to do so.

Danto insists that Descartes's real insight was not much like the ghost in the machine skewered by Gilbert Ryle. Descartes's real insight was that "the mind is one with the body"—which means not only that the mind is embodied, but that "the body [is] *inspirited.*"[44] And what Descartes arguably needs is not just a criterion that insures representational content—some relation between representation and subject. Descartes's considered view, if it is to be made plausible, requires also the notion of *basic action*,[45] whereby the person (self-determined at least at this point) performs an act directly, without doing anything else.[46] The *Cogito* is more performance than inference.[47]

The continuing importance of basic actions in this regard is not always recognized.[48] Basic action was a concept that Danto did much to advance early on,[49] but basic actions themselves, somewhat disappointingly, turn out to be individually opaque to introspection. They were originally thought to provide perhaps "a kind of phenomenological assurance"[50] of having penetrated our real nature, on something of a par with Descartes's *Cogito.* But the antifoundationalist atmosphere of recent philosophy has lent no appeal to this kind of assurance, and by now it is hard not to see this. Once this is noticed, as Danto himself reluctantly admitted, "a measure of philosophical interest is immediately drained out of the concept of basic action."[51]

But let us not miss the fact that a measure of interest is retained as well. Basic action seems to be essentially involved in what we say about human autonomy. It seems to capture (at least a good part of) the notion of self-determination. This is not the same as the "autonomy" rightly rejected by Raymond Boisvert and the feminist-friendly.[52] Human autonomy, as I mean it here, is about power—not about a disembedded, disembodied self. Autonomy is not autarky. Rather, it involves the indecently vague but thoroughly admirable idea that people should be allowed to speak in their voices,[53] and insofar as we are communal beings, we cannot learn to

speak our own voices unless the appropriate social conditions of nurture are present.

To value human autonomy—unless we adopt an utterly implausible dualism—is to believe that external stimuli should *work their causal way* through not only the rational or deliberative structure of the organism, but through its interests and desires as well.[54] Neurophilosophers and eliminative materialists notwithstanding, one's folk-psychological representations need to get engaged. That phrase "work their way" hides an important proviso: one's autonomy is apparently increased in direct proportion to one's psychological integration.[55] This is important because by traveling this untruncated, naturally evolved *folk-psychological* route—and everybody is well aware nowadays of the vast pluralism of possible routes for this—areas of the brain are stimulated just where the free play of imaginative representations occur, where at least some of our various motivational centers are located. If these areas are not engaged explicitly in the brain process, then (short of a lobotomy or Cyborgian brain implant) they will take off on their own and have their way with us, which will certainly deny us our autonomy. This is of course a well-known clinical fact. Autonomy is really about power (though not just about that) and our powers are diminished if our energies are drained by having to manage deep inner conflicts.

Notice that such a well-stimulated circuitry is not a feature of radical neurophilosophy's world, and for this reason, Rorty's Antipodeans lack autonomy. This is so *not* because there is no integrated behavior under an Antipodean regime, for let us assume that brain implants among them are as simple a procedure as sci-fi movies envision. The problem would be that self-determination is itself a loosely integrated affair, *necessarily* involving folk psychology in rational deliberation itself (though this can be so quantified by probabilistic utilities that, especially at philosophy conferences, one might almost forget that these are human situations). Wittgensteinian internalism, on the other hand, might be seen as a slippery path into posthuman forms of life.

So we deliberate about our lives as we know them to be, in autobiographies suffused with intensionality. We see events around us not just as the collision of molecules: they are pregnant with personal, communal, societal, global, or cosmic meaning, and just this recognition is what motivates us to behave as we do. Now certainly these folk-psychological beliefs are tightly coordinated with ("identical with") neurological states, and this means that there is a certain form to the material brain at just those junctures at which the coordination occurs, and this form would be radically different without folk psychology. The very representations that correspond to today's folk-drenched c-fiber firings are abandoned by envisioning them *simply* under the description "c-fiber firings."

In other words, we necessarily restrict conscious brain events when their intensional self-descriptions are eliminated. But a restricted brain event is not a nonexistent brain event. Those brain areas are likely to be engaged in any case, and when they are, we surrender at least some of our self-determination to the primitive forces at play. The alternative—"Cyborg liberation," perhaps[56]—is not the freedom of an autonomous being, but that of a "replicant"[57]—which is to raise an arguably pointless philosophical (and premature political) discussion entirely foreign to the actual experience of any human being. It *avoids* the issue of what one's own autonomy requires.[58] One wonders what the actual lives of those who aspire to what neurophilosophers only dream about could possibly be like.

What is missed in that case is the realm of spirit. Autonomy for Danto occurs only at the level of inspiritedness, which necessarily involves the dimensionality of intensionality. What is needed for self-determination can no more be inferred from sanitized descriptions of c-fiber firings than scientific theories can be foundationally justified by protocol sentences about sense data, and this is so not because theories are overdetermined. It is so because feelings would be intensionally understaffed and our autonomy would be lost because the rich repertoire of possible human behavior would be truncated. And if we lose our autonomy, we lose our humanity.

What then about basic action? The site for the exercise of human autonomy is human action. The humanistic interest of this discussion is not addressed simply at the level of "action," however. Action itself is not a basic concept[59] just because it is so embedded in the cultural web, whereby—at the level of mere "action"—culture acts as much through us as we do vis-à-vis culture. One has to look deeper. What is basic to self-determined *human* behavior is not just action, but *basic action*, and not just intentionality, but self-determination. Basic action, we might say, is the physical manifestation of the performance of the person at the moment where self-representation acts upon the organism and, through whatever robust incitement is then engaged by the representational repertoire, the powers of action are directed toward the accomplishment of purpose. This purpose need not be fully displayed in consciousness throughout the activity: it may not even be *fully* displayable, theoretically speaking—which is just where the veiled ambiguities of artistic representation enter so importantly into the picture.

But if autonomy is to be preserved as a humanistic value, then Danto's view suggests: *To be empowered "in one's own voice" is to reflect and perform one's own personhood, at the level of basic action.*

This does *not* mean that there is a single basic action called "performing personhood"! We should know by now that there is no such type-identity requirement in the philosophy of mind. It means that the power of personhood is engaged *at the level of* basic action as well as in the intentions: it

passes through the body in a certain way, in that if it does not elicit basic action, it does not engender personhood.

