

THESIS

THE IMPACT OF AI ART ON AESTHETIC VALUE

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ABSTRACT

THE IMPACT OF AI ART ON AESTHETIC VALUE

Defining art has been an ever-evolving challenge within the philosophy of art literature. When a definition seems to be adequate, a new artform arises and that definition becomes deficient. As a result, the philosophy of art seems unable to keep up with the art world and its developments. Nevertheless, there is an allure to determining what it is that makes something art that continues to propel the project further. What we minimally appear to agree on is that art is an artifact that was intentionally made or transformed by a human.¹ Furthermore, we can see through examining history, there has been some minimal continuity. In other words, the intentional, skillful aspect of art has persisted through radical changes in style and medium.² Ultimately, I will not commit myself to any particular ontological theory. Rather, I will shift the focus to aesthetic values, arguing that AI art changes what *we think* is valuable about art but does *not* change what *is* valuable about art. More specifically, allowing AI to be art would change what we *judge* to be valuable about art, such that these judgements would likely then be less correct, insofar as we would often miss and fail to appropriately respond to one or more of the three values I argue art in fact has.

In chapter one, I will outline a number of ways in which individuals have attempted to define art. Furthermore, I will show problems that each theory faces. Following this, I will assert that, to

¹ Initially, for the Greeks, art was grouped in craft under the broader concept of *techné* (Staten, 44, 2012). This initial concept and its evolution will be discussed in the following chapter.

² It is important to note that this is a rather Westernized notion of aesthetics that was heavily influenced by 18th century colonialism. While deserving its own investigation and discussion, this lies beyond the scope of this paper. For my purposes, what I take from this is that notions of aesthetics do have certain constraints.

address AI art, what we ought to look at is aesthetic value. Aesthetic value is able to point us towards what is valuable about art and what it is that *we* value about art. Building on this, chapter two will focus on three values in particular: the value of the artistic process, the artist, and the art object. I will examine each of these and argue that AI art denigrates how we regard these values– the values themselves are not denigrated, but rather how we value them. Additionally, in this chapter, I will discuss aesthetic judgements. Specifically, I explore what it is that occurs when we make aesthetic judgments about art; moreover, I argue that there are judgements that are better than others. That is, aesthetic judgements are not purely subjective. Lastly, in chapter three, I address three potential objections to my argument. First, my conception of art is too stringent. Similarly, my conception of value is too stringent. And finally, I express an uncharitable attitude towards the human artist in the case of AI art. Ultimately, I will both show how these objections do not negate my argument and that AI art is something that we should consider as a threat to how we regard art’s aesthetic value.

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Chapter 1: The Ontology and Value of Art

1.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will begin by discussing historical foundations for art both in terms of judgement and ontology. For the former, I will be relying on Immanuel Kant and David Hume to understand the attitudes we have when encountering art and the judgements we impose. Kant and Hume are concerned with the inner workings of aesthetic judgement. This area, specifically, is where the singularity of art is illuminated. That is, we consider aesthetic judgements to be grounded in our subjective experiences and, therefore, value it accordingly. For Kant, although our judgements are subjective, there is a possibility for a universal voice in which all *ought* to regard a work in the same way. Similarly, Hume recognizes that our judgements are subjective while also acknowledging that there are aesthetic disagreements. Three key ways Hume suggests that we can cultivate our sentiments in order to have more apt aesthetic judgements are having a clear mind, knowledge of what we have already deemed beautiful, and knowledge of the comparative degrees of excellence in art.

In terms of ontology, I will begin with Georg Wilhelm Hegel's conception of art and its primary function. He argues that art is meant to be a vehicle for expressing reality and truth. More specifically, he argues that art's form alone reveals truth to us. That is, it is not through the work of interpreting symbolism or some esoteric intention of an artist that we encounter truth—it comes from the physical construction of the work itself. Following Hegel, I will engage with the aesthetic theories of Arthur Danto, George Dickie, and Jerrold Levinson. Prior to this discussion though, I will briefly explore some theories to which they are responding—formalism, imitation theory, and expression theory. Formalism is closest to Hegel's notion of art in that it purports that the meaning of the work is ascertained by its composition rather than knowledge of the artist's intention or historical context. However, as art has become more abstract, formalism seems to be insufficient.

Similarly, imitation theory holds that art is a matter of representational content; furthermore, artist intention and context are not relevant. But, like formalism, imitation theory cannot account for more abstract forms of art. Conversely, expression theory holds that art is necessarily expressive and closely tied to the artist's intention. However, its heavy reliance on intention creates problems in cases in which the artist's intention is unknown, the artist fails in their expression, and the audience's lack of understanding and care for the artist's intention.

To rectify the issues that accompany the theories above, Danto, Dickie, and Levinson put forward their own theories. Danto and Dickie both posit institutional theories in which an object gains artistic status through designation by an 'artworld.' Danto was inspired by the indiscernibility of art works from commonplace objects, particularly Warhol's Brillo Boxes. In response, he attempted to determine the special ontological feature that made Warhol's boxes art. He contends that art is a matter of embodied meaning; more importantly though, a work of art is a matter of acceptance by the artworld. Similarly, Dickie argues that art is institutional by nature. More specifically, he outlines four criteria for an object to be considered art: "(1) acting on behalf of an institution, (2) conferring of status, (3) being a candidate, and (4) appreciation" (Dickie, 1974, 34). What they all have in common is external acceptance. While it is incumbent on the artist to intend their work to be considered art, it is the role of the artworld to determine its status. Levinson deviates from Danto and Dickie in arguing that what makes something a work of art is its foundation in art history. While he concurs that the artist must intend for their work to be regarded as art, it must be regarded "in any of the ways *works of art existing prior to it have been corrected regarded*" (Levinson, 1979, 234). For Levinson, an artist must envelop aspects of earlier works. This is not meant to be understood as a necessity for complete emulation; rather, it is a matter of creating art within the right context.

The second half of this chapter will be dedicated to aesthetic value. The shift to value is a result of ontology being unable to, in many instances, identify aesthetic value. Furthermore, for my purposes, I argue that it is less effective in telling us why we ought to care about the consequences of AI art. First, I will show why the ontology of art remains indeterminate, and, as such, I am not committed to any particular theory. I believe that an ontological theory of art is not necessary to show the potential issues that arise if we call AI images art. What *does* illuminate these potential issues is aesthetic value. I will outline two conceptions of aesthetic value: aesthetic realism and intersubjectivism. In doing so, I will have provided a foundational understanding of aesthetic value; however, my goal in doing so is now to show which theory is correct. Instead, what I focus on is how we experience art's aesthetic value.

Following the discussion on kinds of aesthetic value, I argue that, first and foremost, art expresses *something*. Here, I will introduce Susanne Langer and Noël Carroll. The two argue that art is an instance of instantiating human emotion as well as an opportunity for an audience to exercise their rational capacities. Following this, I will contend that we can better understand Langer's and Carroll's theories through situatedness, specifically Martin Heidegger's understanding of us as beings in time. Heidegger argues that, as beings in time, we determine what is significant about our experiences, and art, I argue, is an instance of demonstrating that significance. Importantly, what we ought to take from this is that art is not something that can be devoid of the artist's experiences within the world.

Finally, I will briefly outline significant aspects of aesthetic value we lose if we accept AI's ability to make art: the value of a work of art as an instantiation of our situated, subjective experience in the world, the value of the product as the outcome of human work, and the value of the artist.

1.2 Historical Foundations

1.2.1 Kant and Hume on Aesthetic Judgement

In his *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, Kant proposes a disinterested disposition in regard to aesthetic judgements that the formalists later take on. He argues that “a judgement about beauty in which there is mixed the least interest is very partial and not a pure judgement of taste” (Kant, 1790/2000, p. 5:205). He does not propose that our pleasure or displeasure are insignificant or that we are to avoid emotive responses; instead, he is making the case that there is art for art’s sake in which it does not exist to serve social or practical aims. As such, he is making the case that art ought to be appreciated for its own sake in which an emotive response designates “nothing at all in the object” (Kant, 1790/2000, p. 5:204). Even if it were the case that we were able to embody a disinterested disposition, Kant maintains that our aesthetic judgements cannot be entirely objective. However, even though it is the case that our aesthetic judgements are purely subjective, they possess a universal modality. They fall under a category of subjective universality. Kant defines this kind of subjectivity as one in which “from aesthetic universal validity, which does not rest on any concept, there cannot be any reference at all to logical universal validity; because the first kind of judgement does not pertain to the object at all” (Kant, 1790/2000, p. 5:214-215).

Another key component of this kind of aesthetic judgement is a universal voice in which there is “the possibility of an aesthetic judgement that could at the same time be considered valid for everyone” (Kant, 1790/2000, p. 5:216). That is, while they are not contingent upon a set of concepts, these judgements do have a certain quality in which they can be prescribed to all. Purely subjective judgements, such as a judgement about liking a certain kind of food, lack this notion that others “should” agree or find the same object of the judgement agreeable or disagreeable in the same way. Judgements of art, however, do possess a sort of normativity. For example, when we find a certain piece of art beautiful, we experience a feeling that others ought to find the piece beautiful as well.

Furthermore, according to Kant, it could be the case that something is *in fact* beautiful rather than a mere instance of agreeability relative to the spectator. Beauty, in contrast to mere agreeability, is purposiveness without any particular purpose, or end (Kant, 1790/2000, p: 5:236). In other words, beauty is that which invites our cognitive and imaginative faculties to ascertain a greater, persisting meaning. Kant characterizes the intersection of these faculties as an instance of what he calls ‘free play,’ which he believes to be possible “since no determinate concept restricts them to a particular rule of cognition” (Kant, 1790/2000, p. 5:217).³ Without concepts to ground our judgements, determining beauty requires us to engage in this free play.

Similar to Kant’s universal voice, Hume recognizes the subjective and normative aspects of aesthetic judgements. Hume argues that the majority of aesthetic disagreements are based upon language, or as he calls it, a “linguistic mirage” (Carroll, 1984, 181). Although we can agree on the value of certain attributes, such as beauty, there is a lack of agreement regarding *what* is beautiful. Hume likens this lack of consensus to moral disagreements in which “the word, *virtue*, with its equivalent in every tongue, implies praise, as that of *vice* does blame” (Hume, 1757, 205). Yet, how these are instantiated are disagreed upon. For example, everyone agrees that justice is good, but how justice ought to be carried out is undetermined. Hume argues that the rectification of this disagreement, this risk of subjectivity and relativity, is grounded in a standard of taste. Hume concedes that, minimally speaking, our *prima facie* judgements are grounded in our emotive responses, or sentiments. In this way, our aesthetic judgements are subjective; however, genuine disagreement in our judgements suggests that there is some underlying fact— some works are, in fact, more beautiful than others. There are three metrics of judgement that Hume seems to suggest.

³ As articulated above, the subjectivity of aesthetic judgements is grounded in a lack of concepts (Kant, 1790/2000, p. 5:215).

Firstly, the one who has “a perfect serenity of mind, a recollection of thought, and due attention to the object” has greater epistemic authority when judging a work of art (Hume, 1757, 213). Secondly, we can observe what has already been accepted as beauty. He states, “the general rules of beauty of use; being drawn from established models, and from the observation of what pleases or displeases” (Hume, 1757, 218). Finally, we can use comparisons to inform our aesthetic judgments. More specifically, Hume argues that “it is impossible to continue in the practice of contemplating any order of beauty, without being frequently obliged to form *comparisons* between the several species and degrees of excellency” (Hume, 1757, 223). The significance of these three measurements is that they force us to move beyond our initial sentiments. Furthermore, the value of a work of art is ascertained when we engage in our rational capacities, grounding our judgements in both observation and contemplation.

1.2.2 Hegel

Having determined what occurs and what *ought* to occur when we make aesthetic judgements, the question now is what makes something a work of art? More specifically, to have judgments that are grounded in more than just our sentiments, we ought to have an understanding of what art is. Hegel purports that art is something we can apprehend through the *sensuous*— through mere perception of the work itself. In his *Philosophy of Fine Art*, he argues that it is “an essential constituent of a work of art that it should have natural forms as a foundation” (Hegel, 1920, 63). That is, art is meant to represent that which is real and true (Hegel, 1920, 10). More specifically, to be representative of reality is to be true. When Hegel talks about the real and true, he is not suggesting that art is necessarily an imitation of the natural world, but instead an embodiment of the Absolute Spirit, which he conceives as the following:

Reason is Spirit when its certainty of being all reality has been raised to truth, and it is conscious of itself as its own world, and of the world itself (Hegel, 1807/1977, 261).

As such, art is capable of “freeing itself from all the finite that clings to it and of attaining to Spirit in its external concreteness and truth (Hegel, 1920, 129). In other words, art is an instantiation of truth that is eternal. This truth is housed in sensuous expression and ascertained through perception.

