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Primitive Dreams:
In Search of Judgment

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May 27, 1991
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“I woke up on the roadside, daydreaming about the way things really are.” (Bob Dylan, “The Idiot Wind”)
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Introduction

"The scale of reason after all is not quite impartial, and one of its arms, bearing the inscription, "Hope of the Future," has an advantage of construction, causing even those slight reasons which fall into its scale to outweigh the speculations of greater weight on the other side. This is the only inaccuracy which I cannot easily remove, and which, in fact, I never want to remove." (Kant, 15)

I have observed that in every theory of art, except possibly Plato’s is a mysterious undefinable element. Some theories attempt to explain it, while others deny its existence. Danto calls it a new predicate to the “is of artistic identification,”² which means something akin to a new meaning. Clive Bell calls it significant form, or “a combination of lines and colours...that moves me aesthetically,”³ and says outright that art’s “kingdom is not of this world.”⁴

Tolstoy terms this undefinable element the “infectiousness of art.”⁵ The viewer feels “as if what it expresses were just what he had been wishing to express.”⁶ John Gardner speaks of this feeling also, saying that we respond to a work of art “with instant recognition and admiration, saying, ‘Yes, you’re right, that’s how it is.’”⁷ R.G. Collingwood finds this same element in the ability of art to prophesy or intuit the viewers’ own “secrets of their own hearts,”⁸ and act as a healer, providing the “medicine for the worst disease of mind, the corruption of
Nietzsche likewise describes the transformation of "the horror or absurdity of existence into notions with which one can live,"\(^9\) that is, joy in the struggle of existence. Art justifies the existence of the world. Nietzsche’s idea of art as redeemer is like Ernest Becker’s idea of art as creation of meaning in a neutral world.

Stanley Cavell alludes to art’s independence as an entity separate from the observer when he points out that its sincerity may cause it to “become uninfectious and even (and even deliberately) unappetizing in order to remain art at all.”\(^11\)

Richard Wollheim speaks of tension between loss and achievement and a language of signs that requires ever deepening attention to interpret. Suzanne Langer’s mysterious element is that the artwork is a symbol for “the articulation of feeling.”\(^12\) The artwork “is semblance, but seems to be charged with reality.”\(^13\) The issue of the reality of an artwork is prevalent in aesthetic theory. Ted Cohen finds it unnecessary to decide always whether a particular work is or isn’t art.

George Dickie, whose cynical definition is that art is anything that anyone presents as art, claims that almost anything can be art. However, he speaks of the “moral vision” of art being inseparable from it.\(^14\) He also
discusses originality: "A copy of an original painting is not a work of art because originality of the kind the copy lacks is required of a work of art." This circular requirement endows the quality of originality with recognizability. Monroe Beardsley gives artistic intention the same ability to be discerned in the work. "The narrative is in fact dramatically shaped, the characters are three-dimensional and live. The style carries heavy overtones, now ironic, now compassionate, now angry, now judicious. Such works, one may say, proclaim that they are literature by being quite good literature. Since it is highly probable that the writer knew what he had done and wanted it that way, we can legitimately infer the intention from the deed. In cases like this, it may seem that we can for all practical purposes dispense with the appeal to intention." Like Dickie, Beardsley has a notion of good art quite separate from his alleged ideal of intention.

Aristotle’s mysterious element is, of course, unity. Berkeley speaks of uniformity amidst variety, and Allan Casebier speaks of internal relations. J.O. Urmson hints at an absolute standard in art when he takes as manifest that “one would not wish to hear a group improvisation of an opera.” Kant, Hume, and Frank Sibley discuss incorrect judgment lying in the viewer’s state of mind, as if there is, after all, an absolute standard of judgment. Maurice Mendelbaum discusses standards of
greatness in art, and Kenneth Clark writes of genius.

Eduard Hemslick mentions two undefinable elements: art as an end in itself, and the specific character of each color.\(^\text{17}\) Clement Greenberg’s idea of good art includes “painterly” elements: “loose, rapid handling, or the look of it... large and conspicuous rhythms.”\(^\text{18}\) He speaks of the evolution of Western art to this painterliness, as if it is the climax of the history of art. Michael Fried, likewise, calls Minimalism part of “the history -- almost the natural history -- of sensibility.”\(^\text{19}\) Hegel also sees art as the evolution of spirit.

For David Carrier, the mysterious element in art is expression. Morris Weitz speaks of the “perennially flexible, the perennially debatable, and the irreducibly vague,”\(^\text{20}\) three separate aspects of art, none of them closed by set criteria. Marshall Cohen abandons the search for a theory of art.\(^\text{21}\)

Marcel Duchamp, although professing not to believe in art, has “these doubts about the value of the judgments which decided that all these pictures should be presented to the Louvre, instead of others which weren’t even considered.”\(^\text{22}\) Here, he hints at other values that are not being used by the established judges of art.

Schopenhauer sees art as an expression of the Ideas (Platonic Forms) of things. Frederick Copleston says that
the intellectual idea, or significant form, does not alone define an artwork. There is “something else, behind and beyond it, supporting it and constituting the ground for its existence.”23 It is this elusive quality of art for which I search: the quality that was known before it was spoken. I do not seek to force an opening in the history of art for my work, but rather to explain, in large part to myself, the urgency I feel to produce work, and the reverence I feel in the presence of works of art. Socrates himself declared a great love for the work of Homer, a love that he couldn’t explain with his own theory.

The task of this paper is, then, to determine three things: what this elusive element in art is, or at least is due to, what the nature of judgment is, and whether judgment of art is possible. All this will, I hope, explain my own work, which I consider an intuitive inquiry into the same issues.

In order to pursue these three goals, I will first discuss in depth the three aesthetic theories that are of interest to me: Plato’s, Kant’s, and Dewey’s, and explain why I find them inadequate. I will then describe some trends in modern thought and attribute them to what I see as a failure of individual judgment. Then I will question traditional morality and find fault with the current state of the artworld. I will attempt to criticize the feminist perspective that is closest to my own, and also Ernest Becker’s science of man, which is also very close to me.
Then, in chapter nine, after criticizing my favorite theoricians, I will begin to offer an idea of my own. I will try to show that opposition, hierarchy, and morality are merely subdivisions of experience, which is integrated only under the universal heading of aesthetic wholeness. I will try to show that the individual is born wholly formed, and is capable of practicing judgment, and that the integration of judgments is more important to the artworld than establishing masterpieces is. I will try to show that works of art can be distinguished from non-works of art. I will use the case of cuteness, because it is appropriate to the subject matter of my thesis paintings (babies), as an example of the complexity of some of the issues discussed here. I will conclude with a study of my own thesis work.

Please pardon the simultaneously impersonal and selfish nature of this work. I have always wanted to attempt a serious philosophical inquiry, and whether I succeed or not, I feel obliged to take advantage of the excellent assistance that my advisors at R.I.T. can offer me in this endeavor. I am especially grateful to John Morreall, whose lectures and writings have been one of the bright spots of my study here, and who has helped me form my own opinions, and to Phil Bornarath, who has responded to my work in a very satisfying manner and helped me think. Thanks also to Bruce Sodervick, who set me on track at the beginning, to Heather Erwin, Nora Folkenflik, Laurie Schoeffler, Robb Westbrook, and Mom and Dad, for reading and suggesting. Thanks to Shamra
Westbrook for giving me peace of mind for the whole school year, and to Chris, Bets, Mike, Rob, Katie for helpful discussions, and Ray for all that canvas. Most of all, of course, I wish to thank -- but more about that later...
Step One: Plato takes art on a superficial level, denying its ability to express the abstract or absolute.

In the analogy of the cave in Book VII of *The Republic*, Plato describes prisoners with their legs and necks chained, with a fire casting shadows over a wall where people and wooden animals seem to walk. The prisoners see only the shadows of themselves and the objects, and hear only the echo of the passing people. The so-called objective world would consist of the shadows of the images.

Plato describes one of the people being loosed from his chains and looking toward the light. He is blinded, continues to think the shadows are true, and considers reality to be the illusion. Then, as he grows accustomed to the light, he is able to see reality for what it is. He pities the other unenlightened people in the cave. He will no longer "care for such honours and glories, or envy the possessors of them," as the people of the cave, who give prizes on the ability to judge the world of mere shadows. To the slaves of the illusion of reality, the person who had seen the truth appears stupid in his inability to see in the darkness of the cave. They consider it better not to attempt to look beyond the cave, and kill anyone who tries to lead others to enlightenment.

Plato is very explicit in pointing out the parallels for his analogy. The cave is the world we live in and perceive
with our senses, and the fire that casts shadows on the side of the cave is the sun. The "journey upwards" is "the ascent of the soul into the intellectual world." The man who attempts to lead himself upwards into the world of reality, or pure thought, then, is the philosopher. The philosopher is not only "unwilling to descend to human affairs," but also has difficulty functioning if "he is compelled to fight in courts of law, or in other places, about the images or the shadows of images of justice, and is endeavoring to meet the conceptions of those who have never yet seen absolute justice."

Meanwhile, in Book X, Plato denounces art. There are ideas, or Forms of objects, that make up the real world, the world of contemplation. The maker of an object makes it according to the idea or Form of the object. Nobody makes the actual idea. "How could he?" According to Plato, it would be simple to make everything in the world if it were possible to hold a mirror up to the whole world. He points out that instead of actually making the world, one would be making a mere appearance. "And the painter too is, as I conceive, just such another -- a creator of appearances."

Plato goes on to discuss the carpenter who builds a bed. He does not speak the truth, because the true bed exists "in nature, which is made by god." The carpenter's bed is built according to the true bed, but the painter's bed
is derived only from the carpenter’s bed, and so it is twice 
removed from truth. It is a reflection of a reflection. The 
painter can’t imitate the Form of bed, but, because he must 
use viewpoint and perspective, he can only imitate the 
carpenter’s bed. From every angle, the bed looks different, 
but the real bed is never different from itself. Artists do 
not leave anything to posterity because they derive only from 
the sensed world, and so can’t lead people to virtue. “A 
painter...will make a likeness of a cobbler though he 
understands nothing of cobbling, and his picture is good 
enough for those who know no more than he does, and judge 
only by colours and figures.”

Switching to the object of bridle, Plato continues the 
argument. The painter doesn’t know the right Form of a 
bridle, nor does even the maker of a bridle, but it is the 
horseman who “knows their right Form.” The horseman, who 
uses the bridle, will tell the bridle-maker how to make it. 
The painter will not know from use, or by being instructed by 
someone who uses the bridle. “He will no more have true 
opinion than he will have knowledge about the goodness or 
badness of his imitations... He will go on imitating without 
knowing what makes a thing good or bad, and may be expected 
therefore to imitate only that which appears to be good to 
the ignorant multitude.”

According to Plato, while math is the work of the rational 
principle in the soul, the other parts of the soul are
inferior and far removed from the absolute principles of calculating, measure, and weight. Plato classes music, poetry, drama, and painting together as imitative arts. "The imitative art is an inferior who marries an inferior, and has inferior offspring." 10

The analogy of the cave shows a beautiful, not to say poetic, vision of the position of philosopher in exile from society. His is an exile brought on by himself, not for the sake of that exile, but because of his principles. His description of the difficulty the philosopher has in functioning in the human world is moving and calls to mind many occasions of exile, not only of philosophers and scientists, but ironically enough, also of artists. His idea that an artist pleases the ignorant multitude has proven to be false over the centuries.

Like Socrates and Galileo, even now Salman Rushdie has been tried and found guilty for his work. Meanwhile, the self-exile imposed by philosophers is the same sort of self-exile imposed by artists, consisting of a contempt for the degraded values of society. As Bob Dylan puts it, "Go ahead and laugh about him... because he doesn’t pay tribute to the king that you serve." 11 This self-exile is not necessarily righteous, but it has become a trademark of philosophers and artists, both of whom are often viewed by the world as crazy. Two obvious examples are the booing of Beethoven's 9th Symphony and the mocking of the Impressionists.
Plato makes another mistake when he gives the ability to know the Form to the user of the object instead of the maker. It is as if, at the last minute, he sees that his argument is leading to the conclusion that the craftsman is as knowing in his field as the philosopher is in his. To avert this conclusion, he gives the ability to know to the user as if he would be more likely to deal with the object in a purely mental way, and to know it in all its aspects. By making the bridle’s user the one who knows its true reality, he is equating the function of the object with its identity. This is precisely the equation he has tried to avoid by positing the Forms.

His real mistake is, of course, his endowment of real, Formal identity to all objects. His attempt to define the essence of an object becomes ridiculous when he claims that the bridleness of the object is what makes it a bridle. He gives an eternal property to useful objects, but still maintains that we live in a world of illusions. There is no reason to endow objects with eternal properties if they do not gain an internal worth from them. If an object offers insight to objective reality by partaking in some way in that reality, then it can not be discounted as lacking reality. If a bridle, for example, is derived from reality, and a philosopher can ascent to reality through it, then its function is dual. It acts as a bridle, but also as a vehicle for enlightenment. If, however, the object partakes of the Form, but that Form is not knowable through the object, but
is only knowable through geometry which is unchangeable, then it seems irrelevant to posit the existence of Forms of objects. Forms of useful objects would have no use in the eternal, immutable world of reality.

Furthermore, the list of Forms would be endless. The Form of car, for example, would necessarily exist prior to the existence of a particular car, since Forms are infinite. Therefore it would not be the user of the automobile who would dictate its structure, but rather the inventor. The inventor, in order to arrive at this design, would need to be a philosopher and draw from his knowledge of the world of Forms to actualize a specific car in the world of reflections. The philosopher must, then, be able to know not only all objects past and present, but also all future objects. The philosopher would know all about geometry and unity, and also all about the world of perception.

New objects, like paintings, come from nowhere, but according to Plato, must be derived from the Form. If the painting is not a reflection of a Form, but rather a reflection of a sensed object, then the painting has no Form in reality. If it shares the Form of the object it reflects, then it participates in the Form as well. If the painting has a form in reality, but is a reflection of a reflection, then, since each painting can’t get a Form in reality after being painted, because the Form is infinite, then the painting would be derived from the Form of itself. Its identity would be as real as the identity of an object, only
once removed from the Form. If, however, the painting does not derive its identity from its own Form, then there must be one Form for all paintings. If there is one Form of paintings, from which all paintings derive their identity, then that Form must not include content, but merely structural ideas, or all paintings would look roughly the same in content. Would there be a Form for mural, unstretched canvas, miniature, and so on?
Step Two: Kant treats art as subjective, but intellectual. Although beauty exists only through its arousal of emotion in a viewer, appreciation of it must be learned.

For Kant, the object only has aesthetic worth by its effect on the viewer. This effect must be a disinterested appreciation. The viewer finds pleasure in the awareness of this appreciation. The object does not cause pleasure as the initial reaction, but rather causes an objective reaction first. The viewer makes use of cognitive powers when viewing aesthetically, so it is an active viewing. The faculties of mind are applied to sensory experience in search for objective experience. The imagination binds the data of consciousness to bring them under a mental concept, which enables understanding. If the circumstances of viewing are “right”, according to Kant, the judgment of beauty is necessary. In other words, human minds work alike in classing objects under concepts, and so all human minds will agree that something is beautiful, given the right viewing circumstances. The judgment of beauty means only that a certain response will arise in specific situations. “If I do not find the object beautiful, that is no indication of its not being so. Maybe I am looking at it in the wrong way.”

Adorno criticizes Kant for trying to separate pleasure from the initial response, and for not defining beauty except in relation to the observer. He suggests that interest is inherent in disinterestedness, that in its will to avoid creating an animal-like reaction of desire to the object,
"all art contains in itself a negative moment from which it tries to get away." Adorno's criticism implies and approach to making and viewing art that is even more calculated than Kant's. While Kant is attempting to describe the sensation of enjoyment not accompanied by desire to have, Adorno suggests that art must actually try to block this desire, "the most important taboo in art." While Kant's approach appears unrealistic in his placing a reaction of disinterestedness prior to enjoyment not of the object, but of the harmonic state of mind the object arouses, Adorno distances the work of art from the reaction to it even more. Prior to aesthetic enjoyment comes a struggle against animal desire "to devour". Adorno's theory, however, includes the tensions of opposites that Kant attempts to dispel. For Adorno, this purely mental pleasure does not embody any of the tensions that pleasure involves. Every thought evokes its opposite. "Art renounces happiness for the sake of happiness, thus enabling desire to survive in art." The simultaneity of opposite emotions -- sharp awareness of reality with alienation from reality, and fantasies of power with a desire for a better world-- recall Plato's description of the philosopher in the cave. Adorno speaks of a dialectic of art and society, even as Plato emphasized dialectic as a means of ascending to the world of Forms.