This connection to personhood was not captured very clearly within action theory during the 1970s. Yes, the distinction between raising one's arm and undergoing an arm twitch seems to be philosophically worth noticing, but precisely why this should matter was not much addressed by action theory itself. That it should matter was taken to be intuitively obvious by its adherents and intuitively suspicious by its skeptics—probably because the epistemological and moral aspects of this difference were not made distinct.

An agent *m* does action *a* by what we conveniently but imprecisely call "doing basic action *b*"—a priest blesses the congregation by raising his arm. *Even if* action *b* is not itself a single basic action but "a concatenation of tiny movements, indiscriminably small in themselves,"[60] nonetheless there may be an autonomous performative: *m* does it directly, *even if* that directness is not introspectible to the agent's consciousness. This is why rejecting a foundationalist view of basic action does not entail a theoretical rejection of basic action.

Danto of course is not saying that all mental acts (especially intentions) are basic actions, any more than beliefs can be. Descartes in fact seems to have failed to see this: the will, he thought, is free "to affirm or deny, to pursue or to shun"[61] as it decides—but Danto's view excludes this, on the grounds that if we really believe that P, we do so in view of the fact that we believe that P is true and not that we "freely" performed the belief.[62] Actions permeate intentions rather like truth permeates belief. We can fail to keep the connection in either case, but if that failure takes on the form of a stable character pattern that does not presuppose truth or action as implicated in belief or intention, then we suffer from a lack of seriousness and our standing as persons is affected. It is very Parisian and New Haven perhaps, but it does not speak to any person's concrete, lived experience.

Folk psychology is valuable precisely because it leverages our affective side toward action not governed by the actual physical data. There may be no especially convincing reason for me not to kill myself if I simply add up the knowable probabilities distributed in my physical space, but I have every reason not to do so if the right affective tone is stimulated. Stimulation of this sort cannot be simply read off the inventory of presently occurring self-scanned physical states, as if internal representations of mere arm twitchings were as evident to introspection as intentional conduct. No. Self-formation occurs only because autonomy is possible, and only through the basic actions that appropriate ("identify with"[63]) those self-representations.[64]

And here indiscernibility enters once again. The ontological distinction between indiscernible actions and nonactions has been a famous concern of Danto's for decades,[65] and this fact—that mere twitchings are in some important sense indiscernible from intentional conduct—figures interestingly into what, around that same point in his career, he began saying about art. The subtext of Danto's entire career since then has been how this insight informs what we should say about the human person. This takes us to Danto's theory of art.

V. Persons and Artworks

First, let us say something more about the person, and in this regard it is of some interest perhaps that Danto's indiscernibility problem has a reverse parallel in the problem of intensionality. Oedipus believes that Jocasta would make him a suitable wife, but does not believe his mother would. Instead of an indistinguishable pair with different referential status, here we seem to have mutually exclusive objects having nonetheless the same reference. This is not perhaps too puzzling in the Oedipus case, except to Oedipus himself.

But in the case of cultural features generally, and religion in particular, there is much that hangs on this. This is a realization that has only lately dawned upon philosophy. The first edition of *Principia Mathematica* does not even mention that intensional properties are counterexamples to Leibniz's Law of Indiscernibles. By that rule, if *a* and *b* lack any common property, they cannot be the same object, so that (for example) if something in the world has a spiritual property described in different ways by different communities, what they are describing could not be counted the same object.

Now this is more important than it might at first seem. This is not just an arcane issue of linguistic philosophy: potentially, it has disruptive social and political consequences. Danto's own example is Christological: If Jesus really were what his followers later claimed, then he had some properties (being the son of God) under a Christian description but not under a skeptic's or a Buddhist's (which turns out to be a problem for liberal Christians in particular).[66] Intensionality was discovered to be "a weeping sore in the flesh of reason."[67]

Some are going to think that not much hangs on this still. For one thing, why not just convince everybody of Quine's indeterminacy thesis—the idea that cultural frameworks are so incommensurable, all we can manage is a pragmatic coordination among the ways entire webs of belief tether to the physical world? (Cultural fundamentalism could not survive in such an atmosphere where intensionality does not much matter, and would we not all be better off?) But an admirer of the Enlightenment (like Danto) might worry that in a Quinean future society (where incommensurability was assumed), the possibilities of humane globalization might be severely

constrained. Those people would lack assumptions about common cultural images required for global crisis management among disparate communities. For example: imagine an ecological crisis several generations hence, where we are not (yet?) posthumans and where voluntary simplicity[68] on a global scale becomes a survival need. Even if Quine were right about inscrutability of reference,[69] perhaps no sensible person would even be reading him at that point—on pragmatic grounds! (One imagines a similar argument gaining ground against Rorty—after he succeeded in shaking up the theoretical security of compartmentalized academic disciplines.)[70]

So, for Danto what really hangs on the intensionality problem? Well, our very status as human persons hangs on it, and (again) this is because our sensuous nature seems to be wired through our representational capacities for beliefs, hopes, fears—all the categories of folk psychology. Even though what Danto "meant by spirit in that last chapter of *Connections* was close to what Hegel meant by 'objective spirit',"[71] this was still not quite in line with Danto's own reading of Hegel. Whatever Hegel meant by "spirit" (Danto thinks), it was supposed to be capable of rendering itself to human consciousness "absolutely," apart from "sensuous form."[72] Whatever Danto means by "spirit," it is incapable of such denuded appearance and so must be something else. Schleiermacher had made a similar point about self-consciousness, against the "speculative" philosophers[73] (like our own neurophilosophers and conversational edifiers). So in this respect, Danto might be read as anti-Hegelian, at least if one thinks of the Hegelian Absolute as a desensitized abstraction that would presumably omit much of what we normally place within those intensional contexts.[74] ("Considering the difficulty philosophers have had in working out its logic, it is gratifying that [folk psychology] is understood by those who are philosophically rude.")[75]

What then is occurring at that folk-psychological level? Danto works in the spirit of Carnap's Extensionality Thesis, where intensionality is given an extensional rendering by treatment as, literally, sentential. Sentences are of course complexes of words, and words—at least their tokens—are physical entities. To say that a Christian believes that Jesus is the son of God (for example) is to say, in part, that on some ceremonial or devotional occasion a person is displaying to herself sentential tokens that include words like: "Jesus Christ, His only son our Lord."[76] We can account for the fact that a Muslim will not respond as a Christian by supposing that when a person believes, say, the pronouncements of the Nicene Creed, she is in that particular sentential state (and a Muslim is not). A person "is literally *made out of words*."[77] There is a certain Antiochene[78] resonance in Danto's announcement that we are all "words made flesh."[79]

Now Danto thinks that something like a functionalist account of mental processes (thus some form of materialism) is likely to be true, but he also

insists that nothing about his representationalism requires this to be so.[80] However it is that sentences turn out to be embodied (whether materially or not), sentences differ from things like sticks and stones by their semantical properties: they and they alone have meanings and bear truth values. (Even in Berkeley's nonmaterial world, stones do not do this.)[81] In other words, sentences are the linkage within the subject/meaning/world triplet which philosophy, whatever its variety, must elaborate. And if Danto is right, they are also the only vehicle available for realizing, insofar as it is possible to do so, the autonomy of persons.