Hegel posits that the highest form of art does not rely on external evidence for its understanding or significance. For Hegel, classical art is the highest form of art. For him, it is “the free and adequate embodiment of the Idea in the shape which, according to its notional concept, is uniquely appropriate to the Idea itself” (Hegel, 1920, 105). Free and adequate embodiment, here, is a matter of the manifestation of Absolute Spirit in which “art is not the imitation of nature, but the sensuous expression of *spirit*- of divine and human freedom- in the form of *beauty*” (Houlgate, 265). Hegel understands beauty to be this sort of intersection between freedom and embodiment.

Conversely, Hegel believes symbolic, or non-representational, art to be the lowest form of art. For Hegel, symbolic art is “a mere search after plastic configuration than a power of genuine representation” (Hegel, 1920, 103). In other words, symbolic art is one that requires further investigation to ascertain some truth contained in the work. He does not argue here that the art itself is bad in terms of actual skill displayed by the artist; instead, the inadequacy here is conceived in terms of two defects: *defectiveness of form* and *defectiveness in content* (Hegel, 1920, 101). The former refers to the sensuous configuration that we see represented in the object itself. Importantly, he believes that this defect is caused by a defectiveness in content. He states that “as indeterminate it does not as yet possess in itself that individuality which the Ideal demands. Its abstract character and one-sidedness leaves its objective presentment still defective and contingent” (Hegel, 1920, 103). The collapse of defective content to defective configuration is grounded in content being the catalyst for the configuration of the work. This is not to say that having the intention to represent truth is sufficient for creating a true configuration of reality. That is, one can have the intention to represent truth and still fail. The key point Hegel is trying to make here is that, insofar as one does not have

the intention to represent truth, the configuration of the work will necessarily be defective. Hegel gives the example of art from the Chinese, Hindus, and Egyptians, particularly their depictions of their gods and idols. He argues that they “were unable to master true beauty. And this was so for the reason that their mythological conceptions, the content and thought of their works of art, were still essentially indeterminate, or only determinate in a false sense, did not, in fact, attain to a content which was absolute in itself” (Hegel, 1920, 101). Hegel is showing a clear, historically-situated bias here. However, as I will argue later, we can take on his conceptual piece without committing to the same form.

With his criticism of non-representational art, Hegel seems to anticipate criticisms regarding intention. As demonstrated, the intention regarding content is necessary for effectiveness in configuration. However, in this context, we are referring to intention in a different way— the significance of ascertaining the intention of the artist to understand the work. The types of art that Hegel outlines are rooted specifically in their observable content and embodiment of meaning. That is, they are not judged on their authorial intention, historical context, and so forth. Taking up this position, in their paper, “The Intentional Fallacy,” Wimsatt and Beardsley mark a distinction between internal evidence and external evidence. Internal evidence pertains to that which is “discovered through the semantics and syntax of a poem, through our habitual knowledge of the language, through grammars, dictionaries, and all the literature which is the source of dictionaries, in general through all that makes a language and culture” (Wimsatt and Beardsley, 1946, 477). Although Wimsatt and Beardsley refer to poetry here, we can apply this concept to visual art as well. That is to say, with visual works of art, we are able to perceive its semantic content through a perceptual medium. Furthermore, due to its public nature, internal evidence allows the audience to ascertain meaning and significance through our interactions and experiences with the work itself. Conversely, external evidence refers to the aspects of art that are “private or idiosyncratic;” more specifically, this

evidence is “not a part of the work as a linguistic fact: it consists of revelations... about how or why the poet wrote the poem” (Wimsatt and Beardsley, 1946, 477-478). In other words, external evidence is that which is not perceivable through the physical work itself. Instead, meaning is derived from a broader context, such as the intention of the artist.

1.3. Contemporary Theories

1.3.1 Formalism, Imitation Theory, Expression Theory

As art has continued to evolve, so too have ontological theories evolved to capture what it means to be a work of art. More specifically, the artworld has seen a departure from the kind of representational art that Hegel was concerned with. For example, art has become less representational and more reliant on interpretation to ascertain the meaning of the work. Three theories with which I will be engaging are formalism, imitation theory, expression theory. Artistic formalism holds that art’s ontology is grounded in the work’s meaning being distinct from our own interests and projections. More specifically, it places an emphasis on “the power of art’s form, composition, and appearance...” (Gal, 2023, 123). Although more accepting of abstract arts, formalism is a sort of Hegelian ideal in which the Idea is realized within the work and available through perception. Furthermore, formalism does not only account for the physical properties of the work, but it also holds that the meaning of the work stands alone. That is, its meaning is insulated from external forces. Rather art is “self-justified” and “serves as a model for individual freedom, autonomy and aspiration to self-fulfillment and the ideal” (Gal, 2023, 125). This essentially means that, for formalism, an artwork’s meaning stands apart from any sort of projection or

interpretation from the audience. In matters of poetry, for example, the “*telos* is internal” (Gal, 2023, 126).⁴ In other words, the poem or the painting does not need external ascription of meaning.⁵

Imitation theory “focused on a readily evident relational property of works of art, namely, art’s relation to subject matter” (Dickie, 1974, 20). That is to say, art was determined by its representation, and, from this, the content was fully determined by the *object* of representation. Knowledge of an author’s intention, analysis of esoteric meaning, or any other unseen properties were unnecessary. However, this theory ultimately came apart as it could not account for instances in which “the objects are bizarre, as those of the Dadaists are, [and] our attention is forced away from the objects’ obvious properties to a consideration of the objects in their social context” (Dickie, 1974, 32). This abstraction of art not only showed that meanings could be a matter of external evidence (as defined by Wimsatt and Beardsley), but that imitation was not an essential feature of art (Dickie, 1974, 20).

Expression Theory came about as a corrective theory that could account for artistic works that fell outside of the scope of pure imitation. It focused, instead, on “the relation of work to its creator;” furthermore, it placed an emphasis on emotion conveyed within the work (Dickie, 1974, 20). For those in support of this theory, it is necessarily the case that art is expressive. That is, there

⁴ The term *telos* can be understood in the context of both formal causes and final causes. According to Aristotle, the formal cause of something refers to “the form or the archetype, i.e. the statement of the essence, and its genera” (Aristotle, *Phys.* 194b27-28). The final cause of something is the “end or ‘that for the sake of which’ a thing is done” (Aristotle, *Phys.* 194b33-34). In this context, I understand *telos* to be a final cause.

⁵ All formalists are focused on the way that sensory data is organized, but there are two ways of thinking about it. That is, there is a bifurcation within formalism in regard to a work’s meaning. Thin formalism is largely focused on the work’s composition- its texture, shape, color, and so forth. Most importantly, though, thin formalists hold that these compositional features are “understood to be perceived without any conceptual or inferential engagement” (McMahon, 2010, 444). Thin formalist judgements are substantive rather than representational in that they have no reference to the intention of the artist (McMahon, 2010, 444). Thick formalism focuses on Kant’s recognition that, while art is not based on concepts, our own concepts that “we have developed, learnt or internalized over a life-time influence the object of aesthetic judgement” influence the way we judge a work of art (McMahon, 2010, 450). Rather than focusing on sensory data in a rather strict sense, just as bare perception of a work of art, thick formalism places an emphasis on feelings, arguing that aesthetic judgements are neither cognitive nor conceptual; more specifically, the thick formalist conceives of feelings as unfounded in “knowledge of the world” (Houlgate, 2010, 453). However, this is not to suggest that aesthetic judgements cannot move beyond feeling; rather, the thick formalism, in conjunction with Kant, holds that these feelings are able to be informed and shaped by both culture and reason (Houlgate, 2010, 453).

are no works of art that are devoid of expression (Fisher, 1962, 64). Like imitation theory, expression theory falls short in defining art in its totality. For example, it relies too heavily on the intentions of the artist. It could be the case that we cannot understand what they have intended to express or that we simply do not care. Furthermore, it does not seem to take into account that the other has simply failed in their expression. Lastly, it does not leave room for interpretation beyond the author's actual intention, and, in many cases, the intentions are unavailable to us.

1.3.2 20th Century Revisions

In rejection of the theories above, Danto, Dickie, and Levinson attempt to establish their own working ontologies to better define art. Danto was inspired by artworks that seemed indistinguishable perceptually from everyday objects. The primary way that he explores art's ontology is through that of indiscernible objects. It *could* be the case that we have identical objects in which only one is art. To ascertain the differences, "we must go outside the objects and into the atmosphere of their ontological status, and seek criteria underdetermined by the retinal indiscrimination" (Danto, 1974, 140). That is, he argues that the essence of art is not its perceptual properties that we can experience. His paradigm example for indiscernibles is the Brillo box. In his paper, "The Artworld," Danto asks the question of why it is that Warhol's boxes are considered art whereas the manufactured boxes are not. More specifically, we are left asking why it is the case that "the Brillo people cannot manufacture art and why Warhol cannot *but* make artworks" (Danto 1964, 580).

One way he tries to answer this question is through craftsmanship. Unlike the manufactured Brillo boxes, Warhol made his boxes by hand. In this way, there was a greater degree of care and skill used. However, Danto argues that this so-called "labor theory of value" fails. He uses the hypothetical example of "a man who carved pebbles out of stones and carefully constructed a work

called *Gravel Pile*’ (Danto, 1964, 580). Even though this man spent a great deal of time and effort carving these stones and arranging them in a particular way, the pile is not a work of art. Danto contends that the physical labor, skill, and duration put into creating a work is not a sufficient condition for something to be art- there is a particular essence that is missing from the pile of stones.

Like craftsmanship, beauty cannot be the defining feature of a work of art. Instead, Danto argues,

Beauty is one mode among many through which thoughts are presented in art to human sensibility - disgust, horror, sublimity, and sexuality are still others. These modes explain the relevance of art to human existence, and room for them all must be found in an adequate definition of art (Danto, 2002, 56).

In other words, there are artworks that are not considered to be beautiful. Art, rather, must be allowed to show the full range of the human experience however unpleasant or mundane. For example, Francisco Goya’s *Saturn Devouring* is grotesque and unsettling to look at. It depicts a distorted Saturn consuming a decapitated, bloodied figure. One could hardly gaze upon this painting and think of it as beautiful in the common sense. However, it is a highly revered work of art. Conversely, something cannot be called art by virtue of it being beautiful. We can think of natural beauty in this case. Like Hegel, Danto’s theory does not consider natural beauty as art. For Hegel, natural beauty is excluded from this category because “the beauty of art is a beauty begotten” from the human mind (Hegel, 1920, 2). Similarly, Danto’s essence of art lies within its embodied meaning as well as in the context of an artworld.

Thus, for Danto, a work of art is not merely the intersection of craftsmanship and beauty. Meaning that the sensuous, representational content cannot alone make something a work of

art- there must be something else. Danto recognizes that “for the naked eye: there may *be* no set of one-place predicates true of all and only artworks, without it following that there is no set of predicates adequate to the purpose” (Danto, 1974, 141). Rather, what art must have is an *aboutness*, an embodiment of meaning. He does, however, concede that there are many objects and representations that have an aboutness that we would not consider art. But, for Danto, this is, minimally speaking, a starting point for determining which objects are works of art. His ultimate answer to art’s determining quality is an artistic theory- one that possesses “an atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of the history of art: an artworld” (Danto, 1964, 580). For him, it is the artworld that makes art possible (Danto, 1964, 581). This artworld is the institution by which works are deemed worthy of artistic status. Danto likens this world’s relationship to the outside world to the relationship between the City of God and the Earthly City in which objects may be identified differently by the two. He states that “the Brillo box of the artworld may just be the Brillo box of the real one, separated and united by the *is* of artistic identification” (Danto, 1964, 582). In other words, the artworld is what distinguishes art from mere things, even commonplace objects indistinguishable from one another.

A significant aspect of Danto’s exploration of indiscernible objects is not restricted to modern art. Furthermore, it does not simply pertain to works whose artistic status is less obvious to us. Instead, what Danto does with his philosophy of art is “require us to explain what makes any work of art a work of art rather than a mere thing, even if the object in question – unlike Brillo Boxes – looks just like what we have always taken art to be” (Houlgate, 2013, 272). For example, he makes us question why da Vinci’s *Mona Lisa* is a work of art beyond convention. In other words, we call the *Mona Lisa* art because the artworld has already deemed it as such, but Danto invites us to go

beyond this. This is not to say that the artworld was wrong; instead, it is a matter of questioning the foundation for our aesthetic judgements in determining what art is.

