



On Restoring and Reproducing Art

Author(s): Mark Sagoff

Source: *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 75, No. 9, (Sep., 1978), pp. 453-470

Published by: Journal of Philosophy, Inc.

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2025386>

Accessed: 17/08/2008 15:59

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/action/showPublisher?publisherCode=jphil>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

---

JSTOR is a not-for-profit organization founded in 1995 to build trusted digital archives for scholarship. We work with the scholarly community to preserve their work and the materials they rely upon, and to build a common research platform that promotes the discovery and use of these resources. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

---

---

# THE JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY

VOLUME LXXV, NO. 9, SEPTEMBER 1978

---

---

## ON RESTORING AND REPRODUCING ART \*

**N**OW and then a work of art, which has been displayed for years in a museum, receiving acclaim and giving enjoyment, is found to be a forgery and removed from the collection. The signs by which forgeries are detected are not always aesthetic; a laboratory test sometimes settles the question. Why, then, is the forgery taken down? Snobbery is often suspected. One writer, for example, says:

. . . in our minds the question of period, authorship, and authenticity, *though in itself extraneous to aesthetic value*, is so intimately mixed up with it that we find it well nigh impossible to unscramble the two. The phenomenon of snobbery, in all its crude and subtle variants, can always be traced back to a confusion of this type.<sup>1</sup>

I wish to suggest that authenticity is a necessary condition of aesthetic value. One cannot appreciate a work of art simply for the sake of its appearance or for the feelings it induces: the identity of the object is crucial to its value; one must appreciate the work itself. There is an analogy with love. Love attaches to individuals and not simply to their qualities or to the pleasures they give. People are not interchangeable; we stand by old friends. Why? You love a particular man or woman—not just anyone who fills the bill. You cannot love a person by pretending he or she is somebody else. You cannot appreciate a forgery by pretending it is a masterpiece. A painting is to be respected for what it is—the creation of a particular artist working at a certain place and time. It is to be admired in relation to the problems it solves or attempts to solve; it is to be compared with other works of its kind. The problems a

\* I am indebted to Max Black for criticism of earlier drafts.

<sup>1</sup> Arthur Koestler, *The Act of Creation* (New York: MacMillan, 1964), p. 402/3.

forgery solves are pointless; the process of making a forgery is the reverse of creative—why, then, would anyone value it at all? A forgery, considered as a work of art, is trivial, except in special cases. This is true whether or not anyone can learn to distinguish it from an original masterpiece—and even if, because of its clearer lines or more brilliant colors, it looks better than the original work of art.

## I

That a forgery can look better than a worn or faded original is to be conceded at the start. Paintings normally change so much with time that, after two hundred years, they may not very closely resemble their former selves. A forger familiar with the style, technique, and materials of an earlier period finds it relatively easy to duplicate paintings as they were first created; the difficulty that leads to detection is that of reproducing deterioration. The forger Van Meegeren mixed phenol and formaldehyde in paint to make it fade; he marinated his forgeries in filth; then he baked them for days in a slow oven.<sup>2</sup> Imagine what might be achieved if forgers were not forced to cook their recreations in order to make them appear genuine. We might then possess copies more like what the originals once were than are the paintings we have treasured for so long. The original, then, may be touched up to match the copy or simply replaced by a reproduction. Why not? Students, exposed to the copy, would become familiar with the original look of the original. And, most important, if authenticity is not an issue, the ordinary viewer, shown the reproduction, would experience a better work of art.

The talents of the forger, which might be admired for what they are, have been made obsolete by mechanical means of reproduction. Casts, since antiquity, have allowed those without skill to produce with ease facsimiles that a forger would labor long and hard to create by hand. Plastics now make possible perfect reproductions of any sculpture at a very low price in lots of over ten thousand. Many of us learn more about paintings by seeing slides and enlargements than by seeing the paintings themselves. This may be the reason Mr. Annenberg has committed twenty million dollars to build a center for the collection and display of photographs of works of art. The Boston Museum of Fine Arts has used a camera, the size of a

<sup>2</sup> See Lord Kilbracken, *Van Meegeren: Master Forger* (New York: Scribner's, 1967), especially pp. 12–63. For documentation concerning the liability of art to deterioration, see Daniel Thompson, *The Materials and Techniques of Medieval Painting* (New York: Dover, 1956).

room, to produce a life-sized photograph of the hidden side of one of its prized tapestries. The curator for textiles commented that the photograph is far more brilliant and faithful to the original than is the faded front of the tapestry itself. Photographs of this kind, he said, "give the public the sense of the work's grandeur as originally perceived by its creators."<sup>3</sup>

