

9. As noted by Dickie (in Cooper, *Companion*, 111), many philosophers have even gone so far as to argue that works of art need not be artifacts.
10. For a persuasive refutation of Wittgenstein's claim that an essentialist definition of *game* is impossible, see Kelley, *Art of Reasoning*, 47–51.
11. On Wittgenstein's pervasive influence, see Dickie, in Cooper, *Companion*, s.v. "definition of 'art'"; and Hanfling, "Definition" (see below, n. 55), 14–16.
12. The emphasis on linguistic analysis in contemporary American and British philosophy was an outgrowth of *nominalism*, the view that concepts are merely mental constructs bearing no objective relation to reality. According to nominalists, a definition is simply an arbitrary stipulation as to how a word will be used, and is therefore neither true nor false. For a succinct analysis and refutation of this position, see Ruby, *Logic*, 114–18. See also Rand's rebuttal of various nominalist claims in her *Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology*, 36–38, 47–48, 50, and 77–78.
13. Dickie's earliest formulation of an "institutional" definition of art was the following: "A work of art in the descriptive sense is (1) an artifact (2) upon which some society or some subgroup of a society has conferred the status of candidate for appreciation." "Defining Art," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 6 (1969): 254.
14. Dickie's 1974 definition, quoted by him in *Introduction to Aesthetics*, 83. Dickie's phrase "status of candidate for appreciation" seems an unnecessarily convoluted way of saying "status of art," which is, presumably, what he meant. The latter phrase would, of course, have rendered his definition even more evidently circular. On the concept "artworld," see below, n. 17.
15. After noting the "dictionary definition" of *artifact*—"An object made by man, especially with a view to subsequent use"—Dickie argues that a piece of driftwood "picked up and displayed in the way that a painting or a sculpture is displayed" would be "an artifact of an art-world system." He further maintains that the urinal Marcel Duchamp presented as an art work entitled *Fountain* "can be understood along the same lines." *Introduction to Aesthetics*, 87. Regarding Duchamp's work and its influence, see our Chapter 14. Randall Dipert observes that, though *artifact* is a key concept in Dickie's definition, it is inadequately developed and explained by him. *Artifacts, Art Works, and Agency*, 8n6 and 110. For an analysis of the concept, see esp. 29–33. Contrary to Dickie's claim regarding the piece of driftwood treated as art and the urinal appropriated by Duchamp, Dipert argues, in part, that *any* artifact (not least a work of art) should be recognizable as intended for the purpose it serves. He then constructs a definition by refining Dickie's concept of artifactuality so as to specify the distinctive nature of artistic intentionality. Though the approach seeks to identify an essential aspect of art, the resulting definition ("An art work is an artifact that is not conceived to have been made with an unsubordinated intention other than one that is such that its recognition implies its fulfillment" [112]) is unclear, owing to its dependence on a complex series of clauses and a double negative.
16. For comments by Dickie on his original definition, see, for example, his recent book, *Introduction to Aesthetics*, 83.

17. Regarding the concept *Artworld*, Dickie (“Defining Art,” 254) quoted Danto’s 1964 article in the *Journal of Philosophy*, which argued: “To see something as art requires something the eye cannot decry [*sic*]—an atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of [the] history of art: an artworld.” As Davies observes, Danto’s discussion “shifted attention from the artistically relevant properties of artworks to the social context without which they could not take on and present such properties. That shift of attention prepared the ground for an institutional account of the definition of art.” *Definitions*, 81.

18. Dickie, *The Art Circle* (1984), 80–82; cited in his *Introduction to Aesthetics*, 92. As implied in n. 17, above, the term “artworld public” does not refer to the public at large, but to a relatively small segment of it whose members are knowledgeable about, and receptive to, “avant-garde” contemporary work and the theories supporting it.

