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Art from a Wittgensteinian Perspective: Constitutive Norms in Context

ABSTRACT

This article offers a detailed textual reexamination of the 'family resemblance' passages to reconsider their implications for understanding art. The reassessment takes into account their broader context in the *Philosophical Investigations*, including the rule following considerations, and draws on a realist interpretive framework associated principally with the work of Cavell, Diamond, McDowell, and Putnam. Wittgensteinian "realism with a human face" helps us discern that the primary issue is not whether certain concepts are definable, posing a stark opposition between essentialism and its denial about kinds such as language or games. What is at issue is keeping uses of language in view in their variety and their broader life contexts. Focus on rules suggests more broadly that norms and values inhere in practices and play a constitutive role in determining the entities integral to those practices. From this perspective, a Wittgensteinian framework explains art as locally overlapping practices, each with their own constitutive norms and values for the works integral to them. What makes something art has normative force specific to a practice. This recognizes the historically contingent nature of art practices in a way that relational definitions or disjunctive 'cluster' explanations do not.

I. INTRODUCTION

This article argues for a new understanding of the relevance of Ludwig Wittgenstein's later work for theories of art. A Wittgensteinian framework offers an alternative to a stark opposition between definitional and antidefinitional approaches for art. Instead of simply denying that some phenomena—such as language or games—can be defined, Wittgenstein's work draws our attention to the fact that what makes something what it is might either be necessary and sufficient conditions or constitutive norms of rule-informed historical phenomena. The insight that our games are determined by constitutive rules—such as the rules specifying the movements of the queen in chess that give identity to the figures of the game—broadens into the appreciation that constitutive norms or values inhere in practices and play a constitutive role in determining the entities integral to those practices. This emphasizes that what makes something art has normative force specific

to a practice, just as rules are specific to the endeavors they inform, and explains the historically contingent nature of art practices in a way that relational definitions or disjunctive explanations do not. This allows for plurality in what makes something art in diverse cultural eras whose practices have different constitutive norms, aims, and values. In short, Wittgenstein's work suggests that art is diverse, locally overlapping practices, each with its own constitutive norms and values for the works integral to the practice.

The predominant view is that Wittgenstein's approach indicates that art is a 'family resemblance' concept that cannot be defined in terms of individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions. This is the landmark neo-Wittgensteinian interpretation from the 1950s.[1] On this view, Wittgenstein's point is to make us stop presupposing that wherever phenomena fall into a discernible kind there are essential features and so in certain cases to stop searching for definitions. Rather, some of the phenomena that clearly form kinds—such

as games—are open-ended and hang together by virtue of being similar to one another and perhaps to paradigm cases in diverse overlapping respects about whose relevance 'we' in some sense make decisions.

Such a neo-Wittgensteinianism has been largely in disrepute since the 1960s, when Arthur Danto and George Dickie argued that if the conditions that make something art are relational or contextual, there is no tension between the open-endedness and definability of art. It is their 'place' in an art-theoretical context that is determining, Danto suggests, since that context enfranchises certain objects but not other, perhaps even indiscernible, ones as artworks.[2] If artworks are artifacts for viewing by an artworld public as Dickie proposes, then it is also by virtue of their 'place' in a context of preestablished practices that involve a variety of roles and relationships, especially those of artist and artworld public, that such artifacts are, or have, the status of art.[3] On both of these accounts, art is defined in terms of relations—theoretical or practical—that put no limitations on the ways in which art may develop and place no visual limitations on what artists do. This opens the way for further attempts at relational definitions, which satisfy the need for the open-endedness for which the neo-Wittgensteinians argue but offer more perspicuous and powerful explanation.

The problem with this ongoing view of a putative dispute between definitional and Wittgensteinian antidefinitional approaches is that it stops too soon and does not question the terms of the debate. The point of departure for this article is that what we have learned from Wittgenstein's work has not stood still over the ensuing decades. One tendency that has been set aside is the 1950s and 1960s view of Wittgenstein as an "ordinary language philosopher" who suggests that we deliver ourselves from our philosophical problems by focusing on the ordinary ways of using our concepts. Wittgenstein's focus on what we do with words in the ordinary circumstances of life is not intended to yield a primary focus on concepts—or "ordinary language"—but an inclusive reorientation to the integral relations between uses of language, activities, practices, and the world in which these take place as one complex matter or "weave" of life. To develop Wittgenstein's multidimensional approach, I draw on a realist, interpretive framework associated principally with the work of Stanley Cavell, Cora Diamond, John McDowell, and

Hilary Putnam.[4] Wittgensteinian "realism with a human face," in Putnam's phrase, is important because it helps us discern that the primary issue is not whether certain concepts are definable, posing us with the need to choose between essentialism and its denial about kinds such as language or games. Rather, Wittgenstein's concern is to keep uses of language in view in their variety and in their broader life contexts. This shift raises the question what form our accounts need to take in order to keep the role of contingent contextual factors in view.

The discussion here divides into three parts that (i) set aside the debate over the neo-Wittgensteinian proposal through closer reading of the primary text; (ii) sketch Wittgensteinian realism, with emphasis on the idea of constitutive rules or norms; and (iii) apply these ideas to art. My examination will be restricted to the debate over visual art. In conclusion, I briefly address how the Wittgensteinian approach might be extended to the relationships among different arts; to develop the broader account lies beyond the scope of this article.

II. REVISITING WITTGENSTEIN'S NOTION OF FAMILY RESEMBLANCE

To reexamine the text at issue, one needs to reconstruct its extended context in the *Philosophical Investigations*.[5] The discussion of family resemblances is only one within an array of considerations that investigate our belief that understanding requires definitions—which in turn are part of a larger tapestry—in order to displace this commitment with an alternative multifaceted outlook. Part of the point is to enable a broader conceptual gestalt switch, a change of 'picture' away from the one that "holds us captive." But the way Wittgenstein's work is transposed to philosophy of art suggests the opposite, as if Wittgenstein advanced one decisive counterargument rather than an arrangement of interrelated and embedded considerations (an arrangement whose intertwining relations might suggest that, at least in part, its design aims to elude streamlined summary). This is important if for no other reason than that a single, apparently devastating argument is open to refutation that is just as apparently devastating.

So let us not start with the discussion of family resemblance concepts, as Wittgenstein does not, but consider how the issues take shape in the text. The *Philosophical Investigations* plunges us into examining our views about language—how it is learned, how it functions in real-life contexts, and so on—confronting us almost immediately with our tendency to assume that all uses of words have some commonalities that we can capture by defining the nature of language.

13. When we say: "Every word in the language signifies something" we have so far said *nothing whatever*, unless we have explained exactly *what* distinction we wish to make. (It might be, of course, that we wanted to distinguish the words of language (8) [a minimal expansion of the slab language whereby people can give orders regarding pillars and slab] from words 'without meaning' such as occur in Lewis Carroll's poems, or words like "Lilliburlero" in songs.)

14. Imagine someone's saying: "*All* tools serve to modify something. Thus the hammer modifies the position of the nail, the saw the shape of the board, and so on."—And what is modified by the rule, the glue-pot, the nails?— "Our knowledge of a thing's length, the temperature of the glue, and the solidity of the box." Would anything be gained by this assimilation of expressions?