Kant can also be criticized for defining beauty merely in terms of mind. It is not clear what causes the state of
mind in the viewer if it is not presence of beauty in the object. If the viewer is reacting to a harmonic relation between himself and the object, it appears that judgment of beauty could be inconsistent with different viewers. Kant says that judgment of beauty can be learned, and, in fact, must be learned in order that conditions for appreciation of beauty be right for every viewer.

Like Plato, Kant implies that education leading toward a purely mental state is necessary for true judgment. Although Kant’s general theory includes the existence of an unknowable world of real things, which he calls noumena, his theory of beauty does not appear to include a concept of absolute beauty.
Step Three: Dewey treats art as experience but fails to explain how one experience is superior to another without having absolute content, or relating to an ideal.

Like Kant, John Dewey emphasizes the idea of harmony, and the relationship between viewer and object in his aesthetic theory. He discusses aesthetic experience and art, but dispenses with the idea of beauty as defining these. Rather, aesthetic experience is a moment of growth due to recovery of temporary imbalance. "The moment of passage from disturbance to harmony is that of intensest life." Instead of being an existing quality in an object, as in Plato's theory, or a response to a disinterested harmony felt between subject and object, as in Kant's, aesthetic experience, according to Dewey, is an interested relationship between person and environment. He describes the relationship as conscious and purposeful. Emotions signal actual or impending disequilibrium. Desire for restoring equilibrium converts emotion to an interest in ends that would realize harmony. He distinguishes between experience in general and an experience, which is marked by wholeness and self-sufficiency. Successful restoration to equilibrium would yield an experience. The parts of an experience flow into each other and lead to something. Art is produced purposely to cause an aesthetic experience, whereas in life and thought, the aesthetic quality of an experience is an accidental side-effect.

Dewey does not see art as separate from experience, but
as a full expression of the possibilities of experience. While science attempts to proceed from unknown to known, art leaps willingly into the unknown. Dewey’s idea of art is praising. “It quickens us from the slackness of routine and enables us to forget ourselves.” Artists have as important a moral function as philosophers, because they keep alive purpose and meaning that is not evident in everyday life. Art criticizes indirectly, unlike Philosophy, through imagined contrasts to reality, and emphasizes the unity and harmony of nature, as if we could actually be one with nature. “Only imaginative vision elicits the possibilities that are interwoven within the texture of the actual.”

Although Dewey does point out the active and emotional nature of aesthetic experience, inconsistencies flaw his argument. While Kant’s description is perhaps too cerebral, Dewey’s is too physical. He describes mental actions as if they are mere substitutes for the instinctual mechanisms for restoring equilibrium that humans lack. The determinist quality of his argument contrasts with his ideals of meaning, purpose, and harmony. His lament of capitalism’s separation of art and life, caused by placing monetary values on artworks and using them as status symbols, is as persuasive now as ever, but his condemnation of everyday life denies its importance. He argues that the aesthetic quality has been drained from social life, and refers to reunion with nature, seeing aesthetic experience as a culmination of natural ebb
and flow that is missing in social life. While he concedes that aesthetic experience can be found in everyday life, he limits meaningful experience to aesthetic experience, calling everyday life slack and dull. While he seems to find a oneness with nature desirable, he does not consider it attainable within the routine of the everyday.

Likewise, while stating that experience is not separate from art, Dewey separates it by using the term aesthetic for all uplifting experience. Because he confuses the ideas of aesthetic experience in craft, in play, and in art, he actually splits the idea of aesthetic experience into parts. "Because of the continuity between works of art and everyday experience... [appreciation of art] could be learned."6 If a continuity between everyday experience and art really exists, it would seem that appreciation of art would not need to be learned, but would come as naturally as aesthetic appreciation of experience. A successful work of art, after all, causes "an experience".7 Having an experience should not require a certain education. Dewey begins to sound like Kant in his requiring certain conditions of viewing art. Dewey states that artists keep purpose and meaning alive that is not apparent in everyday life. If art and experience both have aesthetic moments, then the aesthetic in both should reveal purpose and meaning. Dewey's egalitarian ideal of aesthetic experience turns out to include a hierarchy of values. Art is created in order to harmonize experience, and
so has a function superior to experience. Consequently, its appreciation must be taught.

Although Dewey's theory is helpful in reminding of what is wrong with separating art from reality, and of what subtleties art can use in importing ideas, his failure to offer a distinction between the types of aesthetic experience leads to confusion. Because response to art results in an experience, then what defines art is its ability to produce such an experience. Since this response can be learned, there must be something that gives at least certain works of art a consistent aesthetic value. Since the emotional quality of an experience can also be the result of the mental process of thinking, perhaps it is thinking about the object of art that yields an experience, not merely an initial reaction to it. Learning to think about all objects in a certain way could lead to a more aesthetic understanding of the world. The question remains of how to go about thinking aesthetically, since no definition is offered except for the reaction by the viewer. Art functions to reveal the aesthetic qualities of life, and so to criticize society and lead toward change. In order to achieve its goals better, art should not be relegated to the museum, according to Dewey.

Sadly, placing the burden of art on its uplifting function, and intention to bring about an aesthetic experience, leads to art with overpowering theory. For example, the Situationist International, a movement lasting
from 1957 to 1972, “thought of art as action, as idea, as a vehicle for change rather than as a commodity. Like the surrealists, they desired a fundamental change in consciousness and sought to liberate and reorder everyday life.”

Like Dewey, they saw art as creation of an experience, and lamented “the sterility and oppression of the actual environment and ruling economic and political system.” Dewey was ahead of himself in noticing the turning of objects of art into commodities, and the relation of this phenomenon with the decline of the aesthetic element in society. But attempting to class art as being done in order to be aesthetic, and recommending allowing it to permeate life, cause two difficulties. First of all, when artworks are created in order to be aesthetic, and thus uplifting, then theory replaces emotion as the driving force for creation. In order to justify the aesthetic quality of a work of art, the artist must be able to prove its importance in leading viewers toward a better understanding of the aesthetics of reality. “The traditional distinction between critic and visual artist has become so blurred” because, according to Vitz and Glimcher, the artist’s role as investigator of perception parallels the scientist’s, and thus must imitate the theoretical, verbal form of scientific expression. Scientific experiments and modernist paintings are no longer self-explanatory. This conversion of art into another science can be seen as one possible result of a
theory stressing the use of art as a vehicle for understanding possible improvements of everyday life. Then art does become inaccessible without the necessary education. As Winnie the Pooh asks, when he tries to say “Aha” in a meaningful way, “I suppose it’s just practice,” he thought, “I wonder if Kanga will have to practice too so as to understand it.”

The issue of removing art from galleries and allowing it to become a more universal experience brings other problems with it. Instead of freeing itself from the status of a commodity by becoming part of reality instead of remaining distinct, different art movements become assimilated into the mainstream more readily. Advertising borrows images and ideas from art, and becomes considered an art in itself. “Art” becomes a descriptive term for the general glut of images. The issue of enhancing the aesthetic quality of everyday life is quite separate from a plan for pasting images on every wall. In some places a mural would help, but in others a coat of whitewash would be just the thing. Questioning the aesthetics of materials and use of them may be more important, for example, than an attempt to enlighten by random placement of public sculpture made of red metal. Instead of plopping self-sufficient statements here and there, in other words, it may be more important to integrate experience as a whole.

The group took their argument to an extreme. They "refused and negated the concept of art as a separable,
exhibitable enterprise."

By denying the interdependence of art and life, theorizing movements lose the distinction between art and life altogether. Predicting minimalism, the Situationists insisted that art "must precisely cease to be works of art. There is no such thing as Situationism or a Situationist work of art."
Step Four: Issues in modern art strip aesthetic value of any absolute identity.

Much of recent art continues to be concerned with the borders between art and life. By attempting to "unpack the prejudices"\(^1\) of earlier art, artists seek to show that barriers between art and life are contrived. Christopher Lasch offers a clear analysis of minimalist art, in which he describes the retreat of art from reference to the world or the self. Minimalism involves an elimination of values previously considered crucial to art: patterns, subjectivity, passion, craftsmanship. The minimalist artist denies his own separation from the world. In reaction to advertising, with its deluge of images, which obscures the distinction between images and reality, the artist sees himself as stripped of identity, interchangeable with any other image. Minimalist art reflects this fusion of self with world in its denial of the reality of an inner self and an exterior world, and so its consequent denial of any distinction between subject and object.\(^2\)

Minimalist art attempts both to deny separation of self from reality, and to achieve self-contained, non-referential artwork. An article by Lawrence Weschler notes Frank Stella's insistence that a painting should be nothing more than a painting, or "a wall".\(^3\) His insistence that a
painting is only paint on a canvas shows a desire for self-sufficiency. Dewey's ideal of the self-sufficient moment comes to mind. "The artist was trying to see how few conventions he could retain and still end up with a good painting."4 Although Stella's style has changed a good deal recently in keeping with his avoidance of a personal signature, his minimalist ideals remain intact. His ability to apply them to a new brand of constructed surface lies in his tenet that "the painterly discourse has to remain purely, pristinely, and serenely self-referential."5 In his new phase, this isolation from tradition manifests itself in an attempt to load his paintings with pattern and shape — oddly enough he has passed from his protractor shapes of 1968 to glorified French curves without noticing a connection — but retain their existence as mere paintings. "There comes a point, if you keep taking things away like that and you organize what's left that strictly, that you almost don't have a painting left."6 Eliminating the painting-ness of the painting is as threatening to a minimalist as subjectivity. A commitment to stop making paintings, to a real belief in the end of the function of art, would be as self-affirming as painting the figure. "You get so involved in your system of beliefs," says Stella, "and your commitment that you just can't separate yourself from your work."7 On discovering this commitment, Stella realized that it was time to turn to something new, and not so emotionally binding. Like other
recent artists, he now understands that the painting will stand simply as a painting whether or not someone drags in a lot of associations, because associations "no longer threaten the painting's reality as a painting."\(^8\) Still, though he has moved from studies on the two-dimensionality of the canvas to even more ambiguous works in their ability to hover "in and out of the world,"\(^9\) his paintings remain self-referential.

Like Stella's so-called constructions, the sign paintings of Mary Boochever and Moira Dryer attempt to push the limits between art and life. As in Stella's work, their paintings are self-referential, but allow for unlimited associations. Like Stella in his move away from minimal treatment of the canvas to a formal drafting of minimal space, Boochever and Dryer deal in structures with a contrived found appeal in order further to confuse the borders of art and reality. Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe, in a review of their show, rejects the term beauty in describing Dryer's work in typically obscure and rambling language. "Why would one want to look at a work that was not beautiful in the first place?" he begins, but calling the work beautiful could also trouble the artist because "beauty tends to be linked with frivolity." He decides that the word, and also the idea that "frivolity can not be important,"\(^10\) should be abandoned. We wonder why he doesn't work out some of these ideas off the page, but then realize that there would not be much left of his article without the several options.
for each thought. In a manner common to those who do not want to inflict standards on others, mainly because they have none to inflict, he retracts everything he posits. Instead of accepting frivolity as a positive value and allowing beauty to retain a suggestion of that frivolity, or otherwise attempting to redefine beauty, he instead throws the notion of beauty, with all its overtones, out the window, and after it any criticism of frivolity. He also slips in, in the form of a question, the idea that everything worth looking at is beautiful. Without discussing beauty, he dismisses it, and yet manages to retain it. It is this valueless indecision that defines the paintings under discussion better than any definite assertions could. Unlike Stella’s “dreamily idealist” notion that “What you see is what you see,” the idea behind these sign paintings is that “inferiority is always present but, as such, always deferred into a concept of exteriority. It is a deconstruction of the idea of inferiority.” There is no distinction between interior and exterior. Gilbert-Rolfe continues, “It is also a deconstruction of the (historicist) concept of usefulness. But this is probably less important. Who cares about such things other than those who theorize about the world through work, through religions founded on the image of production and, therefore, with the moral -- narrowly conceived of course -- above all else.” In his half-hearted way, Gilbert-Rolfe rejects work, religion, and morality as
instruments of thinking about and trying to make sense of the world. In discussing Boochever's painting called *Brilo*, which consists of a gradation from peach to brown to black painted on an artist's apron, Gilbert-Rolfe draws an allusion of work, "where that work is the non-productive production that is art. Art is something for people to look at in their spare time, a production designed for moments of non-production. This is the sense in which the work of art is always a deconstruction of the conditions of production when viewed historically."\(^{13}\) He continues in mentioning the apron connected with different types of work: carpenters, domestic servants, and slaves, and their wages. His contention is that there is no factual history, but that the ability of a work of art to be a product without participating in production strips the history of production of any factual meaning. Furthermore, the ability of an apron to recall members of all levels of society, and endless other references, makes it "a kind of ultimate sign of apron-ness, stripping it of identity, exhausting all its meanings, collapsing them into one another."\(^{14}\) So art is no longer satisfied with being only self-referential, but because anything can refer to anything else, it becomes indistinguishable from everything else. Interior and exterior become indistinguishable.

Gilbert-Rolfe expands on the idea of flow in discussing Dryer's *Portrait # 421*. He describes a texture and material
that are “frozen, hard, continuous, fluid,” and contends that placement of a frame would be arbitrary. By being titled a portrait, but being completely non-representational, the painting “disperses the idea of the person.” The continuity, flow, and dissolution, eliminate the idea of the painting or person as an entity separate from anything else. Like signs, the paintings “never exist in themselves” but exist “to point to something else.” The only thing that is not a sign is the self, “and even that disappears once the concept of self is reduced to a list of psychological urges.” According to Gilbert-Rolfe, the self is inseparable from the rest of the world, stripped of its identity by scientific and historical description, and rendered powerless by political structures beyond the control of the individual. Like the individual in society, the artist can’t find identity in art. “These artists are out of control.” Reflecting a similar air of acceptance of social conditions out of his control is Robert Rauschenberg, whose new works uncritically “seem to embrace our technological condition.”

Despite their failure to separate art and its values from reality and its values, artists place art on a separate moral plane. Art is considered to be outside of morality and so is not responsible to any authority for its content. Like a journalist, the artist merely reports on the conditions of
the times, or predicts them. During the recent controversy regarding photographs by Robert Mapplethorpe and Andres Serrano, this amorality of art was called into question by Senator Jesse Helms and others. Although cloaked in backwoods conservatism like William Buckley, Jr.'s when he comments that Mapplethorpe's photographs show "the kind of thing men do to each other while communicating AIDS," the question raised by the opponents of the exhibition are important. Do works of art have to comply with any objective standard of morality, and more to the point "are we taking the position that any creation executed by an artist is 'art' -- and that it should be immune from criticism?" Artists seem to have adopted a position not as moral leaders or critics, but as victims of a tide of immorality. Instead of resisting the deluge to the senses of images of violence and pornography, they are swept up into it. They present their own fatalistic participation in the hypocrisy of a society that imposes laws but doesn't protect as an argument against it, but this message may not be enough. "The depiction of sodomy is primarily a statement, rather than a work of art," says Buckley. By distinguishing between art and non-art, Buckley avoids the issue of whether art is subject to morality. Instead he makes it a moral obligation to discern between what is and isn't art, allowing only what passes this moral standard to be art. In other words, something must have a certain kind of content to be art. Were we to accept
this idea, we would have to find a more suitable executor of discretion than Buckley, who believes that censorship is one way for a society to show "We care."\(^{24}\)

Even those not in favor of cutting all public funding often refer to the Mapplethorpe exhibit as an error in judgment. Requesting "more examples of individual moral judgment,"\(^{25}\) Meg Greenfield puts moral discretion in the hands of artists and curators. She acknowledges that "a great deal of enduring art and thought was initially shocking, even offensive."\(^{26}\) This comment has been not only a standby for artists defending creative license, but a creed. "Outrage has become routinized in art -- outrage has become the very product of art rather that a byproduct."\(^{27}\)

The idea that art responds to society is lost in the call for moral discretion in art. Art is considered to have a higher responsibility than the life that goes on around it. Rather than to document life, and question established values, art is seen to be subject to the laws of the state, whether legally or by its own integrity.