This is an important fact about autonomy. Autonomy has to do with both imagination and action, and for Danto, while imagining is a matter for action, intending is not—just as successful self-discipline is not a matter of just trying harder.[82] Though we can indeed "try" harder and accomplish a little more (just as one might manage to push a boulder a few more feet before breaking one's back), our real successes are very much a matter of a vigorous imagination, and our incapacities may often be the result of its impairment. Intending, however, is not like that. Though actions are intentional, intentions themselves are not so much done as *had*. If there are actions, there must be actions that one does directly, but the contrary must be true for intentions: for how can one perform an intention—since this would be the causing of an intention through another intention? One either intends that P or not; it is hard to see an intention as an intentional effect, because *the intention that P* is already encompassed in the very intending to have that intention. Its effect vanishes the very moment the intentional reiteration even begins.

On the other hand, "whatever the connection between an intention and an action, the intention or reason cannot cause the action in the way in which a fantasy causes tumescence."[83] We are not the helpless causal victims that the hard determinists suppose.[84] We may not be able to have, at any given moment, a will other than the one we have at that instant, but what is important here is not the issue of avoidability (upon which this point is typically thought to depend).[85] It turns out that the issue is not avoidability but *power*—the power of the very representations we entertain to motivate us to act. It is of course true that representations come at us furiously when we are in a bad way psychologically, and these seem beyond our powers of prevention. But to some extent in the normal case we seem to be able to imagine at will, however dimly, and over time it is in some sense up to us how we conceive of ourselves and thus how we turn out as people—for which we are derivatively responsible.[86]

Thus how we turn out as people is a "spiritual" matter. We are (Danto might say) inspirited only through the workings of the representational repertoire available to the imagination, and delimited by our cultural setting. What we should do as moral agents is guided by our self-image of who we are.[87]

This raises an absolutely crucial point. The fact that this self-image does not refer to a self literally resembling it does not imply that it does not refer. (Remember Danto's reservations about mimesis.) It turns out, however, that the referencing is self-determining, i.e., *ontogenetic,* and this suggests a philosophical parallel. Art, Danto says, is what a historical moment "enfranchises"; similarly, persons are *self-enfranchised,* and this is what it means to be autonomously self-determined. This finally brings us to Danto's interest in art.

VI. Inspirited Persons and Artworks: Danto's Orthogonality Thesis

A person, Danto thinks, is a *res representans.*[88] For Danto, to be representational is to be "referential" both intra- and extra-textually—both "laterally" and "vertically." (1) It is obviously true that representation is of meanings, which are the domain of the sign's lateral textuality, and that meanings are what the text is "about" in just this way. (El Greco's painting of the Holy Trinity is "about" the three persons of Christian theology, whether or not the Unitarian or atheist counterclaims turn out to be true.) (2) And then there is another kind of "aboutness" that is not significatory. It is referential in more than just the horizontal sense that intertextuality presupposes. It is *about* something the way a photo is *about* the object it was actually taken of. And representations, Danto would say, are "about something" in both these Fregean ways.[89]

But there is a third sense of "aboutness," one that is not always explicit but no less crucial for Danto's project, and this concerns once again the Intelligibility Argument. Warhol had already taught us that, for art's sake, we could just take some shelved object from the department store and move it to the gallery—though what interest this could possibly have is not settled just by doing so. Its resemblance to a household implement from my beloved Aunt Matilda's kitchen is not good enough.

Some gallery owners, however, have not perhaps been very astute on this point—a feature unfortunately shared by the philosopher whom Danto, "for somewhat complex reasons,"[90] names simply "R." What the less astute miss is why we should even be interested in such casually exhibited art, if the work is thought to be "about" just whatever berserk significatory associations we happen to bring in as interpreters. If a gallery owner is only a craven entrepreneur, we might not expect him, as we do R, to say anything that would make his own interest in art intelligible; but surely R owes us an explanation here. Apart from the harmless satisfactions of a professional hobby, why should we be interested in art if it is just an opportunity to exercise the skill of a semiotically-driven literary critic? Surely no theory that fails to take account of its sponsor's own actions can be satisfactory.[91]

Though there may be other constraints on critical interpretation of art as well, the lesson Danto draws here is that art gives us the occasion for self-reflection, and thereby for entering "the realm of spirit" where "we exist as human beings." This is a point well worth considering at some length. Self-reflection is an activity whose logical space is neither that of lateral signification nor neutral (vertical) description. Danto calls this the "z-coordinate."[92] So we have in fact three coordinate scales, with an interesting parallel in grammar. The vertical referential coordinate is the space of third-person articulation—whereby either a photo of Elvis really is of that late singer, or else it's just of his impersonator. Laterality on the other hand gives us the horizontal dimension and, like the poet's vocative, places us in the relationship of second-person encounter, where semiotic relations get exhaustively played out in the *jouissance* of free-association.[93] This is also the arena where indiscernibility operates: we "recognize" Elvis even in his impersonator, as it evokes in us the responses we have toward others we meet and situations we "undergo" (as Dewey would always say). The third dimension, it turns out, is the realm of "spirit."

Danto has always insisted that the various directions of "reference"—a term he construes broadly at times to include both denotation and meaning/signification—must be related as different *dimensions.* This description has a common use in the science-fiction literature; it is perhaps a mark of Danto's appreciation for pop cultural thematics that this also plays a central role in his own theory. "Laterally" speaking, meanings are the content of experience, while significations are simply a linguistic rendering of that same range of reference. (Today's Derridean literary critics would have been phenomenologists in the late 1940s.)