Like Danto, George Dickie posits an institutional theory of art. That is, they both agree that the artworld is responsible for determining what is to be considered a work of art. Dickie's theory, as outlined in "What is Art? An Institutional Analysis," is a response to both Imitation Theory and Expression Theory. Although Dickie rejects these two theories, he believes that they both illuminate "*relational* properties of art as essential" (Dickie, 1974, 21). That is, a work of art, or rather its essence, is not completely ontologically independent. Instead, it bears some relationship to another within what Dickie claims to be "*the institutional nature of art*" (Dickie, 1974, 29). Dickie strongly resembles Danto in this respect— the institution is what makes the art possible. He uses the example of theater to better explicate this relationship. He states that, within the artworld, "both the players and the audience are involved and go to make up the institution of theater. The roles of the actors and the audience are defined by the traditions of the theater" (Dickie, 1974, 30). The key part of this explanation is the emphasis on tradition. Dickie wants to show that, while evolution in creativity is possible within the artworld, artists and audiences are still, in a way, tethered to certain rules or, rather, "an established practice" (Dickie, 1974, 31). Furthermore, he wants to use this framework as the basis for an essential feature of all art. He concedes that it is clearly the case that there is no one *exhibited* feature of art that is universal; however, he argues that "if, however, we step back and view the works in their institutional setting, we will be able to see the essential properties they share" (Dickie, 1974, 31). For these essential features, Dickie offers necessary conditions for a work of art. Firstly, an artwork is an artifact (Gal, 2021, 275). That is, at its most basic level, art is an observable object in the world. That is not to say that art is exclusively an object in the strict sense- a material object. Instead, we can understand an artifact to refer to that which is perceivable, whether that be a physical painting or work of music. Secondly, the artifact is, then, "conferred by an artworld agent or

institution a status of a candidate for appreciation” (Gal, 2021, 275). While that which perceives is the art itself, it is through this institution that we know that such what we are perceiving is, in fact, art. It is important to note that, when we talk about external authority, we are not referencing just any individual. More particularly, it does not mean that one can simply look at an artifact and deem it as a work of art- this would lower the artistic threshold considerably. Instead, “a work is attributed the status of ‘art-hood’ by agents of its social sphere” (Gal, 2021, 264).

Dickie breaks his second condition into four parts: “(1) acting on behalf of an institution, (2) conferring of status, (3) being a candidate, and (4) appreciation” (Dickie, 1974, 34). In acting on behalf of an institution as well as conferring status, Dickie uses the example of an indictment of an individual by a grand jury (Dickie, 1974, 34). In this case, for the indictment to take place, it must be the case that the legal framework on behalf of which the jury exists. He argues that the artworld, although without an established “constitution, officers, and bylaws,” functions similarly in that it acts as an institution of authority (Dickie, 1974, 35). There need not be any formal or public ceremony for an object to be considered a work of art, but it does rely on the recognition or acceptance of the artworld, which Dickie believes includes the artists themselves, historians, audiences, and so on (Dickie, 1974, 35-36). While institutional, Dickie wants to argue that conference requires only one individual. Here is where he goes into his third requirement for being considered a work of art-candidacy. Candidacy does not necessarily involve *actual* appreciation. That is, the object must have the potential appreciation, meaning that the appreciation need not precede the candidacy. Furthermore, status “may be acquired by a single person’s acting on behalf of the artworld and *treating an artifact as a candidate for appreciation*” (Dickie, 1974, 38). Here, Dickie is not concerned with works that are actually lauded and displayed in a museum. Instead, he is creating a far broader scope in which we ought to avoid “value properties” so that we may account for works that are not appreciated (Dickie, 1974, 40). Thus, similar to candidacy, appreciation does not have to be *actual*. In

his final requirement, Dickie defines what it means for a work to be appreciated. Unlike others such as Kant, Dickie argues that there is no kind of appreciation specific to aesthetic judgements. We do not possess a “special kind of aesthetic consciousness, attention, or perception” (Dickie, 1974, 40). All that he means by appreciation is judging the qualities of something to be of value or disvalue. For a work of art to be appreciated, it “must have some minimal *potential* value or worthiness” (Dickie, 1974, 43).

Jerold Levinson offers an alternative to Danto and Dickie’s institutional theory. While all argue for a social account of art, Levinson proposes that art ought to be judged within the context of art history rather than through the “murky and somewhat elusive institution, the *artworld*” (Levinson, 1979, 232). He highlights several problems and insufficiencies that the artworld metric contains. Firstly, institutional theory is unable to account for private art. He argues that “there can be private, isolated art which is constituted as art in the mind of the artist—and on no one’s behalf but his own and that of *potential* experiences of it” (Levinson, 1979, 233). Another problem that Levinson finds with the institutional theory is that “the artworld must do all the work in specifying the *way* in which an object has to be presented or treated in order for it to be a work of art, whereas the notion of *appreciation* (the point of the enterprise) is not specified at all or only in the most general terms (Levinson, 1979, 233). In this sense, the artworld seems to exclude the intentions of the artist regarding how the object was intended to be received. For example, it could be the case that the creator of some object never intended for it to be considered, or appreciated, as a work of art. Levinson asserts that this has, and ought to have, significant bearing on the status of a work. At first glance, this appears to be an uncharitable or insufficient reading of Dickie. The two do seem intersect here. As stated above, regardless of the degree of creativity, Dickie argues that the artist and their work are still tethered to certain rules and traditions within the art world. Levinson, however, wants to say that art history and the artworld come apart, arguing that the institutional theory

obscures intention of appreciation and removes the weight of it by granting more authority to the artworld rather than art history.

Levinson's solution is "to specify what the art object must be *intended for*, what sort of *regard* the spectator must be asked to extend to the object" (Levinson, 1979, 233). In other words, the intention the artist has for a particular work of art plays a critical role in its artistic status. Levinson argues that, for something to be a work of art, its creator must intend for it to be a work of art. However, this is not the *only* requisite for art. There is a specific kind of intention that is required. For him, "*a work of art is a thing intended for regard-as-a-work-of-art: regard in any of the ways works of art existing prior to it have been corrected regarded*" (Levinson, 1979, 234). Like the institutional theory, the work must be intended to be received as a work of art. The latter half of this definition introduces art history instantiated in the proper way as a necessary condition for art. Levinson argues that art is not something that occurs in succession but rather something that "must *involve*, as opposed merely to *follow*, that which has preceded it" (Levinson, 1979, 233). That is, an artist cannot seek to emancipate their work from all previous works.

1.4 Aesthetic Value

1.4.1 Insufficiency of Ontology

Ontology is important to understand, or at least be familiar with, the ways in which people have attempted to ascertain the necessary and sufficient conditions for art in that it provides us with a starting point for trying to determine what is special about art. Beyond this, I argue, ontology is beside the point as they do not help us settle the issue of AI art. That is, it can attempt to determine if AI images are art, but ontology, however accurate it might be, cannot always identify aesthetic value. So, for the purposes of this thesis, let us grant that AI can produce art. What we are now left with is the question of what is valuable about art as well as what we think is valuable. The former refers to a metaphysical reality of value. In other words, when we say that art has certain values, we

are claiming that there are certain facts about value that are not wholly subjective. One way to conceive of aesthetic value is through realism. Aesthetic realism can be understood through two central claims: First, (1) there are some aesthetic truths or facts about aesthetic property instances. Second, (2) these aesthetic truths or facts are objective insofar as they are response-independent (Tropman, 2021, 62). So, for example, beauty is a real aesthetic property in the world that exists mind-independently. As such, “aesthetic features of things are there to be discovered rather than created. An agent may prefer or take pleasure in an object because it is beautiful, but these aesthetic responses are not what make it beautiful on this realist view” (Tropman, 2021, 62).⁶ In other words, it is not our own aesthetic judgements that confer aesthetic properties onto a work; rather, these properties exist in the world, and an art object may possess them independently of our attitudes.

Apart from realism, value can also be understood intersubjectively.⁷ Intersubjectivism “grants (with subjectivism) that people figure in truth-conditions, but it holds (with objectivism) that the truth of moral claims doesn’t turn on facts about particular individuals” (Sayre-McCord, 1986, 20). It is notably distinct from subjectivism in that the value is not solely dependent upon the agent. For example, the subjectivist can say that a work of art is beautiful because they judge it to be beautiful; however, the intersubjectivist cannot claim value based on their own judgement. Rather, the beauty of a work of art might be determined by certain rules, conventions, or standards laid out by, say the artworld. In this sense, intersubjectivity does not fall into aesthetic realism in that,

⁶ This seems to be a rather difficult theory to uphold. A primary reason for this is the uncertainty regarding how we have epistemic access to these metaphysically strange properties. For example, how do I know that I am looking at something beautiful? What are beauty’s essential properties that I can come to know and, therefore, recognize? One way to answer this is by maintaining that these properties are still tied to our sensory mechanisms (Tropman, 2021, 66). In having this kind of relation, we are able to explain how some judgements are “systematically mistaken and unresponsive to aesthetic truth” (Tropman, 2021, 67). This certainly seems to track our practices of aesthetic disagreement- we seem to believe that some judgements are better, or more accurate, than others.

⁷ These particular theories are largely focused on *moral* value; however, I argue that they can be used to understand value more broadly. So, for the sake of this thesis, we can assume that aesthetic value can also be explained, or understood, through each of these theories.

although not conferred by the individual, value is not an objective feature of the world. Rather, it still makes “essential reference to the concessions and practices of particular societies” (Sayre-McCord, 1986, 18). In the case of aesthetic value, it makes reference to the artworld.

Just as I am not committed to an ontological theory, I am not committed to determining which conception of aesthetic value is true. Value can be objective or intersubjective.⁸ What I take from the metaphysical theories of value is that value is something outside of ourselves. In other words, how aesthetic value is construed need not be important so long as there are some facts about value and these facts are not wholly subjective. In taking on this position, I am able to address a central problem of people simply not caring. For example, I might argue having a human artist is something that makes art aesthetically valuable; however, one could reject this by stating that they do not care about the artist. For example, the aesthetic hedonist cares only for pleasure and, thus, rejects other values. If it were the case that I purported that value is grounded in an agent's judgement, it seems that I would not be able to say that the hedonist is wrong for not valuing an artist being human. However, because I contend that value is something outside ourselves, whether that be as a property of the world or convention, I can argue that those who reject certain values are *wrong* in their judgements.

1.4.2 Expressiveness and Situatedness

I argue that art is a matter of expression.⁹ According to Susanne Langer, art takes on an expressive form, which includes “any perceptible or imaginable whole that exhibits relationships of parts, or points, or even qualities or aspects within the whole, so that it may be taken to represent

⁸ It is important to note that aesthetic realism and intersubjectivism are not the *only* possibilities for aesthetic value. For example, there is constructivism and ideal observer theory. The aim is not to show everything aesthetic value can be. Rather, it is to show that value is something outside ourselves—both constructivism and ideal observer theory support this claim.

⁹ This claim seems to commit me to expression theory, thus making it the case that I am making an ontological argument. However, this is not the case. I am simply saying that we can see that art does express something, however minimal.

some other whole whose elements have analogous relations” (Langer, 1957, 20). As expressive forms, what artworks convey are feelings; however, Langer argues that feelings, in this context, are not meant to be understood as a sort of an emotive outburst from the artist; rather, a feeling is “neither a confessional nor a frozen tantrum; it is a developed metaphor, a non-discursive symbol that articulates what is verbally ineffable—the logic of consciousness itself” (Langer, 1957, 26). Feelings are essentially the entire spectrum of human affects— both physical and non-physical. Additionally, Langer asserts that the expressiveness of a work of art is propositional— “the formulation of an idea for conception” (Langer, 1957, 126). In defining art in this way, Langer is able to address the concerns previously raised regarding expression theory. I raised the objections that it does not seem to take into account that the other has simply failed in their expression. However, as a propositional object, an artwork can be ‘false,’ That is, “an idea may be well expressed or badly expressed” (Langer, 1957, 126). Similarly, in a work of art, feeling is well expressed or badly, and the work accordingly is good, or poor, or even bad—note that in the last case an artist would condemn it as false” (Langer, 1957, 26). To be good, or successful, a work of art must be able to communicate human feelings— what it is to feel joy, disgust, melancholy, and so forth. It is able to “objectify feeling so we can contemplate and understand it. It provides the means for knowing about our subjective reality— our inward life’ and ‘inner experiences”” (Reese, 1977, 49). As such, it allows the audience to find themselves in the work.

Similar to Langer, Noël Carroll argues that art is expressive. His primary focus, though, is art as a matter of conversation based upon the intention of the artist. He argues that, when we engage in conversation, our intuitive “standard cognitive goal is to figure out what the speaker intends to say” (Carroll, 2001, 157). Similarly, when we engage with a work of art, we attempt to ascertain the artist’s intentions. In other words, we recognize a work as a product of authorial intention— someone made this thing and did so with meaning in mind. As such, art “affords not only an opportunity to

reap aesthetic satisfaction but is an opportunity to exercise our interpretive abilities in the context of a genuine conversation” (Carroll, 2001, 174). In other words, art is not simply for our enjoyment or appreciation; rather, it is an invitation for genuine engagement with the artist. Furthermore, as a product of engagement, we learn more about the subjectivity of the human experience— not only that of the artist but ourselves.