To arrive at clearer understanding, Wittgenstein invites us to consider the actual variety and complexity of what we do with language, this time taking the notion of a sentence as his example:

23. But how many kinds of sentence are there? Say assertion, question, and command?—There are *countless* kinds: countless different kinds of use of what we call "symbols", "words", "sentences". And this multiplicity is not something fixed, given once for all; but new types of language, new language-games, as we may say, come into existence, and others become obsolete and get forgotten. (We can get a *rough picture* of this from the changes in mathematics.)

Here the term "language-*game*" is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the *speaking* of language is part of an activity, of a form of life.
Review the multiplicity of language-games in the following examples, and in others:
Giving orders, and obeying them—
Describing the appearance of an object, or giving its measurements—

Constructing an object from a description (a drawing)—
Reporting an event—
Speculating about an event—
Forming and testing a hypothesis—
Presenting the results of an experiment in tables and diagrams—
Making up a story, and reading it—
Play-acting—
Singing catches—
Guessing riddles—
Making a joke; telling it—
Solving a problem in practical arithmetic—
Translating from one language into another—
Asking, thanking, cursing, greeting, praying.

Wittgenstein begins to articulate an answer that involves criticism of certain kinds of general questions in §24:

24. If you do not keep the multiplicity of language-games in view you will perhaps be inclined to ask questions like: "What is a question?"

But then the ensuing sections, which take us to the family resemblance discussion starting at §65, return to examining various parts and uses of language—names, for example—and our assumptions about them and what we picture as their relation to reality.[6] The clear import is that we need to consider much detail before we can address the issues.

65. Here we come up against the great question that lies behind all these considerations.—For someone might object against me: "You take the easy way out! You talk about all sort of language-games, but have nowhere said what the essence of a language-game, and hence of language, is: what is common to all these activities and what makes them into language or parts of language." ... And this is true. Instead of producing something common to all that we call language, I am saying that these phenomena have no one thing in common which makes us use the same word for all, but that they are *related* to one another in many different ways. And it is because of this relationship, or these relationships, that we call them all "language". I will try to explain this.

This terse summary does not stand on its own, but, given its location in the text, invokes the detailed examination of "all that we call language" across the first 64 sections. The promised discussion does not simply address the additional

example that Wittgenstein presents in this section—the notorious example of games—but concerns the diversity of language revealed across the first 64 sections. The additional example of the tremendous diversity of games that we play—ranging over solitaire, rugby, and a child tossing a ball against a wall—only highlights that when it comes to such phenomena:

66. ... we see a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail.

Wittgenstein first suggests a way to "*characterize*" or describe these similarities:

67. I can think of no better expression to characterize these similarities than "family resemblances"; for the various resemblances between members of a family: build, features, colour of eyes, gait, temperament, etc. etc. overlap and criss-cross in the same way. And I shall say: 'games' form a family. . . . *And for instance the kinds of number form a family in the same way.* [my emphasis]

Notice how Wittgenstein switches within the key passage from the first example of members of a family to kinds of numbers. The analogy of resemblances among family members is presented to *characterize* the nature and the diversity among games. Then Wittgenstein immediately switches to the second example of the variety of numbers along with a second analogy as he goes on to address how such phenomena can hold together as one kind, as the next quotation shows. I am interrupting the flow to make clear that the transition from descriptive to more explanatory considerations is made by proceeding to a second example of numbers to illustrate a highly diverse kind, a transition that is accompanied by switching from the analogy of family resemblances to the analogy of a spun thread. Here is the continuation of the passage:

67. . . . And we extend our concept of number as in spinning a thread we twist fibre on fibre. And the strength of the thread does not reside in the fact that some one fibre runs through its whole length, but in the overlapping of many fibres.

The examination does not stop here but goes on across subsequent passages to consider how we might be able to use concepts without clear bound-aries, how we could learn such concepts, in what sense we can be said to understand them, what "*[s]eeing what is common*" (§72) might be, and more. These discussions lead to investigating what it is to follow rules—since using words involves following rules, and one worry that the detailed investigations raise is that using words such as 'game' without a definition would involve rules that do not specify all applications.

Keeping the context of the family resemblance passages and the entirety of that discussion in view shows how both the neo-Wittgensteinian proposal, and especially its criticisms, diverge from Wittgenstein's text:

1. Wittgenstein's primary focus is not on the *concept* language but on "all that we call language" (§65); not on the concept but on the practices or language-games themselves, the forms of life activities in which language-games are an integral part. This point is substantiated further in the next section.
2. Wittgenstein's general claims in §65 depend on the demonstrations that precede them. The earlier sections try to show that we will be less inclined to look for general definitions if we approach our subject matter by attending to the actual varied details of a phenomenon—be it "all that we call" language or art—rather than from the abstract vantage point of a theory that presupposes that explanation requires specification of an essence. This is clear from §24. Whether we strive to define or to detail patterns of differences and similarities results from the attitude and commitments we bring to the subject matter. In this respect, the crucial matter might be settled before we arrive at the detailed variety of language or art. Insofar as we are in the business of constructing definitions, we are committed to the viability of our project in advance of having delved into the lived detail. Since this is one dimension of what the totality of interweaving considerations is designed to show, the general claims about "family resemblance" are part of this complex design. As such, they do not serve to make a self-standing point about the indefinable nature of "family resemblance" concepts.
3. Moreover, the textual claim about family resemblances is tightly circumscribed. The claim is one part of a two-part discussion of our ability to use a single concept for a

tremendous variety of phenomena in the absence of a definition—where the missing definition would have presumably specified the commonalities among the variety of phenomena in terms of individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions. It is not only that we discern the sort of crisscrossing resemblances as in families but also that these resemblances function together as the fibers of a thread or rope. The text clearly offers two analogies, not just one: one analogy to help characterize or describe the patterning of similarities and differences among members and the second to explain how they may form together into one kind, how new and diverse members can be added to a kind, and how our ability to use a concept can encompass such additions.

This is crucial from the perspective of debates in theory of art where it is said that the neo-Wittgensteinian challenge suggests that the similarities among artworks hold together by means of a prototype or paradigm—perhaps as a paterfamilias sitting in the center of a family portrait—and that it is manifest similarities to paradigms that determine membership in the kind "art" and extensions of it.[7] But there is no such suggestion in Wittgenstein's text, which does not delve into the nature of family resemblances for explanation, but immediately switches analogies to that of a thread or rope in which *no* fibers are more important than any others in constituting a whole through their intertwining relationships.[8] The switch is important because the neo-Wittgensteinian proposal was criticized as overlooking that family membership is not in fact constituted by similarities to paradigms, but commonalities in underlying genetic structure. The point of the criticism is that family membership is determined by common properties after all—genes! This seems to vindicate belief in essences and definitions by showing that the sort of crisscrossing resemblances manifest in families are in fact an example where a common essence—genetic structure—explains the manifest diversity. The criticism is telling against the neo-Wittgensteinian proposal to the extent that their discussion focused attention on the analogy to family resemblances.

But Wittgenstein's text holds no such spotlight. The progression in §67 shows that Wittgenstein suggests we think of family resemblances to illustrate the possible complexity of a pattern. His second point is that in certain cases, if a structure is large and complex enough, overlapping local relationships among members can determine the whole. Yes, family resemblances are explained by commonalities in genetic structure. But this does not suggest that all complex phenomena characterized by crisscrossing similarities and differences need to be explained by underlying commonalities since the simple example of a thread shows this to be unnecessary.

