of the property of adding salts causes the instantiation by the fire of the property of being purple, but not the instantiation of the property of having a high temperture, which causes the death. (But for discussion of challenges to the transitivity of causation, see McDermott 1995; Hall 2004; and Kvart 1991.)

There are two main arguments for tropes as causal relata. The first is that causal relata are property instances—perhaps because of either the *Argument from Emphasis* or the *Argument from Transitivity*—but since properties are tropes, causal relata are tropes or trope-based (Campbell 1990, 23). Second, since causation typically involves some form of qualitative persistence, causal relata must be trope-based rather than universals-based since only tropes are capable of the right kind of qualitative persistence (Ehring 1997).

Reflection

EFFICIENT CAUSATION IN ART

Tina Rivers Ryan

> All in all, the creative act is not performed by the artist alone; the spectator brings the work in contact with the external world by deciphering and interpreting its inner qualifications and thus adds his contribution to the creative act.
>
> —DUCHAMP 1957[1]

Giorgio Vasari, the first biographer to record the lives of famous artists, reserved his highest praise for his contemporary, the sculptor Michelangelo. According to Vasari, Michelangelo was literally a gift from God, as "the most benevolent Ruler of Heaven" had "decided… to send to Earth a spirit who, working alone, was able to demonstrate in every art and profession the meaning of perfection."[2] Though he famously toiled for long hours, Michelangelo promoted this idea that his talent was innate: He is reported to have snidely observed that his rival Raphael "did not come by his art naturally"—like Michelangelo himself, presumably—but "through long study."[3] As this comment indicates, Michelangelo was not merely a gifted artist, but also a bit of a character, infamous in his own time for his *terribilità*, connoting both the thrilling inventiveness of his art and the frustrating perversity of his personality (see Figure 4).

---

[1] From "The Creative Act," a lecture at the Convention of the American Federation of Arts in Houston, Texas, April 1957.

[2] Vasari 1991, 414.

[3] Condivi 1999, 106.

Over time, the legend of Michelangelo helped propagate a certain idea, now endemic in Western culture, about what it means to be an artist and to make a work of art. Whereas Raphael, like most artists of the period, executed his works with the help of assistants, the mercurial Michelangelo insisted on "working alone," as Vasari would have it, ensuring that his products were expressions of his singular vision. Consequently, Michelangelo informed a growing perception of artists as innate geniuses who seem to be the sole efficient cause of their works (that is, if we put aside the question of "divine" inspiration). Because the solitary artist directly controls the work from conception through creation, his or her name can be invoked to guarantee the work's quality, and what we know about the artist can inform our interpretation of the work's meaning. In other words, the work is seen as a sign that points to its absent referent—namely, its cause, the artist—who in turn stabilizes the work's signification (and significance). This a trenchant idea; one of the foundational ideas of the field of art history is that works of art are not only conduits for the visions of artists, but also ciphers for the ideas of their time, and yet books on art still tend toward the model of the hagiographic monograph.[4]

In his well-known essay of 1968, "The Death of the Author," Roland Barthes presented a poststructuralist challenge to the longstanding notion of author (and by extension, artist) as efficient cause.[5] The so-called death of the author, Barthes writes, is at the same time the birth of the reader: works are no longer to be approached as hermetic expressions of their authors, but as permeable texts open to, and in fact constituted by, acts of interpretation. Just as Barthes identifies earlier persons who foreshadowed the transition "from work to text" (to borrow the title of another of his essays), one finds precursors of this paradigm shift in the visual arts, most notably in the objects and writings of Marcel Duchamp, the godfather of conceptual art. Though most of his major works were made earlier in the twentieth century, Duchamp had a delayed reception in the art world; notoriously, his first retrospective was only mounted in 1963, at the Pasadena Art Museum. It was in the context of this revival that he was invited to contribute to a 1957 panel on the "creative act," delivering a speech that was published almost immediately in *ARTnews* magazine and subsequently in many other places, and that influenced a generation of artists. Duchamp protests the idea that the artist is the sole efficient cause of a work of art; rather, the viewer (or "reader," in Barthes's formulation) collaborates with the artist in producing the work's meaning. The "gap" between what the artist intended to communicate and what the viewer sees is what Duchamp famously dubbed the "art coefficient," which is "an arithmetical relation between the unexpressed but intended and the unintentionally expressed" (see Figure 5).