Artists, on the other hand, rally around artists' right and even obligation to shock. Indeed, one must simply flip through an art magazine to see images that might have once seemed shocking, but now are obligatory. Abaknaowicz's headless sculptures stare blankly, an ad for Tamara theatre boasts, "We call it the 'Living Movie'. Come prepared for wild, voyeuristic fun. Wear comfortable shoes," Jean
Fautrier's bust is half obliterated with parallel scratches, Jasper Johns includes a severed arm, St. Lewis lists as his medium "human skull with bottlecaps, sterling, semi-precious stones and found objects", and yet, images of violence and bloodshed are generally accepted now. It is the attacks on sexual and religious norms that provoke outrage. It is not considered shocking that art has adopted a position of reflecting the attitudes of society rather than attempting to change the course of history. In the same magazine I was just leafing through, I find also a row of 13 very regular metal logs labeled as sculpture by Walter de Maria, a wonderful pedestal for a missing sculpture by Chillida, Yamaguchi's flaccidly decorative collage with large sperm.28

Finding that shock has "been done", artists turn to minimalism and deconstruction to strip art of meaning. Their messages become indecipherable, even to the educated eye. They become a lesson in the meaninglessness of modern life -- the loss, in fact, of the aesthetic quality in society. Mapplethorpe's desire to bombard the eye with shocking images reflects not so much a desire to shock, but a desire to use the medium, as newscasters do routinely, to habituate society to the image, to strip it of meaning in other words, and thus to gain its acceptance.29 While 2 Live Cru is being banned, after all, the porn shop down the street prospers. It makes no sense for art to maintain moral standards while society fails to. Critics have asked not so much if art is subject
to morality, but also if art has a function other than the reflection of reality.

The exemption of art from moral laws becomes complicated by the increasingly nebulous borders between art and life. Performance art, when taken out of the context of the gallery or stage, becomes the actions that make up reality. Gilbert and George live their performance. These artists point out the pointlessness of any morality. They act out their statement against moral and aesthetic values. Perhaps their mistake is in distinguishing moral values, which are based on ideas of harmony, order, unity, and good, from aesthetic values. The question artists and their critics raise is, of course, what is art?
Step Five: Conventional morality does not give a sufficient impetus for action.

"Plants and people and animals grow because people are kind to them." (Mr. Rogers, episode 1585)

After having asked the question, "What is art?", I find it painfully plain that the question is really "What is life?" In order to distinguish art from life, if such a distinction is possible, we must discuss both. I will discuss only the aspects that I consider crucial to judgment.

Kant's epistemology consists of an inquiry into reason and intellect and their functions. He discusses what can be known and how we know what we know. He also questions whether metaphysics can exist as a science. In order to determine what can be known, Kant begins by categorizing knowledge as a priori (known independently of experience) and a posteriori (known based on experience), and as synthetic (connecting subject and predicate using a principle) and analytic (connecting subject and predicate by definition).

According to Kant, an a priori proposition is necessary (holds true for all possible experience) and universal (there is no possible exception). These features can't be arrived at empirically, because experience can't illustrate that something cannot be otherwise. Kant contradicts Hume's interpretation of cause and effect as repetition causing habitual connection of two events in the mind. Kant points out that we would not attribute universality to the
connection of cause and effect if it were learned from experience: "Whence could experience derive its certainty, if all the rules, according to which it proceeds, were always themselves empirical, and therefore contingent?"¹

If we remove all empirical features from an object, remaining are the ideas of occupied space and substance, which can't be removed. Likewise, the universality of rules of nature derives from concepts in the intellect. The concepts of the intellect allow experience, in the sense that it would be impossible to interpret sensed data without the synthesizing of the intellect.

All a priori judgments are synthetic, according to Kant, because they consist of applying concepts of the mind, which are a priori, to experience. Even math is synthetic because it must be applied to observed figures. "The greatest part of the business of our reason," he concludes, "consists in the analysis of the concepts which we already have of objects."² For Kant, metaphysics is an attempt to understand the principles of a priori synthesis.

Although he states that "it would be even more absurd not to admit the existence of things in themselves, or to suggest that one kind of experience is the only possible method of knowing objects,"³ he adds that it is not possible to know these things in themselves. Attempting to know things in themselves with our limited intellect would be to extend the fallacy that "principles of the possibility of experience be
considered general conditions of things in themselves."\(^4\)

Since experience is given identity by the concepts of the mind, then it is natural to wonder what is real behind the experienced phenomena, Kant continues. The only way for reason to be complete is through the concept of things in themselves. Though we can't know these things in themselves and can't conceive of the kind of reason a god would have, Kant allows a boundary where both pure thought and experience can coexist. The boundary is seeing the world "as if it were the work of a supreme will and intellect."\(^5\) Kant sees the idea of a supreme being as useful. It protects us from materialism, naturalism, fatalism. It is tied in with freedom and morality.

Morality for Kant is the categorical imperative: that a rational being act in such a way that he could will his action to be a universal law. Prudence is choosing the means to happiness, but morality commands certain conduct for its own sake. A person is an end in himself, and so can't serve as a means, "because otherwise nothing whatever could be found that would possess absolute value."\(^6\) He rules out suicide, false promises, and neglect of one's "capacities for greater perfection."\(^7\) He speaks of a "realm of ends,"\(^8\) or a union of rational beings by laws, which each person belongs to as lawgiver, as well as obeyer of laws. He mentions the dignity of morality. "Neither nature nor art has anything which, if dignity were lacking, they could put in its
place." The autonomy of the will is the highest principle of morality, and autonomy of the will depends on freedom.

Kant’s epistemology is very similar to Plato’s in one sense. Kant and Plato both lodge an important part of experience in the mind. Kant’s functions of the mind order experience. For Plato, learning is recollection of our knowledge of the Forms. Though we experience through perception, our perceptions of the world are not reliable. The recollected Forms, however, are reliable. Recollection of the Forms, or *a priori* knowledge, gives order to experience by pointing out that the sensed world is not the limit of our understanding, and by giving a point to reason. Likewise, Kant uses the *a priori* laws of the intellect not to prove, but to extrapolate higher uses of reason.

I find several problems in the practical application of Kant’s moral and epistemological argument. He speaks of the importance of dignity, but also of the rational being as the highest end in itself. Reason dictates choices that make logical sense when applied as universals. Choosing moral actions rationally and logically is a possibility of each human mind because the rational mind follows certain principles, like cause and effect. Each person, then, will follow certain rules, if he acts rationally, and with morality in mind as the highest good. I find Kant’s mistake in placing morality as the highest function of rationality, and rationality as the highest function of man. If morality is the highest good, then the highest function of the
rational being is to be morally good, which is the same as being rational in all circumstances requiring moral judgment. Now, if morality makes rational sense, and the rational being pursues it, then he pursues the same end as all other humans. In other words, he seeks to obey the same laws that any rational being acting in accordance with his rationality would obey in the same circumstances. Because the actions follow rational moral law, the important thing is that they follow the law, not the specific action in itself. The action’s specificity loses its importance, just as the doer’s specific rationality is not as important as the rationality it has in common with all mankind. Rationality, then, is reduced to logic, insofar as it adheres to laws dictated a priori. Freedom of will is subservient to logic. Because actions are judged logically, the specific circumstances are not seen by Kant as important.

Reason’s failure to aid in determining correct actions presents another problem in the practical application of Kant’s argument. Kant’s idea of laws of reason includes their own negation. By positing these laws as mental constructs, Kant allows for the possibility of alternate mental laws. Time, for example, can be reasonably shown not to exist, at least as an absolute entity, as Einstein has proven. Kant’s own positioning of natural laws in the mind has allowed for mind-boggling expansion of the powers of mind to create alternate realities.

Though Kant considers it a moral duty to develop one’s
talents, his specific talents, again, are subservient to morality. The specificity of the individual serves his general humanity. In this case, however, there is a contradiction between moral duties. For example, pursuing a talent may involve self-sacrifice. That is, often a form of art involves inhalation of deadly substances (as in oil painting) or maltreatment of the body (as in dancing), and, moreover, often artworks place their author in fear of his life, as we have seen in the case of Salman Rushdie. Self-preservation and pursuit of one's talents, then, can conflict. Pursuit of morality also often conflicts with self-preservation. Often moral pursuits set the individual against society or the norm, and result in the individual's death by execution, assassination, or suicide. Often pursuit of morality involves dangerous feats of heroism.

In other words, morality can not be the highest good if a rational being is an end in himself. If the rational being is an end, then he can't be used as a means, according to Kant. This argument is good when we think of sacrificing other people for personal ends. However, if a rational being creates a cause that he considers an end greater than himself, then according to Kant he can't use himself as a means in achieving that higher end. This rule inhibits freedom of will because it discards our ability to sacrifice ourselves for a greater good, unless we see our bodies as mere tools of our minds. If we think of body as separate from mind, however, the body can be sacrificed without
sacrificing the rational being. This, then, could be extended to other bodies in the way of our pursuit of a higher end, and so does not solve the moral problem. The separation of mind from body has always posed the question of the importance of the preservation of the body.

Kant's argument in favor of a kingdom of ends, likewise, is perfect in moral treatment of others, but is inadequate in moral treatment of the self. In fact, considering each rational being an end in itself involves an implicit self-sacrifice to those ends, in order that their rights can be preserved. The rational being, then, is important only insofar as he has voluntarily subjected himself to preservation of all other rational beings. This subjection of the rational being to the idea of his own identity as an end parallels the moral action, whose importance lies solely in its subjection to moral laws.
Step Six: Government contradicts morality.

Kant's argument can be solved with the placement of a different highest good, which integrates specific morality, rationality, and talent, in such a way that each may be sacrificed for the greater good.

Suicide is an issue that points out the futility of moral government. Glanville Williams traces the history of the law regarding suicide in America, England, and in various religions. The position varies from a belief in the sanctity of life, to a condemnation of cowardice, to the idea of the duty of the citizen. The discussion of the attempt to apply laws to someone who is clearly no longer a functioning member of society, or who at least is trying to make an exit from it, reveals the ludicrous paradox of a state's desire to protect a citizen by punishing it.

Likewise, and here we see another flaw in Kant's system, prison and execution are a problem-ridden means of punishment. Kant's laws, extracted from reason, can be written down and enforced. His criminals, one might suppose, have sacrificed their status as rational ends by not acting as rational lawmakers, and so may be dispensed with accordingly. However, punishment, for Kant, does retain respect for the person as end in himself. That is, he cannot be punished for a greater good, like example setting, but only because he has committed a crime. He loses, not his natural selfhood, but his civil selfhood. Thus Kant
recommends punishment appropriate to the crime, including the death penalty for murder. "His death, however, must be kept free from all maltreatment." According to Kant, failure to punish criminals makes all the members of society guilty in the crime.

Any moral system, however, when applied to government becomes fraught with inconsistencies, because of the particularities of each case, and the fallibility of human judgment. When Kant takes judgment from the actor and gives it to the justice system, he denies the greatest aspect of his system: the individual’s ability to judge for himself, and his status as lawgiver. Kant points out the "whoever steals anything makes the property of all insecure; he therefore robs himself of all security in property." Kant intends that retaliation should take the form of confiscating the criminal’s property for a time while he serves the state. Kant strips actions of their dignity. When the criminal forfeits security, he does this in an actual way without the necessity of retribution. Police action renders Kant’s statements false, because judgment is taken form the individual and put in the hands of the state. The individual never has to suffer the real consequences of his action, because the police will remove him and give him a sentence. He will never have to live in insecurity, after all, or meet the people he has robbed face to face. Retribution makes crime an integral part of a system beyond the control of the
individual. Police cause crime by assuming the need to prevent it, whereas, if the individual were obligated to be a moral agent on his own, he would be forced by practical need, to oblige. When Kant says that "all false art, all vain wisdom lasts its time, but it destroys itself in the end," he speaks of the absolute value of human work. When he discusses punishment, he denies that absolute value.

When Kant points out that suicide is not logical as a universal law, he does not allow the possibility of its appropriateness as a law with conditions. It could be universally lawful for all mass-murderers to commit suicide for example. When the moralizer does take conditions into account, however, his system becomes even more inconsistent, as Kant obviously was aware when he avoided this pitfall. Those Christians, for example, who are against abortion because of the sanctity of the life of the fetus, but allow abortion in the case of rape or incest, actually discredit God's ability to work, albeit mysteriously. They do not accept the possibility of good arising from evil. They, in fact, deny the sanctity of life with their attempt to reconcile popular scientific morality with religion.

As George Bernard Shaw explains, the root of the problem of crime is "the belief that virtue is something to be imposed on us from without... Living virtuously is an art that can be learnt only by living in full responsibility for our own action;...society must, whether it likes it or not, put up with a certain burden of individual error... The
disastrous people are the indelicate and conceited busybodies who want to reform criminals and mould children’s characters by external pressure and abortion."\(^4\)

Again, the sanctity of life is not protected in war. Although against abortion, “the Catholic religion permits killing in the course of a just war, and this killing may even involve infants who are in no wise responsible for the war.”\(^5\) It is this inconsistency in law that we have been discussing. The law decrees that murder is illegal, and then mandates it in the case of war. The arbitrary borders of the map, redrawn periodically, dictate the value of certain lives. Even the individual soldier does not have power of authority over his participation in war. It is assumed that no soldier will fight if given a choice, and so the soldiers are ordered to fight, when and where, and stripped of personal conscience by being clothed in the anonymous garb of regimentation. Meanwhile, those who give the orders do not have to see the consequences of their decisions. As Gandhi wrote in a letter to his son, violence has “two aspects—physical and passive. Passive violence in the form of discrimination, oppression, exploitation, hate, anger and all the subtle ways in which it manifests itself gives rise to physical violence in society.”\(^6\) War begins within society, in its way of thinking about its members, non-members, and their individual judgment.
Step Seven: Science and art attempt a valueless analysis of the world.

"The fairest thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the fundamental emotion which stands at the cradle of true art and true science." (Einstein, *The World as I See It*, p. 5)

In their book, *Modern Art and Modern Science*, Paul Vitz and Arnold Glimcher illustrate the parallel course in art and science of an analytical reductionist attitude toward vision. They suggest that abstraction, or reduction of information, shows an interest in elementary levels of perception. The flattening of the picture plane shows the awareness and attempt not to conceal that art is an illusion. Theorizing, not just by critics, but by the artists themselves, reflects a new awareness of the historical accomplishments of art. Vitz and Glimcher argue that historians have neglected the profound influence science has had on art, and that modern art is, in fact, not interpretable without taking this influence into account.

They cite many examples of scientific and artistic works in order to track the path away from synthetic-hierarchical thought towards analytic-reductionist thought. While analytic-reductionist thought attempts to break phenomena down to find underlying parts, thus assuming a more basic level will explain observations, the synthetic-hierarchical thought of the Middle Ages and Renaissance finds higher concepts to explain phenomena. Lower objects derive their identity from higher concepts, and the parts are all
interdependent in forming a whole.

According to Vitz and Glimcher, the paintings of the Renaissance show a hierarchical organization of elements so that one area of the canvas has more importance, while modern paintings often have surfaces that have no areas of greater importance, creating "a kind of visual egalitarianism."¹ They point out discoveries in science in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries of activity below eye level: cells, chromosomes, genes, molecules, atoms, elements, neutrons, protons, the unconscious. Compared with the work of Newton, whose work of greatest impact were his laws of nature, which explained and integrated phenomena, modern science offers insight into reality by finding smaller particles. They point out that, although Newton’s work on light revealed the existence of particles of light, this work was insignificant to an "aristocratic, hierarchical society."² (These particles, now called quanta, have naturally enough become the material of recent ground-breaking discoveries in physics.) Vitz and Glimcher also show the breaking down of science itself into many specialized fields as a symptom of the dominance of analytical thought, and point out the parallel division of art into many schools.

In order to show the parallel between art and science, Vitz and Glimcher focus on the study of vision itself, pointing out parallel interpretation of basic visual elements such as light, depth, color, space, time, form, optical
illusion, randomness, redundancy. They show the influence of science on art in a literal way, even to the borrowing of science’s "iconography". They try to show that the collapse of the hierarchical system that supported moral and social purposes for art brought artists to express a new view of vision, so that art could have a new function as a tool for broadening perception.