4. A related point, also established by the thread analogy, is that the fibers at the far ends do not have to actually touch each other in order to be related as parts of one whole. Local relationships among many intervening members allow for relationships among highly disparate members, and even relate distant members that need have no direct relationship. This readily suggests application to art (as neo-Wittgensteinians proposed). On one hand, the realistic frescoes of the ancient Greeks need share no art-relevant features with Duchamp's urinal but might be part of an extended pattern nonetheless by virtue of numerous diverse local relations or overlapping fibers. On the other hand, certain artworks that seem to deny that it matters that there be an object at all can nevertheless be explained as art by virtue of their local relationships to various other art practices.

5. Both of the preceding points bear on the fact that Wittgenstein nowhere suggests that manifest, readily describable similarities must obtain among members of a "family resemblance" kind. Here is the charge against the neo-Wittgensteinian proposal:

To be sure, Wittgenstein does not explicitly state that the resemblances which are correlated with our use of common names must be of a sort that are directly exhibited. Nonetheless, all of his illustrations in the relevant passages involve aspects of games which would be included in a description of how a particular game is to be played; that is, when he commands us to "look and see" whether there is anything common to all games, the "anything" is taken to represent precisely the sort of manifest feature that is described in rule-books, such as Hoyle.[9]

Here is a recent restatement of the objection: "Echoing Wittgenstein, [Morris] Weitz and

[William] Kennick maintained that in order to identify an item as an art-work, one just needed to look and see—look and see whether a candidate resembles the paradigms or descendant therefrom in terms of their manifest features."[10] Danto, for example, agreed with the prevailing understanding that manifest features were at issue in the neo-Wittgensteinian challenge to counter that when it came to the variety of 1960s art, including the variety of artworks that are indiscernible from ordinary counterpart objects: "clearly, there were no manifest overarching similarities. . . . "[11] This is the famous moment of realization in front of a pile of Brillo boxes on a gallery floor in 1964: "What struck me with the force of revelation . . . was that this view was entirely wrong."[12]

But Wittgenstein's injunction to "look and see" was not at all the narrow thesis as the objection claims:

66. . . . Don't say: "There *must* be something common, or they would not be called 'games'"— but *look* and *see* whether there is anything common to all.— For if you look at them you will not see something that is common to *all*, but similarities, relationships, and a whole series of them at that. . . . Is there always winning and losing, and competition between players? Think of patience. In ball games there is winning and losing but when a child throws his ball at the wall and catches it again, this feature has disappeared. Look at the parts played by skill and luck; and at the difference between skill in chess and skill in tennis.

The significance of the injunction to "look and see" is determined against the background of passages such as §23 that display the diversity of language-games. These passages strive to redirect us toward scrupulous attention to lived detail, suggesting that when it comes to understanding the fact of human language, we have been derailed from such attention toward general theory formation that considers variety as something to be abstracted away because it is inconsequential and messy—much like the *noise* that obstructs an informational pattern rather than the parts of the pattern itself. This is different from enjoining us to restrict the relevant similarities to "manifest" ones in a narrow sense. This difference is also clear from Wittgenstein's list of the crisscrossing similarities among games. When we "look and see" the role of luck or skill in a game, we are discerning patterns of a different order of complexity from

the "manifest features" that a rule book such as Hoyle's might describe. Indeed, §67 stresses that it is not manifest similarities in the simple sense intended in the criticism that are at issue. This is clear from the example of the varieties of number that Wittgenstein presents in mid-section to connect his discussion of family resemblances with his point about how fibers make up a thread.

67. . . . Why do we call something a "number"? Well, perhaps because it has a—direct—relationship with several things that have hitherto been called number; and this can be said to give it an indirect relationship to other things we call the same name. And we extend our concept of number as in spinning a thread we twist fibre on fibre.

The relationships to which Wittgenstein points are mathematical, concerning what we can do with numbers in practices that involve numbers. If the injunction to "look and see" continues to apply, as it does, then we are being enjoined to "look and see" what we can actually do with numbers in coming to recognize their variety. There is no question that, for Wittgenstein, the complex relationships between numbers are included in what he directs us to "look and see."

Moreover, if one takes into account the *Philosophical Investigations* as a whole, one of its principal strands concerns the complexity of what we immediately perceive. Wittgenstein does not put a cap on perception but rather urges that we can *see* the nuance and complexity of human feelings when looking at someone's face, for just one example.

Even if we do not go beyond the family resemblance passages themselves, the complex relationships among varieties of numbers indicate that it is consistent rather than inconsistent with Wittgenstein's approach to consider artworks in relations they stand to one another within practices or theories, as well as in relation with each other. Hence, relational theories of art, beginning with Danto's and Dickie's, that focus on the context of complex relationships—theoretical, historical, or practical—in which artworks stand cannot be claiming to do something 'anti-Wittgensteinian,' something that Wittgenstein was arguing against. Rather, in an irony of historical hindsight, Wittgenstein's discussion of the way the concept of number is extended is consistent with a relational approach of the sort

Danto offered in the mid-1960s to rebut the neo-Wittgensteinian approach.[13]

III. WITTGENSTEINIAN REALISM: PRACTICES AND
CONSTITUTIVE RULES, CONTINGENCY, AND
OBJECTIVITY

Wittgensteinian realism highlights that contingency and objectivity are not adversaries but bed-fellows, in the sense that it is in historically contingent practices that objective facts, norms, and values become available and compelling. This issue comes to the fore in Wittgenstein's investigations of rule following. I sketch the leading ideas in this section, and in the next section I draw the implications. Wittgenstein's explorations offer at least these three explanatory resources that bear on our understanding of art: First, they highlight the mutually implicatory relationships between activity, language, and context for any rule- or norm-informed endeavor. Second, they emphasize the role of contingent context both in the sense of practices and customs and in the sense of world conditions. Third, they raise the possibility that some endeavors are informed by constitutive rules or norms.

In Section II, I suggested that Wittgenstein's detailed focus on the variety of language games, or what we actually do with language, reconfigures our approach to language beyond taking the representation of facts to be central. But the idea of a variety of language games or uses also suggests a broader orientation to the life activities or practices to which language is internal. This reorientation begins from the very outset of the *Investigations* with the introduction of the novel technique of imagining primitive language games, which highlights the contextual relationship between a range of activity and a range of language uses:

2. … Let us imagine a language. … The language is meant to serve for communication between a builder A and an assistant B. A is building with building-stones: there are blocks, pillars, slabs and beams. B has to pass the stones, and that in the order in which A needs them. For this purpose they use a language consisting of the words "block", "pillar", "slab", "beam". A calls them out;—B brings the stone which he has learnt to bring at such-and-such a call.—Conceive this as a complete primitive language.