"Vertical" reference, on the other hand, is a semantic notion, whose "difference must come in at right angles to the plane of what we experience."[94] Here—within verticality—is what makes indiscernibility even an interesting possibility. For only if language has more than one dimension, only if one lies *orthogonally* to the other(s), can Descartes's problem be very interesting. Only then can a dream actually *be* indiscernible from waking, and we see this by noticing how Descartes's problem is not just that he is "with eyes [apparently] wide awake looking at this paper."[95] His problem has to be that the appearance is continuous: he does not, the next moment, meet a sequence of crazy concatenations unrecognized in the laws of the waking state. That would make the "indiscernibility" easily solved, in terms of its fit with physical laws. Rather, Danto means this in the very "thick" sense that O. K. Bouwsma's Evil Genius does.[96] The question for Danto becomes whether or not this thickness makes philosophical sense, or Wittgensteinian nonsense.

Bouwsma's Wittgensteinian discussion is a justly famous objection to metaphysical nonsense, and it provides one natural inspiration for those skeptical of Danto's orthogonal concerns. For really, what can Danto be talking about here? Is it not natural to treat Descartes's skeptical worry just as Bouwsma did—by regarding talk of "thick illusions" as just bad locution for normal waking experience?

But for Danto, Bouwsma suffers from a referential tin ear. We can imagine a predictably incredulous Bouwsma-like response to, say, John Cage's *4'33"* (1952)[97]—which is undoubtedly the response of most listeners ever since. ("This is *art*?!") And this is just what the spiritual life is really like. Spiritual perception ("only through the eyes of faith") presupposes a very non-Bouwsmaean faith-stance. To the outsider, this may seem like nothing more than an emotional rationalization, just as someone might see in the activity of an artist nothing more than an entrepreneurial ploy (and the believer herself, suffering a crisis of faith, might fearfully notice this same indiscernibility). So—to bring the argument back to the personal level—the interesting indiscernibility here is not just the artwork but the person, and this has interesting parallels as well with the difficulties religious communities have had in "testing" spiritual claims.[98]

This seems to be where Danto's orthogonality thesis leads. "Orthogonality" is obviously a geometric *metaphor.* For here we have no mathematical problem—it is not like unpacking the dimensions of the latest string theory in physics. However, spirit is still a *dimension,* analogous to the orthogonality of reference vis-à-vis meaning, a "dimension" that Bouwsma sees as irremediably indiscernible from commonplace reality. Bouwsma is like a puzzled viewer before *Brillo Box.* For here is *just* a container of soapy pads, is it not?! Well, yes and no. Like the move from two to three dimensions,[99] the move from three to four is an *Aufhebung,* not a reduction. It is like Danto standing before *Brillo Box* in the year 1964, noticing for the first time that there was something *really* different about that box, even though it is still just a box. So too there are differences among persons, even though we all remain just human beings. And if this analogy holds, this is a difference that is "seen" through the eyes of the person herself.

The difference among persons Danto has in mind is the difference between those who are and those who are not self-consciously representational in the robust, multidimensional sense that Danto's notion implies. So once again, it is worth considering the analogy between artworks and persons. When art was thought of as essentially imitative, as Socrates disparagingly viewed it, there was a great deal about it of which no one (practitioner, critic, or philosopher) was very keenly aware. Some works by aspiring artists were dismissed due to their mimetic insufficiency, much as Kuhnian anomalies

are cast aside by auxiliary hypotheses. But when some of these dismissals become recognizably ad hoc, when the anomaly becomes as entrenched as the theory itself—as occurred with the advent of Post-Impressionism, and then again with the innovations of Duchamp and Warhol—at that point what has happened is more than a mere revolution in taste.

What has happened is that the anomalous objects have become *enfranchised* as works of art.[100] This key term brings naturally to mind something like an act of legislation. But Danto insists that this is emphatically not (though it has sometimes been taken to be) a matter of institutional imprimatur—of decisions by curators or governing boards.[101] (To allow otherwise would confine an artwork's status *qua* art within the ontologically weightless world of cultural constructions or political deployments.) There is much more involved here. *Brillo Box* certainly made its cultural appearance through decisions someone had to have made to exhibit it, but Danto wants to preserve a solid ontology for the artwork itself. For when a newly created work is no longer taken to be a facsimile of reality, it stands on its own. It becomes a real "nonfascimile," "a new contribution to the world"[102]—in short, a *new creation.* And when applied to persons, Danto's theory of art becomes a theory of ontogenesis.

This is exactly where the impact of "spiritual" language lies. Both persons and artworks are (for Danto) ontologically primitive.[103] Just as a person is not reducible to her physical manifestations—she is a functional convergence of consciousness and body—so too an artwork is not reducible to a set of easily identifiable physical traits. Persons and robots may (someday) be grossly indistinguishable, and the similar fact that Duchamp's *Fountain* is virtually indistinguishable from a bathroom appliance suggests that some factor corresponding (in the case of persons) to consciousness may contribute to the enfranchisement of an artwork. What is needed in the case of artworks (Danto declares) is a suitable social consciousness—a cultural context, an "atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of the history of art: an artworld."[104] And what is needed in the case of persons is that this social consciousness be self-representational, at the level that inspires basic action.

VII. Enfranchisement

This begins to bring out a number of salient features implicit in Danto's notion of "enfranchisement." There are at least four, though I shall not speak here at all about the last, which is eschatological. Here I discuss ontogenesis, historicism, and self-consciousness.

1. Ontogenesis

The first feature, as we have already seen, is ontogenetic, reflecting a capacity to bring previously nonexistent items into the world: by mastering a certain way of seeing a physical object, the viewer "*constitutes* it a work of art."[105] All this has a stunningly miraculous ring to it, rather like the third-person jussive of the first chapter of Genesis—the kind of resonance Danto leverages in describing the ontological "transfiguration" of commonplace objects.[106] But this is perhaps less startling than it might at first sound, in fact no more metaphysically remarkable than the fashioning of a pile of lumber into a "real" bed. And we can see Danto's general point without even introducing the complicating notion of art—when (say) a bed's "construction" gets accomplished without any physical change: a teenager with indulgent (and affluent) parents and who just cannot get enough of Bram Stoker might shop for beds at the local funeral parlor. In that case, surely his bedroom would be displaying a newly purchased "real" bed, just as the undertaker's showroom was showcasing "real" coffins. And yet there is no physical difference in the object *per se* which can account for the transformation.