Vitz and Glimcher quote Flaubert’s wish to write a book about nothing. This stripped down ideal has been actualized more recently by modern artists like Ad Reinhardt and Andy Warhol, both of whose work is compared to scientific experiments on sensory deprivation being done at the time. Examples of paintings that exactly resemble scientific studies on vision are shown, and movements in art that were founded on scientific ideals are cited: Suprematism, Bauhaus, De Stijl, Constructivism. Vitz and Glimcher compare Manet’s slight skewing of objects, Cezanne’s fracturing of space, and Duchamp’s study of movement with Muybridge’s photographic sequences of stills of a moving object, and Morey’s time lapse studies. They compare Picasso’s fractured portraits with doubly exposed photographs. They point out an almost simultaneous development of non-Euclidean geometry and Cezanne’s and van Gogh’s spatial distortions.

I have given a thorough description of Vitz and Glimcher’s thesis because it raises many issues without providing an adequate explanation for them. By focussing on what they refer to as the perceptual quality of modern art,
they obscure the conceptual quality of it. Their own approach to the issue is an analytic-reductionist one: they reduce the issues in art to one, that of perception, and systematically analyze examples that prove a parallel between science and art. They dismiss arguments about art based on social change without acknowledging that social change and science are interrelated. There is no question that art and science have made a parallel journey, but by limiting their discussion to the science of perception, they deny the impact of other forms of science on art.

Vitz and Glimcher quote Cezanne as saying, "One must make an optic. One must see nature as no one has seen it before you," without assessing the implications of the statement. They point out an important distinction between art works simply about nothing, and art works "about themselves, for the questions raised are far more complex than the simple absence of a familiar subject." Since artworks are not simply about nothing, they are "self-referential". They refer to themselves and to their role in art history. Vitz and Glimcher quote Alan Spiegel: "Any understanding of a situation is always limited by the way the eye chooses to see it."

The attempt to see nature as nobody has before, has led directly to a condition in which art is no longer simply about nature, but about the viewer’s position in nature, and, more importantly, about art. The theorizing that Vitz and
Glimcher mention represents the self-analysis of art. The artist's inability to escape his point of view renders him powerless to confront nature. The desire to do a painting about nothing, epitomized by Ad Reinhardt, and seen, in a feeling version, in the black paintings of Mark Rothko, reflects a desire to have the last word, to be done with it, to end it all. Ad Reinhardt claimed to paint simply the last painting anyone can paint.6 This finality is mirrored, not in sensory deprivation, but in the creation of weaponry so powerful it can destroy everything. The attempt to paint what nobody has painted is parallel, not to studies in vision, but to studies in technology. It is the simultaneous feeling of helplessness in the face of the challenge and the desire to master the challenge that is reflected in the attempt to find the final frontier. These desires for absolute power and final renunciation of power are crystallized in the Star Wars program of Ronald Reagan -- absolute power in the final frontier. Like the arms race, a never-ending escalation of scientific discoveries rendered impotent by their own power, the arts race has been, since the Impressionists, one ground-breaking discovery after another. The job of the artist is to understand recent art history and blow the lid off it.

The idea of visual egalitarianism is also interesting in company with the breaking down of disciplines into specialized fragments. It is as if one person can never know the whole, but can only know a part really well. In society
this is seen as specialization, not merely in science, but also, of course, in assembly line production, in the intellectualizing of all disciplines, and the introduction of the computer into every field. While possibly rendering the dissatisfaction of all more equal, science has not done anything to reduce social stratification. Egalitarianism in America means that each job is a meaningless part of an even more obscure whole. At best, as in the case of a journalist or graphic designer, the worker is allowed to conceive and execute a product, but the introduction of the computer has robbed even these positions of the dignity of craftsmanship. All jobs, from drafting to publishing, are aesthetically the same, consisting mostly of long hours at the computer, rearranging elements, "cutting and pasting" meaningless parts to form a whole that doesn't have too much impact on society unless it's so obscene it generates instant controversy.

Likewise, education has become a necessity for all disciplines, but not for its own sake or the sake of increasing common ground between people in a field. Rather, education has become a way of further removing the whole of a discipline from the hands of the individual. One will never be able to understand all the academic mumbo-jumbo behind each movement of art, but unless he has a degree that shows he has made an attempt, his own ideas are irrelevant. Vitz and Glimcher discuss the change in art from painting about nature to painting about vision, but they don't mention the stripping of the power of the individual by the self-
referential quality of both science and art. They are not only inaccessible to the uneducated viewer, but even to the artist or scientist who hasn’t read up on the latest software. Art is, like every other jargon-ridden academic discipline, an insider’s affair.

As one professor put it, “As artists you should have opinions on issues in art.” The artist, like the scientist, is no longer free to work in relative isolation, doing battle with his own soul, but has an obligation to refer to his field, to justify his work, and to come up with some new relevant discovery. Reductionism in science and art are more than a fascination with analysis of vision: an artist is no longer trusted to have an autonomous self.

Vitz and Glimcher also choose an approach that doesn’t attempt to impose values on the question of the influence of science on art. While they point out in closing that the analytic-reductionist approach has limits and praise Chuck Close for using analysis in a synthetic fashion, in his building of a complex whole using analyzed parts, they do not discuss the quality of work that is simply reductionist, like the op-art of Robert Rauschenberg, or simply scientific, like photography. They do not consider that these works, which comprise only one aspect of artistic work, are not art at all, but are versions of scientific studies.
Step Eight: Although feminists accurately criticize random hierarchies, they merely propose alternate valueless analyses of the world.

In answer to Vitz and Glimcher's comparison between art and science, feminists might point out that this parallel is inevitable because both art and science reflect the point of view of the white male, and the progress of that point of view as recorded by history, another discipline created by men. "History is a story Western culture buffs tell each other,"¹ as Donna Haraway puts it. However, feminists favor the analysis of texts in terms of social context and point of view of the author, but oppose the science of vision and technological control of nature.

One feminist attack on science criticizes the "all-knowing" eye of science. In her article on science, Donna Haraway traces the progression of the feminist point of view on science. Beginning with imagining an "invisible conspiracy of masculine scientists and philosophers replete with grants and laboratories,"² who determine objective reality and "what can count as knowledge,"³ feminists turned to deconstruction. Like deconstructionist art critics, Haraway points out that "inside-outside boundaries in knowledge are theorized as power moves, not moves toward truth."⁴ She criticizes the ideas of objectivity and scientific method because they attempt a disembodied point of view and because scientist don't even use them in their work.
She describes scientific vision as representing an attempt to see all of nature and control it. She calls for "a successor science project and a postmodern insistence on irreducible difference and radical multiplicity of local knowledges."\(^5\) Instead of attempting an all-explaining, organic theory, she suggests the use of science "not in order to deny meanings and bodies, but in order to build meanings and bodies that have a chance for life."\(^6\) She harshly criticizes what she calls disembodied vision, in which the point of view is not considered a part of the theory, and so the theory is treated as objective knowledge.

E.A. Grosz likewise condemns what she refers to as "liberal feminism"\(^7\), which attempts to achieve sexual neutrality. She describes "feminisms of autonomy"\(^8\) which seek to develop "entirely new forms of theory based on women's experiences and perceptions rather than men's."\(^9\) She defines phallocentrism as a denial of the subjectivity of the masculine point of view. Accepting the position of the white male as objective means that masculine values presenting themselves as universal, truthful, and neutral are imposed on women. The commitment to a static, objective truth implies that scientific experimenters are interchangeable, and thus that the experimenter is not responsible for his results. The values of truth are described in terms of opposites, for example, "reason is surreptitiously defined by claiming it is
not corporeal, not based on passion, nor madness, nor emotions."10 Grosz says that feminists are attempting to "devise alternate modes of theorizing in which women's interests and not men's are represented,"11 that aren't in search of one absolute truth.

She stresses the importance of context, the interestedness of observation, and the responsibility of the observer for what he says. She argues that opposites perpetuate a hierarchy in which one term is superior to the other, and insists that feminists cover the middle ground of "both subject and object, self and other, reason and passion, mind and body."12 She says that it is not enough for women to gain equal entrance to masculine pursuits, but that feminism should pave the way for a completely new approach to knowledge, that men must "take back what they have produced and for us to see that this is only half of the productive possibilities of knowledge."13

Donna Haraway also stresses the importance of accepting the responsibility and limits of vision, and the specificity of the observer's point of view. She points out that relativism is the same as objectivity in its claim to show every angle while accepting no responsibility for point of view. Her chart of male and female approaches to knowledge, which she denies are "mutually exclusive", lists, in almost unintelligible jargon, feminist goals as "ethnophilosopohies, heteroglossia, deconstruction,
oppositional positioning, local knowledge, and webbed accounts."

Lisa Tickner applies feminism to art history. She argues a deconstructionist point of view toward art, condemning the attempt at objectivity, the envisioning of the artist as hero and the painting as a static entity divorced of process, the treatment of women as signs, and the addressing of artworks toward a male audience. Like Grosz, Tickner chastises males for letting masculinity stand for humanity. She raises interesting issues of women as audience when she asks whether the woman viewer is to identify with the nude -- "the passive and fetishized spectacle of woman on screen" -- the male voyeur, or both.

While astute in their criticism of the state of affairs in our time, I find the feminists' arguments presented here to be guilty of exactly the difficulties they find to be at fault. While criticizing men in their attempts to see everything from all points of view, they recommend exactly the same thing. Although they are right in advising the observer to be responsible and speak from a body and a point of view, they deny the possibility of absolutes. They insist on "irreducible difference and radical multiplicity of local knowledges." They call for a smashing of the old system of thought -- the idea of the one, objectivity, universality -- and substituting multiple points of view. Instead of calling for something new, in fact, they are asking to perpetuate the
breakdown of absolute vision that began, as Vitz and Glimcher point out, in the mid 1800s and led to relativism, and then to denial of the power of the self to make judgments. In science, this denial is reflected in the analytic-reductionist attempts to study ever smaller particles, simply to observe. As the larger scene in science becomes more frightening and institutionalized, beyond the control of the individual, the scientist turns to the new frontier of the infinitesimal. The feminist criticism of this form of scientific inquiry as a masculine attempt to destroy the world seems harsh, especially as some of the vision-oriented scientists, like Jacques Cousteau, have turned to nature and environmentalism.

The feminist desire to fracture knowledge into a multiplicity of points of view is parallel to the scientific community’s division into disciplines, which has fractured science into non-judgmental analysis. Feminism is the fear of absolute judgment and thus accountability carried to an extreme. While condemning men for their unwillingness to accept their responsibility for the world by acknowledging their male point of view -- an excellent criticism -- the feminists themselves do not accept the accountability of women for what has come to be.

These feminists have accepted psychology without doubting it, and that is because it pulls the self away from controllable areas and contributes to the fracturing of identity. If there is a biological or psychological reason
for actions, then blame can be shifted from free will. They accept the notion of the phallic symbol, for example, without questioning it, and only because it represents women’s general blamelessness for the course of history. If the world is seen as the creation by males of a ravaged countryside of phallic structures (instead of, as one four-year-old sees it, a land of people symbols, or cities built with domed breasts and many-wombed buildings), then women are not to blame for their own participation. Women have participated in and enjoyed such phenomena as the fetishization of woman. Women who bleach their hair or apply fingernail polish indulge in a daily regimen of becoming the standardized woman. I hope to make myself a part of a long tradition of autonomous selves who did not, could not, believe what was expected of them, and consequently refused to participate: among them Socrates, Rembrandt, Salman Rushdie, Martin Luther King, Jr., Gandhi, Emily Dickinson, Eleanor Roosevelt, Albert Einstein, Abraham Lincoln. I do not class myself with those women who embraced their position, accepted unquestioningly what they liked to think of as their lot, or considered themselves victims of a patriarchal society in which they were the recipients of luxury.

Any thinker has considered himself both from his point of view and from without, and has considered the world from his point of view and from without. Any thinker has taken the risk of associating himself with his work. Any
trespasses on this accountability are made by institutions, and institutions, like marriage, are made up of women as well as men. Women gave orders to slaves in our country, and for that, I would rather not associate myself with a particularly female suffering. Women have hoarded the knowledge learned from child rearing, and then denied the very existence of that knowledge. Radical feminists accuse liberal feminists of becoming just like men, but women have always been just like men, both participating equally in a division of labor between classes and sexes. The real discrimination has been against all people who are denied equal participation in child rearing, equal control over politics, equal influence on business, and equal judgment over what life is and should be. The hierarchy that feminists condemn -- the pursuit of truth, knowledge, and the one -- has long since disappeared. Scientists pursue detailed knowledge of details, art has become constricted to the attempt to do what has not been done before -- the quest, in short, for a saleable gimmick -- and philosophy has become a quibbling over logic. "The signs of that constriction are everywhere today -- in the small ambitions of art, in its lack of any effort towards spirituality, in its sense of career rather than vocation, in its frequently bland occupation with semantics at the expense of the deeper passions of the creative self." 17

Women have not demanded enough of themselves as humans and as artists, and they have not required anything of men. Rewriting art history will not change that. Men's fault has
been the same, except they require nothing of women. Like Penelope, weaving her tapestry by day, and unraveling it by night, women have traditionally been enslaved to the repetitious tasks of everyday life, while the men have led lives of adventure and pursuits of immortality. The food that women prepare is eaten, the dishes are washed and used again. The tasks that form the backdrop for nobler pursuits are satisfying, but ultimately forgotten. Without them there would be no science, philosophy, or art, and yet they are the forgotten arts. Women do not realize that their history is inextricable from men’s. Women participated.

Simone de Beavoir describes the menstrual cycle as building a cradle each month, only to tear it down again. By the time women have joined the work force as equals, it is too late. Stunned, women find that men’s positions also consist of the circular routine of the everyday. Men go to work to make money to buy cars to drive to work in massive traffic jams. They go to school to get jobs and go to school to keep their jobs. Their jobs are about products or about money. They watch television about products and money, and spend their money, which they earned by advertising products, on the products they see advertised, and the products cost more because of the price of advertising and packaging, so they put in a few more hours at work to break even. There are no jobs that aren’t the same as doing dishes. Women and men can no longer wage anonymous wars, but should finally take responsibility for hand to hand combat.
Step Nine: Ernest Becker’s science of man offers an insightful critique of our time, but his definition of the self and meaning as created a posteriori leaves his proposed solution inadequate.

Although the feminist ideal of responsible and accountable actions is valuable, their rejection of the absolute reduces their ideal to just another faction of the reductionist perception of the self as unable to judge. Ernest Becker offers a beautifully insightful criticism of the loss of the power of judgment in the individual. "Homo sapiens...was to lose anything to be really proud of -- family and heredity, a feeling of one’s place in history, a coherent and critical world view, most of the special craftsmanlike skills, an agreed preserve of inner dignity -- it all gradually vanished with hiring lines, time-clocked work, efficiency, and dedication to production and profit.”¹

In 1968, before recent feminists’ critique of knowledge and science, Becker traces a long history of the criticism of science, including the Abbé de Saint-Pierre’s attack on science divorced from human affairs, Diderot’s call for a science centered on man, Kant’s idea of a morality made by man, Rousseau’s criticism of blindly following science. The Enlightenment criticism, that "science had become a fad... It promised automation advance,"² still holds true now. Saint-Simon, too, criticized scientists who conducted experiments without regard for the consequences. Comte intended to synthesize morality and science, thinking that science could be applied to all human problems and, with progress as the goal, solve them “by extending rational, scientific analysis
into all domains -- human and social, as well as physical and natural."³ To reverse the hierarchy and put man at the top of scientific inquiry, the sciences would enable progress toward the betterment of man, "a thoroughgoing empiricism in the service of human values, a mature and controlled idealism of the most realistic kind."⁴

Becker discusses the problems of body and mind, and man and society. He credits James Mark Baldwin with solving the mind and body issue by showing how "the purely symbolic level of human activity grows out of the purely organic level of animal activity."⁵ Thus individual consciousness is two-fold -- organismic and cognitive. Dualism develops as the child becomes aware of inner thoughts against the outer world. Constantly having to adjust his memory of the outer world makes him recognize the separateness of his thoughts from the world. "For the symbolic animal [the self] achieves the highest value, and even the body which opposes it as an object can be sacrificed for the sake of the values it has learned."⁶ Like Dewey, Baldwin saw aesthetic experience as thought meeting a problem and becoming united with the world, "the unity that is forged in successful, adaptational action."⁷ Baldwin's equation, according to Becker, was "individual development = the synthesis of inner thoughts and outer acts = unity = satisfactory experience for the uniquely symbolic animal = individuation of the most complete kind in nature."⁸ Dewey's aesthetic theory, as we have seen, "consigned man to his full fate as an organism within
Marx's idea of alienation, Becker continues, consisted of a person objectifying itself in relation to symbols instead of objects. He saw that the assembly-line and wage labor made him a stranger in a world in which he should be creatively involved. The worker loses the sense of community, self, and responsibility for products and actions. Since man is an open creature, not fixed, he is formed by society, which then takes on its own character. Kant thought that only by aiming, paradoxically, for "maximum individuality within maximum community,"\textsuperscript{10} could alienation be overcome.