Such examples of primitive language games illustrate what has come to be known as Wittgenstein's view that "meaning is use." But this slogan may be less than clear; what is at issue is reclaiming the fact of linguistic meaning in human life—where this might more typically be put as the question of the nature of linguistic meaning—in the sense of Wittgenstein's emphasis that the facts are open to view. The relevant facts—or the determining factors, for a more typical phrasing—are present in the internal relationships among what we can say, what we can do, and the circumstances in which these take place. The relationships are internal in that each of these—human life activities, uses of language, and circumstances—depend on, enable, and entail one another. A primitive building scenario highlights these integral relations. One person can fetch the things another needs in building something insofar as the two speak an articulate language so that the one can tell the other specifically what he needs—one beam, for example, rather than two pillars.[14] This is the reciprocity in human forms of life activities and language: activity like cooperative building comes together with and is inseparable from the articulate speech integral to that range of activity, and both can only take shape in external circumstances that allow for building with beams and pillars. Activities are constrained by and take shape in the possibilities that the world makes available—possibilities that can come into view given our possibilities for activity and articulate language. This is a dimension of Wittgenstein's primitive language game scenarios that seems underemphasized or overlooked. One important implication is to focus on the reciprocity among these facts or factors rather than to take any one—action, language, world—as primary to the others. As Wittgenstein put the point in §19: "To imagine a language is to imagine a form of life."

Moreover, activities such as cooperative building by two or more people are much like games in that one needs to know how to go on in the right way—to bring a slab when it is requested, for example—which points out that our activities are shot through with rules. If we turn explicitly to rules to consider how we are able to go on correctly, for example, to ask for one beam rather than two pillars as the need arises or to fetch a beam when asked, as Wittgenstein does in the rule-following passages, the role of criteria of correctness, context, and training all stand out.

In what has been cast as an argument against the possibility of private rule following or private language, Wittgenstein highlights how following rules requires a larger context that functions—in myriad ways that he explores and details—as the repository of criteria of correctness that are independent of any individual rule follower but to which each is responsive and responsible. Some of the interweaving explorations show that if criteria of correctness were not independent of each individual, and if following rules were a matter of interpretation, then one might claim any behavior to follow a certain rule. In such a case, if it seems to me that adding by 1 up to 1000 and by 2 after 1000 follows the rule '+1', for example, then—it does! But if this is what rule following amounts to, then the idea that we follow determinate rules is empty. Instead of affirming that this idea is empty, Wittgenstein directs our attention to the facts that need to be countenanced:

202. And hence also 'obeying a rule' is a practice. And to *think* one is obeying a rule is not to obey a rule. Hence it is not possible to obey a rule 'privately': otherwise thinking one was obeying a rule would be the same thing as obeying it.[15]

This is Wittgenstein's controversial suggestion, in §199, that "to obey a rule, to make a report, to give an order, to play a game of chess, are *customs*, (uses, institutions)."[16] Though this is the most contentious, it is only one of the interwoven considerations pointing in the same direction. Its bearing on concepts is clear, since in using a concept we follow a rule that specifies possible applications. But its bearing is not restricted to mathematical series or concepts to the extent that various activities involve following rules: involve being able to go on in a specific activity in the right way.

This line of thought does not suggest that all there is to criteria of correctness is communal agreement in practice, or that communal agreement determines what is correct and what is incorrect. Rather, the struggle is to understand how it is that human practices bring criteria of correctness "into view" though not "into being," to echo John McDowell's phrasing.[17] This is important with respect to the objectivity of empirical, mathematical, or value concepts. But its significance is also more general in securing the distinction between doing something according to a rule ("as a matter of fact," so to speak) and doing something in a way

that a community agrees upon. The challenge is highlighted in this line of thought: if criteria of correctness are extant in practices, which are norm-governed ways of doing things at the level of communities, then what vouchsafes the practices?[18] In other words, why is this realism, rather than its opposite, a form of idealism? Wittgenstein raises this worry and indicates the avenue of response:

241. "So you are saying that human agreement decides what is true and what is false?"—It is what human beings *say* that is true and false; and they agree in the *language* they use. That is not agreement in opinions but in form of life.

242. If language is to be a means of communication there must be agreement not only in definitions but also (queer as this may sound) in judgments. This seems to abolish logic, but does not do so.—It is one thing to describe methods of measurement, and another to obtain and state results of measurement. But what we call "measuring" is partly determined by a certain constancy in results of measurement.

A detailed development of Wittgensteinian realism lies beyond the scope of this article; here my point has been to indicate where in part that development would lie: in detailed consideration of the mutual relations between our possibilities for action in the world and the possibilities afforded by the world, relations that are historically contingent and changing. This is exemplified by measurement, which can be integral to ranges of human activities in circumstances that are measurable and in practical contexts in which there are perceived needs for measuring. The point for our purposes is that Wittgenstein directs us toward such detailed focus for a realist reorientation to the role of historical contingency.[19]

The discussion of rule following is also important in the specific way that it highlights the role of practices. The idea of 'practice' figures prominently in both contemporary philosophy of art and mind. And so it might seem that to the extent that Wittgenstein's text directs us to the role of practices, it is not leading us to anything we are not considering already. But Wittgenstein's focus on rule following gives specific content to the notion of practices (or customs or institutions): as rule- or, more broadly, norm-informed life activities that allow facts and values to become evident and compelling.

Wittgenstein's focus on rules as well as their ubiquity in giving shape to human forms of life activities also puts the spotlight on the fact that some rules are constitutive. To take a well-worn example, consider the queen in chess. The rules that specify what this piece in the game does are constitutive for the piece: to be the queen *is* to move in such and such ways, with such and such potential for the point of the game of capturing the opposing king. Such rules are *constitutive*; they determine the games we play by specifying the legal moves and thereby the entities that figure in a game—for there to be an entity that *is* the queen in chess is for there to be an entity whose moves are governed by certain constitutive rules, the rules that specify the queen's movements. The notion is quite strong, insofar as it indicates that there would be no such entity as the queen in chess if it were not for the constitutive rules that define what it is legal in the game for the queen to do.[20] Moreover, facility with constitutive rules comes together with immediate perception of the governed entities, so that insofar as one can play chess, for example, one can *see* a queen without thinking of the rule explicitly or, indeed, without having the capacity to articulate the rule explicitly. Yet the fact that those who play chess can perceive the queen also does not contest that they can think about the way this piece functions in the game of chess as such or in any particular game. Rather, the point is to recognize the integrated variety in our capacities without prioritizing either perception or action or thought. Examples of well-defined games like chess or primitive life activities with two builders help make perspicuous how myriad activities involve rules or norms that are constitutive.

IV. BACK TO ART AS INTERTWINING PRACTICES

A Wittgensteinian framework, sketched above, directs us toward understanding art as practices that have differing constitutive norms and values. The extension of the idea of constitutive rules to constitutive norms captures both the historically contingent and changing character of art and the sense that there is something at work very much like a 'nature' in the sense of something with a determining or *constitutive* force that we need to understand. But what is determining need not be a 'nature,' eternally "always the same" so that "there

are conditions necessary and sufficient for something to be an artwork invariantly as to time and place."[21] At any point in time, constitutive norms and values '*make*' something art just as our intuitions suggest, but their role is specific to certain practices just as rules are specific to the endeavors they inform; this is important in order to understand the historically contingent nature of art practices.

One point of clarification is that, though the constitutive rules of a game like chess specify the legal moves of each of the pieces, giving the identity conditions for an item as being a knight or a rook, the more general idea is that constitutive rules or norms of various kinds specify what it is legal to do and thereby provide identity conditions for the resulting entities. In the case of art, constitutive rules or norms would pertain to the means, techniques, subject matter, and so on that go into the making of an artwork. For much of this discussion I use the generic notion of constitutive norms for brevity, with the understanding that this is shorthand for the variety of norm-governed means, techniques, subject matter, and so on for artworks that art historians study.

