

attempt to find the aesthetics of Friedman's sculpture. It is transparent, to be sure, but that is an external matter entirely: empty space just is transparent. Toward the end of his challenging essay, Hermerén writes

perhaps there is no essence of art to discover, in the way Wittgenstein has suggested? If we look—and at least if we limit ourselves to properties that can be discovered by our senses—we will find that artworks from different periods and cultures exhibit family resemblances, a network of similarities and differences that hold the family of cultural artifacts called works of art together. (183)

This was intended to slow down my impulse to speak of the internal drive of the history of art to discover the essence of art. But most of what is philosophically important about art—most of the essential properties—never meets the eye. The philosophy of art is like philosophical theology. It is of the utmost value in attempting to understand art to keep in mind the paradigm of Port-Royal grammar: "God invisible created the visible world." Seeing something as art, I have said endlessly and often, requires something the eye cannot discern. The same holds for understanding artworks once we know them to be art. There is a whole deep dimension to the being of the artworks that is only inferentially related to what can be discovered by the sense.

A.C.D.

NOTES

1. Arthur C. Danto, "Regarding the Pain of Others: Max Beckmann," *Nation* (September 15, 2003).
2. Richmond Latimore, trans., *The Iliad of Homer* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1962), 3.441.

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Sue Spaid

BEING-HERE: REPRESENTATIONALLY CHARACTERIZED EVENTS OR NOT...

I. BEING-HERE VERSUS ABOUTNESS

In 2004, I presented the paper "Being Here: Wrestling with Resemblance in an Antirepresentational Era" to accompany "Presence," a thirteen-month exhibition curated by Julien Robson for the Speed Art Museum. More a series of solo exhibitions than a thematic group show, "Presence" included eight artists, yet only one work by one artist was exhibited at a time.

By exhibiting a single work within an "isolation" capsule, a De Stijl-like wooden cabin situated within the museum's historic Tapestries Gallery, "Presence" not only focused each viewer's attention, but foregrounded being-here, lending each viewer's subjective response the status of a public event. A kind of laboratory experiment, visitors to "Presence" unwittingly tested whether each art experience is limited to what the work is "said" to mean or whether its presence rather triggers personal memories, unanticipated thoughts, or outright confusion, reflections not necessarily causally-related to the work at hand.¹ (See plate G17.) A firsthand engagement with unfamiliar or unusual art, being-here proposes an alternative to the way we typically gather information about our world via representational schemes, such as pictures and language. However rare, being-here is real, not mediated.

Given this exhibition's focus on representational practices (photography, figurative painting, and video), the event seemed an opportune moment to test out my aesthetic theories of isness, antirepresentationality, and experientialism on works whose representational schemes seemed destined not

to comply?² (See plate G16.) A month later, I read Arthur Danto's book *The Body/Body Problem*, which inspired me to revisit being-here in light of his view that representationalism grounds aboutness. Although aboutness, the artwork's meaning or significance, is representationally characterized, its content hardly seems *logically* or *causally* connected to the underlying work, as it must be under strict representationalism. One could argue that visual art and representationalism are mutually exclusive concepts, since representationalism fastens meaning, thus countering visual art's special capacity to invite different implications with each passing generation. In the case of emerging artists or burgeoning movements, those concepts one needs to articulate a work's significance are rarely publicly available, so aboutness cannot be ascertained, but this hardly disqualifies recent art as art. In fact, visual artists' extraordinary talent entails creating touchstones that inspire fresh concepts and ideas, unbeknownst to the originator. Such works create these touchstones by inspiring spectators' imagination and curiosity, leading viewers to arrive at new views which the work can hardly be said to express. Aboutness remains a vital criterion for art, especially when seen as following *isness*, the period when meaningfulness once seemed impossible, so long as aboutness remained antirepresentational. By antirepresentational, I mean that aboutness, or the work's meaning, provides the best possible explanation of the work's significance, rather than an interpretation that is representational, as in singular and fixed.

Art exhibitions governed by artists' statements, press releases, museum didactics, writers' reviews, or curators' themes are no different from one's daily encounters with visual information. Indeed, such events are representational, as such experiences are *packaged* to elicit specific interests and to articulate particular messages, though the audience is under no obligation to accept such interpretations, so the outcomes are hardly *secured*, let alone certain. Such art experiences run contrary to those associated with being-here, whereby spectators must construct and assess what surrounds him or her, since there are no readymade framing devices.

In the case of being-here, art's cognitive role differs markedly from one's otherwise accessing the world via pictures and texts, framed and interpreted by others. Despite and because of perception's constitutive character, being-here plays a formative role in enhancing, sharpening, challenging, altering, and developing each viewer's perceptual skills, which in turn inform every worldly experience to come.

Since one of *presence*'s definitions is "immediate proximity in time or space," a kind of being-here, why not use the term *presence* instead? The polyvalent noun, *presence*, evokes such diverse connotations as focus, grounding, worldiness, interconnectivity, disclosure, compassion, nowness, intimacy, spiritual awareness, existence, and even the existential Da-sein

(though being-here is not "being there"). Being-here rather emphasizes the art experience as an intimate confrontation, which is necessarily public, not private, although it is negotiated from the perspective of an individual struggling to make sense of some inscrutable situation.³ Such art experiences are neither immediate nor unmediated. In fact, they unfold over time, typically taking years to figure out, and are often filtered through several provisional interpretations.

Such art experiences permeate our memories because we have oriented our world with the goal to alleviate the confusion they have prompted. When the formative work enters our view at a later date, the net effect of being reunited with such an influential work overwhelms its actual presence.⁴ Imagine the thrill Danto feels whenever he discovers a Warhol *Brillo Box*, or just a few on display, as compared to the way everyone else around him responds to the stack. Recognizing the boxes' significance for the philosophy of art, we too become excited on Danto's behalf, though such reactions far exceed some causal relationship between Warhol's sculpture and each viewer's response. This exceptional relationship exemplifies being-here, since neither Warhol's original rationale nor our later reactions are reducible to pat, ready reports.