Becker's most brilliant observations are on the ethical values of aesthetics. He cites Ortega Y Gasset, Cassirer, Max Scheler, and Georg Simmel in his discussion of man as \textit{Homo Poeta}, creator of meaning. (The best part about Becker is his ability to acknowledge his debt to earlier thinkers, and to synthesize their thoughts in his own wisdom.) Since man is not instinctually grounded in the world, Becker explains, because he develops a self by interacting with the world, he is continually creating reality. The cycle of the everyday is not enough to sustain his interest, and so, to render reality meaningful, man creates meaning. This creation of meaning, although playful, "is deadly earnest, because without this artificiality, man has no distinctive world... When man loses the conviction of his everyday social performance, his basic and elemental life meaning grinds to a halt."\textsuperscript{11} This idea recalls Kant's idea of the usefulness of
posing a higher reality, although there are no rational grounds to do so.

Art work, according to Becker, represents possessing the world by infusing it with meaning. The aesthetic object is the most convincing form of the fabrication of meaning. Men need the freedom to create new meaning, or their lives are meaningless, and furthermore, they must believe that their creations are real. Becker concludes that the best support for man’s convictions is the human community. Ritual gives aesthetic meaning to the world. “To stage the dream, then, is to create life, because one creates more visible nature; to ‘live the dream’ is to partake of the richer life that one has staged.”12 If man doesn’t stage the world, it is not his, and he is not much more than an animal, because the world itself is neutral. Becker points out that shared culture enables people to create their sense of value, and the individual with different ideas is a threat. “Primitives managed, for the most part, to allow the individual the relative freedom to celebrate his energies in a rich present, and they managed to combine this celebration with a strict code of social mutuality.”13 Modern industrial man has lost ritual, and thus the celebration of himself as he moves through life.

Now, Becker adds, there is a loss of dignity, shown in the pervasive fear of death, and the fetishization of woman as love object, because the individual doesn’t participate in the world in a self-reliant way. He considers life “overwhelming, precarious, even unfair.”14
Prior to the feminists, then, Becker has pointed out the loss of responsibility for one's actions, the value neutrality of the scientific method, the failure to consider the experimenter's intentions as part of scientific inquiry, the fragmentation of science into disciplines, and the fetishization of woman. For Becker, studying objects in isolation loses sight of the importance of their interrelationships. Becker sees values as emergent, dependent on knowledge. He combines Dewey's idea of knowledge through scientific inquiry, and the feminist ideal of knowledge through dialogue. He suggests that as scientific experimentation with man as the center expands into all areas of life, values will tend to standardize and universalize, as "certain values are inseparable from certain given situations."¹⁵ Like Kant, Becker suggests that the human mind works in a certain standard way. Socialism is inevitable, he continues, because the scientific approach to economics dictates it. He combines intrinsic and instrumental values in his idea that values are created in action, but "that there is a mandate in the human spirit for the kind of values we should further."¹⁶ He decides that "uniform institutional arrangements that respond to intellectual, critical control are the only way of guaranteeing a multiplicity of personal values."¹⁷

Becker defines the good as what liberates man from automaticity and allows freedom. The science of man, the merger of science, philosophy, and religion, would enable choices to be under free, human control. Like the feminists,
he calls for "a tentativeness in both ethics and science... it would go beyond all absolutisms toward a true human freedom... it would be tentative and transactional."¹⁸

Because Becker's views are close to my own, I must point out where we part company. First, Becker calls for a science in charge of establishing a firm society in which the aesthetic whole can be pursued, while he gives art the highest function of man, that is the creation of meaning. Secondly, for Becker, the child gains his identity from society, and the individual later clashes with society in his efforts to create meaning.

Becker calls for a science in charge of society, with the progress of man as its goal. The highest function of man within that society is the creation of meaning through art. Here he overcredits science with the ability to cause man's progress, and he overcredits art as the highest way of creating meaning. If art is creation of meaning, then there is no satisfactory cause for the belief in the created meaning. If we consciously build up meaning in which to act out our lives, as Becker says, then there is no actual meaning built. It is, as he points out, a play meaning, a cultural ritual to perpetuate our participation in the farce. Furthermore, he places science in an ethical role, as the support of art. Science is not a field of knowledge, but a field of inquiry. It, like art, represents the quest for meaning.

The freedom in society to create meaning would be the same as the freedom to create meaning through science. he assumes that science can be used to better man's condition.
Science is not capable of this betterment, and neither is art. Science, art, work, games, math, thought, and dialogue are the methods for pursuing meaning. If we give these disciplines the task of creating meaning, then we deny any real purpose in them. That is, it is impossible to pursue meaning if we are the makers of it. The feminists and Becker, in praising point of view, strip the world of real meaning. In order to aestheticize everyday life, we must take science out of it as a governing entity, and relegate it to its true position as one of the methods for pursuit of meaning. The aestheticization of everyday life can never be a substitute for meaning, but it can enrich the cultural backdrop of the pursuit of meaning.

For Becker, the individual gains its identity from society, but later clashes with it. Becker describes the despair, fear, and guilt an artist feels after creating a work of art as the result of creating unique meaning, "for which the singular person afterward feels helpless and unsupported." He attributes this unsupported feeling to "the fact that one's insides...are never wholly one's own."20

If a self derives its values from its culture, and builds upon those values, reacting with them, in order to reach full individuation, than there is some identity in the self separate from society that enables it to be contrary to the very society that reared it. The ability to doubt at least must be prior to the education of the infant in order for it later to turn against society in its own quest for freedom. Becker's assertion that society can provide meaning
for the individual is misguided, because a constructed meaning is not an acceptable substitution for found meaning. As we have seen, a fabricated meaning, like a fabricated self, does not justify behavior that consists in searching for answers to new questions. While it is true that a social structure that enable freedom of thought and development of an aesthetic whole is an ideal, it is not a substitute for the quest for meaning.

Becker's definition of art as created meaning is also at fault because art, like science, usually results in more questions. An artist is often questioning the possibilities of knowledge, as Vitz and Glimcher have shown in their analysis of the questioning of vision. As Einstein puts it, "One does the best service by giving them some elevating work to do and thus indirectly elevating them. This applies most of all to the great artist, but also in a lesser degree to the scientist."21

Becker's mistake, like that of the feminists, is in denying the existence of absolutes, and hence the universality of the self. He speaks of the self as an a posteriori product of culture, and then laments the loss of faith in the ability of the individual to form meaning. If he is a product of culture, the most he can do is perpetuate culture in some way. How can he trust his judgment more than that of society? Becker does not distinguish between art and craft. Craft could be seen as the forming of a meaningful aesthetic culture. Art, as one of the inquiries of knowledge, has less to do with aesthetics.

Becker's description of alienation, for example, makes
true sense only if the individual is a universe in himself. Becker, like the feminists, preaches tolerance, but tolerance implies a tendency to be intolerant. The reason for this intolerance, as Becker has described, is an attempt to keep whatever meaning a closed culture can offer. Real tolerance, however, does not lie in insisting that everyone’s vision is limited, as the feminists do in stressing the absence of objective knowledge, and as Becker does by giving man the ability to create meaning, but rather in admitting that each man is a universe unto himself. In order to expand his knowledge, then, each man must interact with the other objectively knowing selves, and must interact with all forms of knowledge discovered and undiscovered.

Becker also denies the possibility of absolute knowledge outside of the self. He sees the empirical world as material for man’s creation of meaning. He sees the beautiful as the union of the good and the true -- in other words, art is the creation of meaning according to a morality in which human betterment is the center of all science. His morality is utilitarian, after all, and as it does serve man is very eloquent. Unfortunately, in defining the aesthetic whole as a product of man, instead of as a discovery of man, he makes man’s interaction with the world a voluntary mastering of it, instead of a necessary inquiring into it. It’s possible that my goals for society are the same as his in practice, but my plan for the individual is more far-reaching.
Step Ten: The specific is universal and the aesthetic whole is a spiritual goal.

I would like to pause and define the term “aesthetic”, but I find that I can’t. It is a word that has been much bandied about, to include art, to exclude art, to include nature, craft, emotion, to exclude them. I find it sufficient to say that aesthetics are the study of beauty and leave it at that. Then perhaps I should pause and define beauty, as long as I have paused. There are thousands of ways to define it. The abundance of writing on the subject reveals not only differing definitions, but also differing views of which objects are actually beautiful. It turns out that it is not important to define beauty either, but instead to explain its ability to crop up in the most unlikely places, often accompanied by its intimate friend ugliness. Not only do people disagree, one insisting an object is beautiful while the other finds it ugly, but a person will also disagree among himself. He will at one time find something beautiful, and later call it ugly, or he will go so far as to say that it is beautiful because it’s ugly! He may be trying to be facetious, but he looks so earnest. It may be that he is acknowledging the complexity of judgments of value.

These judgments are complicated because they involve assessing both the object’s possession of qualities, and the tastes of the viewer. Let us not disparage the value of taste in making judgments. We are born with certain a priori faculties: to sense, to recognize patterns, and to prefer. These three faculties are the three required in making
aesthetic judgments. One perceives through his senses, discriminates between the things he perceives, and chooses among them according to his tastes. One’s tastes form one’s whole identity, and are specific to the individual.

The study of children proves the existence of these a priori tastes. Infants are born with a set of potential abilities existing in the layout of the brain, and the desire to put these to use. These abilities are rendered specific to the individual by the existence of a completely formed character. The character of the infant determines, among other things, the extent to which his environment will affect him and his responses to his environment. Babies maintain pure thought before birth, as dream studies have shown, and are born still engaged in thought, but now accompanied by bodies that form a link with the outside world. The infant mind contains degrees of taste for movement, creation, and expression. Curiosity, for example, is a taste for learning, and doubt is a taste for autonomy.

Studies on the abilities of newborns have shown that the mind of the infant contains much of the groundwork for future actions. The baby’s senses are fully developed and functioning, and he can distinguish between close stripes and grey, between straight and curved lines, between rich and minimal contour, between C and C sharp, between spoken syllables “pa” and “ba”, between a plain white field and a white field containing a bar of very slightly off-white (the bar of white differs by 5%). A 4-month-old’s ability to discriminate between blue, green, yellow, and red indicates
innate hue categorization.  

Newborns' acute sensitivity to frequency change especially in the frequency range of human speech, is a prerequisite to their analyzing complex sounds, including speech, and indicates that "the mechanism underlying future speech perception may well be innate." Dr. Spock also refers to this ability to recognize speech patterns in pointing out the newborn's ability to understand not words, but tone of voice. The newborn shows preference for gentle, low speech. One 6-week-old repeatedly showed a decided preference for a hummed F-C-A progression by smiling.

Each infant has a wholly formed system of tastes extending from how he prefers to be held to what patterns catch his eye. Possession of an a priori individual system of tastes is universal. So we find that what is completely specific is universal. Specificity is not opposite to universality, but an integral part of it. At birth we have complete contact with our specific tastes, but they get clouded over by learning. They also must confront ever more complicated choices.

The specific system of preferences includes the body and its relationship to the world. Mind is only the same as body because everything received by the mind passes through the senses. The only thing we can know, from birth onward, is our reaction to what we perceive, and this reaction is based solely on taste. Our original tastes are prior to body, and remain intact, but respond to all perceptions and discriminate between what we accept as knowledge, and what we
reject.

The main tenet of aesthetic philosophy has been either that there is absolute aesthetic value, or that the aesthetic value is subjective. This is the same division we have seen between all opposites -- hot and cold, alive and dead, left and right, black and white, right and wrong, beautiful and ugly, body and mind, process and product, zero and infinity. Opposites do not exist, even as a construction of the human mind. The opposite is always accompanied by its opposite in the mind. Not only do we suspect and fear that the opposite may be true whenever we suggest an idea, but we also can’t attempt to find a dividing line between any two opposites. Hot and cold, for example, become warm between them, but by degrees. Any distinction determining at which temperature cold becomes warm would be arbitrary.

The physiological explanation for heat sensation is that the sensors for cold and warmth in human skin are two separate types of nerve receptor. Cold receptors respond to temperatures below body temperature. The stimulus for both is the same, that is, heat, “since temperature itself is only an expression of the relative amount of this energy present.” Apparently, then, the division between warm and cold would be roughly 98.6 degrees Fahrenheit for humans. However, an experiment on false sensations shows that heat sensation is arbitrary. The left hand is soaked in hot water and the right in cold water for a few minutes. Then both hands are immersed in tepid water. The left hand feels the tepid water as cold, and the right hand feels it as hot. In the middle of the experiment, moreover, when the hands are in
the hot and cold water, adaptation occurs. That is, the hands become used to the temperature of the water, and no longer react to it as hot or cold. In everyday experience, we see this adaptation to experience at the swimming pool, where people always insist, “The water’s warm once you get in.” We also see adaptation in our reactions to the same temperature in different seasons. In winter, when the temperature rises to 40 degrees, everyone goes outside with no coat, but in summer, when the temperature drops to 40 degrees, everyone puts on his jacket.

Even the sensation of hot and cold is the same one. We withdraw the affected hand suddenly, and a drawn-in breath becomes a sigh of relief if we are merely chilled, not burned. The physiological explanation for this reaction is simple. Extreme temperatures are not experienced by the warm and cold receptors alone. “At very hot or cold temperatures the skin loses its acute sensitivity... Evidently, the sensation of extreme heat is due partly to temperature and partly to pain.”9 Hot and cold, then, are not opposites but varieties of reaction to heat. No wonder Socrates did not trust information gained through the senses.

Zero and infinity are likewise difficult to accept as opposites. Created to explain, on the one hand, nothingness, and on the other hand, eternity, they explain nothing. It is as difficult to fathom absence as eternal presence. In fact, space, the infinite zero, is the most difficult thing to comprehend. If something can be both nothing and forever, then infinity and zero are not opposite.

There are also gradations of specificity and
universality, but when something is completely specific, then it is also completely universal. Because the self is by nature composed of absolutely specific attributes, we sense the presence of the absolute and the specific and assume their separateness. Emotions seem to refer to specific events and sensations, while reason appears able to transcend the everyday and arrive at general conclusions. Reason refers no more only to the absolute than emotions refer only to the specific. It is in art that we find the unity of reason and emotions, and it is in art also that we find the portrayal of the absolute and the specific. Perception of the absolutely specific, not in representational terms, but in the life of the picture itself, evokes those Kantian rational emotions that correspond to our own rationally feeling would. Like a self, the painting has its own objective truth, but the objective truth lies in its specific identity as its own self, the only one of itself, the absolutely specific self, which must be taken on its own terms because there are no terms other than itself which can explain it. Like a self, it evades all classification save the class of itself. It has absolute specificity -- it has, for want of a better term, a soul.

This absolute specificity can be termed aesthetic wholeness. The artist does not consciously make art. The artist paints what pops into his mind. Even the well-planned painting begins with an idea that finds itself in the artist's mind. It is the absolute in the specific of the artist's soul that inspires the artist with ideas, and it is the specific in the absolute that dictates their execution.
Step Eleven: The aesthetic whole is also a moral imperative.

All life is taken on aesthetic terms. There is no morality that is not defined by aesthetic values, and likewise there is no art without a sort of morality. The very term “value” is an aesthetic idea. The idea that one thing is worth more than another is a matter of taste. Any system of morality is based on taste. We have seen that taste is specific to each self and is a priori. Each taste is a special form of ugliness, being limited. This specifically formed system of uglinesses composes a particular beauty. This beauty is one of a kind -- it is the soul. It is beauty composed of ugliness. The tastes are ugly because they prevent us from seeing objects for what they are. Even as social roles are ugly because they impose artificial limits, tastes blind us to the beauty in other objects. But combined they are beautiful because they give us a particular identity and beauty so particular as to be a universal entity. Without this combination of uglinesses, we would be unable to comprehend the other. Since there is no class to describe each particular beauty, each beauty is a class in itself. Each taste is also a form of chaos, because it causes apparently wanton choices, but all of the tastes together form order, because they determine an entire way of thinking, complete in itself.