One way we can understand the expressive nature of art, specifically, the instantiation of the subjectivity of the artist is through situatedness.¹⁰ Martin Heidegger argues that we are beings in time, beings that encounter the world and thus assign meaning, or significance. He claims, “the character of being-there of this world can be terminologically designated as *significance*. ‘Significant’ means: being, being-there, in the mode of signifying which is being encountered in a definite manner” (Heidegger, 1999, 74). This sort of being denotes an active rather than passive development of the self in which one is encountering themselves in the world. We are continually assessing what it is that is meaningful within the world, particularly the world we personally encounter. As such, art is not created within a vacuum but is instead born of an intersection between the person and the world.

1.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have given an extensive review of the historical and theoretical foundations for the ontology of art. However, I make no commitment to any ontological theory. Instead, we can appreciate art without knowing or assenting to essential features. I argue that, supposing AI can create art, there are many aspects of aesthetic value that get lost in terms of our own valuing. In

¹⁰ Situatedness can be *likened* to embodiment. Embodiment is an incredibly complex, layered term. For background, though, Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s embodiment theory asserts that there is “reciprocal influence of consciousness, the body, techniques and materials” (Haworth, 1997, 86). While the term ‘embodiment’ contains a multitude of definitions in the literature, for our purposes, we can conceive of it as the interrelationship between one’s subjective experience and the external world- an embodied reciprocity. According to Jonathan Gilmore, there is a metaphysical component to works of art- “a conception of how the self, body, mind, and world interrelate” (Gilmore, 2006, 291). That is, an artwork is more than a matter of imagination realized; rather, it is the amalgamation of one’s lived experience within the world.

other words, although what *is* valuable about art does not change, we seem to value these qualities less. The specific values that I am concerned with are the following: the value of a work of art as an instantiation of our situated, subjective experience in the world, the value of the product as the outcome of human work, and the value of the artist.

Chapter 2: AI Art, Aesthetic Value, and Aesthetic Judgement

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will outline the threat that AI poses to aesthetic value— AI art changes what *we think* is valuable about art but does *not* change what *is* valuable about art. More specifically, allowing AI to be art would change what we *judge* to be valuable about art, such that these judgements would likely then be less correct, insofar as we would often miss and fail to appropriately respond to one or more of the three values that I argue art in fact has. As discussed in the previous chapter, I am concerned with how we experience aesthetic values, whether they be objective properties in the world or subjective to our experiences of the work. What my argument assumes is that there are aspects of art that we find aesthetically valuable.¹¹ The aesthetic values that I will focus on are the artistic process, the art object, and the artist. Firstly, I will show how the value of the artistic process is weakened by AI art. As Langer and Carroll argue, art is a mode of expression— it is an instantiation of the subjective experience of the artist. What occurs in creating a work of art is a hermeneutic process of determining what is significant about one's experiences. Relying on Heidegger, I argue that we ought to conceive of this process as a matter reflecting on our situatedness. Situatedness refers to us as beings in time in which we exist within the world in a particular context. Because of this essential feature of our being, works of art are not created in a vacuum; instead, they are the result of the artist's experiences with the external world. Similarly,

¹¹ My argument suggests that there are certain things we can assume, or buy into, when we engage in the discussion of art. We accept that there are aesthetically valuable properties of art- whether these be objective, intersubjective, and so forth.

Heidegger focuses on human experiences. For him, humans determine what it is they find valuable in their experience. I will use Heidegger to show that the something we value in a work of art is largely grounded in the subjectivity of the artist. To articulate what is lost with AI art, I will show that AI cannot determine the significance of its dataset. In other words, AI does not have the right *kind* of relationship with its data, such that it cannot create art on the basis of what it finds to be meaningful.

Following this, I will discuss one aspect of the value of the art object as the outcome of human, creative work. First, I will draw a distinction between craft and art, beginning with the notion of *techne* that has its basis in Greek Antiquity. While there is ongoing literature regarding what separates art from craft, generally speaking, we can understand this distinction to be grounded in the kind of value each possesses. The value of crafts is instrumental, meaning that they always have some end or use. For example, a chair is valuable insofar as someone can sit in it. Conversely, art need not have any specific end or use. As Kant argues, art is an instance of beauty in which there is no definite purpose (Kant, 1790/2000, p. 5:236). Another distinction I will make between the two is regarding procedure. With craft, there is a clear process regarding knowledge *how* as well as planning— the process of determining how to instantiate their idea into a work of art.¹² Without either of the two, there is no craft. Conversely, although there is an element of planning to art, it is not a necessary condition. Instead, art is a manner of expressing emotion— an expression that truly makes something art; more strongly put, “expressing one’s emotion really *is* the work of art itself” (Janaway, 1992, 46).

¹² There is a distinction between knowledge-*that* and knowledge-*how*. The former pertains to “a relation between a thinker and a true proposition” (Stanley and Williamson, 2001, 411). For example, I know *that* the sky is blue. Conversely, knowledge-how is “an ability, which is in turn a complex of dispositions” (Stanley and Williamson, 2001, 411). For example, I know *how* to ride a bike.

Additionally in this section, I will discuss how AI is relevantly different from other technological advancement in art, particularly photography. First, I will explain the initial backlash that photography received when it entered the art world. Many felt that photography could only imitate; furthermore, it crossed the boundary of being just a tool in such a way that it removed the artist. I will respond by arguing that these criticisms mischaracterize photography. The two ways I do this are by first showing that medium constraints are not unique for photography. Painters, too, are confined to their mediums. Regardless, both photographers and painters are able to instantiate their artistic visions through manipulation of configuration, lighting, content, and so on. Similarly, just like with painting, we would not call all photographs art. If we were to do so, we would have to assent to the objection that the camera is not just a tool as it would, without failure, create something of aesthetic value. However, this is not the case. We find a photograph aesthetically valuable in the way a painting is in that there is both skill as well as an entire process behind photographic art that is imbued with the artist's intention and participation.

In the next section, I will examine Kathryn Wojtkiewicz's argument in favor of AI as a tool for the artist. She argues that there are two conditions for an image or object to be considered a work of art: it must be created with the intention of being a work of art and it is created according to the intention of the artist (Wojtkiewicz, 2024, 458). Furthermore, she argues that AI meets both conditions. I argue that the way she construes these conditions oversimplifies the aesthetic value we find in the artist. Thus, the concern is not the conditions she proposes as my argument is one regarding value rather than ontology. In response, I will argue that, in addition to the artistic process and art object, we value the artist less. I will do so by showing that the AI and the human do not have the right *kind* of a relationship. More specifically, I will argue that the relationship between the two is relevantly different from the artist and their tools. The relationship between AI and the human is a matter of causal dependence in which there seems to be a gap that is not present

between an artist and other tools. The AI, although guided by prompts, has some agency in choosing the output– it has its own decision-making capacities.

In the final section of this chapter, I will shift to discussing the effect that AI art has on aesthetic judgement. Instead of focusing on the artist and their work, I will focus on us as the audience. Firstly, I will attempt to ameliorate the conflict between subjectivity and normativity in aesthetic judgements, relying on both Kant and Hume. I will argue that, for there to be genuine disagreement, aesthetic judgements must be predicated on some standard taste. In other words, there are some aesthetic judgments that operate with greater epistemic authority than others. Following this, I will outline three kinds of aesthetic judgement: experiential, personal, and competent. I will argue that competence-based aesthetic judgements allow for genuine disagreements. Finally, I will explain why we ought to care about the proficiency of our aesthetic judgements, arguing that they are both informative and reflective of what we find aesthetically valuable– they shape our dispositions towards AI art, particularly in determining whether the diminishing what we think is valuable about art is something we should be willing to do.

2.2 Three Key Values

2.2.1 The Value of the Artistic Process

In 2022, Jason M. Allen won first place in the ‘digital arts/digitally-manipulated photography’ category at the Colorado Fair’s annual fine art competition. Following his win, Jason shared that creating this photograph through AI “‘felt like ... some otherworldly force was involved.’ He also declared, ‘Art is dead, dude. It’s over. A.I. won. Humans lost’” (Gover, 2021. para. 9). Allen’s win received significant backlash from the art world. Many felt that an AI image winning an art competition was an affront to art itself. Importantly, it brought the question of whether AI has the ability to create art to the forefront. The present controversies regarding AI and art “‘expose our deep-seated cultural ambivalence about the nature of artistic creation generally: are

artworks valuable because of the amount of time and effort that the artist expends in creating them, or because they contain a creative spark, a special expressive quality that cannot be learned or willed into being?” (Gover, 2021, para. 14). In other words, the rise of AI images entering the art world has illuminated complacency regarding what it is we value in a work of art. For my purposes, the focus is not on the ontological structure of art works; instead, the focus is on how AI alters what we think is valuable about art. There are many aspects of art that become devalued, but what I find significant is the devaluing of the artistic process and, with that, the artist. The central question is, what happens to aesthetic value? In other words, what effect does AI art have on what we find aesthetically valuable about art? I am not arguing that our philosophical notion of value will have to change. Rather, granting that AI generated works are art, I argue that this form of art still systematically possesses lesser value than work of art made by other means. In order to demonstrate that AI art is detrimental to what we think is aesthetically valuable, we must first determine what it is we value in a work of art. Then, the task is to show that AI chips away at how we regard these values.

One of the most aesthetically valuable aspects of a work of art is the instantiation of the subjectivity of the artist. What occurs when one creates a piece of art is a creative upsurge that is anchored in the subjectivity of their experience. Susanne Langer and Noël Carroll support this notion through their emphasis on art as expression. Both argue that art is a communicative artifact by which an artist expresses their own experiences within the world. Furthermore, the expressive nature of art invites us to engage with the artist and their work. According to Jonathan Gilmore, there is a metaphysical component to works of art- “a conception of how the self, body, mind, and world interrelate” (Gilmore, 2006, 291). That is, an artwork is more than a matter of imagination realized; rather, it is the amalgamation of one’s lived experience within the world. As such, art is not created within a vacuum but is instead born of an intersection between the person and the world. From this, we can conceive of the artistic process as a hermeneutic act of determining what is

significant about our experiences. For example, Francisco Goya painted scenes from the Napoleonic invasion of Spain, specifically scenes that he witnessed first-hand (Callot et al. 1990, 38). His *Third of May 1808* depicts the executions of Spaniards that rebelled against the French. The experience alone did not inspire the painting. Rather it was both the experience and the determination about what was about that experience for Francisco Goya. This example is not meant to argue that artists must depict real-life encounters; instead, it can be a matter of what one found significant in a poem, a historical event, and so forth. Situatedness, broadly construed, includes any encounter we have with the external world— physical, verbal, emotional, and so on. It pertains to us as beings in time- beings that are not insulated from the external world but rather tethered to it through history, relationships, and experiences.

Although guided by prompts, AI searches through its own dataset- a dataset that consists of “hundreds of thousands of images made by human artists” (Wojtkiewicz, 2024, 463). Arguably, human artists function in a similar, if not the same way. Artists study the oeuvres of other artists, learning from their techniques and taking them on themselves. Art has largely been a matter of emulating the work of others. In this way, we too operate on our own datasets, composed of the works of others. Thus, the question is what separates a human artist from the AI in matters of what is chosen to be represented in the work. Where the two diverge is how humans and AI make use of their datasets. Unlike the AI, humans have a personal encounter with the art that comprises their datasets. They are simply not fed images from which they choose to create their own; instead, humans have an agency to learn not just the configurations of other art, but their meanings and significance. From this, humans make the conscious decision regarding what is significant about our experiences. In other words, we are instrumental in the assignment of meaning. Conversely, for AI, “it is highly unlikely that these systems are conveying anything more than statistical correlations between pixels or word-object associations as they are drawn from the training data” (Anscomb,

2026, 1651). What is lost with AI is the hermeneutic process of determining what is significant about our experiences. In other words, one of the things that gets lost is the fact that our experiential archive is no longer the relevant dataset to produce what is processed through creative imagination. AI is able to sort through data and determine which most aptly adheres to the prompt, but it cannot say why the images it sorts through are significant. More importantly, it cannot determine what image is meaningful to it.¹³ One might say that the human sorting through the images, selecting them, and tweaking the prompts is still bringing their subjective and embodied perspective to the artistic process, so it isn't about how the AI functions as much as how the human artist uses it as a tool.