Could the enjoyment one feels when one sees a once impenetrable work with which one now personally identifies be what aestheticians *really* mean by that contradictory notion "aesthetic pleasure"? I say contradictory, because unusual art always demands mounds of work before one reaps heaps of pleasure.⁵ While Danto's philosophy and criticism typically privilege firsthand experiences, his texts overlook problems associated with misunderstanding or bewilderment, perhaps because perplexity conflicts with representationalism's assumptions. Aboutness begins when the puzzle of being-here disappears; however, the power of being-here never dissipates.

II. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DANTO'S TYPES OF CAUSAL EPISODES AND REPRESENTATIONALISM

Before exploring the key role that representationalism plays for Danto's aboutness criteria, let us examine his four types of causal episodes, which enable one to chart the variety of possible events that actions as art engender.⁶ Let R be a "representationally characterized event" and ~R an event characterized otherwise, such as an experiential artwork, the state of being dumbstruck, or some physical response akin to horror or laughter. How do we account for the vast majority of causes, let alone outcomes, that one cannot articulate in words? Even if one's spontaneous awareness of such thoughts grants the work significance, the work cannot be said to express

such thoughts, let alone explain their sudden arrival. Moreover, such thoughts are not meaningful under a representational scheme. Such unrelated and unpredictable outcomes exemplify the outcome's antirepresentationality.

During art experiences, the body records physical responses, many of which go unnoticed, unless one recollects some aspect of the experience at a later date. While Danto probably does not consider unanticipated thoughts or neuronal charges exemplary of $\sim R$, he states elsewhere that the representational characterization of something as an idea of x carries a causal implication which, if false, falsifies the representational characterization.⁷ When unanticipated thoughts carry false causal implications, they fall under case 2, and when they are beliefs caused by believing something else, they fall under case 1. To follow are Danto's four cases of causal episodes (in column a are reasons/causes, in column b are outcomes, in column R are representationally characterized events, in column $\sim R$ are not so), accompanied by my commentary on the right:

Case	a	b	
(1)	R	R	What museums, historians, and philosophers presume.
(2)	R	$\sim R$	If True, this is Danto's description of an action, A.
(3)	$\sim R$	R	If True, this is Danto's description of knowledge, K.
(4)	$\sim R$	$\sim R$	This event is akin to some event like experiential art.

To Danto's credit, he focuses here on reasons (column a) and outcomes (column b), rather than intention and meaning. This table characterizes the first stage, whereby an action (column b) has happened, yet its consequence (column d below), the meaning explained by the artist's intention (column c below), has yet to be settled. The artist's intention and the work's meaning are representationally characterized events, which are not available until the second stage, whereby the consequence (meaning) clarifies the *actual* action (the intention).

I would argue that reasons are for artists what motives are for moral agents, while intentions parallel judge's judgments (both are *actual* actions). Just as one might point out that the moral agent was not conscious of his/her *real* motives, one might try to challenge the artist's stated reasons. Reasons, like motives, explain the actions of actors (artists or moral agents), granting those actions sticking power, even when others see through them, but reasons do not cause *actual* actions. While most artists can offer reasons for their actions (explanations for particular movements), they cannot anticipate what they intend, since their works' eventual meaning will be determined by the art world (a jury in the moral agent's case), in particular, those communities that experience the work, and especially the circle of artists and writers who consider the artists' *oeuvre* influential for their purposes.

Meaning depends upon intentions the way the judge's judgment sentence depends upon the judgment, which explains why intentions can be challenged and rephrased to cohere with widely acceptable meanings, yet the actor's reasons stick. G. E. M. Anscombe's view that "why" is to intention as "what" is to meaning reinforces the view that the sentence must reflect the judgment.⁸ Even though actors cannot always predict their actions' consequences; how their *actual* actions (intentions or the judge's judgment) are described must cohere with the consequences (the meaning or sentence). If a driver hits a car in the intersection after the other car's light turned green, the driver must admit that he/she ran a red light. If no car is in sight, the driver can claim that it turned red just as he/she drove through. The suspect who considers his/her motives ethical will plead "not guilty," but the court can still find his/her actions contrary to his/her motives, a case quite familiar to the art world's constructing the artist's intention. For Anscombe, motives (or reasons) may explain actions, but that does not mean that they determine or cause actions (intentions or judge's judgment), a view that coheres with my thesis that the artist's intention cannot be justified by appeal to his/her reasons.⁹ Comparable to touchstones that tender variable aspects, the way the work of art is grasped wholly depends on each viewer's sensibility and needs. In other words, a short list of artist reasons can spawn an extensive list of viewer outcomes, which is yet another attribute of art's capacity to expand spectatorial relationships.

Like Danto, I uphold the criteria that all works of art are meaningful (eventually) and that meaning is "embodied," though not necessarily inferred from the work's appearance. Danto has astutely proven that eyes are useless when distinguishing art from nonart. However, his statement that the embodied meaning "shows" what the work is "about" is rather problematic, for it implies some prior explanatory concept or ideal interpretation, rather than some concept the spectator ascribes to the work. If prior concepts or ideal interpretations actually existed for art, then all art experiences would yield outcomes like cases 1 and 3, whereby one reads/interprets information about one's world via representations, such as pictures and language, eliminating inexplicable actions (case 2) and being-here (case 4) altogether.¹⁰ Unless one's field is emerging art, one may consider few works exemplary of being-here, whereby one's cognitive stock improves alongside the process of seeking plausible interpretations for the stuff of art. Danto's forty-year romance with Warhol's *Brillo Box* demonstrates being-here's significance for his philosophy of art, which proves that an action's outcome (the artist's intention) is not always immediately available as a representationally characterized event, though it must be eventually (stage two below).