There is a common ground for all taste systems, and that is that if we abandon the idea of morality, and address issues in terms of their contribution to the aesthetic whole, then we can find a code of actions. The soul is absolutely
specific, and must acknowledge the absolutely specific nature of all souls. In order to achieve the aesthetic wholeness of our life, we must attempt to know our soul, but in order to know our soul, we must pursue aesthetic wholeness. Because of the absolute specificity we share with all other souls, aesthetic wholeness for each self depends on aesthetic wholeness of all other selves. Unlike the bleeding heart liberal who must donate a certain amount of money to charities to ease the pain of conscience that accompanies his wealth, each soul is truly responsible for the aesthetic wholeness of his others. That pain of conscience is not actually a moral twinge, it is an aesthetic one. He finds poverty distasteful, and so finds it distasteful to enjoy his apparent aesthetic pleasures while others suffer. Since there is a blot on his aesthetic outlook, he tries to clear his conscience by donating money. What he does not realize is that, in order to achieve any sort of aesthetic pleasure, he must pursue his soul. Because he fails to do that, he pursues aesthetic ends instead. These can never form an aesthetic whole without the understanding of his soul. The objects are not enough to be tasteful, because they allow the idea of the opposite to enter — that is, the idea of the have-not. Any time the opposite enters as an opposite, it enters as an opponent. If, on the other hand, an opposite is taken as part of its opposite, it becomes part of the path to discovery of the self, or soul. If he has, but has not, simultaneously and not exclusive of each other, then he catches a glimpse of his absolute specificity. So instead of donating money while enjoying his luxury, the bleeding heart
liberal would be better off embracing poverty's own beauty, and taking it on simultaneous with his own wealth. In other words, he will be in direct contact with poverty, and what he must do in order to achieve his aesthetic wholeness will become manifest.

It becomes clear that the aesthetic wholeness of the one is directly dependent on the aesthetic wholeness of all. Our own specificity, which is also the part of us that is absolute, is the starting and ending point of all humor. Humor elevates us above our situation, as so many have said, but only by planting us in our place much more firmly. The ability to be outside ourselves is the very same as the ability to be inside ourselves. Because our self is absolutely specific, we are always both inside and outside of ourself. We can never picture what it must be like to be someone else, nor can we picture what it is like to be ourself, but we can always visualize the completeness of the other self, because our self has the capacity for completeness. Because we could never be the other self, being so specific in our own identity, we could just as easily be the other self, it being so specific also. All selves share in this absurd specificity. We are responsible for others finding their aesthetic whole because we are dependent on them to give us ours.

The artist may desire self-exile, but he is also dependent on the audience. More than being dependent on the audience for a listening ear, he is dependent on them because he wants to contribute to their aesthetic wholeness. He is attempting to give of his own specificity in order that they
may enrich theirs. He is dependent on them and responsible to them. He desires to participate in the aesthetic wholeness of the whole aesthetic being, and more than this, desires the participation of all the others. The only way for the artist himself to pursue his soul is through the participation of everyone in their own pursuit of soul.

The only morality necessary is living for the aesthetic whole, because in order to live aesthetically, one must not only be responsible for one's actions, but also know what the actions are. One must do his own actions, not let them be done for him by someone else. A scientifically controlled society that provides a comfortable setting for its citizens is not good enough, because it obscures the actions of its citizens. Packaged meat, for example, does not vaguely resemble the killing required to produce it. Electric lights do not have anything to do with oil or nuclear waste. It is not whether each matter is right or wrong that is important, but that each agent knows exactly what has occurred. People need to know their actions, come to grips with meaning, fight life head on, "meet your accusers face to face in the rain,"¹ before they can begin to know themselves.

Nothing should make an artist sadder than war, the simultaneous violation of the respect for the wholeness of each person, and denial of the meaning of actions. In art we learn that chaos and dissonance are productive, because in art they strengthen the bond of non-opposites. Chaos and order are seen to be extremes of the same feeling, not opposite to each other, but related in their pursuit of wholeness. In art, chaotic elements demand to be taken for
what they are, while in war chaos is a means to a planned order. Taken as the opposite of order, chaos is a means, as opposed to an end. In art we learn that means and ends are not opposites, but parts of a never-ending process. Ends are means to another end. When chaos is not seen as an aesthetic end in itself, it loses its value as a means in forming an aesthetic whole. Necessarily, because I am not opposite to you, I must not only respect, but also engage in, your pursuit of understanding of your soul.

The world of children also requires the balance of order and chaos. Learning a language requires the concepts of order and creativity. The ability to learn language is innate, as is shown in the case of an isolated child who quickly learned a language despite having been deprived of continued exposure to it at early stages. Jerrold Katz and Noam Chomsky argue that the empirical evidence alone does not provide sufficient information to construct a language system. The impoverished data available to the child, consisting mainly of sentences that break rules, is not enough to create a sense of the structure of language from nothing.

Chomsky uses the abstractness of the principles underlying the interpretation of sentences and the universal character of linguistic structure in his proof. The most important aspect of language, however, is the creativity involved in sentence building. The child "is capable of pairing semantic and phonetic interpretations over an indefinite range of sentences to which he has never been exposed. Thus his knowledge extends far beyond his
experience and is not a 'generalization' from experience."²

Chomsky emphasizes creativity and the infinite ways of organizing words to express ideas. The reason for the infinite variety of sentences, as with the infinite variety of chess games, is that each self is absolutely specific.

There is no such thing as good and bad. Morality is an evil deceiver if ever there was one. The idea that there must be rules and regulations to force society's members to give what they would freely give, and do what they would freely do, were there no laws to bind them to it, is ludicrous. The idea that an autonomous universal being needs to be subjected to leaders who know what is good for him is preposterous.

Studies on the drawings of children have established the innate existence of order. Like artists, children express a taste for ordered experience. Chaos is only useful within the confines of carefully planned routines.

Perhaps most notable about sequence in drawings is the degree of order and consistency children reveal, even as young as three, four, or five. At a time when in much of their other behavior they appear whimsical, irrational, or easily distracted by the last thing to come along, their drawings reveal a great deal of order. In a sense, they proceed according to plan. To me, the discovery of this orderly sequence is as important as the finding that young children's language follows discernible rules, or as exciting as Lila Ghent's finding that young children are very consistent in their judgments about whether abstract shapes (or their own designs) are upside down or right-side-up. In all these cases children's behavior follows an identifiable principle that can be seen to change with age. So the apparent disorder in children's behavior -- its apparent lack of principles or rules -- is due to our own ignorance of the principles they work by.³
Children's preference for order appears also in their preference for routine. It is external order that provides the stability necessary for creative thought. Study of the infant reinforces the universality of the need also for freedom. The infant requires affection and stimulation in order to grow and learn. Psychologists agree that children who are not given enough affection experience "failure to thrive," in which they simply cease to grow. That the body is influenced so immediately by the psychic state of the child illustrates not only the inseparability of mind and body, but also a set of preconceived expectations in the child. If the child acquires a self only in response to his environment, then he will accept any treatment as normal.

Adorno hits on the complicated nature of things in his discussion of the interaction of opposites: "art is and is not being-for-itself," but he keeps the idea of a logical progression of events following a universal order. His mistake is in preserving the idea that opposites are really opposite. We can accept the idea of soul without separating it from body. Plato makes the same mistake when he describes the sensed world as reflecting the Forms. Although Plato considers reflecting the Form to be a diminishing of the object's status, we could consider the relationship of Form and object to be mutual. The Form derives its concrete identity from the body even as the body derives its essence from the Form. Neither stands on its own.

Kant, in his discussion of epistemology, likewise points out that experience is not possible without the concepts of our mind to synthesize our perceptions into an order. In
other words, the world of sense is given identity by being experienced. The mind depends on the empirical for data, but the empirical depends on the mind to become experience. Kant also points out that reason desires the existence of noumena, although noumena’s existence can’t be proven.

Einstein describes the interdependence of soul and experience when he maintains that “cosmic religious feeling is the strongest and noblest incitement to scientific research.” Although a stable community is necessary for development of individuals, it is crucial, for Einstein, that the individual not be subjugated to society. “Creative, independently thinking and judging personalities” who enable the growth of society, need freedom for the creativity that in turn enriches society.

Studies on children deprived of freedom show that the selfhood of children is limited by restrictions. Children require and choose order, but are stifled by too many rules. The reason for this requirement of an unrestrictive order is that the specific tastes of each self need both autonomy and the autonomy of others in order to form independent judgments.

Dr. Spock emphasizes the responsibility of the parents to establish a secure foundation for the child, but not by protecting the child. Rather, he recommends letting the child cry a little over small things so that the child will know that small things are not disasters. In other words, he suggests that the child’s autonomy will prevail. He mentions that it is difficult to learn to inhabit a body, and always
reiterates the necessity of allowing the baby room to establish his own secure selfhood. Left to their own devices, left to act according to their own tastes, people would choose not hedonistic pleasures, but feelingly rational paths leading to a tasteful life.

There is no need for laws or censorship. Everything may be spoken or done, because if people are left to autonomy, they will soon discover that the only universally tasteful choice is the pursuit of an aesthetically whole environment where the aesthetically whole self can thrive and pursue these non-opposite ends. Though we may say someone has a taste for violence, we discount this objection on two grounds. First, since violence and peace are not opposite, but poles on the outer ends of a gradation, we all have a taste for violence in some degree. Second, violence that damages a part of the aesthetic whole damages the self that has a taste for it too, and the desire for an aesthetic whole does not allow that. We might say someone has a taste for fragments instead of whole, but, again, fragments are not opposite to a whole, but parts of it, and the intact whole is necessary for appreciation of fragmentation. Consequently, it is only through art that we can appreciate opposites and begin to understand their gradual nature.
Step Twelve: Individual judgment is necessary for pursuit of an aesthetic whole.

Objects will be pursued in themselves, and work will be done for itself in an aesthetic environment. Things will be made to be specific, and in that sense absolute. Mass production is no longer productive for the true aesthetic appreciation of everyday life. People's very particular tastes need to be acknowledged. Until now, we have striven for a general happiness, based on general tastes. In order to improve the quality of life, we need to make objects universal in their particularity. When we share in the generalization of experience we lose identity, but when we indulge in the specific quality of our choices, then we become one with the universal.

There is no such thing as perfection. As we have seen in studying children, we are what we are from the start and can never be different. The only absolute Form is specificity. Instead of pursuing perfection, one pursues knowledge of the world, and through it oneself. This is a lifelong pursuit. Knowing what we are is as vague and elusive a goal as perfection itself. The quest is the goal, in the sense that it must be accepted that arriving at the goal is impossible. The pursuit of the soul-self, and of the aesthetic wholeness of experience is not merely a means to an end, but an end in itself. Even as the process of art is the same as the product, and neither can be without the other, whether the product is actualized or not, so pursuit of the goal is the same as the goal. Aesthetic wholeness is achieved merely by being sought. The soul is found, though
it remains elusive.

Humor, love, and art draw the viewer out of himself and remind him of his smallness in comparison to the cosmos, but they also focus on the particular. Seeing oneself from without gives one the point of view of the other, and thus enables imagination of the specificity of the other. Contact with another soul enables growth. Because our tastes are absolute, they also include their opposites. The gradation of subtlety between opposites begins to dominate and fluctuate as it is fueled with perceptions.

Not respecting the wholeness of the other person shuts us off from the layering of selves that enables aesthetic understanding. That is why it is impossible to be a member of a jury. Although it may be possible to be a witness, it is never possible to know the whole story. It is not because we can see each person’s point of view, but because we can’t. We can only know that each person’s self is absolute. Kant’s categorical imperative renders action impossible, but respect for the autonomy of the individual creates an interdependence that requires certain responsible actions. There can be no whole without every self. Objective knowledge of the world is also possible, but there is always something outside of the self that is not yet known. Analytic science has been helpful in illustrating this, since no matter how small a discovery is, there is always a smaller one waiting in the wings.

The aesthetic moment in art does not exist because art has no responsibility to the aesthetic. In that sense, art evokes a moral moment because it derives from the sense of
the absolute. It is this sense of the absolute that enables us to see our world as based in the aesthetic and thus to pursue aesthetic means. Sensing this paradox of the universal through the specific points us to our own soul-self, and thus to that of others, invoking the only morality we need, which is not moral but aesthetic.

Children also give off this sense of the absolute. Evidence that children have a sense of the absolute has been unearthed in studies of infants. Kagan's studies of recognition of faces in infants show that babies are more interested in an unfamiliar face than in a face that is the average of the prior faces shown. This suggests that infants are capable of creating an imaginary prototype of all faces seen, and distinguishing one resembling it from an entirely new example. Since the infants could extract a prototype from experience, they can represent abstract qualities independently from empirical data, and recognize the abstraction in other forms.

In a further study, babies were played either a pulsing or a continuous tone, and then were shown both a broken and a continuous line. They looked longer at the broken line after they had heard the pulsing tone, and looked longer at the continuous line after they had heard the continuous tone. The ability of babies lacking language to extract absolute properties like continuity and discontinuity from experience argues in favor of the existence of universals.

Other perceptual contrasts indicate awareness of universal categories. Two-year-olds say "all gone" or "bye
"bye" upon an object's disappearance and one-year-olds have gestures that mean the same things, implying an understanding of absence and presence.³

Kagan also finds standards of behavior present in children's behavior. Two-year-olds from diverse cultural settings became distressed when a woman approached toys and acted out difficult routines. "I believe that the child invents an obligation to duplicate the adult's actions, and, additionally, knows that she is unable to do so."⁴ The imitative powers of babies as young as 4 or 5 months show a will to practice behaving as the people around them do. Similarly, children smile spontaneously after completing difficult tasks. That they do not seek approval indicates that they derive private satisfaction for meeting standards set for themselves.⁵

These self-imposed standards in children reflect the notion of absolute preferences of behavior. Similarly, absolute standards of moral preference appear. Spock mentions the child's capacity for empathy. A study of children playing with broken toys indicated that children responded only to deviations that might have been produced by actions classified by the child as bad. Extra features did not cause concern, but broken objects elicited comments like "oh-oh" or "broke". Both American and Mayan Indian two-year-olds look longer at a picture of a face with distorted features and express concern. The two-year-old considers actions that hurt somebody or something violations of standards.⁶
As in Socrates' theory of recollection, these absolute standards appear to lie dormant in the child and are revealed by experience as troublesome points. At age three, many children develop a perfectionist streak in which, despite encouragement, they insist that their work is not good enough. The child's immature brain appears to have difficulty containing some of the concepts expressed by its more eternal mind. The knitted brow of worry is among the commonest expressions of the young child. He appears to be trying to reconcile his own preconceived notions with experience. His constant questioning of his environment is like that of a scientist. His memory, as in the case of one three-year-old who commented, on hearing an undetailed mention of infants before birth, "I was folded in a glass of water," does not seem to fit with experience. Ideas of the absolute seem to be drawn from memory and imposed on experience.

The specific identity of the child also seems to be forged from the beginning. Spock implies that a human nature exists and is present in children when he speaks of what infants expect and the motives of infants. Others agree that the structure of human thinking is innate. Like Kant, who described categories in the mind that enable synthesis of experience, some have found systems of thought and development that proceed in children regardless of culture and infant. Although an infant with precocious hand skills will practice his skill on a wider variety of objects, when the less precocious child does acquire hand skills,
individual variation is reduced, illustrating that basic motor skills are probably innate.  

Beyond this human nature, Spock accepts the distinct character of each infant. He mentions babies who are easy to startle and babies who are trembly. He takes the responsibility for the child’s nature off the parents when he talks of the unluckiness of having an irritable baby who cries all the time. The parent must allow for the child’s own specific temperament in caring for him. There is no authority on child care. Dr. Spock’s success lies in his insistence that the parent do what feels right. Kopp and Kagan also support the existence of an innate specific character in infants. They mention studies of babies who began irritable and remained fearful and shy. Jean Arsenian interpreted varying degrees of distress in children upon leaving their mothers “as due to the children’s personalities, and not to variations in the security of the relationship with the mother.” Unlike Kant, whose principles of the mind were universally human, researchers indicate that the specific character of the individual mind dictates a specific method of synthesizing experience within the broader human outlook. Kagan concludes that “each child’s temperament leads him or her to impose a special frame on experience.”

