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INCOMMENSURABLE AIMS IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF ART

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Abstract

This article argues that philosophers of art wrongly aim for their definitions of art to be both descriptively and normatively adequate, for the method that is used to achieve both aims, namely the method of reflective equilibrium, is not applicable to the project of defining art. Therefore, in order to facilitate genuine debate regarding definitions of art, philosophers must abandon the method of reflective equilibrium and determine which approach, be it descriptive or normative, deems more appropriate.

Keywords: Reflective Equilibrium, Metaphilosophy, Definition of Art, Methodology.

1. Introduction

It is often accepted that most philosophers of art aim for their definitions or theories of art[1] to be both descriptively adequate and normatively adequate. In other words, a definition of art needs to include items that are generally thought of as art in the domain of art and exclude all others, as well as provide a solution to contested cases, that is, cases in which there is disagreement over whether or not an item is art. However, I will argue for the following thesis, which I call the Incommensurable Aims thesis (IA):

> (IA) A definition or theory of art cannot be both descriptively and normatively adequate; these two aims are incommensurable.

In order to fulfil both aims, philosophers of art try to reach a reflective equilibrium between the proposed definition and our classificatory judgments[2]

[1] Although a distinction can be drawn between definitions and identification theories of art, here I will use 'definition of art' and 'theory of art' interchangeably. Both terms refer to an attempt to clarify the concept of art by formulating certain conditions for arthood. I will stick to the terminology used by the philosophers that are being discussed in the given contexts.

[2] In the literature on definitions of art, the term 'intuitions' is more frequently used than 'categorization judgments'. I prefer to use the latter term, since recent metaphilosophical investigation has shown the former one to be highly problematic. It is unclear what 'intuitions' exactly entail and which role they play in philosophical research (see e.g., Cappelen 2012; Deutsch 2010; Williamson 2007). I maintain that the notion 'intuitions', as used by

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on which items are art.[3] In this article, I will discuss three requirements that should be met in order for the method of reflective equilibrium to be applicable to the project of defining art: (1) there needs to be a consensus over the circumstances in which a definition needs to be descriptive or normative, or alternatively, there needs to be a consensus over which cases are contested cases; (2) the number of contested cases needs to be limited; (3) philosophers of art need to be able to provide reasons independent of their proposed definitions for discarding some classificatory judgments, while retaining others. In showing that these requirements cannot be met, (IA) will be confirmed, verifying that philosophers of art cannot aim for their definitions of art to be both descriptively and normatively adequate.

The thesis defended in this paper is considered straightforward and meaningful. (IA) not only clarifies why philosophers of art often seem to talk past each other, it also has significant implications for the way in which the project of defining art should be executed and evaluated. Philosophers will have to choose which approach, be it descriptive or normative, they want to engage in, and consequently adopt methods that are consistent with the chosen approach. Only in this way is it possible to know what to expect from and how to evaluate definitions of art.

In the second section, I will show that, contrary to what some philosophers of art themselves believe, most philosophers of art explicitly or implicitly aim for their definitions of art to be both descriptively and normatively adequate. My intention is to present a potentially problematic mainstream view rather than attack a minority position. In the third to the sixth section, I will clarify reflective equilibrium and show how philosophers of art use this method. Then, I will focus on the three requirements for the applicability of the method of reflective equilibrium and show that they are not met, thus endorsing the proposed thesis (IA). In the last section, the consequences of (IA) for the project of defining art will be discussed.

2. Descriptive and Normative Aims

It is first worthwhile to elucidate what descriptive and normative aims in the philosophy of art involve. Descriptivism entails that a philosophical definition of art merely aims to clarify and systematize our concept of art;

philosophers of art, is most charitably and accurately understood as categorization judgments.

[3] Reflective equilibrium is a method borrowed from moral philosophy. It is conceived to work back and forth among our considered judgments about particular instances or cases, the principles or rules that we believe govern them, and, in case one is engaged in 'wide' reflective equilibrium, the relevant background theories with regard to these considered judgments and principles. Any of these two or three elements are revised in order to achieve an acceptable coherence among them.

put differently, it is concerned with how we use the concept of art, rather than how we can be guided to classify items as either art or non-art. A descriptive account does not establish what the extension of art is; rather, this extension is implicit in the way we use the concept. The underlying idea is that while there is broad agreement regarding which items fall under the concept of art, substantial disagreement exists only regarding the theory that best elucidates our classifications (cf. Pust 2012). A descriptive analysis of art has to be in accordance with our classificatory practice. Such an analysis can be falsified by showing that it contradicts our usage; if a descriptive definition includes item x in the domain of art, while x is commonly excluded from the domain of art, then the definition is in need of modification. In other words, descriptivists want their definitions to be 'extensionally adequate,' with the aim of catching the extension of art. It must be noted that virtually, all descriptive proposals aim to capture the classificatory practice of 'competent users', who are well-informed about art, unbiased and are calm when making their classificatory judgments (see e.g., Levinson 1993, 413, Thomasson, 2012). By clarifying the usage of competent users, descriptivists can argue that certain folk or uninformed categorization judgments are false. What they are not committed to is to change the way competent users use the concept of art.

A normative analysis of art proposes which concept or concepts we ought to deploy. As Nick Zangwill has put it: 'the question is not: what is our concept of art? But: which concept or concepts should we have?' (Zangwill 2006, 88). Such an analysis will not completely depart from our classificatory practice. Otherwise, it is not an analysis of the concept under consideration at all. However, a normative analysis does not need to be maximally extensionally adequate. Clearly, these philosophers need to provide us with reasons for changing our use. Broadly stated, the reasons provided fall into two kinds. On the one hand, philosophers might want to change our concepts in order for them to fit the actual structure of the world (cf. Goldman 1987, 538), which represents the metaphysical stance. On the other hand, philosophers might seek to change our concepts in order to provide us with more useful concepts — concepts that are better suited to fulfil our practical and/or theoretical needs, such as simplicity, coherence or fruitfulness for contexts in which the concept figures.[4] Such a theory can be rejected, when it fails to fulfil the metaphysical or pragmatic goals that are sought.

[4] This confers with James Woodward, who defends a normative approach to the analysis of the concept of causation. He argues '[...] my project has a significant revisionary or normative component: it makes recommendations about what one ought to mean by various causal and explanatory claims, rather than just attempting to describe how we use those claims. It recognizes that causal and explanatory claims sometimes are confused, unclear, and ambiguous and suggests how these limitations might be addressed' (Woodward 2003, 7).