Until I came across Danto's above list of "causal episodes" from over thirty years ago, I had overlooked his commitment to *representationalism*.

His art writing disguises this commitment, since he typically employs aboutness as a construct rather than some verifiable feature of an artwork. Under representationalism, aboutness *logically connects* content to an artwork, a necessary condition for philosophers who consider works of art essentially expressive, readable like a text, hardly a position I would attribute to Danto. Danto's notion of representation rather describes the *causal* connection between the viewer's art experience and his/her response, which necessarily generates some "account or statement, as of facts, allegations, or arguments."¹¹ Danto's cases 1 and 3 exemplify this typical notion of representation, whereby the outcome, or meaning, is readily available as a representationally characterized event. R. Case 2 models Danto's view that *actions* are performed for a reason, though the outcomes are not readily describable or discernible, as in the case where the artist's intention is challenged by one whose reaction does not comply with the artist's expectations.¹²

While viewers might voluntarily blame/credit the art at hand for their reaction, their response, however causally triggered by experiencing the work, is not necessarily *logically connected* to the work's presence. Even though artists have their reasons for doing what they do, few can surmise, let alone representationally characterize, their works' eventual outcome (column c below) or meaning (column d).

For an action to function like a work of art, its outcome cannot be planned or designed beforehand, as museum didactics portend. Typically, the work's outcome is describable only after its effect has become publicly visible, which requires a kind of postgame analysis (stage two below). The reasons/causes of cases 3 and 4 resemble open-ended experiences, actions performed for reasons one cannot articulate. Case 4, where one can neither representationally characterize the cause nor the outcome, exemplifies being-here, which is why this rare case causes so much disturbance. Many viewers find such experiences alienating, if not infuriating. Research shows that encounters with contemporary art particularly trouble spectators, even when they are provided copious amounts of explanatory information and relevant interpretations (case 1 or 3).

III. DANTO'S FIDELITY TO REPRESENTATION: PREMEDITATED CAUSES OR POSTGAME ANALYSIS?

The second way Danto uses *representation* follows Immanuel Kant's First Moment in the *Critique of Judgment*, which requests some method of representation to articulate aesthetic judgment. Since the process of judging is a kind of action that occurs as a result of experiencing an artwork, it is helpful to review his detailed description of an action. Danto has described how an

action thought of as a performance which, if caused at all, is caused by a reason, but the connection between a reason and an action involves more than is thought to be required by ordinary causes in relation to their effects: for one thing, the reason is formulated in terms of the action it explains, where it is a mark of ordinary causes that they may be formulated without reference to their effects.¹³

Danto is quite explicit here that an ordinary cause (caused by a reason) is not formulated in reference to its effect, which differentiates reasons from intentions, whose descriptions must reflect their effects (meaning).

An art writer's postevent brainstorm that engenders a text meant to facilitate others' capacity to grasp a situation's meaning is an action "performed for a reason." However, the writer's reaction to the work at t_r , which inspires the later voluntary thought processes at t_p , is rarely a representationally characterized event at first. Art typically induces avoluntary reactions that defy explanation and eschew justification (case 2 or 4). While the process of aesthetic judgment resembles a representation, even in the *Websier's II* sense, this "postgame analysis" typically occurs long *after*, and rarely during, the event, if it happens at all. I would thus modify Danto's four causal episodes to account for postgame analysis, whereby one can identify the *actual action* (column c, the intention or judge's judgment) in light of its consequence (column d, the meaning or judge's sentence).

	Stage One		Stage Two	
	t_i	t_r	t_p	
	(where i = initial, r = reaction, and p = postevent period)			
Case	a	b	c	d
(1)	R	R	R	R
(2)	R	\sim R	R	R
(3)	\sim R	R	R	R
(4)	\sim R	\sim R	R	R

In another passage from that era, Danto remarks that "content is after all what makes representations representations, and it is unclear that *mental content* differs structurally from content of any other kind."¹⁴ By specifically identifying "content" (he could have used "meaning") with representations, he solidifies representationalism. But this is where things get sticky. Representation implies interpolation: one gleams meaning by working backwards from the work to its content. Since Danto's art writing practice often entails projecting meaning, *aboutness* must also entail extrapolation, which further explains why I never noticed his commitment to representationalism.

His reference here to "mental content" suggests that he initially modeled aesthetic judgment on the representational relationship between mental predicates and mental states, which goes from state to predicate, but extrapolation travels from predicate to a work's "embodied" state.

Immune to "false beliefs," Danto derives his certitude from his argument that men do not distinguish their representations of the world from the way the world is: "to believe that *p* is" is "to believe *p* is true."¹⁵ In other words, representation is a crutch, which insinuates certitude, a mode leftover from an era when critics and viewers, under the spell of New Criticism, believed meaning must be gleaned from the thing, or worse, the thing imposes its meaning onto the viewer.

IV. BEING-HERE: THE EVENT PRIOR TO REPRESENTATIONALLY CHARACTERIZED EVENTS

More often than not, contemporary art introduces unfamiliar concepts and unusual experiences, which we mysteriously absorb and contextualize as our own (not solipsistically, but as the culmination of life experiences and further research). Isness characterizes both the work's status prior to its receiving aboutness and the philosophical position that emphasizes the significance of the art experience (column a) as occurring prior to meaning (columns b or d), a sequence first characterized in Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgment* and later developed in Martin Heidegger's "The Origin of the Work of Art."¹⁶ Cases 2 and 4 outcomes exemplify what Ludwig Wittgenstein terms the "phenomena of being struck," since one's reaction cannot be representationally characterized.¹⁷ Being-here (case 4) is the spatio-temporal event whereby one engages an ineffable, inspecific, or inscrutable work/situation, prior to the art world's assigning them its meaning/relevance. Isness thus addresses how art experiences charge our neural system and trigger related emotions, memories, and concepts (some new, others long forgotten), which contribute sensibility. Our understanding of related events, familiar concepts, and the artist's practice justifies these tacit connections, though it happily lacks the authority of a representation.