While I do not commit myself to any ontological view, Levinson's theory does illuminate the importance of art history. More specifically, though, Levinson's argument helps us to understand that there is a relationship between the artist and art history that points to the hermeneutical process of determining what is valuable about the experiences one has— in this case, the experience is encountering past works of art. As Levinson argues, art is that which “must *involve*, as opposed merely to *follow*, that which has preceded it” (Levinson, 1979, 233). That is, an artist cannot seek to emancipate their work from all previous works regarded as art. However, this “necessarily backward-looking” approach to art is not to be understood as merely paying homage to previous art forms as a sort of means to an end— the end being meeting the criteria for attaining artistic status (Levinson, 1979, 232). Without having to commit ourselves to the ontological nature of this claim, we can still see that enveloping previous forms, themes, and styles is an instance of determining what is important about previous works. For example, observing the breadth of artist's interpretations of past works and the ways in which they both include and develop these previous forms, we can see that there is far less uniformity. What one artist finds significant about impression and about

¹³ ‘Meaning’ here is understood as something personal. It refers to that which someone feels some sort of connection to.

impressionist artists differs from what another artist finds significant. Furthermore, their works, as a result of this determination of meaning, is made visible in the works they create. In other words, their works reflect their own subjective experiences with past works. As Heidegger argues, we are beings in time that encounter the world and assign meaning, or significance to what we experience (Heidegger, 1999, 74). In this sense, the connection humans have is more relational in the personal, subjective sense. AI seems to have a different kind of relationship to the works they are trained on. Unlike humans, AI cannot make judgements regarding why they find images in their datasets meaningful; furthermore, it does not seem like they *can* find images meaningful in a personal sense.

One could argue that art need not be born of subjectivity and experience. Insofar as an image is aesthetically engaging, its source is irrelevant. The anti-intentionalists, such as Wimsatt and Beardsley, would fall in this line of emphasis on the product itself. That is, the product is isolated from the process or intentions of the artist. What they care about, as discussed in the first chapter, is internal evidence—evidence that is immediately available to the audience. For example, in painting, this would simply include the image itself. However, I argue that this is the wrong kind of attitude we ought to have. A key tenet of art's value is what went into the making of the work.¹⁴ As such, what I am concerned with is external evidence, which involves what is “not a part of the work as a linguistic fact: it consists of revelations... about how or why the poet wrote the poem” (Wimsatt and Beardsley, 1946, 477-478). The source is relevant on this account, not only regarding how the work of art is constructed but *why*. For this reason, I argue that intention is inherent to the process. It explains the how and the why of the source material. I will grant that it appears to be the case that not all works are expressions of subjective experience in the strong sense. For example, not all works are strictly personal, such as portraits or court painting. However, I argue that works of art do

¹⁴ An anti-intentionalist would deny this claim. However, I claim that, descriptively, we see that we do seem to place value on the artistic process.

possess minimal subjectivity rooted in experience.¹⁵ Returning to Heidegger, that which goes into a work of art is the instantiation of one's experience within the world. If, for example, we had ten artists paint the same portrait, no painting would be identical to another. In response, one could object, stating that there are no two AI images that are identical given it is people with their own subjective experiences that art imputing the prompts. However, this is where we approach the issue of creativity and how it impacts what we value about the work. The diversity in AI images could, in part, be due to an instantiation of one's perspective that is informed by their own embodied experience in the world in the Heideggerian sense. However, it also could be due to the nature of the algorithm. The AI model is trained on an enormous data set and, given the diversity in prompts, spits out individualized images. More importantly though, as I will further explicate later, the AI employs its own decision-making to best fit the prompt. So, it is not simply instantiating the idea of the artist but also its own understanding of the prompt.

2.2.2 The Value of the Product

An important aspect that we value in art is the product as the outcome of human, creative work. This value is built into the oldest idea of art— *techne*. That is, somebody had knowledge of a concept and there was a way of doing it better or worse. *Techne* originated in Greek Antiquity, referring to a particular art or craft (Staten, 2012, 44). At the time, they did not have a specific category for art, particularly fine art. Instead, art was grouped in with craft, generally speaking. Yet, what remains at the core of *techne* is its grounding in human creation and knowledge. Heidegger attempts to pull art and craft apart, arguing that “both art and craft are ways of bringing something into being, but only art is *poiesis* [‘making’ or ‘poetry’]” (Staten, 2012, 44). In other words, unlike

¹⁵ Without committing to an ontological claim, there are certain aspects of art that I assume— specifically those that are generally agreed upon in the artworld. One aspect of art that is assumed is a minimal subjectivity of the artist instantiated in the work. As I will show in this chapter, art is not and cannot be created in a vacuum. An artist, knowingly or not, incorporates some aspect of their situated experience as a being in time.

craftsmanship, art is, in a sense, something both born of an artist as well as something that obtains independence.¹⁶ While I argue against their anti-intentionalist stance, Wimsatt and Beardsley do explain this sort of independence rather well. They argue that a poem, for example, “is detached from the author at birth and goes about the world beyond his power to intend about it or control it” (Wimsatt and Beardsley, 1946, 470). In this way, a work of art essentially becomes its own entity that engages with the public without being tethered to their artist. I reject that the artist ought to be cast aside.

One significant way to consider the distinction between craft and art is that craft is necessary for art, but “being an art, is not exhausted by it” (Janaway, 1992, 45). That is, art involves craft, but it is not *merely* a craft. Conversely, being a craft is not sufficient for being a work of art. Crafts involve, but are not limited to, “a body of knowledge and skill which can be used to produce useful objects: dishes one can eat from, chairs one can sit in, cloth that makes serviceable clothing, plumbing that works, electrical wiring that carries current” (Becker, 1978, 864). As such, we can conceive of craft in terms of instrumental value— the product, physical or nonphysical, has some function. Conversely, as Kant argues, art, or more specifically beauty, is purposiveness without any particular purpose, or end (Kant, 1790/2000, p. 5:236). That is, art need not have a particular use; furthermore, it often has no single purpose.

The point of drawing these distinctions is not to make an ontological claim about art but to highlight that we *treat* art as more than craft. It seems to be its own category. There is a clear display of craft shown in a work of art, but there is something that separates it from a chair, for example.

¹⁶ These claims are rather ontological in nature. As such, this seems to suggest that I am making an ontological claim about art rather than a value claim. However, this is not necessarily the case. One can recognize that art is distinct from mere objects without assenting to necessary and sufficient conditions for its categorization. Additionally, the inclusion of this distinction between craft and art is to provide an understanding of how Greek Antiquity shaped how we think about the significance of man-made objects. Furthermore, the separation of art from craft illuminates features that we find valuable enough to make art its own category of *techné*.

For Heidegger, a work of art is “something else over and above the thingly element;” furthermore, it is “something other than the mere thing itself” (Heidegger, 1971, 19). This special quality remains ambiguous; however, what we garner from this kind of ontology is what Danto argues in stating that art is more than craftsmanship, more than beauty. For him, this characteristic is an embodied meaning that is affirmed through the artworld. This embodied meaning is not sufficient for something being art according to Danto; however, Danto is stipulating that it is a necessary condition. Though my own argument is not directly ontological, meaning does seem to be the price of admission. More specifically, it is what designates art as something apart from ordinary objects. One way this meaning is instantiated through the process itself. We recognize that there was a great deal of time and skill that went into making the art object. Furthermore, there is something deeper that takes place in the making beyond the physical action. There is an intellectual aspect, which is, principally, the hermeneutic process of determining what is worth ascribing meaning to and transforming into art.

It is undeniable that, in certain cases, using advanced tools that expedite a process ought to be used. For example, a quantum computer not only can be used but *ought* to be used for solving complex mathematical equations. That is, it would likely be irrational to spend two months attempting to solve a mathematical equation when a certain quantum computer can solve it in a few minutes. However, when it comes to art, faster is not better- even if the product is just as good in terms of aesthetic pleasure, it does not mean that it is the *same* product in terms of value.¹⁷ In other words, there is value that extends beyond the pleasantness of an image.¹⁸ Carroll argues against this

¹⁷ This can be interpreted as a criticism of aesthetic hedonism, which claims that “aesthetic value is reducible to the value of aesthetic pleasure or experience” (Van der Berg, 2020, 1). Artistic value goes beyond the physical, or sensuous, properties of the work. We can think of Danto’s concern with indiscernible objects. Observation alone cannot tell us what is distinct about each. We must look at external evidence— that which is not present through observation. To truly understand the value of the work, we must also look to the artist, their intention and their process.

¹⁸ To reiterate, there are certain values we can assume here- values that are not purely reliant on our attitudes.

notion of aesthetic hedonism, which is often presupposed by anti-intentionalism, purports that “aesthetic pleasure or satisfaction is our only legitimate interest with regard to artworks” (Carroll, 2001, 178). Instead, he believes that is insufficient and that we do, in fact, “have a stake in actually having the experiences” of artworks (Carroll, 2001, 178). Aesthetic satisfaction, or pleasure, comes from encountering the artist and engaging in conversation with them, which entails rejecting anti-intentionalism and seeking to go beyond the immediate pleasure derived from the work.

Without having to rely on an ontological theory, we can see that there are certainly features of art works that we treat as valuable. One of the most significant features is the artistic process. We often value this aspect of a work of art because it demonstrates not only skill but a devotion to the product. What we lose with AI art is the valuing of this process. Furthermore, the theories I have offered seem to fall short in upholding this. More specifically, this dismissal of the artistic process is where Danto’s, Dickie’s, and Levinson’s theories fall short. Crispin Sartwell argues that institutional and historical theories focus on the product (Sartwell, 1992, 302). That is, what they care about is the work as an object. Levinson seems to go a bit beyond this by placing an emphasis on the artist’s intention in creating the work; however, he, along with Danto and Dickie, overlooks the value of the artistic process. Thus, what gets lost in these theories is the artist’s satisfaction found in the *act* of painting, drawing, and so forth (Sartwell, 1992, 304). Art is an iterative process. For the artist,

part of the satisfaction inherent in creating a work of art arises from the solution of problems that arise in its creation, tortuous though such a process may be in some respects...no artist would be willing to have finished works simply appear on command; working out problems within the chosen medium is precisely constitutes him as an artist (Sartwell, 1992, 305).

That is, the artist finds value in the making- not just the art object. We too seem to value this process. We value, for example, the time, skill intention, etc. that an artist put into the work.

In light of the value of this process, photography received significant resistance upon trying to enter the artworld. Artists, particularly portrait artists, found themselves out of work. The means of creating art were now cheaply available; furthermore, they were available to the masses. As a result, artists were required to defend why what they did and what they produced was something to be valued.¹⁹ As I have argued, we value art as the outcome of human, creative work— this technology seemingly took that away. One significant criticism was that many felt that photography was the embodiment “in the most literal way the mimetic theory of art, which mistakenly regards the creation of beauty to consist in putting a mirror up to the world and producing an accurate imitation of what faces it” (Winfield, 2023, 158).²⁰ The problem with mimicking reality in the way photography does is that it, in many ways, seems to remove the imagination that is embedded in other art forms. For example, in painting, the artist is responsible for instantiating their own imagination onto the canvas. In other words, they must transfer the image in their mind into the physical world through their own creativity. Even when painters, or other artists of sensuous forms, mimic reality through, say, a staged scene or a landscape being perceived, they still capture the image through their agency.²¹ For example, they choose what colors are used, the configuration, the medium, and so forth. The entirety of the work comes from the artist. Photography, however, seems to lack this kind of involvement from the artist. One way this is evident is the constraint of content. More specifically, it is able to capture only that which resides on the other side of the lens- the object

¹⁹ As I have maintained, there can be changes in what *we think* is valuable about art; however, what *is* valuable about art does *not* change. Photography did make us question what we thought was valuable about art, but it did not change what is valuable about art.

²⁰ Imitation is a major criticism from Plato, particularly in regard to poetry. He argues that “imitation is surely far from the truth; and as it seems, it is due to this that it produces everything- because it lays hold of a certain small part of each thing, and that part is itself only a phantom” (598b5-598b8). There is discrepancy regarding whether Plato felt that painters produced mere imitations in the same way poets did. For example, painters are both imitators and producers whereas poets are only imitators (Nehemas, 1988, 220). However, this discussion lies outside the scope of this paper.

²¹ Critics of photography are not arguing that mimicking, itself, precludes one from producing a work of art- artists of other mediums often mimic reality. The problem with photography is that it seems to be the case that it can *only* mimic reality.

is prior to the image.²² That is, a photographer's own creativity is limited to what they choose to capture- there is no image made from scratch. However, having constraints is not a challenge specific to photography. Winfield states that where photographic and non-photographic visual works intersect is their constraint to only that which "can be conveyed in the two-dimensional immobile single image they produce. Both can make use of this field to represent not just figures, but the concrete situation in which they stand, doing so with as much detail and extension as their respective means allow" (Winfield, 2023, 166). In other words, paintings and drawings, too, have certain limitations in which they depict a singular, static image. Although, unlike photography, they need not rely on a physical object set before them, painters must operate within the constructs of their medium.