Although expressed implicitly, most philosophers engaged in defining art aim at descriptive *and* normative adequacy. Overall, definitions of art need to be extensionally adequate, yet, when there is disagreement regarding the art status of certain items among competent users of the concept,[5] a definition should be able to settle the disagreement. Berys Gaut and Robert Stecker openly argue for this view. In his article '"Art" as a Cluster Concept', Gaut considers the constraints on the adequacy of a theory of the concept of art (Gaut 2000, 30). A theory of art, so argues Gaut, must be susceptible of both intuition and a 'normative bite':

> First and most obvious, the account of the concept should be adequate to intuition. That is, it must agree with our intuitions about what we would say about actual and counterfactual cases: if the account claims that some object satisfies the concept, but it intuitively doesn't (or vice versa), then that is one strike against the account. […] Second, and related to the first constraint, the account must be normatively adequate. The process of matching the account to intuitions is unlikely simply to leave all intuitions as they stand. Our linguistic intuitions about particular cases may be flawed in resting on confusions, on ignorance about the language, or on many other factors. Thus some intuitions that do not fit the proposed account may be rejected […] (2000, 30-31).

Put differently, a theory of art should catch what is generally meant by 'art', but when there is disagreement regarding the application of the concept, a theory should provide us with an answer to why some categorization judgments are wrong.

A similar view can be found in Robert Stecker's metaphilosophical reflections. On the one hand, he argues that 'one can ask little more from a definition than that it define a concept currently in use' (Stecker 1997, 22) and that 'the main thing we have to go on in defining art is our classificatory practice' (Stecker 2000, 60). These are clearly descriptive aims. On the other hand, Stecker grants that our classificatory practice regarding art is not as uniform as it is for 'classifying people as aunts', and that, therefore, a definition 'will be somewhat descriptive and somewhat suggestive or revisionary' (2000, 60). A definition of art, then, is aimed at a rational reconstruction of our classificatory practice which, accordingly, can be measured by testing whether a definition satisfies the following desiderata:

> An adequate conception ought to be well informed (about the history of art forms, for example), unbiased, reflective (in the sense of taking into account implication of one's view and recognizing other well-known views). It ought to be consistent and not viciously circular. It ought to be able to cover the generally agreed on extension of "art" and handle hard cases in plausible ways. It ought to make the judgment that something is art corrigible (Stecker 2000, 55-56).

[5] In this article, '(dis)agreement regarding the extension of art' refers to (dis)agreement among competent users of the concept of art.

Stecker acknowledges that there can be multiple rational constructions, yet, while they might not be fully compatible, a consensus view is within sight (2000).

While Berys Gaut and Robert Stecker fully recognize that they pursue descriptive as well as normative aims, other philosophers, at first sight, seem to solely focus on descriptive aims. Three main figures in the debate, namely Jerrold Levinson, Stephen Davies and George Dickie, have suggested that a definition of art merely explicates our classificatory practice; it does not establish the extension of art, but clarifies this extension. Levinson states: 'what I have tried to *locate* […] is the most general concept of art that we have now' [emphasis added] (Levinson 1993, 411). In a similar vein, Davies argues that 'a definition must be exhaustive of all art and exclusive of all that is not art' (Davies 2006, 45). Dickie clarifies the aims underlying the project of defining art as follows:

> What philosophical definitions of "work of art" are really attempting to do is then to make clear to us in a self-conscious and explicit way what we already in some sense know. That philosopher's definitions have been so frequently misdirected testifies to the difficulty of saying precisely what we in some sense already know (Dickie 1997a, 79).

It is therefore suggested, in opposition to Stecker, that we are not in need of a definition of art to settle contested cases. Dickie argues that virtually, everyone interested in art is well-acquainted with the word art, knows some works of art and has experience in using the term. Therefore, Dickie concludes, a philosopher's definition of 'work of art' does not function like a dictionary definition; it need not settle the meaning and extension of the word 'art' (Dickie 1997a, 78-79). Levinson wittily argues that '[n]o one needs a conceptual analysis of person, say, in order to be able to recognize people and distinguish them from apes, mannequins, and IBM PC's.' (Levinson 1989, 27). The same goes for art: we do not need a conceptual analysis of art in order to be able to distinguish art items from non-art ones. According to Davies, one can perfectly well acquire a working mastery of a concept by being introduced to some typical examples falling under the concept. Davies draws the following analogy to clarify his view: 'people could identify water successfully long before science revealed its essential molecular structure.' (Davies 2001, 227)

If we take a closer look at what it entails to give a descriptive account of the concept of art, it is apparent that virtually no philosopher of art, including Jerrold Levinson, Stephen Davies and George Dickie, solely aims at descriptive adequacy. A descriptive account of a concept shows us how a concept *is* used instead of how it *should be* used. Contrary to Stecker's proposed desiderata, a descriptive definition need not be consistent and reflective; it merely need show us how a concept is used. Consequently, as Alessandro Pignocchi has rightly pointed out, descriptive philosophers of art should provide a theory of disagreement, yet not an error theory: a

descriptive definition must be able to elucidate why people sometimes disagree over the application of the concept of art. However, it should not tell us which categorization judgments are right and which are wrong, since this would inescapably add a normative component to the definition. Pignocchi's own intentional account of the concept of art is intended to be purely descriptive and is expected to provide us with a theory of disagreement, not with a theory of error. His account states that:

> An agent intuitively uses the concept of art to categorize an artifact if and only if she infers that this artifact has been intended to fulfill a function or set of functions which she has already accepted as a function or set of functions that can be fulfilled by artifacts that she considers as typical art (Pignocchi 2012, 6).

It should be emphasized that Pignocchi's theory does not require that a maker of an artifact must have had certain intentions in order to warrant the application of the concept of art. It merely holds that people attribute certain intentions to a maker when attributing art status to an artifact. Pignocchi's theory can illuminate disagreement in two ways: firstly, disagreements might spring from the attribution of different intentions to the creator. Secondly, two persons can have a different function or set of functions in mind that have to be fulfilled in order to be art (2012, 7). Pignocchi remains anchored to being descriptive, since he does not maintain that categorizations are correct insofar as people attribute the correct intentions to the maker of the artifact, nor does he indicate what counts as art making intentions (2012, 6). Pignocchi's descriptive characterization is correct if it can be shown that this is the way in which people use the concept of art. However, this is not a central issue in this article. What is important here, is that Pignocchi is not committed to judging certain uses of the concept of art as mistaken.