19. A review of Dickie’s *Introduction to Aesthetics*, in the Newsletter of the American Society for Aesthetics (Spring 1998), makes the mistake of quoting the later version of his definition without comment, while omitting the four supporting definitions he himself treats as, in effect, integral to it. The reviewer, Sarah Worth (co-editor of the ASA Newsletter), recommends the book, reporting that she has used it in an introductory esthetics course.

20. We will not attempt to analyze here Eaton’s broader theory of art, which includes her definition, for to do so would take us too far afield.

21. In Eaton’s 1989 version, the work must be “discussed in such a way that information about [it] directs the viewer’s attention to features that are considered worthy of attending to in aesthetic traditions (history, criticism, theory).” Quoted in Ralph A. Smith, *Excellence II*, 69. More recently, Eaton has replaced “discussed” with “treated” because, as she explains, colleagues pointed out that her emphasis on *discussion* was appropriate only to “Eurocentric art.” “Reply to Symposiasts,” *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, Summer 1995, 29. We would offer a different criticism, however, arguing that Eaton’s definition, like all versions of the institutional theory, is mistakenly predicated upon the spurious art of the twentieth-century avant-garde.

22. According to Eaton, “aesthetic value is the value a thing or event has [owing] to its capacity to evoke pleasure that is recognized as arising from features in the object traditionally considered worthy of attention and reflection.” Quoted by Smith, in *Excellence II*, 69. Eaton’s phrase “traditionally considered” alludes, as Smith suggests, to the sort of critical and theoretical discussions of art that lie at the center of the institutional theory.

23. Smith, *Excellence II*, 70.

24. Davies views the debate over the definition of art as a conflict between “functional” and “procedural” accounts of the nature of art. On “procedural” approaches, see above, n. 6. Davies leans toward a procedural approach, which is characteristic of the institutional theory. *Definitions*, 22.

25. Incredibly, Davies concludes: “Had the Artworld never arisen, there never would have been any artworks.” *Definitions*, 219. Contrast that view, all too commonly held, with Tatarkiewicz’s

observation: “Art exists not only where its name is to be found, where its concept has been developed and where there is a ready theory. These were not present in the caves at Lascaux, yet works of art were created there. Even were the concept and the institution of art to perish in obedience to certain avant-garde precepts, we may still suppose that people would go on singing and wittling [*sic*] figures in wood, imitating what they see, constructing forms and giving symbolic expression to their feelings.” *Six Ideas*, 49.

26. Other groups subsumed by the term “artworld” include philosophers of art, administrators, dealers, collectors, and art historians. See, for example, Wollheim, *Painting as an Art*, 13; and below, n. 31. Only those individuals within these groups who are receptive to avant-garde work and theories would be bona fide “artworld” members, however. The absurd pretentiousness of this term is apparent when one considers that nothing comparable exists in any other sphere of human activity. On this point, see Dipert, *Artifacts*, 110.

27. As just one example of the countless individuals, worldwide, who today hold, and act on, the belief that they have the “authority” to “confer art status” on virtually anything—consider Christine Hill, who declares that the *used clothing store* she created on a side street in an old neighborhood in the former East Berlin “is being perceived as art, *because [she has] chosen to call it that.*” She further explains: “I want to illustrate to people . . . that *art becomes art in the way it is perceived and considered.*” Interview with Janet A. Kaplan, Executive Editor, *Art Journal*, Summer 1998, 43–44, emphasis ours.

28. Enjoyment is an important aspect of experiencing art; but, as we shall argue in Chapter 7, it is a *byproduct*, not a metaphysical *primary*. An analogy may be drawn with the experience of eating food, the primary function of which is nourishment, not pleasure.

29. Amei Wallach, “Is It Art? Is It Good? And Who Says So?” *New York Times*, 12 October 1997.

30. More astonishingly, McEvilley argued “that issues of art are just as difficult as issues of molecular biology,” and are therefore beyond the understanding of ordinary people.