The family resemblance passages offer analogies that give explanatory form to these ideas—though a more effective caption is that some concepts are *multiply intertwining* or simply *fibrous* rather than *family resemblance* concepts. The diversity in "all that we call art" involves crisscrossing similarities that hold together like the fibers of a spun thread: locally overlapping practices with related constitutive norms and values intertwine, with the result that not only similarities but also differences overlap and crisscross. To take a simplified example for illustration, consider art practices of Medieval Europe that were integral to religious forms of life and aimed to produce artifacts for religious worship. These art practices came to aim at beautiful perceptual verisimilitude as well—but that emerged as a constitutive norm as the forms of life were also becoming increasingly secular, so that the primary raison d'être of the emerging, related art practices gradually ceased to be the production of religious artifacts. And both of these aims came to be replaced by different constitutive norms as practices intertwined throughout the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Such local relationships or overlappings—across many dimensions—secure both continuity and diversity. The thread of art might be so long and

thick that numerous fibers might not overlap; the norms of many art practices are quite distinct rather than similar. But this fact would not undermine the integrity of the whole insofar as there are local relationships or overlappings between the strands that do not overlap.

What about the concept 'art'? Wittgenstein's work reminds us to approach the concept by considering the diverse practices themselves. If art is a pattern of overlapping, norm-governed practices with a variety of constitutive norms and values, then the term 'art' would not have a univocal meaning across cultural eras. Moreover, since it is possible for us to mistake the logical grammar of some of our concepts, there might be times and places where we might not understand that the logical grammar of our uses of 'art' has a structure that allows for diverse crisscrossing, overlapping uses.

This perspective releases one from any obligation to supply a definition of the concept that specifies what is common to all art in terms of individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions or even a nonessentializing explanation in terms of a disjunction of conditions. Danto's relational definition and Berys Gaut's disjunctive or cluster account offer instructive contrast. The contrast is illuminating because, as we will see, a Wittgensteinian perspective highlights that both approaches share a key commitment: to keep the role of contingency out of the definition or explanation.

First, consider that Danto's response to the neo-Wittgensteinian denial that art is definable countered that we need to find a way to combine essentialism with historicism: "Essentialism and historicism are widely regarded as antithetical, whereas I see them not only as compatible but as complicated with one another, at least in the case of art."[22] But "complicated" in what sense? Danto argues that the single essence that all artworks share—namely, that all artworks embody meanings—is realized in or through historical circumstances. (Since historical circumstances vary, artworks vary even though they are always embodiments of meaning. That is why a relational definition is appropriate: something is an artwork or embodiment of meaning in relation to a broader context of art theory or understanding.)[23]

Second, Gaut has argued that the family resemblance passages suggest a nonessentializing theory that explains the concept in terms of a *cluster* of *disjunctively* necessary conditions, some subsets of which are sufficient.[24] This accounts for the historical diversity and open-endedness of art in the absence of a definition. There is much affinity between Gaut's reading of Wittgenstein and the one offered here; for example, Gaut also denies that the idea of family resemblance involves similarity to paradigms and restricts us to manifest "visible or intrinsic" properties.[25] But the divergence turns on the role of contingency. First, consider the logical form of a disjunctive explanation that Gaut emphasizes. Art might be explained, for example, as "being expressive of emotion" *or* "being intellectually challenging," *or* any other properties or characteristics of art that we can discern from the way the concept of art is actually used.[26] This logical form accommodates the diversity that some art is expressive of emotion while some art is both intellectually challenging and expressive of emotion; yet other art might turn on different key properties. Insofar as an explanation offers a range of properties and specifies that from these conditions some disjunction is individually necessary, art is being explained by "conditions necessary and sufficient . . . invariantly as to time and place," as Danto has repeatedly emphasized— even though those conditions may in fact only obtain in certain cultural eras, which the disjunctive form allows.[27] Here is Gaut:

A cluster account is true of a concept just in case there are properties whose instantiation by an object counts as a matter of conceptual necessity toward its falling under the concept. These properties are normally called *criteria*, but it is important not to associate all the connotations which this term has acquired with its use here: a criterion is simply to be understood as a property possession of which counts as a matter of conceptual necessity toward an object's falling under a concept.[28]

Consider the way that Danto zeroes in on the issue: "The concept of art, as essentialist, is timeless. But the extension of the term is historically indexed—it really is as if the essence reveals itself through history."[29] Danto's key commitment here is clear, namely, to distinguish the essence or nature of something from what is contingent—from what enters into the way that essence becomes realized in different historical eras: "The essence cannot contain anything that is historically or culturally contingent."[30] Gaut's cluster concept of art does not dispute this commitment, since there is

nothing in the disjunctive form of a cluster explanation that specifies that the various properties necessary for art are *bound* to contingent circumstances.

In contrast, the notion of constitutive rules suggests that local art practices are informed or determined by something with the strength of being determining, such as necessary and sufficient conditions attempt to capture, but with a normative force and specificity bound to a specific practice. This means that later artists, such as those working in the early decades of the twentieth century, could recognize the constitutive norms of the Beaux Arts tradition, for example, without feeling bound by those norms. In short, this approach captures the sense that art practices diverge significantly in what they are—in their very nature, we might be tempted to say. And there would be nothing wrong with this phrase, so long as we are in a position to remind ourselves that depending on what is in question, its 'nature'—in the neutral sense of what makes something what it is—might be a matter of necessary and sufficient conditions, or of constitutive norms, values, and aims of rule-informed historical phenomena.

What divides Danto and Gaut from Wittgenstein, I am suggesting, is how to understand the role of historical contingency. As Danto puts the conundrum: "It really is as if the essence reveals itself through history."[31] Or from another perspective, the puzzle is how best to understand and articulate that the objective facts, norms, and values extant in our activities come "into *view*" though "not . . . into *being*" in historical contexts.[32] The differences between a relational definition, a disjunctive cluster explanation, and an account of constitutive norms (for want of a better expression) turn on how to capture this relationship in the form of an account.

Finally, perhaps it also needs to be said that to be released from the obligation to explain art in a way that shows how it can be defined is not to deny or downgrade the felt need to understand our practices. The point that lies available in Wittgenstein's text is that the two are not the same, rather than to deny the legitimacy of the latter. His investigations indicate how we might proceed by leading us to think about the historically contingent contextual detail of what we can do and what we can say. Recall the broader textual context of Wittgenstein's family resemblance passage concerning the variety of all that we call

language. The import of the extended discussion is that when it comes to fibrous or 'family resemblance' concepts, aside from local circumscribed similarities, any overarching commonality or commonalities are at so great a level of generality that they are not explanatory of themselves. The point is not to deny that there may be generalities but to drive home the recognition that such generalities are not explanatory by themselves without specification by diversifying detail that belongs to the pattern.

Indeed, Wittgenstein suggests that such generalities may be truistic, as is the commonality that handles look more or less alike "since they are all supposed to be handled." One needs to keep in view the variety—of tools, handles, or language uses, for example—in their context or circumstances, in their lived actuality rather than from the standpoint of the kind of theory that treats such detail as noise that obstructs pattern rather than the pattern itself.

12. It is like looking into the cabin of a locomotive. We see handles all looking more or less alike. (Naturally, since they are all supposed to be handled.) But one is the handle of a crank which can be moved continuously (it regulates the opening of a valve); another is the handle of a switch, which has only two effective positions, it is either off or on; a third is the handle of a brake-lever, the harder one pulls on it, the harder it brakes; a fourth, the handle of a pump: it has an effect only so long as it is moved to and fro.