If his approach is contrasted with other definitions of art on offer, it appears that the latter have a clear 'normative bite': they give us conditions based on which contested cases can be excluded or included. In other words, those definitions not only encompass a theory of disagreement, which shows why people disagree over the art status of certain items, they also have an error theory, a theory that shows which judgments are mistaken and why they are mistaken. Jerrold Levinson, Stephen Davies and George Dickie also propose a solution to contested cases, as will be shown below.

As noted above, Jerrold Levinson has maintained that the task of defining art is a descriptive one. However, his intentional-historical definition, a definition that, as Pignocchi acknowledges (2012, 7), is highly similar to Pignocchi's purely descriptive theory, has a normative component. Pignocchi's account asserts that an item x is considered to be art by person A, if A attributes art making intentions to the maker of x. Levinson's definition roughly contends that an item x is art if and only if the item is intended for similar regards as past uncontested art (Levinson 1979, 1989, 1993, 2002). While Pignocchi focuses on whether people attribute art-making intentions

to the maker of an item, Levinson's primary concern is whether the maker of item x has or had art-making intentions. Correspondingly, according to Pignocchi's theory, there are no right or wrong categorization judgments. His theory simply aims to show how these judgments are generated. Levinson's definition, however, does distinguish between correct and incorrect categorization judgments. When categorization judgments conflict on the art status of an item, his theory then tells us which judgments are right and which are wrong. They are right when the maker has the right kind of art-making intentions and wrong when the maker lacks these intentions.

Stephen Davies forcefully argues that any adequate definition of art must be able to account for the so-called non-Western art (Davies 2000). However, there is clear disagreement over whether or not the concept of art should be applied to these items, among philosophers themselves, but also among art historians (for disagreement among philosophers see: Anderson 1989; Crowther 2003; Dutton 2000; Lopes 2007; Shiner 2001; Clowney 2011; for disagreement among art historians see: Kasfir 1992; Dean 2006; Ravenhill 1992). Again, it is clear that Davies not only aims to show us why people disagree over the art status of non-Western art, he also wants to reveal that people who deny those items art status are simply wrong. In other words, apart from aiming at extensional adequacy, he further argues which items should be included in the extension of art. Thus, he exhibits how the concept of art should be applied, besides how it is applied.

Likewise, George Dickie's institutional definition of art offers us a clear answer to contested cases. While the art status of avant-garde art remains contested, even among philosophers, Dickie unequivocally includes avant-garde artworks into the domain of art, since these items clearly satisfy the conditions for arthood he discussed through his definition; avant-garde art is strongly embedded in art institutions. In fact, the inclusion of avant-garde art is one of the main motivations behind his definition. Much culturally and historically remote art, however, is not so clearly institutionally embedded. When it can be shown that these artifacts are made outside of any kind of artworld, according to Dickie, then they are not art (Dickie 2004). This follows from his view that art is a cultural-kind activity (Dickie 1997b, 27-28), regardless of the common view concerning whether or not art is seen as a cultural-kind activity. Therefore, Dickie's definition not merely illustrates why people disagree, but also settles the disagreement.

To summarize, there are strong reasons to believe that most philosophers of art, whether or not explicitly, adhere to the view that a definition of art must be both descriptively and normatively adequate.[6] The next part delineates that these two aims cannot be combined.

[6] As noted above, Alessandro Pignocchi is an exception since his theory is purely descriptive. Nick Zangwill and James Young, on the other hand, are also exceptions, since their theories are openly normative, see: (Pignocchi 2012; Zangwill 1995; Young 1997).

3. Three Requirements for the Method of Reflective Equilibrium

As presented above, philosophers implicitly or explicitly try to formulate definitions of art that fit our classificatory practice, and they also attempt to suggest how the concept should be used when the art status of an artifact is contested. Gaut, Stecker and others argue that philosophers of art have borrowed a method from moral philosophy, namely the method of reflective equilibrium in order to do this (Gaut 2000, 31; Stecker 2000, 60; Abell 2012, 678; Lopes 2014, 54). The term 'reflective equilibrium' was coined by John Rawls (Rawls 1973, 20) who elaborated on this method in his book *A Theory of Justice*. Applied to the definition of art, the method entails the following. A theory of art in reflective equilibrium is a theory whereby hypotheses regarding the extension of art, that is, what we judge to be art, and hypotheses concerning the intension of art, that is, the proposed definition of art, have been mutually adjusted. In consonance with moral philosophy, reflective equilibrium in the philosophy of art undergoes the following procedures. Firstly, our initial judgments over the extension of art are collected. Certain judgments will be immediately rejected because they have not been made under favorable conditions. In moral philosophy, 'favorable conditions' suggest that the person making the judgment is calm and has adequate information about cases being judged (Daniels 1979, 258; Rawls 1973, 47-48). In the philosophy of art, this requirement entails that the judgments are made by 'competent users' of the concept of art. Once these categorization judgments have been collected, philosophers of art try to propose definitions of art that fit with these judgments. In other words, a definition or theory of art is formulated that is able to catch the extension of art, as derived from the collected judgments. Lastly, when philosophers of art come across a 'lack of fit', cases in which judgments are conflicted and consequently do not fully match with the proposed definition, they try to mutually adjust the categorization judgments and the proposed definition of art. In this way, as argued by the proponents of the method, a definition of art is able to catch the extension of art and to provide a solution to contested cases.

Commentators on the method of reflective equilibrium have distinguished between 'wide' and 'narrow' reflective equilibrium. In a narrow equilibrium, a philosopher aims to formulate a theory that 'economically systematizes' the collected categorization judgments (Daniels 1980, 22). The method of wide reflective equilibrium, however, points out three elements that need to be integrated into equilibrium: (1) the categorization judgments, (2) the proposed definition of the concept, and (3) a set of relevant background theories regarding the concept (Daniels 1979, 258). It follows that our categorization judgments are not merely adjusted to the proposed definition and vice versa, they are also judged against background theories. These

theories, in turn, can be adjusted in light of the categorization judgments and the proposed definition. When philosophers of art use the method of wide reflective equilibrium, they also include theories on issues such as the ontological status of artworks, artistic value and the interpretation of art, into the adjustment process.