Secondly, many rejected photography on the grounds that it was not simply another tool for artistic production in the same way that previous tools, such as a paintbrush, were. A photograph can be made by the simple press of a button. Many felt that creating a photograph removed the necessity of skill. However, I argue that this is a mischaracterization of photography. Winfield states,

Admittedly, artists in the other media all use tools, be they devices of architectural craftsmanship, chisels for sculpting stone, brushes to apply paint, instruments to make music, or pens or keyboards to write literature. These tools, however, produce no work of art unless the artist applies them in a creatively constructive manner, independently giving the work of art its form and content. A photographer need only push a camera button to have it

²² One could clearly make the argument that the content of many paintings is contingent upon an existent object that is prior to the work. However, the distinguishing factor here is that a painting has the *capacity* to be the result of images from the mind.

automatically reproduce whatever given visual image is reflected through its lens” (Winfield, 2023, 157).

While it is the case that a photograph can simply be made through the pushing of a button, the reduction of artistic photography to this action is an oversimplification of the process. Firstly, just as we would not call any stroke of paint on a canvas aesthetically valuable, so too would we not call just any photograph aesthetically valuable. More specifically, “although the photograph (whether in hard-copy print or in digital display) is surely the standard end product of photography and conventionally recognized as the goal and work of photographic art, there is more to photography than the photograph” (Shusterman, 2012, 68). Instead, there is often an entire process behind photographic art that is imbued with the artist’s intention and participation. Like a paint brush, the camera is the means by which a photographer creates a work of art. Beyond merely pushing a button, the photographer determines the object of the image, the camera, the lens, the framing. For example, “some photographers have used the artifice of soft focus, smeared lens, and elaborate lighting effects to make their cameras emulate the painterly chiaroscuro of old masters” (Winfield, 2023, 162).

2.2.3 The Value of the Artist

There is ambiguity surrounding what it means to have authorship over some creation. Put simply, we can conceive of authorship as being responsible for the creation of the object. As such, because “AI is programmed by humans, any creations made by AI should be considered the property of its creator” (Gover, 2021. para. 4). In other words, despite AI’s own creative role in configuring the image, the product remains under the authorship of the human—AI images are still the result of “human-led activities” (Anscomb, 2026, 1647). In response to this issue, many would like to argue that, like photography, generative AI is simply another in the line of technological advancement in art. However, I purport that AI is relevantly different from any other technological

advantage. In her paper “How Do You Solve a Problem like DALL-E 2?,” Kathryn Wojtkiewicz makes a case in favor of generative AI’s ability to make works of art. She argues that AI is able to meet the two requisites that she believes are both necessary and sufficient for something to be art. Like Danto and Levinson, she states that a work “must be created with the intention of being experienced as an artwork, (Wojtkiewicz, 2024, 458).” As Wojtkiewicz expresses, this criterion is fairly straightforward; therefore, the primary focus of her argument is her second requirement, which posits that an artwork is created according to the intention of the artist (Wojtkiewicz, 2024, 458). This is relevantly different from the first criterion. One way she argues for the necessity of intentionality is by showing that a work of art cannot be produced by accident. For example, we can imagine painting an office in which “I slip on a paint roller left carelessly on the ground... as each bucket hits the ground, it spatters paint across the full expanse of the office’s previously white wall in a way that looks uncannily like a drip painting” (Wojtkiewicz, 2024, 459). It could be the case that the paint falls in such a way that it produces an aesthetically pleasing image. However, mere appearance or configuration is not a sufficient condition for artistic status. That is, we could have two identically painted walls, but only the wall created with intention is a work of art. Wojtkiewicz anticipates the criticism that AI is unable to have the same intentionality that the wall painter has. She argues that AI programs do not remove intention but rather “change the way a creator participates in the creation of the image” (Wojtkiewicz, 2024, 461). So, like the camera and the paint brush, AI is simply a new means by which a work of art is created. To affirm that intention remains, Wojtkiewicz looks to Claire Anscomb for a more specified conception of intention. Anscomb argues that, rather than bodily movements being necessary for intention, “an agent can exercise intentional control over the features of an image if they successfully anticipate the effect that the remote consequences of their actions will have on these;” furthermore, “to exert intentional control over the features of an image is to exercise ‘creative agency,’ which is a species of executive agency”

(Anscomb, 2021, 415). The agent inserting prompts seems to have this kind of agency; therefore, AI art is created according to an intention.

Wojtkiewicz demonstrates a significant aspect of aesthetic value, that being the intention of the artist, further illuminating that we do care about the presence of an artist. And one way we come to appreciate the artist and their work is through the intention. Moreover, I agree with Wojtkiewicz that AI does not create a problem for intention being present; however, I argue that she overly simplifies intention in such a way that it devalues what we generally hold to be authorship over a work. My argument is that, unlike photography, AI is not a new way that an artist participates in the creation process, but rather it is, if not the removal, the devaluing of the artist. If we were to call AI the artist, we must accept that these programs are capable of intention. I argue that, to have intention, one must have the *capacity* to independently conceive ideas. That is, one must be able to create, or act, through their own volitional abilities without external forces acting upon them, AI does not possess this faculty.²³ It can only do that which it is prompted to do. For example, an AI program would not produce an image without a directive, much less an image of a garden in the impressionist style of Claude Monet. It is important to note that it is not the case that a work of art must come from an artist uninfluenced by external forces; rather, it is a matter of whether it is *possible* for the artist to conceive of the idea and produce the work independently. In requiring a prompter, the AI cannot be the artist, and consequently, cannot make art. We separate humans from AI is our ability to create rather than merely generate. Similar to the objection regarding value, it seems to be the case that I am making an ontological claim about the artist. That is, to be an artist, one must meet conditions x, y, and z. However, I am not committed to a theory of what makes someone an artist. Instead, I am showing what we seem to value about an artist- both skill and

²³ I recognize that there is debate regarding the ‘cognitive’ abilities of AI. However, this conversation is beyond the scope of this paper. Thus, for our purposes, I am operating under the assumption that AI is not a sentient agent with the same capacities attributed to human beings.

intention, with the focus here primarily being intention. More specifically, I am concerned with what happens when we lower the threshold for what it means to have intention and realize that intention through a work of art.

If we suppose that the artist is the human, we must look at the kind of involvement the human has in the creation process. Generally speaking, to make an AI image, someone must put in a series of prompts detailing what they wish the program to create. If unsatisfactory, one may continue to alter the prompts until receiving the desired image. In this way, there is clearly intention behind the work that is being created- one has a particular idea that is realized. However, the question is whether intention alone is sufficient for being able to claim authorship over a work. I purport that, in the case of AI, the human functions more similarly to a commissioner than an artist. Historically speaking, many of the works we have today were commissioned; however, we do not give status as an artist to one simply responsible for the assignment of an idea but rather one who realizes it. Imputing a series of prompts is analogous to telling a painter what to paint. I can have the intention for a work of art to be created without being the artist myself. Intention alone does not connect me in a significant way to the work itself. This is not to say intention is not necessary; however, relying solely on intention is too weak. We intend things all the time, but it alone does not connect us in a significant way to the process or product that is brought forth. Intention is necessary in that it is the reason-giving force for a work. For example, as Levinson argues, intention gives reason for the work and how the artist intends for the work to be regarded. However, it is not sufficient for the kind of authorship that we seem to find valuable in a work of art.²⁴

If we reject the commissioner argument, the denial of the human as the artist can be rooted in the kind of relationship it has to the AI program. I argue that it is not the right *kind* of

²⁴ I am not making the ontological claim here. Instead, intention as it pertains to AI does not grant the human artist the same authorship that we seem to value in other art forms.

relationship. The relationship between the human and the AI is one of causal dependence in which there seems to be a gap that is not present between an artist and other tools. The gap feels intuitive though quite difficult to define. It is true that there can be no art without a tool. Furthermore, there is a large diversity in the ways in which AI might be used to aid in the creation of art. For example, an artist might use AI to create an image reflective of their idea but then would paint the picture themselves. However, a tool seems to no longer be a tool when it takes responsibility for what is produced.²⁵ That is, when someone strictly uses AI to create the ‘work of art,’ the AI is no longer merely a tool. AI can take on its own agency when creating an image. It sorts through data that best fits the human prompt; however, it does have some liberty in choosing what image to output. In other words, it employs its own decision-making capacities. As such, this kind of relationship seems to devalue the artist and their agency over their tools.

2.3 Aesthetic Judgement

The rise of AI clearly influences the artworld in terms of the artist and the art object. But it also, I argue, reveals an epistemic responsibility of the audience as valuers. When we approach the subject of art, we ought to be asking “‘what is it for? What are we supposed to do with it? Who is it for? What is it supposed to be? Who made it?’” (Heidegger, 1999, 72). In terms of what it is for, we can say it ranges from mere pleasure to revelations of truth. Though the primary focus of this thesis has been what we value about art, I have asserted that aesthetic value is, minimally, something outside of ourselves. That is, we might value something for the pleasure it gives us, but that does not mean we are valuing what *is* valuable about the work. The aesthetic realist, for example, would say that aesthetic values are properties that exist in the world irrespective of our attitudes. The

²⁵ One could argue that this objection also functions as an objection to photography. The photographer does not create their image by hand in the way a painter does. Rather, it is largely the camera that is responsible for the image created. However, a camera is still not equivalent to AI. The camera does not possess any decision-making abilities. It does not produce an image that it believes best fits the artist’s intention. Rather, it captures what resides on the other side of the lens; furthermore, the content is the artist’s decision.

intersubjectivist, though not contending that aesthetic values are properties in the world, maintain that aesthetic values are not determined by our judgments alone but rather through certain rules, conventions, or standards laid out by, say the artworld. What both affirm is value that exists outside of our own attitudes. In holding this view, we can make the argument that there are certain judgements that are incorrect, whether that be based on some objective property or some constructed standard. For example, we can say that someone simply not caring for the values I have discussed and focusing only on subjective experiences are wrong in their judgements. The focus, though, in what I have outlined thus far is the effect that AI art has on how we value these properties.

I contend that art points us towards higher order pleasures, such as introspection. Calling AI images art is, albeit a strong claim, a misuse of our rational capacities to assign value. It could be the case that one is able to assign meaning to an AI image through their own experiences of the world, regardless of how it is made. However, as I have argued, external evidence matters— both the process and the artist. While the external evidence, I argue, *is* valuable, how *we* value these aspects of external evidence is diminished by AI. As a result, I argue that the way to approach AI images as art is through aesthetic judgements that are fortified through standards of taste. We can look to Kant for reconciling subjectivity, universality, and normativity. For the latter, I will rely on Hume to show how we ought to organize our sentiments into rational aesthetic judgements.

As successful expression is incumbent on the artist, sincere aesthetic judgement is incumbent on the audience. As such, an imperative aspect of evaluating AI art is the role of the audience. I argue that the audience of any art piece has a minimal epistemic responsibility regarding aesthetic judgement. Before I can make a normative claim regarding how we should approach aesthetic judgement, I must first explain various ways in which we do, in practice, make judgements regarding works of art. As discussed in the first chapter, Kant argues that aesthetic judgements are not

concept-based. That is, unlike mathematics, aesthetics is based on feeling— how we experience a work of art in terms of pleasure. However, Kant maintains that aesthetics is unique in the sense that, while subjective, aesthetic judgements do have a sense of normativity. That is, there is an oughtness surrounding how one should regard a work of art— a sense that everyone ought to regard it in the same way. Kant calls this possibility for objectivity with the universal voice. That is, it is the case that one judges a work of art in such a way one believes that everyone ought to hold that same judgement. Similarly, although the sentiments we feel when we encounter a work of art are subjective, Hume argues that one can achieve a standard of taste that grants greater epistemic authority in one's aesthetic judgments.

I agree with Kant and Hume that aesthetic judgements are subjective; furthermore, I argue that they are right in asserting that there is a normative nature to these judgements, which are especially illuminated by disagreement. We clearly make comparative judgements about art— some works are better than others. Moreover, we give reasons for why we disagree. While there are certain works upon which there is remarkable agreement, such as the *Mona Lisa*, it is also the case that one's judgments regarding which works are superior are often not in alignment with others' judgements. Although unable to claim what exactly makes an aesthetic judgement 'correct,' I argue that there is something intuitive about believing that some works are better than others and that some judgments are better than others.