Isness also accounts for the response "this does nothing for me," which occurs when we lack the wherewithal to furnish meaning. We thus feel discontented! Most of us have experienced this paradoxical event whereby we come to love originally despised works as those works become enriched over space and time as our understanding of the world grows. Is this a neural process whereby routine exposure forges synaptic connections or does joy spring from its sudden relevance? These are arguably different descriptions of the same event. Wittgenstein once commented that "we

find certain things about seeing puzzling, because we do not find the whole business of seeing puzzling enough."¹⁸

Since Danto admittedly projects or ascribes interpretations (column b or c), rather than interpolates (moves from mental states to mental predicates), aboutness is not necessarily representational, despite Danto's commitment to representationalism. Unlike the word "shoe," which represents only a shoe (something that covers a foot), the Rs in column b or c are provisional, not permanent. These Rs await better explanations (all cases). Nothing illustrates Danto's antirepresentationalism better than his own Theory of Indiscernibles, whereby seven identical red paintings with six different titles (two share the same title) cause seven separate case 1 reactions (due more to the content of the titles than the paintings). If aboutness were causally connected to each object, seven red squares would yield only one outcome (just as everything called "shoe" must reference *shoe*), leaving only one possible meaning.¹⁹

Under Richard Rorty's antirepresentationalism, the causal connection is a matter of "acquiring habits of action for coping with reality" (in this case, explaining how each is different), not a matter of getting reality right.²⁰ Aboutness is less a true interpretation and more the best possible interpretation. When the cause or reason is not stated as R (cases 3 and 4), a useful explanation of the outcome (event) or interpretation of the reaction (object) is not available until column b (case 3) or c (case 4). Antirepresentationalism dovetails with research on object-centered segmentation. "The Phenomenal Content of Experience," a recent paper by psychologist Athanassios Rafopoulos and philosopher Vincent C. Müller analyzes this recent research.

These representations allow object individuation and both precede representations based on semantic information that allow object identification. The common thread of the research is the claim that there exists a level of visual processing in which objects present in a scene are parsed and tracked as distinct individual objects without being identified as particular objects. Object segmentation processes create object-files for the discrete objects parsed in a scene. The files individuate and index objects and are allocated and maintained primarily on spatiotemporal information.²¹

In other words, what differentiates art experiences that viewers must negotiate (cases 2 and 4) from experiences from daily life is that "seeing-as" or "reading-in" is a rather slow process that takes time, since the object-files for the discrete objects, which pave the way for object individuation and later identification, have not yet been opened. The longer it takes to open the object-files, the greater the chance that this process will pervade other developmental processes.

However well informed or useful an interpretation R is, the writer's interpretation of a work's meaning gleaned during postgame analysis (column c) cannot be said to represent a work, the way a portrait characterizes its sitter, a landscape painting captures sunlight, or a work manifests its manifesto.

V. BEING-HERE AS OPENING VERSUS ABOUTNESS AS ENGAGED

In *Jean-Paul Sartre*, Danto characterizes Sartre's mindset: "In order for reality to be described it must already have the structures of language itself, as though language could fit the world only if the two were costructural, like hand and glove."²² Sartre's stance indubitably inspired later theorists to structure visual art, however erroneously, like a language. From Sartre, Danto frames the poetic attitude thusly: "we remain concerned with words as words, rather than with what, in the context of prose or ordinary discourse, the words are about or to what they usually refer."²³ Heidegger considers poetry an illuminating project that lets the Open happen.²⁴ Contra Sartre and Danto, I would argue that contemporary art's analogy actually is poetry, whose words parallel art's chunks of real stuff.

For Danto, aboutness's significance rather resembles Sartre's distinguishing poetry's effect from that of prose. Sartre remarks that poets cannot be engaged, whereas prose writers "cannot *but* be engaged."²⁵ He goes on to remark that the prose writer *uses* words as speakers do, and he does something by means of them: "he designates, demonstrates, orders, refutes, interprets, begs, insults, persuades, insinuates." In prose, words are actions rather than things.²⁶ Danto's framing art in terms of aboutness analogizes art with speech acts, which are actions done for a purpose, whose outcomes can be articulated (case 1). Less demonstrative, poetic works (case 4) have a longer shelf life, since they spread out the time between t_r and t_p . Isn'tness affirms art's role in engendering subjective experiences, actions whose unpredictable outcomes are not readily articulated (case 3), while aboutness links art to the discourse of speech acts.

The same year Danto published *Jean-Paul Sartre*, he also delivered the paper "Action, Theory and Representation," which *The Body/Body Problem* includes. In that paper, Danto notes how both the continental and Anglo-Saxon philosophers were engaged in the study of action. He recalls Merleau-Ponty's structuring the field of phenomenal experience around the observing body.²⁷ Danto asserts that "the body, and our special relationship to it as agents and knowers, locates *us* immediately in the world."²⁸ He familiarizes readers with curious motifs like Merleau-Ponty's "My body is not an object" or Sartre's "I *am* my hand," both extensions of Gabriel

Marcel's 1927 statements, "I do not *use* my body. I *am* my body."²⁹ Sartre's 1939 manifesto exclaims, "We shall touch things themselves. We are no longer imprisoned in our sensations like Proustian men."³⁰ Like today's experientialists who thrive on live events (actions done for unspecified reasons) that cannot be characterized as representational, existential philosophy's bodily focus privileges live bodily responses over thoughts about bodies, virtual bodies or body-concepts.³¹

Danto initially seems intrigued by the novel attempt to distinguish consciousness, which is detached and entails awareness of some object, from the immediacy of nonrepresentational, bodily experience, but he soon squelches any possibility. He references Anscombe's analysis of practical knowledge, a kind of knowledge whose immediacy is nonrepresentational. When one says one thing and does another, Danto proves that her slogan "I *do what happens*" splits world and representation, which must remain one.³² Perhaps Wittgenstein's student meant to add the caveat "Do what you say and say what you do." While the specter of false beliefs (and therefore false reporting) haunts Anscombe, Danto's conception of representation is immune to false beliefs, but it is equally prone to erroneous judgments and incorrect interpretations.