31. Rosenblum further claims that the only criterion for a work’s status as art, as well as for the determination of its quality, is “consensus . . . among *informed people*—[that is,] artists, dealers, curators, collectors” (emphasis ours)—in other words, among members of the artworld. That basic assumption of the “artworld” in this era of impoverishment in the visual arts is, ironically, at odds with the view widely held in Renaissance Italy, that an educated layman was fully qualified to judge works of art. See Sir Anthony Blunt, *Artistic Theory in Italy*, 56.

32. On the fallacy of the “appeal to authority,” see Ruby, *Logic*, 132–34; and Kelley, *Art of Reasoning*, 118–20. Kelley (109) characterizes fallacies as “a class of arguments . . . so weak that the premises do not support the conclusion at all.”

33. On this point, see the absurd claim of one artworld authority in n. 30, above.

34. Barzun, “Philosophy and the Arts,” in *Critical Questions*, 258. On the importance of intelligibility in discourse about art, see also Barzun’s “A Little Matter of Sense: Thoughts on the

Language of Criticism,” *Aristos*, March 1988; reprinted from *New York Times Book Review*, 21 June 1987.

35. The 1948 edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* lists the following rules, s.v. “definition.” (1) *The definition must be equivalent or commensurate with that which is defined; . . .* (2) *[It must state the essential attributes; . . .* (3) *[It must be [in terms of] genus [and] differentia. . .*.” Three “minor rules” include the admonition that “[o]bscure and figurative language must be avoided.” The most recent edition of the *Britannica* (1997), reflecting the contemporary eschewal of analytic definition, contains no entry on *definition* as such. The index does include a reference to “definition by genus and differentia,” but it is keyed to a cursory mention of *genus* and *differentia*—buried deep in the article on “Aristotelianism,” in a section entitled “Relationship to Neoplatonism”—which merely lists them as two of five concepts “that had been much used by Aristotle” (the other three being *species*, *property*, and *accident*). No hint is given of the emphasis placed on definition by genus and differentia in the long tradition of classical logic originated by Aristotle.

36. Ruby’s inclusion of architecture is inappropriate, in our view; see Ch. 10.

37. Whereas Ruby implies that a definition of art is possible, though he does not himself offer one, Kelley is less sanguine. He begins inauspiciously with the following speculation: “Suppose that an artist puts an egg on top of a brick, and exhibits the arrangement as his latest sculpture. Would this be a case of art? Some people would doubtless argue that it is; others would argue with equal vehemence that it is not. . . . The only way to settle the issue would be to find a definition of *art* that both sides could agree to.” (34–35) In so stating, he makes the fundamental mistake of assuming that an individual who would exhibit an egg on top of a brick as his latest “sculpture” might agree to an objective definition. Such an “artist” would *ipso facto* subscribe to the authoritarian theory of art, and would therefore reject out of hand what Kelley means by “definition.” More troubling with regard to Rand’s definition, however, is Kelley’s subsequent remark: “It won’t always be easy to find a definition—in the case of *art*, people have been trying for a long time—but even the effort to find one can clarify our understanding of a concept.” (35) Notwithstanding any misgivings he may have about Rand’s definition, it is regrettable that, as a leading interpreter of her work, he did not at least cite and critique her attempt, so rare in the twentieth century, at the sort of definition he extolls in his text. See Kamhi and Torres, “Critical Neglect.”

38. As Sciabarra explains: “The definition implies *all* of the concepts’ differentiated units. But a definition is only an identification that satisfies the cognitive need for ‘unit-economy’; it is not a description. Since people cannot grasp every characteristic of every existent in a single act of consciousness, they must utilize definitions that focus on essence within a specific context or level of generality.” *Ayn Rand*, 175. Kelley points out that a definition serves to clarify the *boundaries* of a concept, to clarify the relationships between concepts, and to provide a summary statement about the referents of a concept. *Art of Reasoning*, 32–35.