More specifically, how does this approach explain art of our time or of the past? I hesitate to offer examples of constitutive norms integral to particular art practices since the detailed expertise for filling in the framework I have offered lies with art historians. The discussion here can only be programmatic at best due to space constraints. Nevertheless, let me briefly indicate how changing to a Wittgensteinian perspective meshes with art-historical approaches and addresses some hard cases.

Art historian Linda Nochlin's work stands out for its Wittgensteinian outlook, which contextualizes artworks within a broader social history to help explain how specific works respond simultaneously to a dual set of pressures, from their broader social as well as their artistic context. Her point is not that these pressures exhaustively explain the "uniqueness" or "singularity" of

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certain pivotal works, but that "the corporeal eye, the visceral eye"—of artists, historians, and ordinary viewers alike—is historical: "All eyes are located not merely in bodies but in historically specific bodies and can thus be viewed within a history of representation and a history of practices, a social history, in short that can thicken up our responses."[33] This thesis is developed in her recent *Bathers, Bodies, Beauty,* which examines the changing representation of the human body across the past two hundred years from a unique starting point: the mid-nineteenth-century Parisian craze for swimming pools. Nochlin details how "the practice of bathing and swimming ... was coming into being" with the building of numerous pools in the river Seine and across Paris, accompanied by new interest in health, sport, and hygiene, all of which involved a range of representations, discursive and visual, from magazine articles, illustrations, and advertisements, to satirical cartoons and paintings.[34] These facts set up her examination of paintings that take the naked body as their theme to the present day. Nochlin argues that the bathing craze exerted pressure not simply on paintings of bathing but on the heroic landscape or *paysage composé*, which presents human subjects in landscape settings and includes bathing as a subtheme. This is because both genres or themes share an apparently ahistorical dimension. The *paysage composé* locates subjects in landscapes where time seems to stand still. Similarly, the bathing theme "seems to be a natural 'given' of art history: timeless, elevated, idealized, and as such central to the discourses of high art."[35] But Nochlin's attention to the social context shows that the contrast with the explosively changing nature of bathing as a recreational outdoor activity for large numbers of people in urban settings could hardly have been more stark and changed painting of the human body.

For example, her approach situates Edouard Manet's *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe* innovatively at the intersection of the *paysage composé* and the bathing theme, rather than just within the latter figurative genre by showing that the *Déjeuner* subverts traditional atemporal or ahistorical landscape painting along with a similarly ahistorical figurative tradition running through the bathing genre.[36] It is in such arguments that Nochlin analyzes how a genre is informed by constitutive norms concerning subject matter, means, and techniques that give identity to the works and how these evolve through interplay between the broader social context and a range of artistic permissions and constraints. The following quotation is just one example of her discussion of the visual means by which Manet introduces "the instability of the historical process into the realm of the natural."[37]

History, in the *Déjeuner* ... refuses to stand still but rather bursts upon us ... in the destruction of the "natural" setting and the transcendent harmony of the figure/ground relationship. But the *Déjeuner* does not submit easily to a simplistic analysis of its relation to history either. It is neither flat (that is, totally present, in temporal terms, eradicating history) nor spatially illusionistic ("deep," evoking temporality, the passage of time, history) but both: the figures are deliberately flattened, but the wings of the landscape, the peripheries, reveal themselves as illusionistic, suggesting mysterious depth penetrating the picture place. Yet neither depth nor flatness is really privileged, but rather both in different parts of the picture, so that the artifice of the pictorial construction is itself foregrounded.[38]

While Nochlin's work illustrates a Wittgensteinian emphasis on the relationships between specific art practices and broader life circumstances through which constitutive norms emerge and change, Dave Hickey makes the related point that rules both liberate and constrain us, which helps explain innovative works or movements as responses to the restrictive effect of norms. "The Heresy of Zone Defense" discusses art together with basketball, which is unique in having been invented at a specific well-documented moment through the design of a set of constitutive rules.[39] Hickey highlights how novel game-changing acts, such as Jackson Pollock's drip paintings (or Julius Erving's 1980s basket), "elevate" us into the "joy" that is attendant on seeing that something is "at once *new* and *fair* ... the product of talent and will accommodating itself to liberating rules."[40] But drip painting also came to govern and constrain once it emerged as a norm, Hickey argues, so that "the trick of civilization lies in recognizing the moment when a rule ceases to liberate and begins to govern."[41]

This is apt for considering a variety of works or movements across the twentieth century as challenging extant norms. In contrast, the definitional framework in theories of art suggests we consider how such works clarify our understanding of art by defying or negating conditions that had been taken to be necessary. For a hard puzzle,

consider conceptual art. There is controversy over narrower and broader uses of the term, but for our purposes a narrower use is more instructive since it focuses on works that are "distinguished by the relative absence of physically robust material and by the recourse to linguistic specification and description which that absence entailed."[42] Such works tend to do away with an object entirely in favor of a linguistic specification of a process that someone might carry out or an object whose "first-order physical properties" serve only to present linguistic text and textually conveyed ideas. Some examples are Sol LeWitt's Wall Drawings, which resulted from a set of instructions to be carried out by others, Lawrence Weiner's *A River Spanned* (which offers the preceding phrase but is neutral over whether the description needs to be realized in any way, as indeed it was not when exhibited), and Robert Barry's *All the Things I Know but of Which I Am Not at the Moment Thinking—1.36 P.M.; 15 June 1969, New York*, which can be entertained only in imagination (if at all).

A Wittgensteinian approach highlights that conceptual artists were challenging aesthetic norms associated with Abstract Expressionism and theorized in Clement Greenberg's arguments that visual art (like any art) was justified by a Kantian critique of its own limiting and hence necessary conditions.[43] In Hickey's terms, artists such as Sol LeWitt found that the norms developed by Abstract Expressionism had ceased to liberate, having rather begun to govern in a way that no longer "elevated us into joy."[44] Since the aesthetic values of Abstract Expressionism were identified at the time as clarifying the conditions of visual perceptibility as such, conceptual art proposed alternative norms concerning subject matter and means or techniques that do away with a perceptible object. With these facts in the foreground—that conceptual art addresses Abstract Expressionism and other practices that draw on perceptual effect in order to liberate artworks from norms that had become constraining—it is clear that conceptual art stands in local relationships to art practices just as Wittgenstein's fiber analogy specifies. Further, the Wittgensteinian framework suggests that conceptual works and the broader context of discussion they engender are part of the process of cultural conversation or "disputation" whereby the norms of specific practices evolve. In particular, part of the discussion surrounding conceptual art

addresses whether perceptibility has a defeasible role in art practices. Wittgenstein's work suggests that this is a contingent matter, unfolding in contemporary debates over conceptual art.[45]

V. CONCLUSION: THE LOSS OF BEAUTY

To reconfigure Wittgenstein's relevance for theories of art, it was necessary to go back to the neo-Wittgensteinian challenge to the definability of art. But we also need to move away from taking the question of art's definition as the prime relevance of Wittgenstein's later thought. To counter that tendency, I will conclude by sketching how Wittgenstein's work offers a framework for the reexamination of beauty currently underway.