By accepting that the meaning of a work of art is thus always already out of the artist's hands, Duchamp paved the way for artists to relinquish control over their creative processes. Perhaps the most astute reader of Duchamp in this regard was the composer John Cage, who explored Duchamp's ideas in his own work from the 1940s onward, employing aleatory operations (such as the rolling of dice) to liberate his compositions from the constraints of personal taste.[6] Cage had a huge impact on the visual artists who came into contact with him, and it may have been through the work of his Neo-Dada friends Jasper Johns and

---

[4] This model of interpreting art has been critiqued by Rosalind Krauss, who in her famous essay "In the Name of Picasso" employs structural linguistics to counter the reduction of Picasso's works to mere autobiography by "an art history of the proper name." See Krauss 1985.

[5] See Barthes 1977. Barthes's essay was preceded by Martin Heidegger's "The Origin of the Work of Art," which similarly examines the designation of the artist as efficient cause. See Heidegger 2008.

[6] The literature on Duchamp, Cage, and Cage's relationship to the visual arts is voluminous; one recent example is Robinson 2009.

Robert Rauschenberg that his ideas (and Duchamp's) came to influence the young Andy Warhol (see Figure 6).

As early as 1963—only months after traveling out west to see the Duchamp retrospective—Warhol gave an interview on the new Pop fad to *ARTnews*, claiming, "I think somebody should be able to do all my paintings for me.... I think it would be so great if more people took up silkscreens so that no one would know whether my picture was mine or somebody else's."[7] The idea of the silkscreen is central here; previously, paintings were thought to inevitably evidence the "artist's hand" (or a group of artists' hands), but to produce a silkscreen painting, the hand merely squeegees paint through a series of industrially cut screens, leaving no discernible trace. Asked if his aim was to "turn art history upside down" (that is, by challenging the basic assumption that the artist is the efficient cause of his or her work), Warhol somewhat disingenuously replied, "No. The reason I'm painting this way is that I want to be a machine, and I feel that whatever I do and do machine-like is what I want to do."[8]

Thus, while Duchamp claimed that a work of art is only partially determined by an artist's vision, Warhol claimed there was *no artist at all* behind his work. The efficient cause of his paintings is merely a machine, which is to say, his infamous "Factory," comprising interchangeable operators (mostly drug-addled hangers-on) who performed perfunctory acts of image duplication. Warhol therefore does not simply return to the Renaissance model by which entire studios collaborated on works of art: while the contributions of Renaissance assistants often can be identified through the markings of individual style, Warhol's works bear few, if any, discernible traces of their respective producers. The cool "blankness" of his paintings—seen in the inexpressive use of line, color, and brushwork, and the blatant use of other peoples' photographs—reminds us that they are like any other factory-made product, and are therefore opposed to the "expressionist" works of the previous generation of American art. Of course, Warhol is a master ironist, and his words and works betray a considered perspective that belies his claim to want to renounce authority over his art; and yet the degree to which he complicated his position as "author" of his works is indicated by the never-ending series of lawsuits attempting to validate his works' authenticity.[9] Legal complications aside, Warhol's critique of the myth of the individual genius is ultimately a powerful retort to Cold War–era anti-Communist rhetoric and, simultaneously, a reflection of America's nascent consumer culture: the 1963 interview opens with his ironic claim, "I want everybody to think alike.... Russia is doing it under government. It's happening here all by itself without being under a strict government.... Everybody looks alike and acts alike, and we're getting more and more that way."[10]

Looking both backward and forward in time through the lens of Warhol and Duchamp at midcentury, one recognizes that the artist's abdication of total control over his or her work is one of the major trends of twentieth-century art. Aside from these two cases, one could consider the chance games of the Surrealists; Moholy-Nagy's "telephone paintings," ordered from a nearby factory; open-ended Fluxus scores for the realization of quotidian or impossible events; Conceptualist confrontations with unsuspecting strangers, such as Adrian Piper's *Catalysis Series* from the 1970s; the "appropriations" of popular culture by artists such as Richard Prince in the 1980s; and, more recently, works of

---

[7] Warhol 2003, 748.

[8] Warhol 2003, 748.