39. Although Rand does not discuss the process of classification as such, she clearly implies that a meaningful definition presupposes that the referents of the concept being defined are similar in some fundamental respect—i.e., that they have been rationally grouped or classified. In her

Objectivist Epistemology, she notes, for example, that “concepts represent classifications of observed existents according to their relationships to other observed existents” (47); “concepts represent a system of cognitive classification” (66); and “conceptual classification of newly discovered existents depends on the nature and extent of their differences from and similarities to the previously known existents” (73). See also her comments on the *genus* and *species* of the category “art works,” in “Art and Cognition,” 78. It is also significant that, in *The Art of Reasoning*, Kelley precedes his discussion of definitions (Ch. 3) with a discussion of classification (Ch. 2)—whereas Ruby’s discussion of classification is relegated to the context of “scientific methodology,” in his penultimate chapter. Moreover, Kelley emphasizes that things should be *classified* according to their “essential [i.e., fundamental] attributes” (19)—an explicit statement of a principle clearly implicit in Rand’s epistemology.

40. With respect to the original referents of the term *art*, it is important to recognize that the idea of *skill* is fundamental to the root concept of *art*, in its widest sense, which derives from the Latin *ars*, the equivalent of the Greek term *technê*, meaning “craft, technique.” For Aristotle and other Greek writers, the “mimetic arts” (corresponding to the modern “fine arts”) are among the diverse products of human *technê*—that is, of practical, productive skill requiring the application of systematic knowledge. According to Aristotle’s conception, the mimetic arts inevitably involve *technê*. This root meaning persists in the background of modern-day discussions of art, though the “artworld” often ignores it in the indiscriminate granting of art status to works involving little or no skill. When someone objects that something isn’t art, because “anyone could do it,” the notion of skill is clearly implicit. As novelist and critic Anthony Burgess observed: “Art begins with craft, and there is no art until craft has been mastered.” “A Deadly Sin—Creativity for All,” in *But Do Blondes Prefer Gentlemen?* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1986); quoted in editorial, *Aristos*, March 1987.

41. See Rand, *Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology*, 13–14.

42. Dickie, *Introduction to Aesthetics*, 84, cites the twentieth-century examples we quote, and affirms that “both versions of the institutional theory have quite consciously been worked out *with the practices of the artworld in mind*—especially developments of the last hundred years or so” (emphasis ours). Thus his focus is on the avant-garde, rather than on traditional work. Davies devotes considerable attention to “hard cases” with respect to the definition of art. See *Definitions*, 39ff.

43. For the rules of definition, see Ruby, *Logic*, 102–108; and Kelley, *Art of Reasoning*, 36–43.

44. Note that while Rand’s definition refers to “art” in the sense of *art works*—that is, the artistic *products*, not the process or activity—it also implies the essential nature of the creative process.

45. On the concept of *mimesis* in Greek thought, see the highly illuminating analysis in Halliwell, *Aristotle’s Poetics*, 109–137; and his subsequent article, cited below, n. 46. Rand’s *genus* is far more informative than that Dickie’s institutional definition—“an artifact.” In specifying art works as a particular kind of *mimesis*, moreover, Rand’s definition answers a major objection raised by Dickie (“Definition of ‘art,’” 109–10): he notes that the idea of art as

imitation (*mimesis*), which persisted for 2,000 years after Plato, “flouts the traditional approach [to definition] by specifying only *one* condition rather than *two*,” and thus implies that all imitations are works of art. Rand supplied the missing differentia.

46. As Halliwell notes, Aristotle *Poetics* 1448b4–9 (on “the instinct of imitation . . . implanted in man from childhood”) seems to view the play-acting of children as an example of non-artistic mimesis. “Aristotelian Mimesis Reevaluated,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 28 (1990): 490n5.

47. Dipert, too, argues that the ultimate function of art is less apt to be held in conscious awareness than is the function of other artifacts, especially practical ones. *Artifacts*, 111.

48. As we noted in Chapter 3, the precise manner in which a given artist concretizes what he deems important may be influenced to a large degree by the expressive and stylistic conventions of his time and place; but this does not alter the fact that it is *his* view which he projects in his work.