What such examples appear to suggest is the extent to which everyday objects are what they are not so much by virtue of their monadic properties as by their relations. We often miss this because so often the relations we ourselves contribute are surreptitiously projected onto the object. (This is more immediately obvious in the case of art than it sometimes is in certain other social arenas.) To say that Duchamp's *Fountain* is "daring" or "impudent" is certainly not a comment purely about the physicality of a piece of porcelain: it is a comment as well about the gesture we read into its original elevation as a readymade. Though Danto refuses to follow John Dewey all the way on this—for Dewey, *all* knowledge is said to be reductively flattened into a display of relational properties comprising "situational" complexes[107] (including features of the knower herself)—nevertheless, something *rather* like this seems to be what Danto has nonreductively in mind when it comes to artworks. Dewey was fond of using the term "artwork" as a grammatical verb, referring not to the physical object *per se*, but to its "working" upon our experience, so that the real artwork is the interaction between the human and the artifact.[108] Similarly for Danto, human theories (and culture generally) create something more than a physical thing out of a physical object.[109]

For Danto, one can judge Duchamp's urinal to be "impudent" only through mastering the "'is' of artistic identification,"[110] by which one regards a work to "be" something it literally is not. This judgment is, in Hegel's sense, a "spiritual" act. For Danto's Hegel, "spirit" captures the unity whereby, say, Raphael's *Transfiguration*, though heavily criticized in some quarters as compositionally disjointed, takes on an interpretive integrity: "if we look at the *spirit* of the composition, a supreme connection is not to be missed."[111]

But just as importantly for Danto, this same existential application also underwrites another existential claim which is (literally) about more than the physical artifact—viz., that *Fountain* "is" indeed an artwork. And though it would not be at all right to say that the artwork enfranchised itself, it would be no more correct to say that humans did so alone. (Here Danto may be more Deweyan than he sometimes appears to be, for given that not every thing is possible at any historical moment, it would seem that only the historical-situational complex can be ontogenetically pregnant.)

2. Historicism

But some may still wonder just what significance all this has beyond the mere fact that the lived world has "for us" a certain experienced reality, one that finds rather inexact expression in language. Even Richard Rorty, no friend to deep ontological categories, uses existential predicates.[112] But Rorty does so in a spirit of reductive contextualism inspired by the historicist relativist strand in Dewey. And this brings up a second feature of Danto's theory of enfranchisement, which is Danto's own historicism.

Danto's historicism must be rather stringently qualified, since aspects of his overall view can be plausibly regarded as *anti*historicist—as David Carrier indicates of Danto's take on philosophical problems generally.[113] And Descartes is obviously a key figure for the problem of indiscernibles: what scientific observation might discover about two objects lies "at right angles"[114] to what philosophy might discover about them, and the quintessential problems of philosophy arise precisely because science itself lacks anything further to say about their essentially differentiating criteria (as we see in Goodman's green-grue puzzle).[115] Of course, this is not literally the case with Warhol's *Brillo Box*: presumably the chemical composition of the paint and construction materials of Warhol's *Box* were not exactly what comprised the box shelved at the Westside Market on Broadway. So science *can* see through the gross indiscernibility. But for Danto this is of no account. Science can see that Rutherford's model of the atom is not an exact replica, but we do not need an exact replica of the real nuclear atom to understand what Rutherford meant.

Just how well this sits with historicism, however, is the question, and here Danto's connection with Hegel becomes key. In 1807 Hegel made his famous announcement that "Spirit has broken with the world as it has hitherto existed and with the old ways of thinking, and is about to let all this sink into the past."[116] This is a remarkable statement in a number of

respects, but especially so in the way it expresses a balanced (or perhaps juggled) tension between two apparently contending ideas—(1) the notion that history is characterized by fluid "Moments" in which any individual is entirely enveloped; and (2) the idea that at least one of these historical occasions provides a clear-eyed view of the entire historical landscape, including the true nature of what is going on here and now, where we gaze (as it were) at right angles to history itself. For Hegel, as for Danto, the second is in some sense a consequence of the first. In Hegel's case, youthful generational rebellion happened to coincide with the aspirations for collective transformation voiced by the unprecedented events of 1789; and it is hard to imagine Hegel's 1807 manuscript having been written or so widely received at some less inspiring moment in history. So too Warhol's scruffy industrial container became more than a mere household utility only when the world was ready to receive it as such.

For Danto—given what else was going on in the art scene after the late 1950s—one has the feeling that even if Warhol had never existed, somebody would have invented what he was up to. Andy Warhol, in other words, was so very much a product of his time that he himself (he would be the first to admit) was almost entirely incidental. The atmosphere of the day was alive with a shared knowledge of the history of art, engaging enough people in a similar enough way that it is hard to imagine that key question never being raised: What makes one item an artwork, and leaves the indiscernible commonplace member of the pair ontologically untouched? And Danto has an answer. What makes an item an artwork is the spirit of the times as recognized by those who are its products, and this involves the self-recognition enfranchised by that same spirit. This point suggests the third aspect of "enfranchisement."

3. Self-consciousness

Humans, Danto announces, are representational creatures. They exist in the physical world (the world would be discernibly different were they not around), and they can do so only because there are two kinds of matter in the universe—matter capable of representations and matter that is not. Humans and probably the other higher animals are comprised of representational matter.

Now, this claim about self-consciousness cannot be a *philosophical* claim on Danto's part, as long as philosophy is just the laying out of the parameters of possible discourse on this—specifying for example what it would *mean* for subjects to have representations, without any commitment to their having them. Sometimes Danto seems to speak of philosophy in

this limited way—as a task of an architect who just provides design layouts, rather than building any actual buildings. And yet, if Danto is right, philosophy is involved in something much more than just this, and here perhaps is its supremely interesting task. The Argument from Intelligibility is after all a *philosophical* argument, and as such it has consequences beyond the laying out of various philosophical possibilities. For Danto, once again, the argument mandates a choice among the various ways that subject, representation, and world might be jointly configured. He affirms, for example, that the subject cannot be simply erased (as in Hume). This is the general kind of further choice that philosophers have traditionally made—which is more than just analysis, more than just characterization of the *possible* relations holding within the subject/representation/world complex. If philosophy is not barred from making such sweeping humanistic claims as Danto's robust trinitarian picture provides, then clearly philosophy involves more than Wittgensteinian nonsense.

And yet, just what more can philosophy be for Danto? Does this position not also signal a slide *away* from philosophy? For it would seem to reach beyond the concerns of the empirical indiscernibility. Whether or not humans even are representational beings is a question for science to help decide—through experiments suggesting that subjects do in fact have inner representations, even if unconscious ones.[117] If humans could not represent the world to themselves—even as nothing more than high-level socio-biochemical Geiger counters—we would not have survived the challenges of everyday life, not to mention the perils of natural evolution. So where are the boundaries of philosophy?