One way to conceive of aesthetic disagreement is through a difference in standards of taste. In other words, "it is obvious that a lack of shared standards, or even a difference in the importance or weight given to otherwise shared standards of evaluation, can and often does generate disagreements regarding the relative merit of artwork" (Bender, 2001, 73). Hume explains this phenomenon on the grounds of language. For example, when it comes to morality, we all can agree that justice is good, but *how* justice is carried out is not unanimous. Similarly, in art, we agree that

beauty, for example, is good, but we disagree about what is beautiful. In this way, the particularity of beauty is subjective; this, however, is not to say that all subjective judgements of beauty are correct. As articulated above, it is possible for some judgments to be wrong.

We seem to *prima facie* value art as something that provides us with pleasure, enjoyment, impression, and so forth. More importantly, though, we make *prima facie* aesthetic judgements. For example, at first glance, we might call a work beautiful, impressive, simple, disturbing, and so on. However, what is often missed in our *prima facie* aesthetic judgments is the conceptual significance of the work itself. For example, we may look at a work of Pablo Picasso's and say, "my four-year-old could have done this." Many of his portraits are misshapen, unrealistic depictions. Furthermore, they appear child-like in nature- it appears as though it would take little skill to paint in such a way. Yet, this kind of assessment of his works is both an oversimplification and misinterpretation, causing the neglect of the meaning-making process behind the work.

Why is it that, in learning something about the process, our value judgements change? That is, what is it that we value about what goes into the work? To disambiguate, what goes into a work is the process of making it, but it is also a matter of the artistic, cultural, or historical context. In other words, we learn about the subjective, situated experience of the artist that inspired the work as well as the way they chose to construct it. Returning to Picasso, our *prima facie* judgement might be one of dismissal due to his works appearing less skillful in resemblance than, say, the works of Michelangelo. Purely on the basis of form, Picasso's work seems to be of less value. Conversely, we might judge a work of art to be beautiful and profound; however, in learning more about the artist and the process, we judge the work to be of lesser value. For example, one might think they are looking at a Picasso painting only to learn that a child with little knowledge of art painted the image. While the form of the work is identical, we judge its value to be less. One reason for this is that the painting, in a sense, is accidental— not that the child did not intend to make a painting, but rather

that there was little to no background knowledge or cognitively motivated intention. For example, unlike Picasso, a child does not choose a particular medium or style to best represent their subjective experiences. Picasso did not paint like a child because that is what his skill level was restricted to. In fact, his early works were more realistic and technical. Instead, he chose to paint like a child. It is this freedom in creation— skill and intention— that influences our judgements beyond those at first glance.

There are undeniably disagreements in aesthetic judgement. There is often a “lack of shared standards, or even a difference in the importance or weight given to otherwise shared standards of evaluation” (Bender, 2001, 73). As a result, a common narrative is that aesthetic judgements are purely subjective to the individual. However, if these judgements are, in fact, purely subjective, then genuine disagreement does not seem possible. For example, it could be the case that one person finds a work to be nonsensical whereas another takes the work to be an abstract creation imbued with meaning. Yet, without the possibility of disagreement, the two are at an impasse— the work is both nonsensical and meaningful. Yet this attitude does not map onto how we actually operate within the world. Kant addresses the phenomena of aesthetic disagreements. More specifically, he wrestles with the apparent conflict between subjectivity, normativity, and ultimately universality. For Kant, aesthetic judgements are purely subjective, yet he does allow for genuine disagreement. For example, in finding a work of art beautiful, I believe that others *ought* to regard the work in the same way. Kant explains this normativity based on universal modality— subjective universality. He states,

Hence he will speak of the beautiful as if beauty were a property of the object and the judgement logical (constituting a cognition of the object through concepts of it), although it is only aesthetic and contains merely a relation of the representation of the object to the subject, because it still has the similarity with logical judgement that its validity for everyone can be presupposed. But this universality cannot originate from concepts. For there is no

transition from concepts to the feeling of pleasure or displeasure... (Kant, 1790/2000, p. 5:211).

Even though our aesthetic judgements are not based on concepts, we speak of them as universal and normative due to the free play between our cognitive and imaginative capacities (Kant, 1790/2000, p. 5:217). We do, however, frame our judgements in terms of concepts as a way of expression and, in this way, we are able to engage in genuine disagreement.

There are three kinds of aesthetic judgments that I will explore in order to show that how we regard and cultivate our sentiments has bearing on what we find aesthetically valuable. Irene Marín discusses these three in terms of autonomous aesthetic judgement; however, I believe they can be used to categorize general aesthetic judgements. First, there is judgement based on experience, which involves “first-hand experience of the object of appreciation (Marín, 2024, 5).” For example, experiential judgement may come from simply standing before a painting in a museum. We can conceive of this kind of judgement as *prima facie*. That is, in observing a painting in a museum, we make immediate judgement regarding the work's quality, or value. These *prima facie* judgements pertain to the work's configuration, colors, accuracy, visual appeal, and so forth. Without knowing about the artist or historical context, we make value judgements. I argue that experiential aesthetic judgements are incomplete; however, this is not to say they are of no value— they do seem to point us towards engagement in what we find significant about the work.

Following experiential judgements, there are personal aesthetic judgements, which “involves identifying one's aesthetic responses as being expressive of one's aesthetic self” (Marín, 2024, 5). This seems to fall somewhat in line with Langer's position. Art is an instantiation of the full spectrum of human emotions. As such, we can identify ourselves within different works. Aesthetic judgements grounded in personal identification within a work go beyond *prima facie* judgements.

That is, they involve a degree of some minimal introspection and analysis to form judgement that is reflective of how they respond to a work or how they find themselves within the work.

Lastly, there is judgement based on competence, which maintains “a grasp of the features of an object that make it aesthetically good or bad” (Marín, 2024, 5). Competence-based judgements, I argue, are the most sophisticated form of aesthetic judgements. The issue to overcome here is disambiguating what it means to be competent in our aesthetic judgements. First, though, we must demonstrate that there is at least some minimal epistemic access to aesthetic knowledge. One mode of access could be sensibility. John W. Bender argues that we ought to conceive of sensibilities as “dispositions or propensities to identify certain features, properties, or relations of a work as being aesthetically significant, i.e., as either being value-making or value-lowering. Differences in sensibility are disagreements about where the aesthetic value of an artwork lie” (Bender, 2001, 74). This kind of aesthetic judgement most closely aligns with Kant and Hume. Both argue that aesthetic judgements are subjective, but just as some works are better than others, there are judgements that are better than others. Hume, for example, believes that the epistemic authority of our judgements can be improved by intellectual practices, such as comparing the degrees of excellence we see in art and familiarizing ourselves with established models of beauty (Hume, 1757, 218-223). In doing so, our judgments come closer to reflecting what is aesthetically valuable.

So, the question is why competent aesthetic judgement is relevant in the case of AI art. Art is not meant to be judged in a flippant or cursory manner. Aesthetics not only informs and reflects what we find valuable (not necessarily what *is* valuable) in an artwork but also what we value as a society, such as human ingenuity and creativity. AI art is undoubtedly an instance of human ingenuity, but, as shown, it violates the preestablished values of art, particularly in matters of creativity. The audience of the art world has significant influence over whether we maintain certain values or whether we hold them in the same regard. Ultimately, the competence of our judgments is

critical in determining whether the diminishing of the aesthetic values I have outlined is something we should be willing to do. I argue that competence tells us that we should *not* be willing to do so.

2.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have outlined key aspects of art that we seem to value and the ways in which AI art diminishes them. To reiterate, the aim is not to show that AI art does not meet the necessary and sufficient conditions for being art. Rather, it is to explain what it is we value about art and the effect that AI art has on valuing. What we do seem to value is the artistic process, the art object, and the artist. The diminishing of any one of these aspects diminishes aesthetic value as a whole. Finally, the ways in which we cultivate our aesthetic sentiments significantly impact the attitudes we take towards AI art. Competence-based judgements seem to tell us that accepting AI art is not something we should be willing to do.

Chapter 3: Objections

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will outline potential objections to my argument that granting AI images artistic status diminishes what we find aesthetically valuable about art, which includes the artistic process, the artist, and the art object. Throughout the thesis, I have argued in favor of strong notions of artistic value, including process, artist, and object. As a result, there could be backlash on the account that I am, perhaps, too stringent. Firstly, one might object that my conception of art is too strict, as I do appear to be focusing on the high standards that apply specifically to *fine* art— the art we see lauded in museums, for example. However, there are other forms of art beyond this, such as kitsch. I argue that this is not a problem for my argument in that I am not committed to a definition of art. I am simply interested in what we find valuable about art and how AI art denigrates that value.

Secondly, one could argue that my notion of value is too stringent. I appear to be suggesting an intrinsic aesthetic value, closely aligned with essentialism, rather than other forms of value, such as instrumental or hedonistic. That is, my argument seems to commit me to the idea that, for something to be art, it must possess intrinsic value. Consequently, one could argue that my argument is actually an ontological one masquerading as aesthetic value. However, along the lines of my response above, I am not attempting to assert that there is something intrinsically valuable about art. As I have discussed, aesthetic value might be objective in that these values exist in the world, and an art object may possess them independently of our attitudes. Conversely aesthetic values might be intersubjective in that, although is not conferred by the individual, value is not an objective feature of the world. Rather, what I suggest is that value is, minimally, something outside of ourselves. From a purely descriptive standpoint, it is evident that we do value art for a number of reasons, many of which extend beyond the subjective attitudes we take towards a work of art, such as instrumental or hedonic goods for example. We might find ourselves represented in the work or we might come to ascertain a deeper understanding of the world and human experience. This seems to fall in line with both Langer and Carroll's understanding of aesthetic value. Each purports that there is an interaction that takes place when one encounters a work of art. For Langer, the encounter is characterized as one in which the individual ascertains the emotions the artist has attempted to express; furthermore, it is an encounter with ourselves in which we come into greater understanding of human feelings (Reese, 1977, 49). Similarly, Carroll characterizes our encounters with art as conversations with the artist. When we engage in conversation, we further "our interpretive abilities in the context of a genuine conversation" (Carroll, 2001, 174). For Carroll, this is where we come to value art's aesthetic properties. Moving beyond description though, the reality of AI diminishing our valuing of aesthetic properties should move us to care what we accept as art.

A further objection could be that my argument is uncharitable to the human as the artist. Just as I have argued that not every photograph is a work of art, not every AI image may be considered a work of art. Rather, like photography, it takes time and skill to create a good AI image. However, I do not believe this is enough to maintain the value of the artist—specifically, the value we recognize in other artists.²⁶ As shown in the previous chapter, the relationship between AI and the human is relevantly different from that between an artist and a paintbrush or even a camera. AI bears some responsibility for the image in that they assert some degree of agency in the making. In this way, AI operates as more than just a tool. It cannot be likened to a paintbrush or a camera.

3.2 Three Main Objections

3.2.1 Stringent Conception of Art

One objection that could be raised is that my conception of art is too stringent— that what I am really talking about is *good* art rather than art in general. That is, it seems to be that my notion of art is one of success. For something to be a work of art possessing any aesthetic value, it must be good. Kant’s notions of beautiful and agreeable art, I suggest, most aptly describes the kind of distinction I am making with art.²⁷ In Kantian terms, I appear to be allowing only beautiful art rather than agreeable art. The former is “is a kind of representation that is purposing in itself and, though without an end, nevertheless promotes the cultivation of the mental powers for sociable communication” (Kant 1790/2000, p. 5:306). As discussed, this beauty possesses a purposiveness without a determinate purpose, meaning that the artwork provides us with some indeterminate truth or meaning that engages us and prompts further contemplation. Conversely, for Kant, an artwork is

²⁶ It also fails to maintain the value of the artwork, but this objection is specifically focused on the artist.

²⁷ The issue of art as a matter of success or as a matter of being good is not specific to just Kant. This issue extends to other artistic theories, especially essentialism, which holds that art is a specific kind of thing with certain necessary features. Formalism, for example, is an essentialist theory that emphasizes the physical properties of the work; furthermore, the meaning is independent of internal evidence, such as authorial intention. So, for something to be a work, it must succeed in meeting these conditions.

agreeable “if its end is that pleasure accompany the representations as mere sensations” and is “only intended as momentary entertainment, not as some enduring matter for later reflection or discussion” (Kant, 1790/2000, p. 5:305). In other words, it does not need to engage us in further contemplation. Rather, it is simply sensory enjoyment that does not extend beyond contact with it. For example, we can think of a print of a cat hanging on a tree with the caption “hang in there.” Looking at this image might give us immediate enjoyment or amusement; however, we are not going to later find ourselves contemplating the work's deeper meaning or unrevealed truths about the human experience or the world.