Like universals, which turn out to be specific beings, everyday life is not something to be bypassed in the quest for something more true. Rather, the values we learn from
art teach us that everyday life can form a continuous aesthetically unified experience. Craft may not function as art, but it has an equally important role in making a richly layered real surface against which our selves can play out their search for wholeness. Children’s and primitive art are part of the tapestry against which art is displayed. Although often more aesthetically charged than art, naïve art is too much a part of the universal, and not enough of the specific to teach the truths art tries to teach. Categorizing art and non-art is not a way of judging, but a way of explaining the importance of non-art in building continuous aesthetic experience. Art is a reflection of the search for total aestheticization, but non-art is the material for that aestheticization. Everyday life can only be important through objects that are greatly aesthetic, but not art. Cultures not as technologically advanced as ours, for example, usually have higher standards for the rich aesthetic content of their customs and practices, not to mention their possessions.

Artifice is the tool of art. Craft, photography, film, history, philosophy, and TV do not use artifice. They reorder reality without attempting to create persuasive alternate worlds. Art uses trickery to push the limits of perception. Monet’s insanely large brush strokes somehow manage to draw the observer into his water lilies and accept the false world they form on its own terms. Pictures and sculptures that do not require this acceptance by the viewer are not art. In order for a soul to have insight into its own identity, or the identity of the whole, it must be forced
into the presence of another self, and this can be done through art as well as through other people. Art's use of artifice, however, enables the viewer to drop his guard and experience contact with the other more readily. Because he has been fooled, in a sense, into confronting the art work on its own terms, he is susceptible to seeing it for what it is, all of its paradoxes molten in one specifically universal identity.
Step Thirteen: Humor in art reveals the necessity of artifice.

"The great writer...has, like a great comedian, in infallible sense of timing." (John Gardner)

The best part of the Feminist argument is the independence of the outside world. When Haraway accredits nature with a sense of humor, she implies that there is something knowable outside of the observer, and thus that there may be an objective reality, although she does not believe in objective knowledge. She refers to Southwest American Indian folklore of nature as a trickster. This simple comment on humor shows the range of feeling that humor includes. In his book, *Taking Laughter Seriously*, John Morreall puts forth a theory of laughter as enjoyment of a psychological shift. He emphasizes the importance of suddenness, pleasure, and security in humor. I think he underestimates the power and magnitude of humor. For example, Morreall lists some standard funny material: deformity, ignorance, stupidity, immorality, failure, misfortune, imposters, mimicry, coincidence, unexpected repetition, inappropriate juxtaposition, violation of natural laws, violation of linguistic laws, and shift in perspective. These items have in common more than simple incongruity. To return to the American Indian point of view, these items all unleash alternate possibilities. They also point out the boundaries and limits of the self. Humor pulls the mind into the land of infinite possibilities -- where that short girl is Johnny Carson, where nature has deliberately outwitted me yet again, where Alfred E. Neumann
really is the "sexiest schmuck alive," and then jerks it back into its particular self. Humor is a cosmic version of motion sickness, in which the universal self joins its peers for a moment and then plants itself ever more firmly in its particular.

Donald Kuspit distinguishes between humor and wit.

Humor transcends both wit and the bourgeois, for it dialectically integrates them. If wit is a manic, aggressive attempt to recover from a depressing regression, humor creates a self strong enough to deal with the world without denying it or backing down from it. More subtly, humor generously forgives the world for being the bad thing it is. Humor conveys gratitude for life despite recognizing its hardships and injustices. Yet humor is finally more critical of the world than wit is, for in turning the tables on the world, humor never turns against the self; humor is beyond hurt.

Although he gives the avant-garde credit for attempting to counterbalance the seriousness of bourgeois culture, he denounces its sense of humor as mere wit. Avant-garde artists have become a part of the society they poke fun at, and their boredom is inescapable. The self's "inward life is in dull earnest, ... It believes in the world more than it believes in itself."

Kuspit's description of the warm capacity of humor to forgive and appreciate the world includes the unifying quality of it. It integrates opposites by appreciating both bad and good, and emanates from an integrated self, "a poetic self who is mathematically clear about the world." It is not necessary therefore to create one division of humor, which he calls humor, that is superior to another, which he calls wit. Even in slapstick and puns it is possible to find that insight into other
possibilities that marks humor. Kuspit’s own idea of humor, after all, is “largely verbal,” a feature usually connected with wit. What distinguishes kinds of humor is not genre, but insight. A better distinction might be between transcendental humor and entertainment.

Kuspit’s criticism of the avant-garde, whose “sense of self is insufficient for them to realize that the struggle for individuation is a major issue of artmaking,” and his description of humor are both insightful. His idea of humor as emanating from a strong self, and appreciatively forgiving the world, recalls again the American Indian’s appreciative version of the world as trickster. Humor, like art, is a trickster. Being pulled into the land of infinite possibilities is being tricked, and there is nothing funnier or more irritating than being tricked. Real humor reflects a way of looking at the world. From peek-a-boo to Rembrandt in a funny hat (is he trying to trick us into thinking he finally got somebody else to sit for him?), being tricked is being forced into appreciating the outside world, the infinite possibilities of it, and our own place in it. Humor, because it involves artifice, is also embedded in art.

The most important quality of art is artifice. Artifice is the ability to trick the eye or ear, to fool the mind. Artifice gives art its mystery. Using a medium separate from life, and yet a material found in life with its own life, the artist builds a world, where there was none. This world is entirely believable, in the sense that the viewer is fooled into reacting to it, and returning to it. Ironically, the forms of art with the least resemblance to life and the most internal limits are often most
persuasively alive. Because the emphasis is taken off the form in a very traditionally structured form, like the sonnet, the artist is free to manipulate the medium within the form toward a more specific product. That is, a portrait, for example, by presenting a traditional form, is free to inquire more deeply into the subtleties of expression. Because the artist is not attempting to introduce a new form, and in this way to jar the audience, he is free to jar the audience in more important ways, that is, in his uses of artifice. As Vitz and Glimcher put it, familiar objects "are superior for their very familiarity accentuates the shock of strange juxtapositions -- there is no distraction from trying to figure out what the object is." Sometimes it is necessary to introduce a new form, but this should be done in such a way as not to limit the power of artifice.
Bob Smith, *Spiral Tubing*, copper tubing + elbow grease
Hannah Dark-oven, Tanglewood Festival 3, hand-woven branches.

Barbie Mandrell, The Holy Trinity, gravel.
Pamela Sue Rogers, *Heart O' Stone*, common garden rocks + tree

Marcel Marceau, Sakrete, Mortar Mix and Plastic Sheathing

Marcel Marceau, Silent Frame, Rusted Metal & dirt
King Tuttle, Cobra, 100' steel pipe, asphalt, & reflector

King Tuttle, Bent Stick, 1"x1" pine
Andrea Carlson, Equivocate VIII, bricks + plastic + unidentified black stuff
Crystal Running Trench (detail)
5 mile long trench with pipe
Step Fourteen: Judgment of art and craft depends on their relationship to the aesthetic whole.

The success of traditional forms has to do also with the relationship of the artist to the history of art. He acknowledges his debt to the giants on whose shoulders he stands, without renouncing his aim of transcending their abilities. The artist does not need to pursue style. If proper attention is paid to making the object, the style will follow. The personal touch of the artist will necessarily penetrate the artwork, and any attempt to cultivate a signature style results in creating only a gimmick. When one studies art history, especially recent history, one might conclude that a trademark style or gimmick is what makes an artist famous. This is a misinterpretation of art history. In fact, it is this attempt to find technical variety that has taken people’s minds off the dynamics of the product, and its relationship to the processes that formed it. It also reduces the position of the viewer from someone who interacts with the artwork and continues the process, to a mere audience for the spectacle of the artist’s conceptualizations.

The study of art history is important for the obvious reason of learning from the masters. But what do we learn from them? We learn that it is not necessary to seek fame and glory, or to come up with a catchy statement or innovative technique. The despairing artist fears that “everything has been done”. The history of art should inspire artist with the endless possibilities, not stifle them with the futility of coming up with any new ideas.
Rembrandt, for example, teaches self-exploration and humor. He only broke barriers in his attempt to see things clearly. He required a new language of expression because he was himself, and each self has its own creative language. He didn’t seek a new technique as an end in itself. The work of the artist is studying the depths of medium and form, and where the old limits are no longer helpful, adjusting them. Art, like chess, is not limited to finite patterns.

The technique, or manipulation of the medium, is an important part of the process of making the product. Technique allows the medium to speak. The medium controls the technique to a certain extent. Its own characteristics add an element of luck. For example, the grain affects a woodcut, or a fissure affects a marble sculpture, or natural opacity affects an oil painting. The painter has to use his own knowledge, but he also must allow the medium to have its say. The balance of these is technique. It represents the artist’s participation in the process.

The presence of the work of art is what sort of reaction it demands. If it involves the viewer, then the viewer’s reaction to the work of art also becomes part of the life of the work of art. Because each viewer is an absolute self, the reaction of each will be entirely specific. Furthermore, because of the development of the self toward aesthetic wholeness, each viewer’s reaction to the work of art will be different each time he sees it. It is this quality of the responsiveness of art that requires the involvement of all in art. The process of discovery and discussion becomes part of the life of the work of art. An artwork is the reaction of
the artist to life, and reflects his pursuit of meaning. The
artist, however, is the last to understand his work, because
an artwork can be interpreted in infinite ways and on many
levels. It must be capable of this depth of meaning because
it must be accessible on some level to everyone who sees it.
It may prove to be beautiful to some, and ugly to others, but
it will be memorable. The viewer will return to it often, if
not in person, at least in memory. Each work will, of
course, evoke a deeper response from certain viewers, but
real art works are seen and remembered by all.

As mentioned, the artist does not always understand his
own work. "The spectator will always understand more than
the artist intended, and the artist will always have intended
more than any single spectator understands." This
phenomenon is caused partly by the different frame of
reference of each viewer. As we have seen, the working of
art is the artist feeling, rationally, but blindly, for
meaning in response to his knowledge of the world. The
moment of the loss of the self in the work is, paradoxically,
not only the moment of greatest self-expression, as Pollock
taught us when he denied the accident, but it is also the
moment when the work of art becomes itself. A work of art
interpreted on an infinite variety of levels, like life
itself. Not only dependent on the minds of its audience, the
work of art must also be able to sustain the mood changes of
each viewer. It must be able to have meaning independent of
changes of time and setting. If it requires an explanation
or a specific setting, like a gallery, to transmit meaning,
then it may be visual thought, but not a work of art.
The recent movement of craft to the gallery setting is a testament to the lack of aesthetic value in everyday life. Not only have everyday objects made it into galleries as art, as in the case of Duchamp's readymades, but craftsmanship has been relegated to the museum. Instead of enriching the very material of existence, craft must be visited in the gallery. Craft does not need to be considered art, because it has an important function of its own. Art is about life, but craft has the ability to be life. Craft is the making of meaning, while art is merely the search for meaning.

The final proof of a work of art is its autonomy. In the presence of this autonomy, the viewer feels, not only the working of the artist, but also the absolute quality of the work itself. It has its own identity. we feel this, and perhaps we can know it. It is proof of the existence of absolutes outside of the human absolute. It is proof, as are science, math, games, sports that there is always something beyond humanity, whether or not knowable by us. It is proof of the infinite maneuvers capable by the human mind. We see it in chess, that a seemingly limited game is rendered infinite in possibilities, simply with the addition of the absolute participants. In sports, painting, music, science, limits are always broken, and in math new systems are built. And yet, these things exist outside of us, because there is always something else that has not yet been found. We feel its presence around us, even as we sensed it within us: that mysterious something that is yet to be.

As Pollock put it, "I have an edge dream, off and on. I'm sort of way out there on my own, moving slowly to the
edge, but not to a cliff, and it’s not a void either... What it is, what it feels like, is just more me."² Or, as Bob Dylan puts it, “I’ve been wondering all about me, ever since I’ve seen you there... I know I’m around, but I don’t know where.”³ It is as if these artists are sniffing their own scent in their quest for meaning in the world outside of them.

The absolute nature of the self, of the artwork, is not only known by man. If nobody ever sees it, or recognizes its status as art, then it still has a place among the absolute selves that have been.

The way around Plato’s problems with the Forms, then, would be to posit a world of identities, or ideas. All possibilities are actualized in this world of Forms, but humans draw intuitively on this world for ideas. Philosophers can study the absolute in the sensed, and thus use the felt world as a beginning. Artists also use the felt world as their impetus, and as a launch for finding the eternal.

The specificity of the object does not draw from a Form, but the eternal aspects do derive from Forms. It is the layering of existence that makes it complex and fascinating. There is the physical surface, which is short-lived, embodying decay, age, death, then there is the interactive level, on which physical beings work with each other, as family, friends, political conversants, or as cogs in a machine, or parts of a whole. There does not need to be a Form of a car, for example, because it is an interactive
object. Then again, there is a layer of thought regarding these relationships, or history, which, though long, is not eternal. Institutions like marriage belong to this layer. While a marriage takes on a life of its own, it is a life in thought, not in absolute existence. There is another layer of possibly infinite, but not absolute, entities: space, time. Finally is a layer of timelessness, in which we are aware of the possibilities and impossibilities of mind. Glimpsing these eternal ideas that exist in themselves, but pertain also to relationships, gives a sense of enlightenment, revelation, or awe, but affirms one’s existence in the specific.

Plato’s philosophy claims to transcend the layers and reach enlightenment, but actually incorporates these layers through dialogue. He uses the physical people as voices in an interactive inquiry into history, in making a case for pure thought. Art also uses these layers. Renaissance painters literally used layers of translucent paint to create a rich depth reflecting not so much a likeness of the seen world, but more the complexity of the light. Since there are five senses and thought, it is never so simple to depict in two dimensions what is felt in six.

Though philosophy has elements of art in its ability to present ideas creatively and think outside regular bounds, it does not allow the bond of trust between artist and observer, nor the infusion of elements by an outside source. There can be much discussion and interpretation, but insofar as all the issues are laid out as plainly as possible, to avoid misinterpretation, nothing is trusted to the observer’s own
subtle range of interpretation, and nothing unintentionally allowed. The luck-chance element of art is lacking. In art, the painter must have faith: in the painting to have unknown elements, in the medium to be expressive in its own right, in the observer to add elements not observed by the artist himself, and in himself to possess a self of value and a learning judgment.

The most important distinction in judging art, then, is in determining if a piece of is a work of art. If it represents someone’s labor to inquire into the absolute within and outside of himself, and has levels of meaning, humor -- not necessarily uproarious, but humanly felt appreciation for the world, technical ability that the artist constantly studies and attempts to perfect, and presence, then it is a part of the working of art. We call it an artwork. Once we determine that an artwork is a true working of art, then taste determines the viewer’s own relationship to the artwork. Art itself, those workings of art that are absolute selves, has absolute value, which we can suspect and argue about, but not know.
Step Fifteen: Cuteness is an example of the complicated intertwining of experience.

In an attempt to tie up the loose ends of this discussion of humor and the judgment of art, I will respond to an article on cuteness by John Morreall. Morreall argues that it is the cuteness of babies that has allowed their survival. Cute features cause adults to want to care for babies, and evoke "bonding". Cuteness crosses the boundaries of taste and endears the baby to all who may be necessary to its survival. "Bigots will often admit the cuteness of infants in the group they despise."¹

He also points out that finding babies cute fulfills needs in adults also, for affection and for pleasant compensation for all the slave labor adults have to do for infants. In extending his argument to cuteness in general, he reminds us of "the connection between cuteness and eating or nuzzling,"² and points out, as endearing attributes, vulnerability and naïveté.

Morreall says that cuteness is not appropriate in art because it is unsubtle, shallow, quick, easy, thoughtless, automatic, and "requires no taste or aesthetic education to learn."³ He condemns movies that manipulate the emotions, preferring a more complicated emotional experience involving tension and possible resolution. "The human race is lucky to have its automatic reactions, in short, but those reactions could never be the stuff of great art."⁴
I agree that there is a distinction between cuteness and beauty, but I find Morreall’s discussion, especially of babies, not inquisitive enough. Morreall makes a technical mistake that I think ought to be corrected. He explains the lack of cuteness in art this way: “The traditions of Western fine art have been male dominated, and males have not valued the tender feelings involved in cuteness... Aesthetic features eliciting nurturing responses have not been considered important by male artists.” Here he implies four things: first, that females have a greater disposition to respond to cuteness; second, that a female dominated art would find a place for cuteness in it; third, that the infants portrayed by male artists are not cute; and fourth, that cuteness is the same as cutification. These four things conflict with his thesis. First, his whole idea is that everyone responds to cuteness on the same simple lever. To contend that cuteness triggers only a female response is to reduce the argument to a mere analysis of maternal instinct. If Morreall intends such an analysis, then the whole section on why men call their lovers “baby” has no place in his essay.