If representation still seems solid, guess again. Long before genetic engineering or materials science, Danto observed: "That we can change the world to fit our representations, as in action, or change our representations to fit the world, as in knowledge, is a marvelous power, but it requires reference to representation," which he believed distinguishes the human sciences from the sciences of nature.³³ If Danto's modernist man "changes" his world, the anti-representationalist chooses a changed world whenever he/she adopts new habits for coping with reality. For Wittgenstein, each new dawning of an aspect, what both he and Richard Wollheim term "seeing it as," is not a property of the object, but an internal relationship between it and other objects.³⁴ Similarly, whenever one chooses to focus on a particular aspect of the world, one incidentally engenders an alternative perspective. Wittgenstein notes that we see things differently because interpretation ("seeing as") is not the same as the state of seeing.³⁵

VI. REPRESENTATIONALISM AND THE INSTRUMENTAL FALLACY

The work of art, from whatever side you approach it, is an act of confidence in the freedom of men.³⁶

Framing art in terms of aboutness may boost it to the level of speech acts, but it also instrumentalizes art. It requires something of art, as if art has a

function, a purpose. To be art, the object or event must fulfill some tacit expectation. Since the cornerstone of art is freedom, what can we expect of art? Danto's privileging aboutness has spawned legions of graduate students all too willing to disclose what their work is about, yet incapable of producing anything so complex that we will need to question its meaning. In the case of being-here, one may have yet to have identified the unfamiliar object as art, but one is clearly *already* paying attention to the work. Committed to figuring it out, one is en route to judging it as beautiful. While art historian Thierry DeDuve views baptizing a work as art on par with considering it beautiful, Danto equates the process of interpreting a work of art with baptism, "not in the sense of giving a name but a new identity, participating in the community of the elect."³⁷ Returning to the issue of instrumentalism, Danto himself states, "we cannot possibly derive imperatives from ontology's indicatives," especially since ontology concerns what is.³⁸

Paradoxically, Danto was the first to articulate art's ontological status, yet his Wittgensteinian unity of world and representation characterizes epistemology, not ontology. Being ontological, art's value is as an indicative, not an imperative. To insist that aboutness is the criterion for art is to insist that some object mean something for it to be considered art at all. Under the circumstances, aboutness rather makes sense as a criterion for knowledge, since aboutness must be more certain than an interpretation, since interpretations are not properties of objects. The view that meaning is imperative commits the Instrumental Fallacy, overshadowing art's ontological status as an indicative (an action done for reasons, independent of outcomes).

The Instrumental Fallacy is as follows: by requiring art to answer to some stated goal (such as aboutness), one undermines art's special status as free, whereby art is judged as beautiful even though the adjudicator lacks a useful or relevant interpretative concept. All works of art eventually mean something (columns b–d), though this meaning is anything but self-apparent, as the meanings and contents of daily experiences are. Art's meaning is always in delay, on its way to here from some future awareness.

Our world is full of both living and inanimate things that are useful, but seem useless, prove nonsensical, or even fail to attract our radar, yet their existence unwittingly affects us, however unconsciously. While Heidegger could explain this via reference, which is constitutive of worldliness, such an explanation is rather superfluous. Like Heidegger's *zuhanden* and Sartre's *pour-soi*, Danto's notion of aboutness requires consciousness (stage two). When one prescribes the twin conditions of aboutness and consciousness to distinguish art from nonart, one diminishes art's uncanny capacity to influence spectators on a subconscious level. No longer indicative, like the ontological isness, the work loses its freedom to be whatever art is.

In addition to aboutness resembling Sartre's desire to structure everything like a language, the aboutness imperative resembles Sartre and

Heidegger's emphasizing equipmental value. Although *Jean-Paul Sartre* was one of the earlier English texts about existentialism, Danto has adamantly disassociated himself from its tendencies. Nonetheless, Danto's emphasizing aboutness parallels Heidegger's *zuhanden*, or "handiness," and Sartre's *pour-soi*, or "for itself." In *Being and Time*, Heidegger made a radical move when he reversed phenomenology's prioritizing an object's objective presence over its equipmental value (use, meaning, or reference). Heidegger's later describing work-being as showing "what is at work in a work of art" anticipates Danto's aboutness.³⁹ Danto himself remarks that engaged things are no longer *vorhanden* ("present-at-hand") or *en-soi* (in itself or complete essence), features that predate human participation.⁴⁰

At the moment of *pour-soi* or *pour-nous*, the object relates to the world, generating a situationalized consciousness, that is otherwise unavailable through experience, because ordinary experience is also situationalized.⁴¹ Evidently, certain aspects that are objectively available fog the picture, because they are irrelevant to the situation, "to the thing as integrated into the system of possibilities, obstacles, opportunities, and the like, which give it situational import and significance for us."⁴² Since Heidegger originally discussed everyday things like fountain pens, hammers, or the wind, not works of art, it is not surprising that he avoids terms like "representational," which are too close to making present. With such a cautious world view, no wonder postmodernists privileged the "utility-engendering discourse" surrounding the work (cases 1 and 3) over open-ended engagement (cases 2 and 4).

In contrast to existentialists and postmodernists who privilege the discourse surrounding the work, experientialists highlight the art experience itself (case 4), since attending to "aboutness" or "handiness" tends to fix meaning, another feature of the Instrumental Fallacy. A fluid meaning requires tools that account for each viewer's different experience. Repeat viewings engender new experiences, enabling artworks to become catalysts for life-changing events.