49. Note that Rand’s term “re-creation” is general enough to encompass the diverse arts, whereas a term such as “embodiment,” say, could not apply to all art forms, since its implication of physicality would exclude literature and music. Dickie, however, argues that some works of art “are not imitations in any way,” citing as examples “many pieces of instrumental music and non-objective paintings.” Contrary to his view, we have argued (Chapter 5) that all music is fundamentally mimetic. For our arguments against regarding nonobjective (wholly abstract) paintings as art, see Chapter 8.

50. In contrast with contemporary theorists such as Weitz and Dickie, Rand clearly holds that artistic “creativity” is delimited by the perceptual, cognitive, and emotional requirements of human nature. We explore some of those requirements in Chapter 7. Responding to Weitz’s argument that an essentialist definition would foreclose creativity, Dickie sanguinely considers that “this danger is now a thing of the past.” *Introduction to Aesthetics*, 85–86. For an instance of the sort of “creativity” Dickie’s theory helps to legitimize, see above n. 27; for other examples, see our Introduction and Part II.

51. On the basic objections to essentialist definitions, see Davies, *Definitions*, 6, 8, 15, 20, and 21. One obvious problem was the assumption that the diverse forms of art could share directly perceptible properties. Rand’s definition is framed at a sufficiently abstract level to avoid this problem.

52. See Merrill, *Ideas of Ayn Rand*, 125; and our discussion in Kamhi and Torres, “Critical Neglect.”

53. As David Kelley observes, “the essential attribute of a man-made object is usually its function. Such objects are created to serve a purpose, and the purpose explains why they are designed the way they are.” *Art of Reasoning*, 21. Unfortunately, he comments no further, and cites no particular exceptions to the general rule.

54. Historically, functional definitions of art have been flawed, because they have incorrectly identified the ultimate purpose of art. Lacking the understanding of art's cognitive function that Rand provides, theorists have proposed definitions based on various misconceptions. Perhaps the most common of these (at least since the eighteenth century) is the idea that art is created solely for the "pleasure of contemplation"—in other words, that the primary function of art is to give pleasure. In contrast with Rand's theory, such accounts offer no adequate explanation regarding the source of that pleasure.

55. As Hanfling notes ("The Problem of Definition," in *Philosophical Aesthetics*, 27), for example, Kennick (see above, n. 4) cites ancient Egyptian funerary art, intended to provide magical benefits for the deceased, as evidence that the attempt to define art in terms of function is "doomed."

56. The enduring appeal of work from past centuries and distant cultures is potent testimony that true art often transcends the specific circumstances of its origins.

57. Neither "maker" nor "creator" is appropriate for every kind of art work. One does not speak of "making" a novel, for example, though choreographers often refer to "making" a dance. Regarding the problematic implications of the term "creation" (and its cognates), see above, Chapter 3, n. 28.

58. The term *value-judgments* is familiar enough in contemporary discourse, in the sense of "an assessment of someone or something in terms of personal values, such as whether it is good or bad, worthwhile or troublesome; a subjective judgment or appraisal"—as defined in the *World Book Dictionary* (1981), for example, or "a judgment attributing a value (as good, evil, beautiful, desirable) to a thing, action or entity" (*Webster's Third New International Dictionary*, 1967). While the primary meaning of *metaphysical* corresponds to Rand's sense of "pertaining to the fundamental nature of reality," however, the term is often differently construed in common usage—as pertaining to the spiritual, the occult, or the supernatural, to that which cannot be accounted for by physical science; or to that which is "highly abstract, hard to understand."

56. "Art is a re-creation of reality according to one's values." Rand, *Fiction-Writing*, Lecture 1. Similarly, in a lecture at the 1961 Creative Arts Festival at the University of Michigan, she defined art as follows: "Art is a re-creation of reality according to the artist's values. It is not a creation out of a void, but a *re-creation*, a selective rearrangement of the elements of reality, guided by the artist's view of existence." Quoted by N. Branden, *Who Is Ayn Rand?*, 90.

57. Rand, "Objectivist Ethics," in *Virtue of Selfishness*, 5.