PART THREE

ON SUBJECTS AND OBJECTS AND ARTISTIC COMPLEXES:
THE MATERIAL OF ESSENTIALISM

Introduction

It is the purpose of Part Three of this book to identify those things with which, given all of the preceding considerations, even the most Abstract artwork cannot dispense, and which, with respect to what has been seen, will therefore form the basis for investigating the limits of Abstraction in art within an Essentialist framework. Because works of art are specifically addressed to subjects and cannot exist apart from objects, what is possible in Essentialist Abstraction will be determined by basic characteristics of subjects and objects; fundamental relations of objects to objects, and the most basic relations of objects to subjects and subjects to objects; laws or conditions that pertain to subjects and objects and their properties and relations; and certain facts that concern these things. An artist must be responsible for effecting the identification of an artwork with some object, and it must be possible for people in addition to the artist to understand that intended identification. Thus the artistic effecting of the identification of an artwork with some object must take into consideration the possible comprehension of the intended identification. To that end, an artist must be responsible for a public perceptible object on which comprehension of the identity of an artwork is relevantly dependent. Apprehension of such a perceptual object creates an artistic complex of which the object, the apprehension, and the subject whose apprehension it is are constituents. These constituents have certain properties that pertain to their being constituents of an artistic complex; certain relations hold between them; and certain facts pertain to them. Whatever the metaphysical nature of the constituents of an artistic complex, and the properties, relations, and facts that pertain to them, they are philosophically coterminous in the sense that they all feature in or apply to the complex in their different ways, and they do so unavoidably. It is in this sense that these properties, relations, and facts, together with the constituents
to which they pertain, are said to be essential elements of artistic complexes. Because an artist must make the intended identification of an artwork with some object comprehensible, and comprehension of the identity of an artwork occurs in an artistic complex that has certain essential elements, possible uses of these philosophically basic elements as the fundamental material of Essentialist Abstraction would have to be creatively investigated. That is, Essentialism would have to explore the possible uses of things that are essential to comprehending the identity of an artwork to effect that identity. Those things that are essentially involved with the comprehension of the identity of an artwork are the essential elements of artistic complexes, and everything else is superfluous and hence inessential to determining the limits of Abstraction. Hence the importance of the identification of the essential elements of artistic complexes to the Essentialist project. Not only are the essential elements of artistic complexes identified and considered in the pages of Part Three, but a considerable portion of this part of the book consists of attention to things that pertain to these essential elements and their possible use in determining the limits of Abstraction. Were this not the case, then the identification and consideration of those elements would be incomplete.