VII. CONCLUSION

Works of art associated with being-here (case 4) introduce several features. Such works: (1) engender aesthetic pleasure; (2) require postgame analysis, since neither the experience nor its related meaning can be articulated; (3) improves one's perceptual acuity and cognitive stock, as one searches for physical clues that involve additional concepts; and (4) defy representationalism's stranglehold, since neither the artist's reasons nor his/her action's outcomes is a representationally characterized event. From the onset, Danto thought that representationalism was necessary to ground aboutness as causally connected to the work of art. Danto's own

case of seven indiscernible red squares demonstrates how the absence of logical connection does not inhibit meaning. Just as the red squares get their meaning from their textual labels, not the representationally characterized outcome generated by each red square, works of art get their meanings from the intentions (interpretations) that the art world ascribes to explain the relationship between the artists' actions (intentions) and their actions' consequences (meaning). Not only is representationalism not necessary, but it engenders such a strong notion of aboutness that one risks committing the Instrumental Fallacy. Reducing art's indicative status to an imperative makes sense as an epistemological criterion, but not as an ontological marker. Although the intentions (column c) and meanings (column d) are representationally characterized, they remain provisional, subject to reconsideration, as each new generation emerges, so they are hardly fixed, as they must be under a representational scheme.

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BALTIMORE
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SUE SPAID

NOTES

1. Such an event parallels David Hume's discussion of the appearance of the picture of an absent friend. "Our idea of him is evidently invliven'd by the *resemblance*, and that every passion, which that idea occasions, whether of joy or sorrow, acquires new force and vigor. In producing this effect there concur both a relation and a present impression. . . ." (David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* [Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1978], 99).
2. See Sue Spaid, "The Experiential Paradigm: The Power to Cause Things to Happen," *arLUS* 2 (2003): 29–37 and Sue Spaid, "Isness: A Philosophy for Avant-Gardes" *X-tra* 8, no. 3 (2006): 10–19 for greater detail.
3. Keith Lehrer also emphasizes the primacy of the sensory experience "arising from attending to the painting." One who has not seen the painting lacks the sensory experience necessary to grasp the content. For Lehrer, firsthand experiences engender sensory experiences, whose "sensory phenomenology of the illuminated sensory surface is what is exemplarized." The work's content is constitutive of the viewer's experience. (Keith Lehrer, "Representation in Painting and Consciousness," *Philosophical Studies* 117 [2004]: 7).
4. It might seem that being-here bears resemblance to Walter Benjamin's "aura" (the specialness associated with a singular experience), Michel Foucault's "text" (the significance that lingers even after the object disappears), or Marcel Proust's "memory" (some special feeling that is suddenly recollected). What I have in mind is rather each viewer's particular struggle with a work's meaning, a struggle that inadvertently alters his/her life course as he/she elects to research and explore topics that reconcile mystifying art experiences. Being-here rather resembles Martin Heidegger's "the world worlds" (the moment when the "work holds open the Open of the world"). (Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," in *Poetry, Language, Thought* [New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1971], 45.)

5. Exemplary of meaning's importance, I coined the slogan "content equals contentment" some twenty years ago (as Danto's student) to describe the pleasure art arouses when one finally settles on a satisfying meaning.
6. Arthur C. Danto, *The Body/Body Problem* (Berkeley: Univ. of CA Press, 1999), 58.
7. *Ibid.*, 41.
8. G. E. M. Anscombe, *Intention* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1957), 35.
9. *Ibid.*, 19.
10. Christopher Peacocke's fallacy of prior concepts might offer an argument to discourage the assumption that art is expressive.
11. *Webster's II* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1984).
12. Arthur C. Danto, *Jean-Paul Sartre* (New York: Viking Press, 1975), 137.
13. *Ibid.*, 137–38.
14. Danto, *The Body/Body Problem*, 17. Italics mine.
15. Danto, *Jean-Paul Sartre*, 22.
16. Heidegger himself uses the term *isness*, a reference recently discovered in the Epilogue to "The Origin of the Work of Art." He writes, "The beautiful does lie in form, but only because the *forma* once took its light from Being as the isness of what is. Being at that time made its advent as *eidōs*." (Heidegger, 81.)
17. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (New York: Macmillan, 1968), 211e.
18. *Ibid.*, 212e.
19. Arthur C. Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1981), 1.
20. Richard Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1991), 1.
21. Athanassios Rafapoulos and Vincent C. Müller, "The Phenomenal Content of Experience," *Mind & Language* 21, no. 2 (April 2006): 200.
22. Danto, *Jean-Paul Sartre*, 5.
23. *Ibid.*, 31.
24. Heidegger, 72.
25. Danto, *Jean-Paul Sartre*, 32.
26. Danto, *Jean-Paul Sartre*, 32. Quoting Sartre.
27. Danto, *The Body/Body Problem*, 65.
28. *Ibid.*, 66.
29. *Ibid.*, 66–67.
30. Danto, *Jean-Paul Sartre*, 16. Quoting Sartre.
31. Danto, *The Body/Body Problem*, 68.
32. *Ibid.*, 72.
33. *Ibid.*, 80.
34. Wittgenstein, 212e.
35. *Ibid.*
36. Danto, *Jean-Paul Sartre*, 36. Quoting Sartre.
37. Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*, 126.
38. Danto, *Jean-Paul Sartre*, 155–56. Quoting Sartre.
39. Heidegger, 38.
40. Danto, *Jean-Paul Sartre*, 84–86.
41. *Ibid.*, 86.
42. *Ibid.*, 88.