We can clearly recognize a distinction in how we value a cat print in contrast to a painting by Michaelangelo. However, it would be a mischaracterization of my argument to assert that I would, with certainty, not call the cat print art. I think one could make the argument that the cat print could potentially fit into several artistic theories— it seems to be both an imitation as well as an expression of some intention. It may or may not be art. Whether it is art is not my concern. Rather, my concern is what changes about what we think is aesthetically valuable when we regard something as a work of art. This seems to commit me to a value-laden conception of art, and I am willing to assent to this— I consider art to be a thick concept. A commitment to this seems to entail an ontological commitment as well; however, this is not the case. I can deny or abstain from assenting to a set of necessary and sufficient conditions for art being valuable while also recognizing that there are aspects of art that are valuable to us. For example, art instantiates the subjectivity of the artist and the experiences that they have found valuable. Returning to Langer, we not only come to understand these experiences but understand the greater reality that is the universality of human emotion.

We can look at examples of how what we have called art has had significant bearing on what we value about art. In antiquity, for example, artists focused on perfection of the human form, primarily through the representation of the gods. For impressionism, the focus was not on

perfection but on the expression of emotion. The question, then, what do AI images demonstrate about what we find aesthetically valuable? A potential answer could be that we value ingenuity in technology. It is undeniable that AI is impressive, and our curiosity for its abilities and limitations seem to draw us to it, for better or for worse. But, in its denigration of the artistic process and the artist that I have outlined in the previous chapter, the concern is that we might become wary about the results of human expression. As we are seeing now, we approach digital images with greater skepticism, wondering if it is human-made or AI-generated. When we determine that it was made by AI, our trust in art and expression seems to diminish. For example, when we love a piece of art only to later discover it was made by AI does something to our judgement. Beyond valuing the image less, our wariness to accept what is real increases. It seems that we *want* art to be made by human artists. Human creativity and endeavor have been shown in creating AI, but using AI to create art diminishes what we find valuable about art. Art exemplifies an intersection between expression and skill, and, when we make aesthetic judgements, we, ideally, approach the work in good faith, with the openness of appreciation, introspection, and understanding. When we introduce wariness and skepticism, our approach to aesthetic judgements is more hesitant and scrutinizing.

3.2.2 Stringent Conception of Aesthetic Value

Another objection is that my notion of value is too stringent. My argument could be interpreted as narrowing value to such an extent that it cannot be purely hedonistic or instrumental. Instead, what I seem to be suggesting is an intrinsic value grounded in essentialism, accepting it as “*a priori* on the grounds that an understanding of what art is involves knowing that art has a distinctive sort of value *as art*” (Stecker, 1997, 52). It remains unclear what this sort of value is— an embodied meaning, truth, history, etc. Regardless, the value is intrinsic for essentialism. Furthermore, all essentialist arguments propose that art is a specific kind of thing with certain necessary features. It might be said that what I am doing is making an ontological argument- not a value argument. In

other words, my argument is based upon the nature of art under the guise of value. It is certainly the case that I have outlined features that we believe make art valuable— the artistic process and the relationship between artist and tool. However, I am not making the argument that an object cannot be art without these features. In other words, I am not claiming that something can be art if and only if the artist stands in a certain relationship to the work. Rather, I have simply made the descriptive claim that these are properties of art that we do, in fact, seem to value. From this, I have described what occurs when a human uses AI to create art. For example, the shift in artistic process, as I have shown, is relevantly different from other artistic processes. Art, made by a human, is the instantiation of their situatedness within the world— an amalgamation of their experiences and what they have found significant about them. Conversely, AI is not situated as some being in time. Or, rather, it is not a being with the same capacities for identifying meaning. Like us, they too have data sets, but they cannot determine what they find meaningful about them. It is not the case that a work of art is necessarily the result of this kind of hermeneutic process; however, it is part of what we seem to find valuable. The descriptive nature of how AI art is made should not be understood as disregard for normativity. Rather, what we know about AI art and how it is made informs the attitudes we ought to take towards it.

To be more charitable, though, let us suppose that I am committed to *non*-essentialism; furthermore, does this negatively impact or undermine my argument? Important features of non-essentialism can be understood by the following description:

This conception is empirical or a posteriori in the sense that, according to it, no amount of reflecting on the concept of art will tell you what artistic value is, whether it is intrinsic or instrumental, singular or plural, unique to art or not, always shared across artforms or not. One can only find these things out by examining the relevant aims of artists and appreciators, and the artworks about which they have these aims (Stecker, 1997, 51-52).

Like essentialism, non-essentialist views seem to retain some notion of aesthetic value; however, in contrast to essentialism, non-essentialism is not reliant on any particular feature—there are no necessary conditions for something to be a work of art. So, for example, an artwork need not be representational, of a certain style, expressive, etc. There are two ways we can cash out non-essentialism. Firstly, there is hedonism, which contends that the pleasantness of a work determines its aesthetic value. Hedonism could be problematic for my argument. If a work of art is only valuable insofar as it pleases me, I might not be considered with external evidence (intention, historical context, etc.). I might only care for its affective qualities. In this case, perhaps AI seems as though it does not present a problem for aesthetic value; however, Noël Carroll argues that, when we approach art hedonically, there is something that we miss or deprive ourselves of when we take this kind of approach to art. What we derive ourselves of is true aesthetic satisfaction. In other words, the hedonic pleasure is not equivalent to aesthetic satisfaction and, in committing oneself to aesthetic hedonism, one denies themselves of a greater value that can be derived from art. Additionally, as I have argued, value is something that is minimally outside ourselves. The fact of aesthetic value does not turn on our personal attitudes or subjective experiences. So, hedonism is an incorrect assessment of aesthetic value.

Secondly, art might only be a matter of instrumental. For example, I value art as a means for me becoming a more cultured person is sufficient for something to be a work of art. Instrumental value does not pose a problem for my argument. The question we ought to ask is what it is we find instrumentally (non-hedonically) valuable about art. I mentioned becoming more cultured, but art can also be instrumentally valuable in teaching us about historical events. Perhaps, we look to other works of art to learn how to draw, paint, sculpt, and so forth. Each of these instrumental values do still seem to point at some of the values I have highlighted. We do not look at just any painting to become more cultured or to learn about history. We choose the paintings that we find the most

compelling, the most impressive, the most suited to our purposes. We still go through some deciding processes and determine what we find most valuable to us. I argue that, even when valued instrumentally, the aesthetic value of art returns to, or is grounded in at least one of the values that I have emphasized— the artistic process, the artist, or the art object.

3.2.3 Uncharitable Attitude Towards the Human Artist

Another objection is that my argument is uncharitable to the human as the artist. In other words, my conception of an artist is too narrow— someone is an artist insofar as they meet a certain set of conditions. Thus, like those suspicious of photography, I am oversimplifying the skill it takes to understand how an AI program functions and how to interact with it in such a way that it produces the image envisioned by the human. Firstly, one could object to my consideration of the human as a commissioner on the grounds that commissioners do not participate in the creation of the work to the same degree or kind as the human creating AI art. Oftentimes a commission is made, and the commissioner then has no further involvement in the process. Secondly, it is not clear that the commissioner always (or even usually) has a vision for the piece the way an artist does. In the case of AI, the human is not only responsible for vision but its instantiation. So, it seems that the human is more than a commissioner. Secondly, just like a painter or a photographer, the human using AI possesses a certain level of knowledge of the tool and the skill to use it effectively. Wojtkiewicz argues that her own prompts, “though detailed and making use of the language the programs’ creators suggest, regularly fail to create images of any quality. And yet, there are examples of images created by these programs that are not only pleasing to look at, but that have won international acclaim” (Wojtkiewicz, 2024, 462). Because of this, she suggests that these images cannot simply be the result of a set of numbers the program arranges in a specific way but rather the result of skill. However, as Danto argues, craftsmanship is not, alone, what makes something a work of art. In other words, while skill certainly seems to be necessary, it is not a sufficient condition for

being an artist. For example, I can have the skill to operate the AI program in such a way that it yields the intended image without producing a work of the same aesthetic value as a human-made work of art.²⁸

The primary way the insufficiency of skill as a condition is shown is the kind of relationship that is had between the human and the AI. Unlike other art forms, AI is not just another tool in the way a paintbrush or a camera is. AI is more than just a tool. Unlike a paintbrush or camera, AI had some responsibility for the way an image turns out. More specifically, the responsibility is grounded in the agency it can assert. Although it is the human that inserts the prompt, the AI searches through its own data set and determines which image to spit out. One could object to this argument on account of there being collaborations in art frequently. There are many pieces of art that are the product of collaboration. For example, music is especially collaborative with the composer and the musician(s) in dialogue with one another. In this way, there is not one sole contributor responsible for the authorship of the work. And yet, we do not claim that these pieces are of lesser aesthetic value. So, the question is why we do not treat AI images in the same manner. There are several ways in which we can conceive of artistic collaboration. Claie Anscomb highlights three in her paper “AI: artistic collaborator?”: collective authorship, co-creatorship, and co-production. For my purposes, though, I will focus on collective authorship and coproduction. Firstly, collective authorship requires that “minimally the different parties must be able to participate in acts of agreement and make commitments with others towards the creation of artwork” (Anscomb, 2025, 3421). This kind of authorship characterizes the relationship between musician and composer. However, this is not the case for AI in that “they cannot refuse to operate if they would prefer not to work with a particular human or on a particular project” (Anscomb, 2025, 3421). Importantly, though, AI’s lack of

²⁸ The use of the work ‘intended’ here seems to indicate that there is more involved than just skill in the operation. I agree that this is the case— intention is also part of the operation. However, as I argued in the previous chapter, there seems to be an oversimplified, or watered-down, notion of intention in the case of AI art.

collective authorship does not necessarily make it a mere tool as suggested by the notion of co-production:

As generative AI systems are unable to participate in making agreements and commitments with leading agents towards the creation of the leading agent's artwork, it would be remiss to describe these interactions as joint efforts. Accordingly, these interactions are perhaps best described not as collaborations, but as 'AI-assisted production' (Anscomb, 2024, 3424).

I still maintain that AI is not a tool in the same way as a paintbrush or camera; instead, it is something of its own category. That is, it exercises some agency in the creation process and employs its own decision-making capacities; however, it does not enter into an agreement in the same way other artistic collaborators do.

3.3 Conclusion

I am not certain, nor concerned in this thesis, of what makes something art. We seem to have intuitions about art, but, as I have shown, art continues to evolve in such a way that our intuitions are called into question. It is easy to look at Michaelangelo's works and know that you are looking at art. Conversely, Warhol's Brillo Boxes are less obvious as they are essentially replicas of a commonplace object. However, the artworld has decided that these boxes are art. We can use all of the theories I have discussed to explain why the boxes and other forms of modern art are art, but the answer will remain indeterminate. In terms of AI, there are theories that might allow for these images to be art whereas others will not. AI images might have an embodied meaning, historical references, intention, skill, and so forth. Regardless of the answer, theories of ontology do not always identify aesthetic value. The aim of this thesis has been to show key aspects of aesthetic values that we lose if we grant these images artistic status. To reiterate, one thing we lose is the significance of the subjective, situated artistic process. Art is first and foremost a mode of expression. As Langer argues, this does not mean the works of art are necessarily overtly and

intensely emotional.²⁹ Rather, in virtue of their subjective origin, works of art are representative of the human experience however subtle it might be. As such, art is imbued with the subjectivity of the artist that is specific to their status as a being in time.

It is undeniable that AI will only get better. As of now, it does not seem that AI possesses consciousness in such a way that they have their own subjectivity and situated position in the world. This might not always be the case in the future, which seems outlandish, but what AI is capable of now was outlandish to us ten years ago. The aim of my argument is to address the problem as it stands now. At this time, AI lacks certain features that humans possess, and, in this context, the features artists possess. It is unable to process data in the same way we process our own experiences— why they matter and how we chose to express their significance. If we choose to say that AI can create art, we must say that this hermeneutic process is less significant, auxiliary even. The same can be said about the other aesthetic values that I have defended. Regarding the value of the product as the outcome of human work, AI might produce a work that is just as good in terms of aesthetic pleasure, but it does not mean that it is the same in terms of value. In accepting these images as art, we change what we value about art, or, perhaps more troubling, we devalue key properties of art— the artist, the artistic process, and the art object.

Lastly, we cannot call AI an artistic collaborator in the same way we characterize the collaboration between other artists. For example, it cannot enter into a mutual agreement with humans. This, however, does not mean that AI is a mere tool. AI does create a gap between the artist and their work. It employs its own agency and decision-making faculties in such a way that it is, in part, responsible for the work. As I argued in the second chapter, this kind of relationship devalues the artist and the agency they have over their tools.

²⁹ As discussed in chapter one, Langer considers a feeling to be “neither a confessional nor a frozen tantrum; it is a developed metaphor, a non-discursive symbol that articulates what is verbally ineffable—the logic of consciousness itself” (Langer, 1957, 26). In other words, expression does not necessarily indicate intensity

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