[9] The irony of trying to establish which works are "authentic" Warhols, when Warhol's goal was precisely to undermine the idea of the work of art as an authentic expression of an individual agent, seems to have been lost on most of the litigators.

[10] Warhol 2003, 747. For more on Warhol's relationship to mass production, see, to cite only one example, Jones 1996.

"relational aesthetics," which create situations that encourage spontaneous social interaction. That said, despite a century of challenges to the paradigm promoted by the near-deification of Michelangelo, the art market—built on the premise that behind almost every major work stands a solitary genius who served as its efficient cause—has proven remarkably adept at continuously reviving the power of the author function. Hence the common elision: one does not buy *a painting* that happens to be by Warhol; one buys *a Warhol*.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Contemporary Efficient Causation

ARISTOTELIAN THEMES

Stephen Mumford

1. Humeanism and Its Alternative

While counterfactual dependence views of causation remain popular due to the influence of David Lewis's (1986b) work, and there are still those who defend regularity views (Psillos 2002), there is nevertheless a rival to these broadly Humean approaches.[1] The rival view can be described as neo-Aristotelian, though not because its proponents explicitly endorse or even cite Aristotle's work—for few of them do—but because of the similarities between these contemporary theories and Aristotle's philosophy of nature. We may characterize Humean theories as those that accept the world to be a mosaic of unconnected events in which we find some pattern of regularity (Lewis 1986d, ix). Such theories say causal relations are supervenient upon such patterns

---

[1] See chapter 10 for some contemporary Humean approaches, and chapter 8 for Hume's own view.

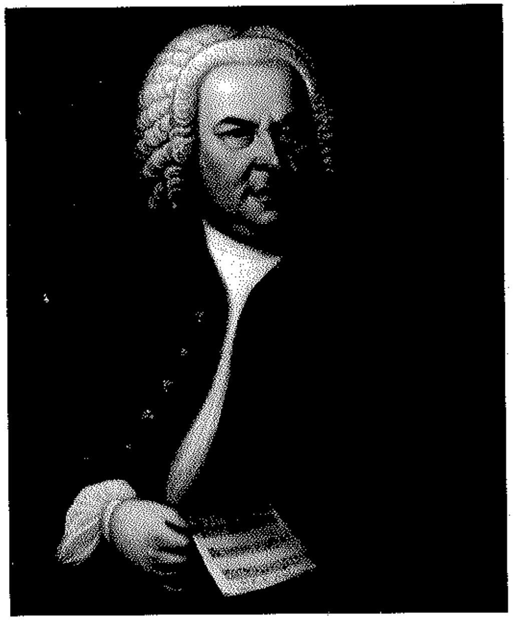

FIGURE 2. ELIAS GOTTLOB HAUSSMAN, Portrait of Johann Sebastian Bach, 1746 Altes Rathaus, Leipzig

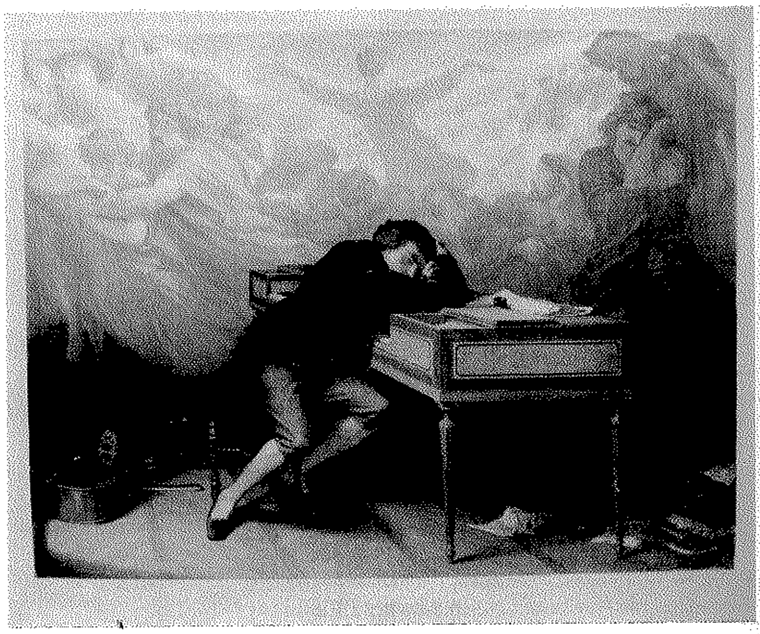

FIGURE 3. FRANÇOIS JOSEPH AIMÉ DE LEMUD, *Beethoven inspiré*, 1863 Library of Congress, Washington, DC