REPLY TO SUE SPAID

We speak of certain persons as having a "presence"—an impressive appearance, a palpable distinctiveness, an aura, an *on ne sait quoi* that sets them apart from those that *lack* presence. Samuel Pepys wrote in his intimate diary that the Queen lacked presence, appearing like any ordinary woman when she entered a room. Works of art have—or perhaps are—presences in this sense, though perhaps not as a matter of course. The 2004 Speed Museum exhibition to which Sue Spaid refers sought to present works of art as "presences" in this way, by showing them in isolation, in a special gallery, where viewers could give themselves up to them, and allow them to evoke associations that might vary from viewer to viewer, depending upon their individual histories. For whatever reason, Spaid has chosen to use the term "being-here" rather than "presence," though I tend to think of it as weaker than the latter, which trails a certain history of usages, including, I would suppose, what would have been spoken of as the "mystical presence of the saint in the icon"—a transport of pictorial metaphysics that put worshippers in the saint's very presence, where he or she can be supplicated or prayed to directly. Subscribers to this metaphysics could draw a distinction between "the saint *in* the picture" and "a picture *of* the saint"—the latter having no special magical powers, being merely a pictorial representation. The differences are profound. Perhaps Spaid is leery of the magical overtones of presence, and hit on "being-here" as a way of controlling what she wants to say. Whatever the case, she intends to use the term to contrast with my use of "representation" in the definition of art, implicitly offering a different definition in which we respond instead to the work's "beinghereness." I had some problems in figuring out what her account might entail, and it occurred to me that there may be something in the use of the word "representation" itself that put her off, especially since she apparently felt that the schematic array in which I spoke of "representationally characterized" states or events implied something unsatisfactory in my definition of art.

The word "representation" does not trip lightly off the tongue in ordinary speech. It is an extremely stilted term, forced by philosophical necessity to do a lot of work it was not intended for. I think, for example, that Richard Rorty made a considerable philosophical reputation for himself by taking an "antirepresentationalist" stance when virtually every sentence he writes is representational in the sense that it is about speech, or writing, or thought, or action, each of which he "represents" in one or another way. It is of great importance to my thinking about art that artworks should be thought of as "representational" when I mean only that they *have meaning*, or that they be *about* something, or have "content." A painting by Zuburan of a lamb is usually understood as a symbolic representation of Jesus, since the lamb is a symbol of innocence, or purity. A sculpture of a dog over a church portal is a pun on the "dogs of God"—*i domini cani*—signifying that the church belongs to the Dominican order. Meyer Schapiro argued, rightly or wrongly, that apples were not, in Cézanne's works, merely fruit—they represented the female breast and expressed the sexual desires that raked the great artist's sexual imagination. Sean Scully's paintings titled "Wall of Light" (see, for example, plate G7) are *of* walls of light—surfaces transfused by light, evidence of something spiritual abstractly disclosed. These are interpretations, but not untypical of how we as viewers understand the works they address. It would be false to say that Jesus, Saint Dominic, Venus, or the Holy Spirit are "being-here"—but they are what these works are respectively about if the interpretations are true. If Sue Spaid understands "representation" as implying anything else, she has misread my intentions. If she thinks that representation understood as I have just explained is seriously wrong where something called "being-here" is right, I fail to see what she can mean. She owes her readers a far clearer explanation than she has so far given.

Let me now clarify why representation, understood as meaning, aboutness, or content is so important in my philosophy of art. For that, one needs to go back twenty-five years to the opening sections of *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*, and to the issues I raise by means of indiscernible objects, some of which are works of art, some of which are not. The book begins with a monochrome painting imagined by Søren Kierkegaard in *Either/Or*. I am not sure that monochrome paintings could have occasioned anything other than philosophical jokes in the nineteenth century or earlier, as picturing monochrome realities like fog, night, or a light that obliterate as picturing monochrome realities like fog, night, or a light that obliterate reality. One can never be sure. The art historian Georges Didi-Huberman recently wrote a book on Fra Angelico in which he argued that certain colored rectangles in San Marco in fact have a meaning—are about something. This plays into my argument: until his book appeared, everyone would have thought these were mere rectangular expanses of pigment, hence decorative rather than significant works in their own right. Kierkegaard's painter had

been commissioned to paint the *Israelites Crossing the Red Sea*. He in fact painted a red rectangle, explaining that the Jews had crossed over safely, the forces of Pharaoh were drowned, and the sea's surface restored to calm. The joke is a pun—that the Red Sea is literally red. Kierkegaard writes that his *life* is like that very painting—a single mood or color (probably gray). In *The Transfiguration*, I go along with the joke: two red monochrome paintings, just alike, with different contents, one of them about the defining episode of *Exodus*, and the other the state of mind of a consistently gloomy Dane.

Now my philosophical strategy was to generate an exhibition of indiscernible red monochrome paintings, all exactly alike, but having different contents (representing different states of affairs, being about different subjects, or whatever). There was a still life, a landscape, an abstraction, a religious painting, and so forth. I could have gone on and on, but stopped when I felt I had enough examples. I then imagined a panel grounded uniformly in red lead by a famous artist who meant to paint a *Sacra Conversazione* but never did; and finally a panel painted red by nobody in particular for no artistic purpose whatever. The problem was to explain why the latter was not a work of art though it looked like any one of a number of works of art, each in a different artistic genre, all of them monochrome red squares. Sue Spaid could say the explanation was easy—that each of the works exemplified “being-here,” while the final panel in my philosophical show was here, but did not exemplify “being-here.” I wrote that the difference was that the works of art had meaning—had different meanings in fact—whereas the plain red painted panel was just a plain red painted panel, a mere surface, lacking aboutness, without content or meaning, nonrepresentational—a mere thing. Once monochrome painting was introduced as a Suprematist paradigm, it was interpreted as having meaning. Malevich's critics saw his *Black Square* as meaning death or nothingness. He thought it meant openness and a new order of social being. My sense is that if the monochrome painting is treated as an interpreted object, then that object would be what is treated as a presence—the surface of the Red Sea, say, or the inner state of a Danish philosopher. In that case, “being-there” would not *contrast* with representation—it would *presuppose* it.