It should be noted that some commentators on Rawls' reflective equilibrium maintain that the method only concerns one person's moral judgments and principles: 'the reflective equilibrium is one achieved by a person between his disposition to make certain moral judgments and to adduce certain reasons to back them and the moral principles which would lead to the making of those very moral judgments' (Raz 2003, 178). In this view, the method of reflective equilibrium only aims to render people's personal moral beliefs more consistent and coherent. Applied to the philosophy of art, this would imply that the method only aims to render our personal categorization judgments on which items are art and our personal beliefs about what it means to be art more consistent and coherent. It is, however, not intended to show us how people generally judge items as art, nor does it aim to formulate an answer to contested cases, cases over which there are interpersonal disagreements. However, this view on the method is not adhered to by many commentators on the method of reflective equilibrium. Many seem to agree with Norman Daniels, who argues that the method of reflective equilibrium must not only formulate precise statements of different moral conceptions, but 'must also face the task of choosing between competing moral conceptions, of solving the problems of justification and theory acceptance in the moral domain' (Daniels 1980, 21).[7] Hence, in what follows, I will examine whether these goals can be attained by the method of reflective equilibrium in the philosophy of art.

As noted above, Berys Gaut and Robert Stecker are explicit about their adherence to reflective equilibrium. Yet, those philosophers of art who are not explicit about their methodological commitments also employ this method. For instance, Stephen Davies, when trying to establish why procedural approaches are to be preferred over functional approaches, states that:

> Any theory that settles the difference between these two approaches to an analysis of the concept of art must cohere with a wide spread of intuitions about the terms in which art is discussed and interpreted. It cannot rely on a narrow match between its claims and a single critic's comments about some particular, controversial work of possible art. (Davies 1991, 46)

[7] This view is endorsed by philosophers of art who are explicit about their adherence to reflective equilibrium (Gaut 2000, 31; Stecker 2000, 60; Lopes 2014, 54). For a few recent examples in support of my claim outside the philosophy of art, see Campbell (2014); Doorn (2013); Nichols (2012); Zatpentine, Cipolletti, & Bishop (2012).

In other words, we should not choose between these two approaches solely based on our intuitions regarding the extension of art, but should instead seek coherence between various principles: the proposed definitions of art, our categorization judgments and our other beliefs about art, i.e., our 'background theories'. Davies' metaphilosophical reflections are duly manifested in his practice. In his work on non-Western art, Davies evaluates proposed definitions of art by examining whether they can account for this phenomenon and concludes that many cannot do this (Davies 2000, 210-213). He invokes background theories on aesthetic properties (2000, 207), linguistics (2000, 202) and art's origin and development (2000, 209) in support of adjusting definitions of art to include non-Western art into their extension. These background theories, then, justify adjusting the definition to the extension, and not the other way around.

Jerrold Levinson also seeks to establish an equilibrium between the hypothesized extension of art and his definition. He first observes the extension of art (Levinson 1979, 3) and reviews how the competing definitions of art try to capture this extension (1979, 4-6). Then, he formulates his own definition of art that is purportedly better at capturing the extension of art (1989, 21). Finally, when faced with counterexamples, i.e. tensions between art's extension and his definition, he sometimes adjusts the extension — and thus rejects the counterexample — to his definition, as in the case of very bad art (1993, 415). Other times he further clarifies, as in the case of forgeries (1990, 231-233) or even adjusts his definition to be able to account for the counterexample, as in the case of first art (1993, 421, 422; 2002, 371-372). Frequently, he depends on background theories regarding the ontological status of artworks (1993, 415) or the rationality of intentions (1990, 231) to support his adjustments.

Similarly, George Dickie evaluates his own and the competing proposals not only on the extension of art, but also on whether they are consistent with the view that art is a cultural-kind activity (Dickie 1997b, 25). Isolated art, i.e. artifacts made by people who are unaware of art and artistic practices, is excluded in the extension of art for reasons irrelevant to our classificatory practice, but because the metaphysical theory Dickie adheres to necessitates this exclusion (1997b, 27).

For the method of reflective equilibrium to be successful in the sense described above, some requirements need to be met. (1) There needs to be a consensus over when and where there is disagreement over categorization judgments, that is, there needs to be a consensus over which cases are contested. If there is no such consensus, then it is unclear when theory and categorization judgments need to be mutually adjusted and when not, and, relatedly, how the descriptive and normative adequacy of a theory can be judged. In moral philosophy, this consensus is presupposed. John Rawls, for example, presupposes that we have the greatest confidence in judging

racial discrimination and religious intolerance to be unjust, while 'we have much less assurance as to what is the correct distribution of wealth and authority' (Rawls 1973, 19-20). Thus, one starts from considered moral judgments regarding uncontested issues like racial discrimination and religious intolerance, in order to formulate answers to more contested issues, such as the correct distribution of wealth and authority. However, if it turns out that there is no consensus on which issues are uncontested among well-informed persons in favorable conditions, then the method of reflective equilibrium cannot succeed in the tasks that Norman Daniels has formulated. Let me clarify this with a plausible example. Imagine that person A finds religious intolerance unjust, while person B finds religious intolerance often acceptable, since fully tolerating religion may lead to even more radical intolerance. Moreover, person A, like Rawls, believes that religious intolerance does not constitute a contested case, whereas person B does otherwise. It is clear that A cannot hope for B to accept her moral theory that is partly justified in terms of being coherent with judging religious intolerance to be unjust. For B, A needs to provide arguments for the view that religious intolerance is unjust. These arguments, according to the method of reflective equilibrium, should be grounded in consistency with what B accepts to be uncontested cases, that is, considered moral judgments that are shared. In summary, the method of reflective equilibrium can only hope to fulfil tasks including choosing between competing theories, that is, judging the descriptive and normative adequacy of proposed theories, if the adherents of different theories agree over which cases or judgments are contested and which are not.

This leads us to a second related, yet different requirement that concerns the amount of disagreement. (2) The collection of contested cases, broadly conceived, cannot be overly extensive, otherwise there is no clear starting point for the method of reflective equilibrium. Within ethics, this requirement for the method of reflective equilibrium is commonly agreed upon, by defenders and foes of the method alike. Joel Feinberg, a defender of the method, argues that '[i]f there is no common ground of moral conviction whatever between the two individuals, either at the level of general principle or the level of singular judgment, then the game is over before it begins' (Feinberg 1972, 1020). In what follows, he is quick to argue that it is a reasonable assumption that 'two individuals in ethical disagreement over one question can find other matters on which they are in solid agreement' (1972, 1020). As has been argued with regard to requirement (1), one cannot hope to persuade an opponent of her theory by pointing out that that theory is consistent with moral judgments her opponent does not share. D. W. Haslett has suggested that a radical Marxist and a fundamental Christian cannot hope to convince each other of the virtues of their moral theories since they start from starkly different moral judgments. It seems that 'in

achieving a reflective equilibrium, both the radical and the fundamentalist would have accomplished little more than a systematization of his initial perspective, thereby leaving us still with no basis for choosing between the two perspectives' (Haslett 1987, 307).