But then again—maybe this is not really the question that needs to be asked. Maybe it is just pointless to be looking for firm boundaries. Maybe philosophical activity is not best thought of in terms of disciplinary purity, but also not best construed in terms of an instrumentally flattened social function. This is not to deny that philosophy has a social function, nor to dissipate its function into the subjectivism of the individual. But what Danto seems to be saying is that this function of personhood gets performed only when both the lateral and horizontal dimensions of linguistic reference are brought to bear, as in the Socratic injunction, within the inspirited dimension of ontogenetic self-consciousness. Here philosophy is involved in a project larger than itself.

This motif of self-consciousness is perhaps what sums up our own contemporary view of Hegel in many quarters, but it's worth noting that this aspect of Hegel is just as much a feature of Romantic *Poesie*—of the young Schleiermacher and Schelling and Schiller and Schlegel—whose "peculiarity . . . was that it raised the act of aesthetic creation to self-awareness."[118] In any case, its point is often misunderstood by non-Hegelians, as if this were

just a matter of fitting a pretentious metaphysic around a commonplace fact. But through that Romantic motif, much more comes to "self-consciousness" than metaphysical categories, not just in accepting a propositional fact about oneself, but also in feeling (acutely, through the imagination) what significance this acceptance would have for actually living one's life. For a fully considered life, this places one's own intensional self-representation within the effects of a full awareness of one's perilous mortal state.

So one more thing needed, in order to fill out Danto's picture of Understanding, Knowledge, and World, is an account of the fact that there is a crucial relation between self-ascribed representations and that part of the world which is the embodied subject. There is, in other words, a body/body problem[119]—which, from considerations shared by Donald Davidson and others, would regard this as a purely causal relation.[120] Since the notion of causation is itself not well understood, perhaps all we know this to mean is that embodiment is essential to representationality. In that case, this is what the (formerly?) antihumanist Foucault was, by the time of his death, calling "the relationship of self with self and the forming of oneself as a subject."[121] In other words, what Danto means by "inspirited" has more than superficial affinity to what Foucault meant by "discursively incited."[122] This is not perhaps surprising, in view of Danto's idea that our capacity for representation depends on our constitution as sentential (discursive) creatures.[123] "We are built on the principles of texts, of words made flesh."[124]

VIII. Conclusion

A careful reading of Danto indicates that the *terra incognita* of spirit can be something other than *terra interdicta,* even for an analytically trained philosopher, and the fact that the author of *Mysticism and Morality*[125] wants now to say something substantial about such an elusive matter is rather remarkable. This is bound to seem initially puzzling to the readers most familiar with the vocabulary Danto uses, but once the general contours of his position are made apparent, its philosophical interest is not hard to grasp. For despite the influence Zen played in Danto's earlier career after 1953 (during "what I might call the Buddhist phase of my life"),[126] when it comes to spiritualist vocabulary, Danto is not tempted either by the eliminativism of Buddhist discourse, or by Rorty's eliminativist reduction of "edification" into a matter of mere conversation.[127] And by preserving the "externalism" of language—the possibility for language to represent, both in terms of meaning and reference—Danto may have undercut perhaps the best reductionist argument available to a radical secularist like Rorty. For philosophy of art, this has motivated a transition from Clement Greenberg's[128] high modernist aesthetics[129] into a transfigurative hermeneutics of everyday life.[130] It remains to be seen what consequences this view might have for religious studies.

Pioneers in philosophy have frequently found their intuitions overreaching their original project, and even the available vocabulary. Alert to the "merciless" treatment words receive once they "fall into literary clutches," C. S. Peirce famously resorted to a neologism "ugly enough to be safe from kidnappers"; but despite his declared "pragmaticism," he is still generally considered the father of *pragmatism.*[131] One hates to call Danto's agenda here "spiritualism," and an uglier term might do the trick instead. So I have referred here instead to Danto's "inspiritedness."[132]—even though these are not matters Danto has explicitly addressed as much as one might want.

Today, he spends most of his professional time as an art critic. "Philosophy," he thinks, "is pretty drab right now,"[133] so art criticism may seem now a more natural *métier.* But clearly Danto's interests remain much broader than one might suppose just from this fact. He has consistently advanced a view of philosophical psychology that seeks to promote "human ends,"[134] by championing the only form of representationality which (he thinks) could plausibly do so.[135] Like most in the liberal tradition, he does not (as a philosopher) seek to limit those ends with culturally imbued specificity, but this does not mean that nothing specific can be said about these ends: for whatever human form those ends might historically take, they would have to be representational, and thus referential in three dimensions—one of which is inspiritedness.

Given the edifying fatuousness of much pop evangelism and motivational psychology, Danto's own "diffidence" towards edifying discourse is hardly surprising.[136] But just as the best projects outrun their author, Danto himself was finally prompted to admit that his own project cannot avoid being "almost incendiarily edificatory."[137] This itself is a sign that Danto is really on to something. The project has a power that reaches past its author's own conscious intentions, and the very fact that Danto is willing to testify to this could have incendiary implications of its own.

> His disciples said to him, "When will the kingdom come?" "It will not come by watching for it. It will not be said, 'Look, here,' or 'Look, there.' Rather, the Father's kingdom is spread out upon the earth, and people do not see it."
>
> — Gospel of Thomas, 113[138]

David Seiple

Union Theological Seminary
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NOTES