What is important to emphasize is that my aim in *The Transfiguration* was to find a definition of art. The book has the form of a Socratic search for the conditions necessary for something to be a work of art. Two indiscernible objects, one a work of art and the other not, could be differentiated if the first had a meaning and the latter had none. Indiscernibility meant that there was no relevant visual difference between the two—that the differences, if there were any, had to be invisible. As a philosopher, I was benefiting enormously from the fact that artists—Andy Warhol in particular—were producing art that was indiscernible from objects in the *Lebenswelt*, like

industrial shipping cartons. The artwork and the ordinary object looked, for purposes of my analytical program, exactly alike, since no visual difference could account for the *ontological* difference between works of art and other kinds of things. The philosophical opportunity that Warhol presented me with was broadcast in the art world of the 1960s—in the plain wooden boxes of Robert Morris, the arrays of bricks or metal plates of Carl Andre, the trenches of Fluxus or Conceptualism, or the experiments in redrawing the boundaries of dance at the Judson Dance group. It would not have been possible to explore the ontology of the artwork anywhere else or at any earlier time in art history. One needed these unprepossessing artworks—that looked like the kinds of objects that *contrasted* with artworks. One could then project the definition back onto the really prepossessing works that fascinate us when we think of art in a natural, nonphilosophical kind of way.

The question then is whether something like “being-there” could do the necessary work of ontology, in helping draw the boundary between artworks and other things that were not art, when there was no visible difference to lean on. Once one realizes that meaning—or representation—played that ontological role, it becomes, or should become, clear that if meaning would not do the trick, one would have to set about finding something that would. At the same time it would have to become clear that “presence”—or “being-here”—would *not* do the trick (and neither would “being-there”—*Dasein*, to follow Spaid's hastily considered suggestion—since the ontological job that *Dasein* was intended to do means something like “present to the world,” which Jacques Derrida famously found subverted the agenda of phenomenology). Of course, having meaning would only do part of the ontological work, since meaning was not a sufficient condition—one had to find something to discriminate two objects, both of which had meaning but only one of which was an artwork. And I used embodiment for my second necessary condition, yielding as a provisional definition that to be an artwork is, by definition, to be an *embodied meaning*. That was as far as I went in *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*. I am under no illusion that I had achieved a watertight definition of art, immune to creative counterinstances that would force a further search. But how many of the lexical searches in the Platonic compuses get a lot further than two necessary conditions?

Nothing in the ontological analysis had much to do with *experiencing* works of art, and to the extent that artistic experience is Sue Spaid's central interest, she is addressing a different topic altogether. Representation and “being-here” are not competing answers to a given question, but noncompeting answers to different questions. My question was ontological, hers was perhaps aesthetic. Admittedly, I have often felt that the two necessary conditions in my definition easily serve as moments in the act of art criticism. One starts by asking what the work is about—what it is seeking to

say—and then goes on to describe in what way that meaning is embodied in the work. This corresponds precisely to what Hegel spoke of as knowing intellectually what art is, namely knowing (a) the content of art and (b) the work of art's means of presentation, and the appropriateness of both of these to one another. This is of course not the way in which one experiences art when it is part of one's life, which Hegel believed is no longer the case. One does not have, when it *is* part of life, to find these things out intellectually. But with most art produced today, these are things we have to find out before we can give ourselves up to its "being-here." For it is not in many cases obvious what it means or how it is conveying just that meaning. In the Speed Museum exhibition, the viewer has all sorts of associations with what is before him or her. These amount, in my view, to interpretative hypotheses as to what one is looking at—attempts to interpret what is going on, efforts at identifying what is there.

Spaid is by profession a curator, and a very good one. She has to know that a main task of the curator is helping her viewers grasp the art she has gathered, and make it pertinent to their lives. In my one serious effort at curating—the exhibition "9/11 Art" which I organized to mark the fourth anniversary of the attack on the World Trade Center Towers—I selected work that in no instance could be seen as a response to that horrendous event. All the works were oblique to their occasion, and needed to be explained to the viewer before they could be responded to. In addition to my own essay on the reasons for selecting that kind of work, I asked the artists to write an essay explaining why their works were as they were. It made for a powerful show. The works expressed aspects of what it felt like to undergo the experience of the attack. The pluralism of contemporary artistic means requires that each work must be understood in its own terms.

Let me now explain what I was attempting to do with that tabular array that gave Sue Spaid the feeling that I had a narrower concept of representation than I ever held. I was not really thinking about art when I constructed that array. I was thinking of four different kinds of causal episode, in *three* kinds of which cause or effect or both were *internally* related to one another. I had in mind the idea that when explaining the behavior of beings that form representations of the world, we need a structure somewhat more complex than the paradigm collision of billiard balls through which the concept of causation is analyzed by philosophers. When a billiard ball strikes another and the latter moves because of that, we ascribe representations to neither event. But when a driver stops a vehicle because a light turns red, the red light means stop, and the driver has learned that. In general, in a causal theory of knowledge, of action, and of thought, there has to be some relationship other than simple causation between cause and effect—that representational beings, like us but unlike billiard balls, connect to the world through various

systems of meaning. The table was a schematic device, which sought to bring content into causal episodes involving beings who represent. But I never especially developed it beyond that, though it played a certain role in my book, *Connections to the World*, which undertook to show how central representations are in traditional philosophy. Describing knowledge, action, and thought by using the word "representation" resulted in rather a stilted discourse, which the use of symbols like R and ~R more or less obviated. Experiencing a work of art involves representing a representation, which simply means: grasping the meanings of the work to which one responds.

As luck would have it, I actually saw a 2003 work called *Being Here* when I was composing this response to Sue Spaid. It was by a young video artist, Siebren Versteeg, and consists in three shots. One shows the artist, sitting in what looks like a waiting room, wearing dark glasses. There is a television screen in the room with him. A second shot shows the screen, reporting the news. The third shot is black. These shots are repeated, and repeated, and repeated.

A.C.D.