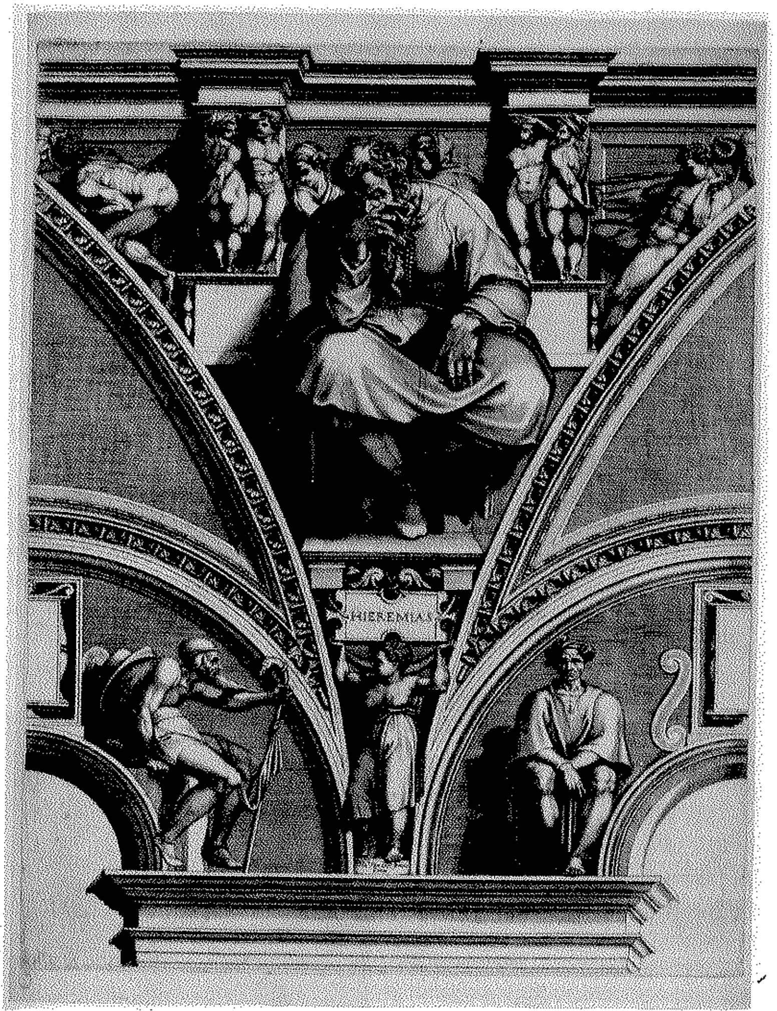

FIGURE 4. GIORGIO GHISI AFTER MICHELANGELO, *The Prophet Jeremiah*, early 1570s. Engraving laid on paper, plate: 56 × 43 cm; sheet: 59.9 × 44.8 cm. National Gallery of Art (Washington, DC), Alisa Mellon Bruce Fund.

This engraving—produced within a century of Michelangelo's Sistine Ceiling, from which this image is reproduced—represents the almost immediate apotheosis of Michelangelo. The artist used a medium of mechanical reproduction to copy Michelangelo's painted self-portrait (as the moody figure of Jeremiah), helping to spread the legend of his terribilità to a wide audience.