1. Arthur C. Danto, *Connections to the World* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), 274.
2. See Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1979).
3. Richard Rorty, "Introduction," in *John Dewey: The Later Works 1925–1953*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston, vol. 8 (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1986), xiii.
4. Forrest H. Peterson, *John Dewey's Reconstruction in Philosophy* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1987), 87, n. 54.
5. See *Realism and the Background of Phenomenology*, ed. Roderick Chisholm (Atascadero, CA: Ridgeview, 1960).
6. Roland Barthes, *Criticism and Truth*, trans. Katrine Pilcher Keuneman (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1987), 49.
7. See *Secular Theology*, ed. Clayton Crockett (London and New York: Routledge, 2001).
8. Danto, *Connections*, 274.
9. Personal correspondence, 8/1/2004.
10. Robert C. Solomon and Kathleen M. Higgins, "Atomism, Art, and Arthur: Danto's Hegelian Turn," in *Danto and His Critics*, ed. Mark Rollins (Oxford, UK; Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell, 1993), 108.
11. Personal correspondence, 1/22/2005.
12. Paul Kurtz, "A Secular Humanist Declaration," *Free Inquiry* 1, no. 1 (Winter 1980).
13. Arthur C. Danto, "Responses and Replies," in *Danto and His Critics*, ed. Mark Rollins (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), 208.
14. Danto, *Connections*, 274.
15. Ibid., ch. 4.
16. Ibid., xii–xiii.
17. Plato's metaphysical concern was the structure of Being, and Danto is, broadly speaking, a naturalist in inclination, so that "Being" for Danto (but of course not for Plato) is really just the cosmos. Accordingly, the way to investigate being is through empirical science. But one of the lessons from the twentieth century is that understanding the natural world is a more theoretically complicated project than empiricists used to think, and it is obviously not too much like what old-line determinists once supposed.
18. See Plato, *Republic* 10.603. *Plato: The Republic*, vol. II, trans. Paul Shorey. The Loeb Classical Library, ed. T. E. Page et al. (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard Univ. Press and William Heinemann Ltd., 1963), 451–53.
19. Plato, *Republic* 10.608b, 469.
20. Perry Miller, *Jonathan Edwards* (Cleveland: Meridian Books, 1949), 55ff.
21. See Arthur C. Danto, *The Body/Body Problem: Selected Essays* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1999), 47.
22. Since no metaphysical questions are solved by empirical investigation, whatever philosophical "answers" there are cannot be specific (in the evidential sense). This is a radical constraint: it means that though some indiscernibilities may be resolved empirically—as when we ask whether my experience here and now could possibly be a dream, and then remember all the physical laws that predicably tie together strings of experience in a highly undreamlike way—persistent indiscernibilities are always present. This accounts for the continuation of philosophical disputes: Are the governing relations among subject, meaning, and reference more like Descartes's thought or more like Locke's?
23. Richard Rorty, "Dewey's Metaphysics," *New Studies in the Philosophy of John Dewey*, ed. Steven M. Cahn (Hanover, NH: Univ. Press of New England, 1977), reprinted in *Consequences of Pragmatism* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota, 1982), 72–89.
24. John Dewey, *John Dewey: The Later Works, 1925–1953*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston, vol. 12: 1938, *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1986), 72.
25. Michel Foucault, "Two Lectures," trans. Colin Gordon et al., in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 81.
26. Danto, *Connections*, 151–54.
27. Ibid., 36, 238.
28. Sidney Hook, "Introduction," in *The Middle Works of John Dewey 1899–1924*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston, vol. 8 (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1979), xviii.
29. Danto, *Connections*, 153.
30. Ibid., 80.
31. P. H. Nowell-Smith, *Ethics* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1954), 81.
32. Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1989), 73ff.
33. Patricia Churchland, *Neurophilosophy: Toward a Unified Science of the Mind-Brain* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986).
34. James Cornman, "On the Elimination of 'Sensations' and Sensations," *Review of Metaphysics* 22, no. 1 (1968): 15–35.
35. Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, 70–127.
36. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 3rd ed., trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (New York: Macmillan Company, 1958), §243.
37. Danto, *Connections*, 238–39.
38. Ibid., 239.
39. U. T. Place, "Is Consciousness a Brain Process?" *British Journal of Psychology* 47 (1956): 44–50, reprinted in *The Philosophy of Mind*, ed. V. C. Chappell (New York: Dover Publications, 1981), 101–9.
40. Sanford Goldberg and Andrew Pessin, *Gray Matters* (Armonk, NY and London: M. E. Sharpe, 1997), 59.
41. I address this more at length below, in the discussion of basic action.
42. Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, 74.
43. See Bernard Berofsky, *Liberation from Self: A Theory of Personal Autonomy* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1995).
44. Danto, *Connections*, 219, emphasis added.
45. Arthur C. Danto, "Basic Actions," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 2, no. 2 (April 1965): 141–48.
46. "If as part of doing *a* I must do *b*, and as part of doing *b* I must do *c*..., and this is perfectly general, it follows that there can be no actions performed at all." Danto, *The Body/Body Problem*, 46.
47. Jaakko Hintikka, "*Cogito, Ergo Sum*: Inference or Performance?" in *Meta-Meditations: Studies in Descartes*, ed. Alexander Sesonske and Noel Fleming (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1965), 50–76.
48. Andrew Sneddon, "Does Philosophy of Action Rest on a Mistake?" *Metaphilosophy* 32, no. 5 (Oct. 2001): 503–22.
49. See Danto, "Basic Actions and Basic Concepts," in *The Body/Body Problem*.
50. Danto, *The Body/Body Problem*, 47.
51. Ibid., 49.

52. Raymond Boisvert, "Heteronomous Freedom," in *Philosophy and the Reconstruction of Culture*, ed. John J. Stuhr (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1993).

53. Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1982).

54. I borrow my view of autonomy from Bernard Berofsky's earlier work. See Berofsky, "Autonomy," in *How Many Questions? Essays in Honor of Sidney Morgenbesser*, ed. Leigh S. Cauman et al. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983), 315.

55. Neil Rossman, *Consciousness* (Albany, NY: State Univ. of New York Press, 1991), 36ff.

56. Erik Baard, "Cyborg Liberation Front," *Village Voice*, July 30–August 5, 2003, 38–41.

57. Ridley Scott, *Blade Runner* (Warner Brothers, 1982). This film is virtually a meditation on Danto's indiscernibility problem.

58. Of course, one might want to argue that the development of a "posthuman" future is really a good thing, and that autonomy is either harmful or superfluous. But that would be a different discussion.

59. Danto, *The Body/Body Problem*, 55.

60. Ibid., 48.

61. Rene Descartes, *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, vol. 1, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, trans. Elizabeth Haldane and G. R. T. Ross (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1967), 175.

62. Arthur C. Danto, *Analytical Philosophy of Action* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1973), 192.

63. Harry G. Frankfurt, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of the Person," *Journal of Philosophy* 68 (1971): 5–20.

64. This of course still requires us to distinguish between autonomy and coercion (hegemony)—which will have to await another discussion.

65. Danto, *Analytical Philosophy of Action*, 45.

66. See *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered: The Myth of a Pluralistic Theology of Religions*, ed. Gavin D'Costa (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003).

67. Arthur C. Danto, "Outline of a Theory of Sentential States," *Social Research* 51 (Winter 1984); reprinted in *The Body/Body Problem* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1999), 84.