From the tangle of hard problems that come together in beauty's demotion in both art and life, two offer a concise entry point here. First, beauty's cross-cultural variability has seemed too great for beauty to be a value, indeed for beauty to be one of the three core values along with the true and the good as it was considered throughout much of Western history. Second, when it comes to beauty's relation to art, essentialism plays a key role in demoting beauty. Following through on his definitional approach to art, Danto argues that the fact that some twentieth-century art, for example, is not beautiful shows that beauty is not part of the nature of art, neither necessary nor sufficient for art regardless of past artworks that seemed to embody the identification of art with the beautiful.[46] But it is important to be clear that *only if* it is believed that art has a nature does beauty's absence from much of twentieth-century art establish that beauty is *inessential* to art.

Wittgenstein's work bears on both issues. First, Wittgensteinian realism holds that values can only come into view in contingent practices. This provides a framework for a detailed rehabilitation of beauty's specific value and plurality. Part of the task would involve showing how a certain form of life makes a certain beauty available and compelling. One would examine what is beautiful in a certain cultural era—the sumptuously colorful beauty of Ottoman Empire manuscripts with their distinctive mauves and pinks and gold, for example—and study the life activities in seventeenth-century Isfahan and other centers to understand that *that* beauty becomes available.

To be sure, some of Wittgenstein's reflection in his "Lectures on Aesthetics" set beauty aside.[47] He argues against supposing that because the word 'beautiful' figures as an adjective, there is such a property; rather, it is a word of approbation, and in circumstances of approval the term plays very little role; specific considerations in context do the work.[48] In downplaying the concept of beauty as a term of approbation or by extension as a value term, I think that Wittgenstein was a person of his time, during which the rejection of beauty was well underway. But the need to understand specific aesthetic judgments by focusing on the way they are available and compelling in specific cultural circumstance is one of the themes in his "Lectures on Aesthetics":

25. The words we call expressions of aesthetic judgement play a very complicated role, but a very definite role, in what we call a culture of a period. To describe their use or to describe what you mean by a cultured taste, you have to describe a culture ... which fully means really to describe the culture of a period.[49]

26. What belongs to a language game is a whole culture. In describing musical taste you have to describe whether children give concerts, whether women do or whether men only give them, etc., etc. ... that children are taught by adults who go to concerts, etc., that the schools are like they are, etc.[50]

My account shows that we can follow this lead without discounting the importance of beauty as simply an interjection of approval that does no work.

Second, in displacing essentialism about art, Wittgensteinian realism makes it possible to consider beauty as a constitutive norm or value that informs some art practices. So long as the background commitment that art has a definable nature stays in place, the only role open for beauty is that of an optional extra that may be added to art's core nature—for example, that of embodiment of meaning. But to the extent that contemporary reaffirmations of beauty suggest that beauty's role may be more vital and integral to art, they show that rethinking beauty calls for rethinking art and for rethinking art in a way that allows beauty a more integral role. Wittgensteinian resources offer what is needed by explaining art as overlapping practices with differing constitutive norms and values, so that a certain beauty might be a constitutive value for some art practices and a different beauty might be constitutive in a range of others (for example, the beauty of the early Beaux Arts period and the beauty of the Japanese Edo period) even though beauty would not have a constitutive role in many.

These are just some of the ways that Wittgenstein's later work can enter into contemporary thought about art. Wittgensteinian realism provides a framework for understanding art, as well as its relationship with beauty, and it might offer further specific insights for developing such explanations in detail. In this article, the main point is that Wittgenstein directs our focus to the way constitutive norms and values inform our practices and forms of life. This suggests that art is interrelated practices that are integral to different forms of life or cultural eras. On this view, art is like a thick rope made of many different intertwining fibers. The strands differ insofar as their constitutive values and norms are different along with divergences in the forms of life in which they figure. This understanding of art is more adequate to the historical phenomena—which now includes the emerging reaffirmation of beauty as a value within the pluralism of contemporary art—than the view that art is the sort of phenomenon that has a distinctive essence, albeit a relational one that allows for open-ended historical realization and change but is nevertheless specifiable ahistorically in terms of individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions or alternatively through a cluster of disjunctive properties. This perspective also offers an analogous approach to the relationships among the different arts—literature, film, music, dance, visual art, and so on—as interrelations between norm-governed practices within their respective forms of life. That is, if we focus on the specific ways that the constitutive norms of the various arts, music or poetry, for example, emerge and evolve within forms of life, we can also consider the relationships among these practices, asking exactly how specific arts such as poetry and music intertwine within any particular form of life or across several.

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1. Morris Weitz, "The Role of Theory in Aesthetics," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 15 (1956): 27–35.

2. The classic statement is Arthur C. Danto, "The Artworld," *The Journal of Philosophy* 61 (1964): 571–584, which Danto has gone on to refine and elaborate over the ensuing decades.

3. George Dickie, "The New Institutional Theory of Art," in *Aesthetics: Proceedings of the 8th International Wittgenstein Symposium, Part 1*, ed. Rudolf Haller (Vienna: Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1984), pp. 57–64.

4. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, ed. G. E. M. Anscombe and R. Rhees, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1967), p. 174. All further references to *Philosophical Investigations* will be to section number (for Part I) or page (for Part II) of this translation.

5. Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy* (Oxford University Press, 1979); Cora Diamond, *The Realistic Spirit: Wittgenstein, Philosophy and the Mind* (MIT Press, 1991); John McDowell, "Wittgenstein on Following a Rule" and "One Strand in the Private Language Argument," in *Mind, Value, and Reality* (Harvard University Press, 1998), pp. 221–262 and 279–296; and Hilary Putnam, *Realism with a Human Face,* ed. James Conant (Harvard University Press, 1990).

6. Such as the assumption that in learning language, we learn what objects are called by learning their names through 'simple' ostension.

7. I think the charge is overplayed. In Weitz's classic article, the notion of a paradigm only occurs once, in parentheses, "certain (paradigm) cases can be given," but when the process of extending the concept of art is sketched, the notion of paradigm cases is not used: "what is at stake is no factual analysis concerning necessary and sufficient properties but a decision as to whether the work under examination is sufficiently similar in certain respects to other works, already called 'novels,' and consequently warrants the extension of the concept to cover the new case." Also: "'Is this *collage* a painting or not?' does not rest on any set of necessary and sufficient properties of painting but on whether we decide—and we did!—to extend 'painting' to cover this case." Weitz, "The Role of Theory in Aesthetics," pp. 31–32.

8. Wittgenstein does use the notion of a paradigm in a series of passages examining our use of color words to make the point that "when we forget which color this is the name of [red], it loses its meaning for us; that is, we are no longer able to play a particular language-game with it. And the situation is comparable with that in which we have lost a paradigm which was an instrument of our language." *Philosophical Investigations*, §57.

9. Maurice Mandelbaum, "Family Resemblances and Generalizations Concerning the Arts," in *The Philosophy of Art: Readings Ancient and Modern*, ed. Alex Neill and Aaron Ridley (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1995), pp. 192–201, at p. 197.

10. Noël Carroll, "Introduction," in *Theories of Art Today* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2000), pp. 3–24, at p. 13.

11. Arthur C. Danto, "The End of Art: A Philosophical Defense," *History and Theory* 37 (1998): 127–143, at p. 129.

12. Arthur C. Danto, "Introduction: Art Criticism after the End of Art," in *Unnatural Wonders: Essays from the Gap between Art and Life* (Columbia University Press, 2007), pp. 3–18, at p. 8.