The third requirement is arguably the most important one. In response to the first two requirements, it could be argued that disagreements are not deeply pervasive and even if they are, the method of reflective equilibrium is at least able to eliminate minor disagreements between those with similar starting points (Haslett 1987, 309). Requirement (3) states that we need a principled way to decide what kind of adjustments need to be made: in which cases do we need to adjust our considered judgments to our proposed definition and in which cases do we need to adjust the proposed definition to our considered judgments? If such a principle cannot be provided, then, these adjustment decisions can only be made arbitrarily. This would render the method viciously circular and arbitrary. Such a principle should operate independently of both proposed definition and the considered judgments. In other words, the reasons for adjusting the considered judgments cannot be derived from the proposed theory and vice versa. Otherwise, the method of reflective equilibrium will inescapably entail circularity and arbitrariness. This requirement, again, is underwritten both by defenders and foes of the method and has been labeled 'the independence constraint' (Daniels 1979, 259). While moral philosophers who defend the method argue that such a principle can be found in background theories, that is, by applying the method of wide reflective equilibrium (Daniels 1979), foes of the method argue that background theories cannot give independent support for making adjustments (Haslett 1987; Cummins 1998; Holmgren 1989).

In what follows, it will be shown that all three requirements cannot be met in the philosophy of art.

4. Consensus Over Contested Cases

The first requirement denotes that a definition that aims to be both descriptively and normatively adequate tries to either reflect or systematize our usage of the concept, or prescribe how to use the concept. An obvious question arises: do we have a principled way to help us determine the conditions under which a definition need be descriptive or normative? The equally obvious answer would seem to be: a definition will need to be normative when there is disagreement, that is, when we are confronted with contested cases; in all other cases, a definition should stick to the descriptive level. Contested cases, then, are cases over which there is disagreement amongst competent users of the concept of art regarding their art status. If disagreement can be resolved by pointing out that one party is

misinformed or biased, then there is no genuine disagreement. This answer, however, presupposes that there is a consensus over when and where there is disagreement over categorization judgments, in other words, that there is a consensus over which cases are contested cases. Nonetheless, a quick read of the literature on definitions of art shows that there is no consensus over disagreement; philosophers of art disagree over which items have a contested art status. This means that philosophers disagree over when a definition needs to have a 'normative bite'. Let me clarify this issue with some examples. Berys Gaut argues that his account has an adequate normative bite, since it provides a solution to the contested art status of non-Western artifacts. His theory shows us that non-Western art should be included into the domain of art, since the reasons for excluding these items are misguided; according to Gaut, definitions that exclude non-Western artworks wrongly take the intention to make art to be a necessary criterion for arthood (Gaut 2000, 37-38). Denis Dutton, Julius Moravcsik and Stephen Davies, however, see the art status of some non-Western artifacts as a descriptive fact that should be accounted for by any definition of art (Davies 2000; Dutton 2006; Moravcsik 1993). Still other philosophers, including David Clowney, argue that the fact that non-Western art is often discussed as art does not qualify for inclusion. He says:

> […] we label lots of things from the past and from other cultures as art. The question we are trying to answer is whether the label gives us any insight into what those people did and made or whether we are simply assimilating their practices to our categories. (Clowney 2011, 312).

It follows that there is no consensus over whether or not the art status of non-Western art is contested. Admittedly, Dutton, Moravcsik, and others acknowledge that for some the art status of non-Western art is contested. However, they suggest that the perspective of people who deny such artifacts art status is parochial (Crowther 2003, 130; Dutton 2006, 367-368; Moravcsik 1993, 429). Put in another way, they believe that competent users of the concept, those who are not parochially biased, agree that non-Western artifacts can be art, thus making them disingenuous contested cases. Avant-garde art provides us with another example. For philosophers such as Arthur Danto and George Dickie, some avant-garde artworks, including Duchamp's *Fountain* and John Cage's *4'33*", are paradigms of art, while for Denis Dutton and Nick Zangwill, they are marginal and contested phenomena within the domain of art at most (Danto 1992; Dickie 2000; Dutton 2006; Zangwill 2006). Again, philosophers disagree over whether or not the art status of avant-garde art is contested. As in the case of non-Western art, philosophers who argue that many avant-garde works are paradigmatic artworks tend to acknowledge that these works' art status is contested by some. Yet, they seem to believe that these judgments are

misinformed and biased: how can one exclude artifacts from the domain of art that are so clearly included by competent users of the concept of art, namely members of the artworld (Danto 1997; Dickie 2000)? In Levinson's words, Conceptual art, Minimal art and Performance art present an 'undeniable evolution of art' (Levinson 1989, 22).

Against this context, it is thus unclear how it can be decided when adjustments need to be made, and, more generally and importantly, how a genuine debate regarding the descriptive and normative adequacy of a definition of art is possible.

5. The Amount of Contested Cases

The second requirement states that the amount of contested cases needs to be limited. Indeed, this is commonly assumed by philosophers of art. However, disagreement over which items are art is extremely wide. While it has been shown above that philosophers of art disagree about which instances are contested cases, a case is justifiably called contested when different philosophers of art attribute a different status to them. A quick review of work on definitions of art and empirical data produce the following contested candidates for art: instances of 'romantic' isolated art, non-Western art, cave art, avant-garde art, popular arts, folk arts, bad art, forgeries, pornography, cooking and fashion (on non-Western and folk art see: Anderson 1989; Crowther 2004; Dutton 2000; Lopes 2007; Shiner 2001; Clowney 2011; Levinson 1993; on avant-garde art see: Zangwill 2006; Carroll 1993; on forgeries see: Lessing 1965; Oppy 1992; Sartwell 1990; Levinson 1990; on romantic art see: Dickie 2004; on fashion see: Hanson 1998; Kim 1998; Miller 2007; on cooking see: Telfer 2002; Korsmeyer 2002; on pornography see: Maes and Levinson 2012; on bad art see: Levinson 1989; Stecker 1990). Therefore, it is impossible for a definition of art to be largely descriptive in the sense that it cannot catch the commonly agreed upon extension of art, since there is no such thing.[8]

The substantial disagreement is problematic since it erases the possibility of a largely descriptive account. Moreover, it results in the method of reflective equilibrium being unable to be implemented. The first step to attain a reflective equilibrium is to collect the categorization judgments at hand, which is clearly a descriptive step. It merely tries to establish what is commonly seen as the extension of art. Indeed, all philosophers who aim at descriptive and normative adequacy start from the extension of art, or what is seen as art in artistic practice broadly conceived (D. Davies 2004, 21).