68. See Daniel Doherty and Amitai Etzioni, *Voluntary Simplicity: Responding to Consumer Culture* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003).

69. W. V. Quine, "Ontological Relativity," in *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1969), 35.

70. Cornel West, *The American Evasion of Philosophy* (Madison, WI: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 206.

71. Personal correspondence, 8/1/04.

72. Arthur C. Danto, *The Abuse of Beauty* (Chicago: Open Court, 2003), 94.

73. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, trans. H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), §20.1.

74. I am grateful to Charles Courtney for suggesting to me that the "real" Hegel should perhaps not be thought of in these terms.

75. Danto, "Outline of a Theory of Sentential States," 83.

76. Dogmatic confessional statements are not perhaps typical, insofar as some of what we believe might be unconscious, and it is hard to imagine one's Christology being among these. The point about rendering intensionality by sentence tokens remains, however.

77. Danto, "Outline of a Theory of Sentential States," 87.

78. In the history of early Christianity, Antiochene theology tended to emphasize the humanity of Christ, and at its margins embraced an adoptionist Christology that blurred the uniqueness of Jesus.

79. Danto, *Connections*, 248.

80. Danto, "Outline of a Theory of Sentential States," 91.

81. Though admittedly there are other religious views where the world is God's created text, readable by the natural theologian.

82. Danto, *Analytical Philosophy of Action*, 190ff.

83. Ibid., 190.

84. John Hospers, "What Means this Freedom?" in *Introductory Philosophy*, ed. Frank A. Tillman, Bernard Berofsky and John O'Connor (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 145–57.

85. Harry G. Frankfurt, *The Importance of What We Care About* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1988), 7.

86. Bernard Berofsky, *Freedom from Necessity* (New York and London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), 35.

87. See Nathan Tierney, *Imagination and Ethical Ideals* (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1994).

88. Danto, *The Body/Body Problem*, 13.

89. Gottlob Frege, "On Sense and Reference," 1892, trans. Max Black, in *Translations from the Philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege*, ed. Peter Geach and Max Black, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1960), 56–78.

90. Arthur C. Danto, "Philosophy as/and/of Literature," in *Post-Analytic Philosophy*, ed. John Rajchman and Cornel West (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1985), 71.

91. Danto sufficiently expands his little conceit to guarantee that R's aesthetic sensibilities are not so muted as to be irrelevant to genuine human interest.

92. It is tempting to rename this the "s-coordinate."

93. See Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975), 62.

94. Danto, "Philosophy as/and/of Literature," 75.

95. Descartes, *Meditations*, 146.

96. O. K. Bouwsma, "Descartes' Evil Genius," in *Meta-Meditations: Studies in Descartes*, ed. Alexander Sesonske and Noel Fleming (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1965), 34.

97. John Cage, *4'33"* (London: Peters, n.d.), 2. Cage's *4'33"* is a piece of total silence on the part of the performer, into which random sounds of the performance space enter as the only discernible content.

98. See Christopher Morse, *Not Every Spirit* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994).

99. See Ian Stewart, *Flatterland: Like Flatland, Only More So* (Cambridge, MA: Perseus, 2001).

100. Arthur C. Danto, "The Artworld," in *Philosophy Looks at the Arts*, ed. Joseph Margolis (Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 1987), 156.

101. See for contrast, George Dickie, *Aesthetics: An Introduction* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1971), 101.

102. Danto, "The Artworld," 157.

103. Ibid., 159.

104. Ibid., 162.

105. Ibid.

106. See Arthur C. Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1981).

107. Dewey, *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*, 72.

108. John Dewey, *John Dewey: The Later Works, 1925–1953*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston, vol. 10, *Art as Experience* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1987), 167.

109. See David Ilett Seiple, "John Dewey and the Aesthetics of Moral Intelligence" (Ph.D. diss., Dept. of Philosophy, Columbia University, 1993), 101ff.

110. Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*, 126.

111. Arthur C. Danto, *The Abuse of Beauty* (Chicago: Open Court, 2003). 89.

112. See Richard Rorty, "Is There a Problem About Fictional Discourse?" in *Consequences of Pragmatism* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota, 1982), 110–38.

113. David Carrier, "Danto as Systematic Philosopher or *comme on Lit Danto en Français*," in *Danto and His Critics*, ed. Mark Rollins (Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell, 1993), 14–15.

114. Danto, *Connections*, 7.

115. See Nelson Goodman, *Fact, Fiction, and Forecast*, 4th ed. (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1983).

116. John Edward Toews, *Hegelianism: The Path Toward Dialectical Humanism, 1805–1841* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1980), 30. *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, in G. W. F. Hegel, *Werke*, ed. E. Moldenhauer and K. M. Michel, 20 vols. (Frankfurt, 1969–72), III, 18.

117. Danto, *Connections*, 230.

118. Toews, *Hegelianism*, 43.

119. See Danto, *The Body/Body Problem*.

120. See Donald Davidson, "Actions, Reasons, and Causes," *Journal of Philosophy* 60 (1963), reprinted in *Essays on Actions and Events* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 3–19.

121. Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Random House, 1985), 6.

122. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality,* vol. 1: *An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Random House, 1978), 12.

123. Danto, *The Body/Body Problem*, 82ff.

124. See Danto, *Connections*, 248.

125. See Arthur C. Danto, *Mysticism and Morality: Oriental Thought and Moral Philosophy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972).

126. Arthur C. Danto, "Upper West Side Buddhism," in *Buddha Mind in Contemporary Art*, ed. Jacqueline Baas and Mary Jane Jacob (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2004).

127. See Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*.

128. See Clement Greenberg, *Art and Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), 6.

129. Greenberg says in *Art and Culture*: "The avant-garde poet or artist tries in effect to imitate God by creating something valid solely on its own terms . . . something *given,* independent of meanings" [original italics]. Ibid.

130. See Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*.

131. Charles S. Peirce, "What Pragmatism Is," 1905, in *Charles S. Peirce: Selected Writings*, ed. Philip P. Wiener (New York: Dover Publications, 1958), 186.

132. Danto, *Connections*, 219.

133. Personal correspondence, 7/31/04.

134. Arthur C. Danto, *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1986), xv.

135. See Arthur C. Danto, *Philosophizing Art: Selected Essays* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1999), ix.

136. Danto, "Responses and Replies," *Danto and His Critics*, 208.

137. Ibid.

138. Stephen J. Patterson, *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus* (Sonoma, CA: Polebridge Press, 1994), 72.