13. To be fair, I think that in hindsight we can also appreciate that Weitz's suggestion—that our concept of art develops as we make decisions about novel cases by considering whether they are similar in relevant respects to previous works—fits with Wittgenstein's wording of the way we extend the concept of number, as in spinning a thread we twist fiber on fiber. But Weitz was attempting to distinguish, as he put it, "constructed and completely defined" concepts of logic and mathematics from empirically descriptive and normative concepts ("The Role of Theory in Aesthetics," p. 31). That is presumably why he stayed away from the analogy to intertwining fibers that Wittgenstein offered in discussing numbers and stuck to discussion of family resemblances that Wittgenstein offered by discussing games while attempting to capture the concept of art. Unfortunately, the focus on family resemblances led to numerous misunderstandings, as I have sketched. It is also important to note that Weitz was not denying that most concepts are definable. Rather, he was elaborating what he took to be Wittgenstein's "refutation of philosophical theorizing in the sense of constructing definitions of *philosophical entities*" (p. 30, my emphasis). Since the primary aim in this article is to move the discussion forward, I have not examined Weitz's view in detail from a more contemporary perspective, though I think that a more comprehensive or charitable reading is possible.

14. This distinguishes building as a form of life activity from building as a life activity of a nonlinguistic animal such as a beaver: beavers can build together or alongside one another but not in the cooperative way where one beaver directs another to specific tasks such as bringing two branches or some mud or even two willow shoots or one maple branch. It is this specificity that holds the potential for an open-ended multiplicity of possible variations so that, in our case, there are forms of life activity.

15. My point is very quick here, given the purpose and scope of this article. John McDowell has offered a detailed textual examination that shows how a skeptical reading that undermines the idea of determinate meanings introduced by Saul Kripke depends on disregarding much of the actual text. See Saul Kripke, *Wittgenstein and Rules and Private Language* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982), and McDowell, "Wittgenstein on Following a Rule."

16. See also Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §202.

17. John McDowell, "Reply to Gibson, Byrne, and Brandom," *Philosophical Issues* 7 (Perception) (1995): 283–300, at p. 285.

18. This challenge is developed in the recent trend, principally associated with Saul Kripke and Crispin Wright, of interpreting Wittgenstein as making a skeptical or more specifically an antirealist point that there is nothing at the level of communities that could vouchsafe the correctness of our practices—or of our communal ways of going on in one way rather than another. Space does not allow discussion of the debate between realist and antirealist interpretations, since the latter is more nuanced than the textually problematic skeptical view offered by Kripke; the discussion above can only aim to indicate the realist reading.

19. See also Richard Eldridge, "Problems and Prospects of Wittgensteinian Aesthetics," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 45 (1987): 251–261.

20. More precisely, constitutive rules determine the identity conditions for some entities. The identity conditions for the queen in a game of chess are distinct from the identity conditions for a lump of ivory or plastic: whatever obeys certain movement rules is a queen in chess, but only that which behaves in a certain regular way given initial conditions has the physical constitution of plastic. See John Haugeland, "Pattern and Being," in *Having Thought: Essays in the Metaphysics of Mind* (Harvard University Press, 1998), pp. 267–290, and my "Minds: Contents without Vehicles," *Philosophical Psychology* 17 (2004): 149–180. A helpful summary of the idea of constitutive rules and how it figures in the debates sketched here is in Kathrin Glüer and Åsa Wikforss, "The Normativity of Meaning and Content," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2010 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta. http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2010/entries/meaning-normativity/, accessed September 28, 2013. See John Rawls's "Two Concepts of Rules," *Philosophical Review* 64 (1955): 3–32 for a classic discussion of constitutive rules and practices. For a recent discussion with respect to art practices, see especially Peter Lamarque's "Wittgenstein, Literature, and the Idea of a Practice," *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 50 (2010): 375–388. My discussion in this article may be seen as forging a middle option between the sociological and analytic conceptions of practices from which Lamarque's nuanced discussion sets out.

21. Arthur C. Danto, "From Aesthetics to Art Criticism and Back," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 54 (1996): 105–115, at p. 113.

22. Danto, "The End of Art," p. 128.

23. If artworks are embodied meanings, as Danto proposes, then artworks will vary across historical eras because (1) not all contents are available at all times, and (2) means of embodiment vary along with possible meanings and contents. This is the reason why artworks have one essence, but historical conditions give realization to the one essence ("From Aesthetics to Art Criticism," p. 113). See also Arthur C. Danto, "Modalities of History: Possibility and Comedy," in *After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History* (Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 193–219. It is interesting that having rejected the antidefinitional neo-Wittgensteinian approach, in this

chapter Danto turns to the Wittgensteinian notion of forms of life to explain the historical asymmetries in embodying meanings.

24. Berys Gaut, "'Art' as a Cluster Concept," in *Theories of Art Today*, ed. Noël Carroll (University of Wisconsin Press, 2000), pp. 25–44.

25. Gaut,"'Art' as a Cluster Concept," p. 28.

26. Gaut,"'Art' as a Cluster Concept," pp. 27–28.

27. Danto, "From Aesthetics to Art Criticism," p. 113.

28. Gaut,"'Art' as a Cluster Concept," p. 26.

29. Danto, "Modalities of History," p. 196.

30. Danto, "Modalities of History," p. 197.

31. Danto, "Modalities of History," p. 196.

32. McDowell, "Reply to Gibson, p. 285.

33. Linda Nochlin, *Bathers, Bodies, Beauty: The Visceral Eye* (Harvard University Press, 2006), p. 15.

34. Nochlin, *Bathers, Bodies, Beauty*, p. 20.

35. Nochlin, *Bathers, Bodies, Beauty*, p. 15.

36. Nochlin, *Bathers, Bodies, Beauty*, pp. 74–76.

37. Nochlin, *Bathers, Bodies, Beauty*, p. 57.

38. Nochlin, *Bathers, Bodies, Beauty*, p. 79.

39. Dave Hickey, "The Heresy of Zone Defense," in *Air Guitar: Essays on Art and Democracy* (Los Angeles: Art Issues Press, 1997), pp. 155–162.

40. Hickey, "The Heresy of Zone Defense," p. 156.

41. Hickey, "The Heresy of Zone Defense," p. 157.

42. Charles Harrison, "Conceptual Art," in *A Companion to Art Theory*, ed. Paul Smith and Carolyn Wilde (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), pp. 317–326, at p. 320.

43. Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," in *The Philosophy of Art*, ed. Neill and Ridley, pp. 111–117.

44. Hickey, "The Heresy of Zone Defense," p. 157. See also Saul Ostrow, "Sol LeWitt," *BOMB* 85 (2003): 22–29.

45. For further discussion of conceptual art from a Wittgensteinian perspective, see my manuscript "Beauty and the End of Art."

46. For example, see Arthur C. Danto, "Beauty and the Philosophical Definition of Art," in *The Abuse of Beauty: Aesthetics and the Concept of Art* (Chicago: Open Court, 2003), pp. 17–37, especially pp. 25 and 27.

47. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*, ed. Cyril Barrett (University of California Press, 1997).

48. For example, Wittgenstein, *Lectures and Conversations*, p. 5 (§13).

49. Wittgenstein, *Lectures and Conversations*, p. 8.

50. Wittgenstein, *Lectures and Conversations*, p. 8.