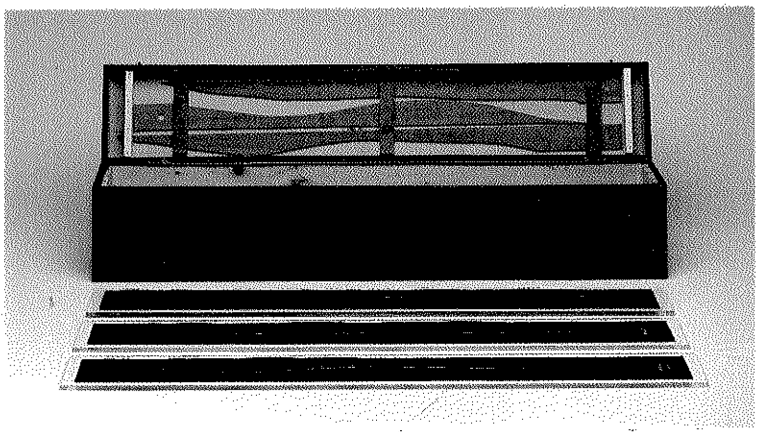

FIGURE 5. MARCEL DUCHAMP, *Three Standard Stoppages*, 1913-14; Schwarz Edition, 1964. Thread, canvas, glass, and wood in a wooden box, 28.2 × 129 × 22.7 cm. Yale University Art Gallery, Katherine Ordway Fund. © Succession Marcel Duchamp/ADAGP, Paris/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York 2013.

To produce *Three Standard Stoppages*, Duchamp dropped three one-meter strings onto three canvases, using the lines they happened to form as outlines for a new set of totally idiosyncratic wooden rulers. A sly take on the adoption of the French meter as a "universal" standard, this work reminds us that our seemingly sacred, rational conventions are just that—that is to say, randomly derived social constructions or forces of habits, rather than absolute truths.

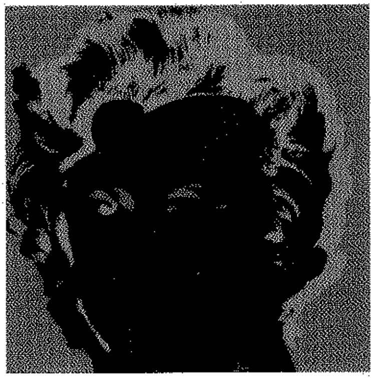

FIGURE 6. ANDY WARHOL, *Marilyn Monroe*, 1967. Screenprint (green, yellow, red, violet), 92.71 × 92.71 cm. Yale University Art Gallery, Mr. and Mrs. Theodore E. Stebbins, Jr., B.A. 1960, Contemporary Print Fund. ©2013 The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc./Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

The source photograph (here, a publicity still from one of Monroe's films) lurking within the planes of color reminds us that this is not a portrait of a person who sat for him, but an image of an image, or a copy of a copy. The overall flatness of the image (which eschews painting's traditional techniques of creating illusory depth, such as shading, in favor of broad fields of printed color) reminds us of the "flatness" of the invented persona of Marilyn Monroe and, beyond that, of the "flattening" of subjectivity through consumerism: as Warhol observed, we, the President, and Liz Taylor all drink the same Coke.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Efficient Causation in Hume

P. J. E. Kail

1. INTRODUCTION

Toward the end of his discussion of the idea of necessary connection, Hume offers two definitions of 'cause'. Very approximately, the first of these treats causation as a matter of the regular succession of objects, the second of these our psychological reaction to regular succession. Among the corollaries he draws from these definitions is that there is

> no foundation for that distinction, which we sometimes make betwixt efficient causes, and causes *sine qua non*; or betwixt efficient causes, and formal, and material, and exemplary, and final causes.... [W]herever [constant conjunction] is observ'd, the cause is efficient, and where it is not, there can never be a cause of any kind. For the same reason we must reject the distinction betwixt *cause* and *occasion*, when suppos'd to signify any thing essentially different from each other. If constant

OXFORD PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPTS

Christia Mercer, Columbia University
Series Editor

FORTHCOMING IN THE OXFORD PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPTS SERIES

Health
Edited by Peter Adamson

Evil
Edited by Andrew Chignell

Dignity
Edited by Remy Debes

Animals
Edited by G. Fay Edwards
and Peter Adamson

Space
Edited by Andrew Janiak

Eternity
Edited by Yitzhak Melamed

Memory
Edited by Dmitri Nikulin

The Faculties
Edited by Dominik Perler

Self-Knowledge
Edited by Ursula Renz

Sympathy
Edited by Eric Schliesser

Pleasure
Edited by Lisa Shapiro

Consciousness
Edited by Alison Simmons

Moral Motivation
Edited by Iakovos Vasiliou

OXFORD PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPTS

Efficient Causation

A HISTORY

Edited by Tad M. Schmaltz

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

2014