Second, the implication that a female dominated art world would find a place for cuteness implies that women accept superficial cuteness as equaling aesthetic quality or beauty. Even in the case of children, a mother will prefer her child, for who he is, over other people’s more attractive children. If cuteness were accepted as the final criterion in aesthetic appreciation, women would always be trading in their husbands for plump young things, and their possessions
for polka-dotted toadstools. A good example of an artist who treats infants is, after all, Mary Cassatt, whose straightforward approach to her subject matter is clearly that of an outside observer. In that sense, her portrayal of children is as male as Morreall could wish from art, since a male dominated art is not subject to cuteness.

Third, however, I would hesitate to consider the role of the outsider to be a masculine role. In painting, we find also countless babies painted by males, some as if by an outsider, and some as if by a parent or someone with inside information on the subject of children. If Morreall says that babies are cute, then a representational painting of one would necessarily include at least some cute features. Furthermore, the babies of Rubens have exaggeratedly cute features, including extra of the ever-popular rolls of fat around the thighs. Renoir’s portraits of children emphasize their softness, another of the cute features Morreall mentions. Rembrandt’s Ganymede is peeing. What could be cuter? And yet, each artist has more to say about children than that they are merely cute.

Last, I believe Morreall has confused cuteness, which occurs naturally, with cutification, which is what I would call a contrived cuteness. Unlike a cute baby, which, although cute, exists, as we have seen, on other levels as well, a cutified object has been exaggerated and simplified so that it exists mostly on a cute level. Something derived from nature, for example, like a rainbow, that has been reduced to its simplest form and stamped as a cheaply accessible symbol of hope, has been cutified. The
particularity of each rainbow is no longer important, but the physically obvious features are treated as a symbol. Certain things, when given a logo or nickname, are also cutified, because they are reduced to a simplistic level. The township of Henrietta, for example, posts its logo on welcoming signs. It does not need a logo, as if it were some kind of business trying to make itself memorable or legitimize itself. While things that are cute by nature have a great deal of dignity, a cutified thing, by the very self-consciousness of its presentation, is stripped of any specific, and thus universal, identity, and reduced to a symbol of itself. When a baby is cutified in illustration, certain features are exaggerated to emphasize its cuteness alone. This exaggeration is a concession to the fact that a baby is not simply cute. Generalization is a way of forming the equation: child = all children = love. This oversimplification of a complex relationship strips it of real emotion, and generates, in its place, schlock.

In pointing out the cute features of babies, Morreall quotes Konrad Lorenz, who lists large head, large forehead, low eyes, plump cheeks, short and thick limbs, soft skin, weakness, clumsiness. What he does not mention are characteristics that are equally charming, but more difficult to classify. For example, the way an infant's head extends in back to hold its massive brain is particularly endearing. Not the thickness of its arms, but the oddly delicate thinness of its wrists is surprising. Its strong will, already formed character, adult eyes, and amazing strength and sill are ironic in the face of its helplessness. These
factors transcend cuteness. They fuse all of time into one moment, because they allude to the infant as it will be as adult. Its overgrown brain, its delicate wrists include the child’s potential in its actual. The infant is willing to attempt feats that would be impossible for an adult, and is infinitely creative in its actions. Its fontanel hints at the tension between life and death. The infant reminds us of the infinite possibilities of existence.

The qualities Morreall lists as cute are those qualities that endear babies in general to adults in general, and thus his argument seems to make sense that these qualities would be important to survival. These are the qualities that would enable any adult to feel compassion for any baby, not only his own, and care for it. However, as Morreall himself points out, “a starving child is not cute,” and newborns, especially premature ones, do not have the plump cheeks, arms, and legs of older infants. Perhaps, then, it is helplessness that really renders babies appealing, or what Morreall terms their “non-threateningness.” Certainly, as Morreall points out, it is possible not to have sympathy for someone who is dependent. Vulnerability seems to conflict with cuteness. It may the very ugliness of the vulnerable that evokes sympathy. A dirty, smelly animal and a scrawny newborn are ugly. They cry out for their rightful cuteness to be restored. Because they are vulnerable, they deserve to be cute. I think we translate cute as loved: If a baby is clean, fat, and healthy, he is cared for; he is cute. He is no longer vulnerable, because people greedily want to be near
that baby for their own sensuous gratification. The destitute, the ugly, the unloved baby is the one that appeals to its parents alone. After all, we know of children who need to be adopted, and, although we may be tempted to offer assistance, we feel no real obligation. We are obliged, however, to transform our own baby from vulnerable to safe and adventurous.

The newborn appeals to its parents not only in its vulnerability and ugliness. An infant possesses a specific beauty, and that is why parents prefer their child, even if it is ugly or deformed, and often find the same qualities cute that strangers might find hideous.

When it is first born, an infant often looks old. Its skin is wrinkly, its face is thin, it often bears a resemblance to an adult in the family, and it looks wise. Again, it foreshadows the future. It represents pure actuality in that it enters the world entirely itself, but it also represents pure potentiality because it is nothing yet. As the baby fills out, it loses the resemblance to adults and looks more like a baby. It becomes cute. The newborn, as old person, is also threatening. In fact, threatening is an attribute of children in general. They are threatening on three levels: universally, humanly, and specifically.

Universally, babies and children confront one with all manner of metaphysical questions. Their dependence on an adult for answers seems more like a test than an innocent wish to know. It is almost as if the child is the philosopher leading the adult onward in a dialectic. At least it is necessary always to question previously accepted
beliefs in the face of the child’s trust. If it’s an awesome responsibility caring for his body, it’s a grave one caring for his mind.

Humanly, babies mean mortality. The adult is preparing the next generation for taking over the world. He is preparing to die. We see this, too, in the way time speeds by after we have children. I think we have a bond with other parents, and all other values are dimmed in the face of the feeling of shared humanity that we have for every other parent.

Specifically, children threaten us with their own eventual adulthood. Morreall mentions the desire of the adult to be close to babies. Mixed with that is the awareness that they will not always be babies, and that this is perhaps the most gratified the adult will ever be. Of course, the fleeting quality of this pleasure makes it even sweeter.

The physical gratification that one gains from children recalls the disinterested pleasure of Kant’s aesthetic theory. The qualification I would add to the disinterested appreciation of art is the same as the one I would add to the appreciation of babies. As Morreall points out, appreciation of babies is altruistic, but also selfish. I would point out that this is a pure greed. Like art, a baby heightens our awareness of our better self, that is, our specific self, as well as our appreciation of the baby’s self. We bask in the presence of a concrete self, whose selfness makes us feel safe, and we want to return the favor. We know that babies, like art, are good for us, and we hunger for the edification
they offer. The nibbling that Morreall discusses, but does not explain, reflects the desire to break the tension of intense love and to parody it, perhaps with a hint of trying to be part of the pure selfness of the infant. We think of Adorno’s primal desire to devour art. When a stranger attempts this nibbling, it is often a sign of hostility, even jealousy, as if he were trying to reap the benefits of something he is not a part of.

Humorous allusions to love and hate are a common way of expressing love, and lightening the tone of what is otherwise a very serious undertaking. Humor, in fact, is the only way to accept the responsibility of child rearing. Childbirth itself, after all, is ridiculously painful, an absurdly serious, life changing event, and a riotously common occurrence. Each child is a work of the utmost craftsmanship, and yet children are oddly common. What feels like a life’s achievement is tossed off hourly by fourteen-year-old girls. As for the family, who can help but laugh at anyone stupid enough to put all their eggs in one basket?

Art offers the same thing that children offer, “emotions that are complex and even mixed with opposite emotions, emotions linked to a greater understanding of life, and emotions that within my experience of the artwork develop and deepen and perhaps even get resolved.”⁸ Thus, when Morreall decides that “if hungry babies had needed aesthetes as parents in order to be fed, our race would never have gotten started,”⁹ he makes what is, as we have seen, a very common mistake. He decides that appreciation of beauty in any
complexity must be learned, although of course it is never explained who is to teach this appreciation, and where the teacher himself is to learn it. It makes more sense to admit that people are perfectly capable of complex emotions and appreciation of art, and acknowledge that the only way to "learn" appreciation is to be allowed free judgment. Universal free education, in all subjects, is necessary in order that selves might appreciate other selves and themselves, and thus ensure truly free judgment. Doubt is the mark of the independence of each soul.

Ted Cohen points out that training in aesthetic judgment is "the development of taste, or the directed training of one's normal faculties." He expands on Kant's idea of taste: "The exercise of taste involves no concept at all. Taste involves noticing. It is not merely a manipulation of oneself. But it is a kind of noticing evinced in a feeling. One might say that Kant thinks it is a special feeling, but for the fact that he claims it is so un-special that one can demand to find it in all other people." As we have seen, Kant also demands to find moral judgment in all other people. Kant, instead of hesitating to judge lest he be judged, requires of others, as well as himself, actions that are executed in order to stand up to judgment. Trust your judgment, he says, and act according to it, so that others may act according to theirs. We can extend this to insist that people trust their taste, because judgment depends on the specificity of each person's ability to appreciate beauty.
Step Sixteen: My own work reflects, I hope, my views on experience.

"The importance of physical detail is that it creates for us a kind of dream, a rich and vivid play in the mind." (John Gardner)

Unlike Becker's idea of controlling our choices in order that we won't miss too much through bad planning, my paintings show my belief in the haphazard quality of life, which I see as fate or destiny. I believe that it is most important that things unfold the way they must. I don't believe in God, but I believe that there are Lessons to be Learned. I am extremely thankful for what I have been given, and how it has been given, and I believe that is to be seen in my work. My paintings are workings of art because they aspire to be whole. Whether they are actually art in the sense of being aesthetically whole remains to be seen (by the non-eye that sees whatever we are about to see). The series I present as my thesis is an attempt to study the layered meanings of life, and depict the overall aesthetic quality that my life has gained since the introduction of our children, Robby and Greta, into it. Perhaps like a tapestry, my life has a richness of tone that someone should know about. Knowing them has taught me faith in the self, and in humanity as a whole. I have also realized the pressing need for social reform. I have learned that there is immense satisfaction in the specific, but that the whole is important. They have shown me the value of the work, the labor, of art, and the importance of fashioning a specific, meaningful backdrop for thought. I wish that I could make
one person feel what I have felt. And in that sense art is political -- it fosters discussion, and calls out to the automonical individual to make himself heard.

Art has an absolute identity beyond its objectness. One can classify objects according to categories, but in judging the absolute quality, humans can only use instinct and the artist can’t judge his own work absolutely. Ideas pop into my head from some source and I execute them. After the idea pops into my head I find it appealing, ugly, funny. My work is not done in an attempt to be any of these, but rather in response to the idea. Often the original idea changes during its execution. Then, again, I respond to the finished piece and find qualities in it, even as an outside audience does. I do not feel solely responsible for, the work, although I am proud to have participated in its becoming. That is why I have no difficulty criticizing or praising my own work. It is as if I am the medium, or vehicle, and the would-be work of art is channeled through me. Consequently, it is not particularly helpful to ask me about my work. I know as much about it as you do. When the painting is finished, my work is done, and I pass it on to you, or to me, for inspection by an objective viewer.

I have tried to illustrate in these pages what I see as the ideal of all action, including artwork, and that is the idea of the aesthetic whole. The aesthetic whole is an ideal to which all actions aspire, but it is a changing, moving, paradoxical ideal. It is paradoxical because it is attained even as it is being sought, and yet it is unattainable. It is not an end, but a means, and yet it is the ultimate end.
It is the highest ideal, and yet it is integrated in the mundane. I have discussed Plato, Kant, and Dewey because they present a hierarchy of values crucial to the discussion of an ideal of behavior. They also have faith in the lowliest person to understand this ideal and act according to it. Yet, they undermine their own systems by deciding that good judgment must be taught.

I have discussed feminists and Becker because their faith in the value of the individual and point of view dominates their theories. I share their contempt for contrived hierarchies, but their abandonment of an absolute reality to which we aspire leaves me cold. I have tried to show that there is a way of integrating values without arriving at a valueless therapeutic system, in which all opinions are equally "valid". I have tried to criticize a system based on fear, in which children are graded on the way they think in order to stamp cultural values onto them. I stress the importance of judgment, discussion, even heated argument. I believe there are good and bad, but I question the faithlessness in the power of good and bad when petty humans attempt to nail down their definitions for all time. Values are elusive and require constant re-evaluation.

If cultural values are indeed valuable, then a child will embrace them willingly. As an adult, I shudder every time my work is graded, even if it's given a high grade. I am insulted that someone would attempt to stamp a mark of approval on my work rather than discussing its meaning. I find it as fearful to label someone as having bad taste as to censor works of art. It is simply not necessary to make that
distinction. If people assume they have an internal wholeness, which they arrive in the world with and ever after must attempt to regain, then they will have a responsibility to that wholeness. If people are required to judge, and to evaluate themselves, they will educate themselves. The lack of faith by society in its members’ ability to judge, without conventions stamped onto them, is mirrored in the lack of faith by an artist in his work to be what it is without a style or theory stamped onto it.

My work, then, is an attempt to explore an aesthetic wholeness, just as all my actions represent that attempt. Guilt is awareness that I have undermined my own attempt in some way. The stamping of the baby’s face on the surface of the paintings reflects, to me, that faith in the rhythm of life that has been stamped onto me by my children in a way that no amount of grading will stamp culture onto me. Fittingly enough, I looked up the word “diaper” in the dictionary to see if it had a recognizable root, after my thesis show is hanging, after most of this has been written. Words have a way of reflecting how experience is integrated. We say something is “not nice”, for example. We mean this morally, but it is also an aesthetic pronouncement, because “nice” also means fancy or pretty. A diaper is “a fabric with a distinctive pattern, an allover pattern consisting of one or more small repeated units of design (as geometric figures) connecting with one another or growing out of one another with continuously flowing or straight lines.”2 All year I haven’t just been changing diapers, I’ve been painting them!
Endnotes

Introduction:


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9Ibid. p. 123

10Ibid. Friedrich Nietzsche, “Dramatic Reality, from The Birth of Tragedy, p. 252


13Ibid. p. 164


17 Ibid. Eduard Hanslick, “A Formalist Theory of Sound in Motion: from The Beautiful in Music,” p. 409, 411


19 Ibid. Michael Fried, “Art and Objecthood,” p. 438


23 Ibid. Frederick Copleston, “Art as Escape: The Partial Escape -- Art,” p. 753

Step One:

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4 Ibid. p. 550

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9 Ibid. p. 669
10 Ibid. p. 670

11 Bob Dylan, “Property of Jesus”

Step Two:


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Step Three


2 Ibid. p. 393

3 Ibid. p. 395, Dewey quoted

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6 Ibid. p. 99, quoting Stella

7 Ibid. p. 96, quoting Stella

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23 Ibid. p. 62
24 Ibid. p. 62

25 Editorial (Commonweal, August 10, 1990) p. 438

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27 Ibid. p. 437

28 Excerpts from Artforum, Spring 1988


Step Five:

1 Kant, Op. Cit. p. 27
2 Ibid. p. 29
3 Ibid. p. 98
4 Ibid. p. 99
5 Ibid. p. 106
6Ibid. p. 177
7Ibid. p. 179
8Ibid. p. 181
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Step Six:

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3Ibid. p. 112
5Glanville Williams, The Sanctity of Life and the Criminal Law (N.Y.: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974) p. 198

Step Seven:

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3Ibid. p. 127
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6Ad Reinhardt video, part of show c. 1980
7Dr. Joanne Szabla, March 12, 1991, lecture
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2. Ibid. p. 575

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15. Lisa Tickner, “Feminism, Art History, and Sexual Difference” (Genders, No. 3, Fall, 1988) p. 113


Step Nine:


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4. Ibid. p. 127
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Step Thirteen:


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8 Ibid. p. 98


Step Fourteen:


3 Bob Dylan

Step Fifteen:


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3 Ibid. p. 46

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Step Sixteen: