



## CHAPTER ONE

### SPEAKING OF A WORK OF ART

1. You show me some Picasso paintings and I say that none of these are to be called works of art. You show me other ones of Dali. You tell me to listen to the performance of Beethoven's Symphony No.9. You take me to visit Lolyd Wright's studio. You give me a work of fiction written by Dostoëvsky to read. You take me to watch the film "Apocalypse Now". Each time the only answer I give you is "No. You cannot call this a work of art." And you try again and again but I give the same answer. At last I tell you that "No work of art has existed before, neither good nor bad ones, and I do not know any in the future." Do you say that my answer is incredible? I ask you on what condition is my answer incredible? Because my definition is a faulty one? On what grounds do you charge me to be at fault? Are we all artificial in this account? Are all definitions equally justified?

On the first look, it seems as if there's no problem, but when you scrutinize the perplexity arises. Using the same word does not matter when using it not the same meaning. What is the object of contention when we talk about a work of art? More properly question, what is the object of referring when we use the word 'work of art'?

The field we called "Aesthetics" is crowded by enormous papers which seem to discuss of the same cluster of problems, using the same terms. It's the source of headache when you read them and

are perplex by such theoretical terms, I say theoretical terms, as 'aesthetic experience', 'aesthetic appreciation', 'aesthetic attitude', 'aesthetic emotion'. Or the terms such as 'Aesthetic object', 'Works of art'. Outside the critical community, as of art criticism, these seldom occur in the context of everyday discourse. We talk of art in our everyday life, not only describing or asserting artworks but also evaluate and judge them as good or bad, or by using other judgementative terms. This does not mean that there is no some touch between those theoretical terms and everyday language. Such nonaesthetical terms (using Sibley's terminology, see Sibley 1959), the aestheticians say, are not preferable, they are the source of confusion because of their ambiguity. Yes, we accept that one task of an aesthetician or a philosopher in this field is to clarify the terms which are used. In constructing one which can be used 'appropriately' in our conceptual scheme to understand aesthetic state of affairs, we want the one which is least problematic. Constructing a system of terminology to clear-up a problem is not arbitrary. Yes, it sometime can even challenge our commonsense. But this must be based on an explanation of why our commonsense is confused. This gives a ground for rejecting a theory of art.

But the problem is not solved. When you say a theory of art is wrong what matters is the explanation of why it's wrong. This does not assume metaphysical realism, or in the special context some kind of scientific realism, is right and gives this basis. Nor, using Goodman's words, does it mean that there is 'the world' to refer to. It only means that on some common ground which debating is possible. Discourse of one theory is distinguished from that of

another one because the paradigm and cluster of problems treated are different. What is the common ground for debating? As seems like debating is not debating at all. It's only talk of one own matter, describing or propounding one own story. Do we have only many autobiographical works in the field 'aesthetics'?

2.

The literature of aesthetics is littered with desperate attempts to answer the question "What is art?". This question, often hopelessly confused with the question "What is good art?", is acute in the case of found art - the stone picked out of the driveway and exhibited in a museum - and is further aggravated by the promotion of so-called environmental and conceptual art. Is a smashed automobile fender in an art gallery a work of art, What of something that is not even an object, and not exhibited in any gallery or museum - for example, the digging and filling-in of a hole in Central Park as prescribed by Oldenburg? If these are works of art, then are all stones in the driveway and all objects and occurrences works of art? If not, what distinguishes what is from what is not a work of art? That an artist calls it a work of art? That it is exhibited in a museum or gallery? No such answer carries any conviction. (Goodman 1978: 66)

Goodman, then, rejects the question 'what is art?' as a wrong one, because of its "failing to recognize that a thing may function as a work of art at same times and not at others". The genuine question is 'when is art'. More properly speaking "when does an object come to function as a work of art?". (Ibid.: Chapter 4) He said that "Things function as works of art only when their symbolic functioning has certain characteristics." Or in another word "Indeed, just by virtue of functioning as a symbol in certain way does an object become, while so functioning, a work of art." (Ibid.:67) An object becomes a work of art when it comes to function in a particular way. Beethoven's Symphony No.5 is come to function as a work of art when it comes to function in that way. Symphony No.5 can be an other thing when it takes another function e.g. suppose

being using in a psychotherapy project. In his words "An object may symbolize different things at different times, and nothing at other times. An inert or purely utilitarian object may come to function as art, and a work of art may come to function as an inert or purely utilitarian object." (Ibid.:70) A work of art can become an other thing when it takes the appropriate function. At that moment we don't call it a work of art. But what is a work of art? It looks as curiously because it's circulation explaining.

Using another words art is what art is when it functions as it is and it can function as other, on that moment we don't call it as it is. This sounds like something can essentially be a work of art but be used otherwise - That isn't Goodman's meaning, is it? No, it is what my analytical scrutiny of Goodman's theory that reveals this circulation explanations. I think that one solution to this circulation is that there is art proper as art. Strictly speaking, by some forms or modes of existence are proper to be called as modes of the works of art, because those forms or modes of existence are modes of presencing, or give their existence as works of art. Therefore, some object genuinely is a work of art. This means that : to be is to function as itself. To function as a genuinely utilitarian object is because it is an utilitarian object in its mode. To function as a genuinely work of art is because it is a work of art in its mode.

Perhaps to say that an object is art when and only when it so functions is to overstate the case or to speak elliptically. The Rembrandt painting remains a work of art, as it remains a painting, while functioning only as a blanket; and the stone from the drive-way may not strictly become art by functioning as art. Similarly, a chair remains a chair even if never sat on, and a packing case remains a packing case even if never used except for sitting on. (Ibid : 70)



And on his footnote 9 :

Just as what is not red may look or be said to be red at certain times, so what is not art may function as or be said to be art at certain times. That an object functions as art at a given time, that it has the status of art at that time, and that it is art at that time may all be taken as saying the same thing - so long as we take none of these as ascribing to the object any stable status. [Ibid : 69, This footnote refers to the sentence " and the stone from the driveway may not strictly become art by functioning as art"]

If as that conclusion, why the question "What objects are works of art?" is a wrong one? Goodman said that "In crucial cases, the real question is not "What objects are (permanently) works of art?" but "When is an object a work of art?" [Ibid.: 66-67, accent by my own] The problem is with respect to what is the case at the time when we take that object as art, not as another. In this light the question "What is a work of art?" and the question "When is an object a work of art?" are the one and the same question. The 'is' in the first implies situating condition, to be is to function as itself, or strictly speaking to function as it is primarily intended to be such an object, a work of art, by to be present as such a mode of existence, e.g. painting. At that moment that this object is take function as it is primarily intended to be, not at the moment that taking it to function as another, an utilitarian one, e.g. Beethoven's Symponies when used in psychotherapy project, it is situated in its primary condition to be a work of art, as is intended to be as such when it is created. The crucial question here is as to what is disturbing Goodman. The context of his concern tells us that the problem of taking a 'found object' and so-called 'conceptual arts' to be included in the category of artwork is what disturbs him.

If attempts to answer the question "What is art?" characteristically end in frustration and confusion, perhaps -as so often in philosophy- the question is the wrong one. A reconception of the problem, together with application of some results at a study of the theory of symbols, may help to clarify such moot matters as the role of symbolism in art and the status as art of the 'found object' and so-called 'conceptual art'. (Ibid.:57)

Is it really that the attempt to answer the question "What is art?" characteristically end in frustration and confusion? One task that I will do in this essay is to show that the question "What is art?" can be answered, not in frustration and confusion, such a theory of art as of Collingwood, as I will reconstruct later, give successful answer to the problem. Application of that theory can help to clarify the status as art of the 'found object' and so-called 'conceptual art'.

3. When an artist takes an object of a natural kind such as a stone and calls it a 'work of art' and exhibits it in an art exhibition and claims that this natural object fulfills his/her ideal of that a type of work. This is an example of taking a 'found object' to take function as an art work. Another example is what we call 'conceptual art': representing a white room, which has only empty space inside, the artist tells us that this empty room is like what we see when we introspect our ourselves. This imaginary bare room fulfils this artist's need to express this one's feeling of the hollowness of life.

My answer is that just as an object may be a symbol - for instance, a sample - at certain times and under certain circumstances and not at others, so an object may be a work of art at some times and not at others. Indeed, just by virtue of functioning as a symbol in a certain way does an object become, while so functioning, a work of art. The stone is normally no work of art while in the driveway, but may be so when on display

in an art museum. In the art museum, it exemplifies certain of its properties - e.g. properties of shape, color, texture. The hole-digging and filling functions as a work insofar as our attention is directed to it as an exemplifying symbol. On the other hand, a Rembrandt painting may cease to function as a work of art when used to replace a broken window or as a blanket. [ Ibid. : 67, accent by my own.]

Now you can see that Goodman's notion has some accent on our directly attention to that object as a symbol. "...and art without symbols is restricted to art without subject." (Ibid. : 58) "Whoever looks for art without symbols, then, will find none - if all the ways that works symbolize are taken into account. Art without representation or expression or exemplification- yes; art without all three -no" (Ibid. : 66) His arguing is so strong that a work of art can exemplify certain of its properties, stands as a sample of some of its properties.

"...and that the properties to which it bears this relationship of exemplification vary with circumstances and can only be distinguished as those properties that it serves, under the given circumstances, as a sample of. Being a sample of or exemplifying is a relationship something like that of being a friend; my friends are not distinguished by any single identifiable property or cluster of properties, but only by standing, for a period of time, in the relationship of friendship with me" (Ibid. : 64 - 65)

To exemplify is to symbolize

"...exemplification no less than representation or expression is a form of reference. A work of art, however free of representation and expression, is still a symbol even though what it symbolizes be not things or people or feelings but certain patterns of shape, color, texture that it shows forth." (Ibid. : 65)



The recognition of the symbolic function of a work of art is the crucial step to give us a clue to "the perennial problem of when we do and when we don't have a work of art!" But an object or event takes function as a work of art only when it symbolic functioning has certain characteristics.

Our stone in a museum of geology takes on symbolic functions as a sample of the stones of a given period, origin, or composition, but it is not functioning as a work of art. (Ibid.: 67)

What are these characteristics? He said that

The question just what characteristics distinguish or are indicative of the symbolizing that constitutes functioning as a work of art calls for careful study in the light of a general theory of symbols (Ibid.: 67)

His book, *Language of Art*, has subtitle "An Approach to a Theory of Symbols". "Language" in his title, he said, should, strictly, be replaced by "symbol systems" (His analysis of symbol systems in the field "art" in the light of a general theory of symbols led him to assert that "Art and Science are not altogether alien". (Goodman 1976:255) When he said of five symptoms of the aesthetic :

(1) syntactic density, where the finest differences in certain respects constitute a difference between symbols - for example, an ungraduated mercury thermometer as contrasted with an electronic digital-read-out instrument; (2) semantic density, where symbols are provided for things distinguished by the finest differences in certain respects - for example, not only the ungraduated thermometer again but also ordinary English, though it is not syntactically dense; (3) relative repleteness, where comparatively many aspects of a symbol are significant - for example, a single-line drawing of a mountain by Hokusai where every feature of shape, line, thickness, etc. in contrast with perhaps the same line as a chart of daily stockmarket averages, where all that counts is the height of the line above the base; (4) exemplification, where a symbol whether or not it denotes, symbolizes by serving as a sample of properties it literally or metaphorically possesses; and finally (5) multiple and complex reference, where a symbol



performs several intergrated and interacting referential functions, some direct and some mediated through other symbols (Goodman 1978 : 67 - 68)

He said this on the account of his theory of symbols. [ See His Theory of Notation in Goodman 1976 : chapter 4 ] Then he can "examining the aesthetic relevance of the major characteristics of the several symbol processes involved in experience". Rather than seeking a crisp criterion but look for aspects or symptoms of the aesthetic. In his words "Symptoms, after all, are but clues; the patient may have the symptoms without the disease, or the disease without the symptoms." (Goodman 1978 : 68) An experience is aesthetic just in case it has at least one of those attributes. His theory of notation is interesting but to discuss in that account not the point of my essay.)

This "symbol" using here covers "letters, words, texts, pictures, diagrams, maps, models, and more, but carries no implication of the oblique or the occult. The most literal portrait and the most prosaic passage are as much symbols, and as 'highly symbolic', as the most fanciful and figurative. (Goodman 1976:XI)

To call for careful study in the light of a general theory of symbols, this studying of the structures of appearance, is lead Goodman to give signification to what art does than to what art is.

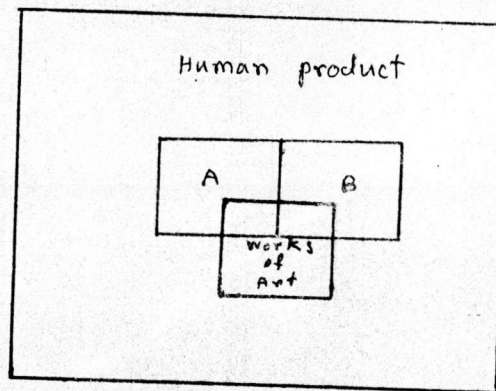
To say what art does is not to say that what art is; but I submit that the former is the matter of primary and peculiar concern. The further question of defining stable property in terms of ephemeral function-the what in terms of the when-is not confined to the arts but is quite general, and is the same for defining chairs as for defining objects of art. The parade of instant and inadequate answers is also much the same: that whether an object is art-or a chair-depends upon intent or upon whether it sometimes or usually or always or exclusively functions as such. Because all this tends to obscure more special and significant

questions concerning art, I have turned my attention from what art is to what art does... The bearing that this inquiry into the nature of works of art has upon the overall **undertaking** of this book should by now have become quite clear. How an object or event functions as a work explains how, through certain modes of reference, what so functions may contribute to a vision of-and to the making of-a world." (Goodman 1978:70)

Is this only the change of paradigm from one question to another one? This question is the crucial one. As many critic of Quine's account on Ontology that his concerning is the shiftiness of **problem** 'being-qua-being' to another postulation. To discuss about new cluster of problems, but not on rejection of the old one, it's only the discussion of different subject-matter. Is it really that former question is the matter of primary and peculiar concern? Is it really that the question 'what is art?' tends to obscure more special and significant questions concerning art? Before you pass to the next chapter, I advice you to note that such a theory as of Collingwood can answer the question 'what is art?' and not obscures the special and significant questions concerning art. His theory can directly apply to the case of the 'found object' and so-called 'conceptual art', as the act of creation the artist plays without requiring skill as craftsman. What Goodman takes to be one symbolization as of art, by Collingwood theory, some such a symbolization is the activity of art falsely so called. What Goodman attempts to do, the seeking varieties and functions of symbol by systematic inquiry, is only the ex post facto activity. (see chapter two)

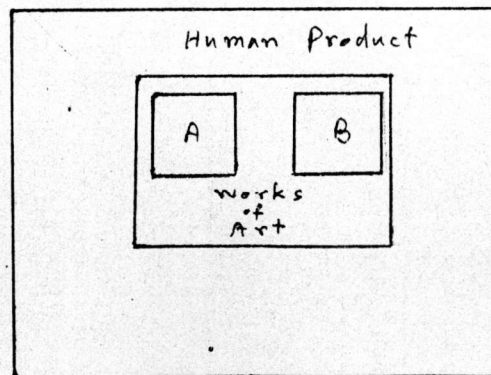
4. Take the example problem I already said in (1). That is the extreme type of using the word 'work of art' as refer to criterion that excluded all product in artistic activity, supposed

that there can be such criterion; only the martian can create work of art. The less extreme is what we can see in many theories of art, i.e. Croce-Collingwood's theory of art. As these theories, for example, painting is painting only some painting is a member in the class of the works of art. Let see illustration A.



Let A be set of one mode of the existence of art, such as music.  
 Let B be set of another mode of the existence of art, such as sculpture.  
 A is not identical with B in its mode.

Now see illustration B.



"To be a work of art is one thing, and to be a good work of art is another. "Work of art" in no way implies "good work of art". [Hospers 1969:4, Notice here that Hospers's claim not

correspond to the position of many theories of art, which see the word 'work of art' as implying "a good one", such as Tolstoy's theory or Significance Form Theory. See Tolstoy's article in Kennick 1964, Bell's theory in Hospers 1969] This sentence is as the illustration B. The set of human products can expand infinitely. And the set of the works of art can expand infinitely too, including new modes of functions such as the utilitarian one, can sometimes function as a work of art. And other natural object too. All genuine members in the class of the works of art primarily function as works of art. The phrase 'work of art' is neutral term used primarily as the name of the class of human artistic products, some version of this position is Goodman's theory.