[8] Accordingly, the most a descriptivist can hope for is an account of how people categorize items as art, rather than catching the commonly agreed upon extension of art. Alessandro Pignocchi's account is a good example of such an approach (Pignocchi 2012).

However, given the amount of disagreement, this descriptive basis is extremely thin. Unsurprisingly, when we take a closer look at the 'descriptive' starting points of philosophers of art, it is apparent that these extensions already include contested cases of art and are, as such, normative starting points. Denis Dutton, for example, states that '[w]e must first try to demarcate an uncontroversial center that gives the outliers whatever interest they have' (Dutton 2006, 368). Yet, his 'uncontroversial center', including cave art, non-Western art and Bollywood movies, is not uncontroversial to many other philosophers of art and participants in the field of the arts. Likewise, Danto's and Dickie's starting points, including much pioneering avant-garde art, are controversial. It could be objected, however, that while these philosophers indeed do not start from an 'uncontroversial center', there are artworks that are *undoubtedly* art, and these artworks could be used as starting points. Examples of such uncontroversial artworks are those by canonical artists such as Michelangelo, Rembrandt, Da Vinci, Shakespeare, Mozart and Bach. Nonetheless, such works are few in view of the totality of 'candidates for art status' and thus too limited to form the uncontroversial core required for employing the method of reflective equilibrium. In a reflective equilibrium, the collection of considered judgments must be able to adjudicate between different theories. Yet, virtually all theories can account for this collection of uncontested artworks, but for different reasons: in view of their historical origins, their place in the artworld, the intentions of their makers or their possession of aesthetic properties. Reference to this thin core of uncontested artworks cannot show us which of these criteria are art criteria and accordingly, is unable to show us whether or not contested cases such as non-Western art should be included into the domain of art.

To summarize, the method of reflective equilibrium has to build on the agreed-upon applications of the concept and presupposes agreement on a broad collection of categorization judgments. However, the agreement over the extension of art is thin, which makes it challenging to find a clear descriptive starting point for defining art, as is evident from the fact that philosophers' starting points are already normative to some extent. Accordingly, the method of reflective equilibrium is unable to provide us with a means to choose between two competing theories. Since different theories start from different collections of 'agreed upon' categorization judgments, we are unable to compare their merits on the basis of the used method. Competing theories can all be in equilibrium, yet, advocate different answers to contested cases.

6. The Independence Constraint

The third requirement depicts that we need guidelines for making the adjustments; we need to know when we have to adjust the definition to the

judged extension or vice versa. In other words, we need a way in which we can justify the made adjustments, that is, the solutions to the contested cases. If there is a mismatch between categorization judgments and proposed definition, then this mismatch can be eliminated by adjusting either the proposed definition or our categorization judgments. The method of reflective equilibrium does not seem to provide us with an answer to the question which option should be chosen. It seems that, as D. W. Haslett has suggested, we can choose between these two options only arbitrarily (Haslett 1987, 310). This problem is also discernible in the project of defining art. Richard Kamber and Catharine Abell have formulated related criticisms with regard to proposed definitions of art. Abell has argued that the mutual adjustment between the extension and intension of art can only proceed when the two hypotheses are independent of one another (Abell 2012, 678). Kamber argues that, when identification problems arise, most philosophers of art justify their solution to these cases in terms of their own proposed definition and has convincingly shown that this procedure entails circularity and dogmatism (Kamber 2011, 197). This means that the proposed definition of art is justified in terms of being able to catch the extension of art, and the extension of art that follows from the definition, is justified in terms of the proposed definition. Indeed, this represents a classic case in the project of defining art. For instance, Robert Stecker and Jerrold Levinson disagree over whether or not 'very bad art' should be included into the extension of art. At one point, Levinson defends the inclusion of 'very bad art' since 'it would seem like critical fascism to deny artistic character to […] sincerely undertaken and historically groundable activity' (Levinson 1993, 414). Here, Levinson restates the conditions for arthood proposed by his own intentional-historical definition of art in defense of his favored extension of art. Insofar as other philosophers do not accept his definition, they have no reason to accept his defense of the inclusion of very bad art.

Defenders of the method of reflective equilibrium have argued that this problem can be avoided when employing wide reflective equilibrium, as opposed to narrow reflective equilibrium. As explained above, wide reflective equilibrium entails that not only the extension and the proposed definition are mutually adjusted, but that both are also judged against background theories. This methodology can only be acceptable if the background theories are independent of the categorization judgments on the one hand and the proposed definition on the other. Thus, the categorization judgments that informed the proposed definition cannot be the same categorization judgments as the ones that informed the background theories. This is the so-called independence constraint, as formulated by Norman Daniels (Daniels 1980, 26).

The independence constraint forms the crux of the method of wide reflective equilibrium. If the constraint cannot be met, then there is no way

to escape the circularity complaint. The first problem that arises is that the way in which this constraint is to be met, is questionable. There seems to be no adequate reason not to arbitrarily take some categorization judgments into account for formulating a definition of art, in order to gain independent support from background theories that are informed by the withheld categorization judgments (Haslett 1987, 308). Since, by hypothesis, narrow reflective equilibrium takes into account a broader range of categorization judgments than wide reflective equilibrium, there seems to be no convincing reason to prefer one to the other (Holmgren 1989, 58). Moreover, it is highly unlikely that philosophers ad hoc do not take into account categorization judgments, simply to meet the independence constraint.

Secondly, if we take a closer look at possible background theories for the project of defining art, it becomes clear that it is implausible that they can serve as an independent element in the adjustment process. In the literature on wide reflective equilibrium, it is often unclear what kind of theories could count as background theories (Holmgren 1989, 50). It seems reasonable that relevant background theories for definitions of art are theories concerning artist's intentions, artistic value, the ontological status of artworks, the metaphysics of art, art institutions, art's meaning, aesthetic properties, aesthetic experience and other related aspects. A first problem for using these theories as background theories in a wide reflective equilibrium is that there is wide disagreement over these theories as well. Disagreements over these theories are just as deep as those over definitions of art themselves[9], which is problematic. George Dickie, for example, cannot hope for other philosophers to accept that isolated art needs to be excluded from the extension of art on account that art is a cultural-kind activity, when other philosophers deny that art is a cultural-kind activity. A second problem that arises is that the background theories one holds are intricately connected to the definition of art one proposes and the extension that is presupposed. In other words, the theory one defends in relation to art's ontological status and artistic value is consistent with the theory one holds about the concept of art. It is, then, highly unlikely that the background theories appealed to by philosophers of art are based on a different set of categorization judgments than that used to formulate their definitions of art. The independence constraint is simply not met. Denis Dutton defends a cross-cultural naturalist definition of art. The metaphysical theory of art he defends, states that art is a universal phenomenon and that art is a natural kind. Accordingly, Dutton sees his definition of art compatible with these metaphysical views.

[9] For disagreement over the metaphysics of art, see Carroll (2004a); Davies, (2010); Dickie (1997b); for that over the role of artists' intentions, see Carroll (2000); Levinson (2010); Stecker & Davies (2010), and over aesthetic properties, see Carroll (2004b); Shelley (2003).

George Dickie, on the other hand, defends an institutional definition of art. As shown above, he does not adhere to the metaphysical view that art is a natural kind; he rather defends that art is a cultural kind, thus considers his very own definition compatible with this view. Both Denis Dutton and George Dickie have reached an equilibrium between their hypothesized extension of art, their proposed definition of art and their background theories. However, with the method of reflective equilibrium, it cannot be shown which definition is to be preferred. The background theories do not function as independent factors in the equilibrium; they are simply presupposed by the defended definition.

Arthur Danto and Jerrold Levinson think we cannot judge the artistic value of an artwork when we are unaware of its historical origins; artistic value depends on the historical context in which the artwork is made. They judge their own definitions to be upheld by the fact that their definitions are consistent with this view on artistic value. Philosophers who defend aesthetic theories, on the other hand, mostly adhere to some form of aesthetic autonomy, the idea that aesthetic appreciation can proceed to some extent independently of knowledge of historical context. They see their theories as paying honor to the theory of aesthetic autonomy. In other words, philosophers of art can proclaim their definitions superior to those of others on account of consistency with background theories. Yet, since the background theories particular philosophers hold are not independent of the definition they defend, circularity is not avoided. Adjustments made in order to resolve contested cases turn out to be merely justified in terms of the defended definition. Berys Gaut is aware of the problem of circularity and advocates a seemingly somewhat different solution to it through an error theory. He suggests that, to avoid begging the question, the normative dimension of a theory of art, that is, the adjustments made in the reflective equilibrium, must include a theory of error – an account of why people have the mistaken intuitions they do and of why these intuitions seem plausible to them (Gaut 2000, 31). Thus, when there are conflicted categorization judgments, we can discard some of them if we can show why they are mistaken. Again, such an error theory must be independent of the proposed theory of art.

The independency constraint here is also hard to be met. Dominic Lopes has convincingly argued that it is quite easy to make up an error theory. One can always accuse a rival theory of wrongly turning a contingent feature of art into a necessary condition for arthood. Indeed, defenders of institutional theories often accuse defenders of aesthetic theories of making aesthetics an essential feature of art, while it is an oft-recurring, but contingent feature of art. Likewise, defenders of aesthetic theories have accused institutionalists of rendering institutional embeddedness into a necessary criterion for arthood, while it is also merely a contingent feature (Lopes 2014, 55-56).

It is clear that in these cases the error theory is not independent of, but merely follows from the defended theory. The method of reflective equilibrium cannot correspondingly settle these disagreements.

This problem is also *observable* when we look at Berys Gaut's own error theory. The cluster account can give a simple explanation of disagreement, so Gaut argues: 'at least one side in the dispute is misapplying the concept of art by converting criteria into necessary conditions' (Gaut 2000, 37). Gaut is not only showing why people disagree, but also aims to show that at least one of the sides is wrong (2000, 37). How can Gaut provide us with independent reasons for arguing that one side of the dispute is wrongly converting criteria in necessary conditions? The cluster account claims that there are no necessary conditions for arthood. Therefore, anyone denying arthood to some item by arguing that it does not satisfy a necessary criterion for arthood is mistaken in light of the cluster account. So, his verdicts on contested cases simply follow from his theory. Still, Gaut argues to have found independent support for his error theory. He focusses on conceptual art, primitive art and popular music:

> The opponents of conceptual art, "primitive" art, and popular music, as we saw, hold that the relevant criteria are really necessary conditions. This assumption can be challenged by appeal to other, less contentious examples. To take some of the examples given earlier, those who insist on the necessity of the skill criterion can be challenged by the case of the fluke masterpiece, those who support intentionality as a necessary condition can be challenged by consideration of the artistic status of an artist's practice sketches, of the case Méliès, and so forth. Thus the cluster account has the resources to argue that in certain cases one side in disputes about art is in error (2000, 37-38).

First, it should be noted the 'less contentious' examples are nonetheless contentious. Many philosophers have no problem with excluding fluke masterpieces from the domain of art. Christy Mag Uidhir, for example, concedes that there are failed art attempts that turn out to have artistic qualities anyway, but apart from the intentions with which they were made. These items can later be appropriated as art by the artist, but then this constitutes a new art attempt, so maintains Mag Uidhir (Mag Uidhir 2013, 34-35). The art attempt, however, did not initially result in an artwork, according to Mag Uidhir. Therefore, the analogy drawn between fluke masterpieces and primitive art does not fully work. The same goes for sketches; some would exclude them insofar as the artist did not intend to present them as such. Second, these less contentious examples could be included in the domain of art for other reasons; they may possess other art criteria that the contested cases lack. For example, artist's sketches were made in an artworld context, while primitive art was not. Therefore, one might still feel like she has valid reasons to exclude primitive art and include artist's practice sketches in the domain of art. The less contentious examples, if effective, do not show that

it is mistaken to exclude primitive art; they merely show that the intention to make art is not a necessary criterion for arthood. Then, the normative dimension of Gaut's cluster theory is quite underdeveloped and dependent on the cluster theory: if one denies art status to an object because she takes one art criterion as necessary, then this exclusion — for this reason — is unwarranted. But, this is only so if the theory is correct. Put differently, Gaut assumes that we should not take any criterion as a necessary criterion in any case, a view that is derived from his theory. Therefore, he justifies his solutions to contested cases on account of his own theory as opposed to an independent error theory.

To sum up, the method of reflective equilibrium cannot lead to satisfactory results in the philosophy of art. Firstly, it is unclear when classificatory judgments and proposed definition need to be brought into equilibrium, since there is no agreement on which items have a contested art status. Secondly, since disagreement over art status is considerable, there is no clear descriptive starting point for the method. Thirdly, no solution is in sight to resolve contested cases that does not rely on either the categorization judgments or on the proposed definition of art. Accordingly, the circularity of the method of reflective equilibrium with regard to defining art has not been eliminated. In this way, it is sufficiently shown that descriptive aims and normative aims in the philosophy of art are incommensurable (IA). In the next section, it will be shown that the circularity problem leads to justification problems and suggestions will be made as to what should be done in order to avoid the problem of circularity.

7. Consequences

In this section, I will show what hinges on the circularity inherent to the method of reflective equilibrium, when applied to the project of defining art. Firstly, I will argue that this circularity is vicious, since it renders rational debate regarding definitions of art impossible. Secondly, I will maintain that, in order to avoid circularity and facilitate rational debate, philosophers of art will have to choose to engage in either the descriptive approach or the normative approach.

In the previous section, it has been shown that it is unclear how some categorization judgments can be prioritized over others. Generally, philosophers of art give priority to the categorization judgments that fit the definition they defend. The circularity of this procedure is highly problematic, since it turns the justification of definitions of art into an extremely thorny issue: when a definition is criticized on account of not being extensionally adequate, the definition can be defended in terms of normative adequacy, and when a definition is criticized for not being able to provide a solution

to hard cases, the criticism can be rejected on account of trying to meet descriptive aims. Put differently, since it is unclear when philosophers are making descriptive claims and when they are making normative claims, it is equally unclear how definitions of art can be evaluated. Furthermore, there is no way in which we can establish that one definition is superior to another when both definitions are in equilibrium. As shown above, completely incompatible definitions of art, such as aesthetic and institutional definitions, can be equally justified by the method of reflective equilibrium. Each definition can be supported by matching background or error theories. There is no resolution in sight, and consequently it is impossible to hold a rational debate about definitions of art.

What, then, needs to be done in order to ameliorate the project of defining art? First and foremost, philosophers of art must abolish the idea that a definition must and can be both descriptively and normatively adequate, and must similarly abandon the method of reflective equilibrium. Instead, they can explicitly state which approach, be it the descriptive or the normative approach, they are pursuing and stick to the methods that fit with the chosen approach. Only few philosophers of art, most notably Nick Zangwill and Alessandro Pignocchi, have applied this rule. Zangwill openly rejects extensional adequacy as a main aim for the philosophy of art and defends a normative approach that aims at clarifying why art is valuable to us. In this sense, his theory cannot be entirely rejected on the basis of the theory's failure to fully capture the extension of art. It *can* be rejected, however, if it is shown that it does not shed light on the value of art. Pignocchi's theory, on the other hand, aims to be purely descriptive: it does not prescribe how we should use the concept of art, but merely systematizes how the concept is used. This fact that his theory does not provide a solution to contested cases, however, does not constitute an adequate reason to reject his theory. On the contrary, his theory should not be accompanied with an error theory, but only a theory of disagreement, a theory that explains divergences in categorization judgments. An error theory that shows when and why categorization judgments are mistaken will inescapably add a normative component to a theory. However, a descriptive theory can be falsified, if it is shown that it fails to correctly capture how we make categorization judgments. Whether or not Zangwill's and Pignocchi's theories are successful is not what matters here. What is important is that both philosophers are clear about their aims and methods and have enabled us to evaluate their definitions by explicated and appropriate criteria.

To sum up, only by (1) choosing one approach, whether it is the descriptive or the normative approach, (2) sticking to the methods that are in line with the chosen approach, and (3) explicitly stating which approach has been chosen, can the circularity inherent to the method of reflective

equilibrium be avoided and debates regarding definitions of art be held in a more rational fashion.[10]

8. Conclusion

Nearly all definitions of art on offer have descriptive as well as normative aims: they try to catch the agreed upon extension of art and provide a solution to contested cases. This article has shown that these two aims are incommensurable.

In order to be able to fulfil both aims, philosophers of art have borrowed a well-known method from moral philosophy, namely, the method of reflective equilibrium. However, I have offered three reasons explaining why the method is not applicable to the project of defining art. First, there is no consensus regarding contested cases, and therefore, it is unclear when a definition of art needs to be descriptive and when it needs to be normative. Second, disagreement is extremely widespread, and there is correspondingly no clear descriptive starting point for the method. Third, there are no theories available that can justify giving more weight to some categorization judgments over others when there is disagreement. As a result, categorization judgments justify definitions of art, but when these judgments are in conflict, then some judgments are prioritized on account of the proposed definition. The circularity of this procedure is deemed vicious, since it renders the justification of definitions of art arbitrary.

The thesis defended in this paper has clarified a range of problems with regard to the project of defining art. Since it is unclear when philosophers are making descriptive statements and when they are making normative statements, an impasse is unavoidable. (IA) shows what must be done to ameliorate the debate on definitions of art. To enable and encourage genuine debate, it is of the utmost importance that philosophers of art are clear on

[10] In order to further evaluate the project of defining art, we need to examine why the project is worth pursuing. Descriptive proposals are often merely justified in terms of 'curiosity' (seee.g., Kania 2011, 5; Levinson 1979, 232). It has been argued that such justification is deficient (Kaufman 2007, 280-281; Zangwill 2002, 215-216). Noël Carroll, however, has given more substantive reasons for defending the project: since applying the concept of art to certain items shows us how to present, approach and appreciate them, we need to get a firm grip on this concept (Carroll 1999, 7). Moreover, it has convincingly been demonstrated that the descriptive approach is unlikely to yield many results, given there is no robust concept of art to be analyzed (Mag Uidhir & Magnus 2011). Normative proposals have been defended on account of explanatory power (Zangwill 1995) and on account of theoretical and/or practical utility (Margolis 2010). Standard objections to normative proposals center around the idea that one needs plausible reasons to revise our usage of a given concept, and that such reasons are not yet available (cf. De Vreese & Weber 2008, 98). All these discussions have warranted further investigation into the value of defining art.

what they are aiming for when they are defining art, and then use methods that are consistent with these aims and explicitly state their aims in their work.

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