If we do not respect an art work for what it is, the product of an artistic process, we can in almost every case prefer a reproduction. Actors in a play, who are seen and heard with difficulty from the balcony, are experienced on film in every detail of motion, voice, and expression. The film can be edited in production; it can be distributed at little cost to an unlimited audience; unlike the performance it represents, moreover, it is permanent. We may have fifty excellent *Hamlets* on film; why stage the play again? In music, the technology of sound recording, with its magnificent analytic clarities, presents plainly more to the ear than can be heard in the muffled sonorities of the concert hall.<sup>4</sup> The studio artist has so many advantages that critics commonly judge a live performance by how well it approximates a recorded one. The comparison is a bit strange: what is recorded is not always a performance. The tape recorder picks up a passage here and there; Schwartzkopf puts her high C on Flagstad's recording; a team of technicians discuss, mix, and edit note by note; and the result can be a magnificent medley of any number of contributions. Yet the surfaces are there; the sound is exquisite; but something is missing, if stylistic properties are important, for how can you splice style? What is missing, of course, is the direct relation to a creator; the phrase 'art without the artist' applies in a literal sense.

The objects of nature are as easy to improve upon as those of art. Technology provides a non-dairy cream, a non-carbohydrate sugar, a non-animal leather, a non-wood wood, all better and better for you than nature's own. Is silk smooth and delicate? Acrylics are washable as well. Do you enjoy grass for its color? Astro turf is greener still and stays green. Aesthetes usually find desirable qualities in objects they believe are genuine; they find undesirable qualities if they suspect an imitation; thus they indicate, without admitting, the importance of authenticity itself. We hate the artificial, the bogus, the forged, the faked, the phoney—but when asked why, we point out differences that distinguish the genuine article from

<sup>3</sup> *Time* (Sept. 26, 1977): 81/2.

<sup>4</sup> For discussion, see Glenn Gould, "The Prospects of Recording," *High Fidelity Magazine*, xvi (April 1966): 46-63.

the synthetic, as if the only thing wrong with a deception is that it is not deceptive enough. The differences are important because they help distinguish the authentic from the inauthentic; they might not be noticed otherwise. Why insist on them now?

The reason is this: we value one object way above another because it is the product of a different process. We prefer the "imperfect" hand-made sweater to the "perfect" factory article—why?—because we prefer the hand to the machine. And we admire the processes of nature more than those of the assembly line. Acrylics are not the invention of caterpillars and mulberry trees. Astroturf is not quite the journeywork of the stars. These are objects of use, but are not part of a world the soul can enjoy or inhabit. We value a thing aesthetically not for use, not for show, but for what it is. And the reproduction may be hateful because it denies our affection for individual things, and with it, the strong ties we have to the past.

Nothing in the aesthetic theory of the last hundred years is more familiar than the thesis that knowledge of the process by which a work of art is created has nothing to do with the way the product is to be appreciated, that only the "aesthetic surfaces" count, and that the "perceptual object, although doubtless a necessary condition for aesthetic 'effect', is simply the vehicle by which feeling is incited."<sup>5</sup> If 'the perceptual object' means something created by an artist, then, why have it at all? Why not toss the masterpieces of millennia in the trashcan once methyl methacrylate and styrene substitutes are in place? I cannot find in the literature of aesthetic theory a good reason not to do that. I shall attempt to provide one here. I shall try to give an aesthetic rationale for preferring an authentic object to a perfect reproduction. I shall focus upon a difficult case: the question of the integral restoration, the legitimacy of adding new pieces to restore the appearance of a damaged work of art. The issues and principles at stake are general; the argument, however, confines attention, wherever possible, to this single problem.

## II

Since 1973, the public has viewed the famous early *Pietà* of Michelangelo through a pane of bullet-proof glass. The precaution was taken because a lunatic, during the previous year, had struck the statue fifteen times with a nine-pound hammer, breaking the arm of the Madonna in several places, knocking off her nose, and badly chipping her eye and veil. The Director of the Vatican Museum,

<sup>5</sup> Henry David Aiken, "Art as Expression and Surface," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, iv, 2 (September 1945): 87-95, p. 87.

Professor Redig de Campos, who took over-all responsibility for the restoration, described the *Pietà* as "totally destroyed."<sup>6</sup> He did not mean, however, that the statue was beyond repair; he was certain that his team of artisans could restore its appearance. This feat of craftsmanship satisfied one observer, a reporter for the *American Artist*, who wrote:

I could scarcely make out the thin hairlines of restoration. The public will not see them at all. The *Pietà* has been reborn, more beautiful than before, for the statue has been washed as well as put back together. . . . The principle followed was that of an *integral* rather than a *purist* restoration. Historical rigor in this case—that is, not replacing anything that was not Michelangelo's—would have entirely destroyed the piece. A scratch on the *Pietà* is more disfiguring than the missing arms of the Venus de Milo (55).

An integral restoration puts new pieces in the place of original fragments which have been lost; a purist restoration limits itself to cleaning works of art and to reattaching original pieces that may have fallen. Purists contend that nothing inauthentic—nothing not produced by the original artist—may be shown. If damage obscures the style of the original, a purist may allow a few substitutions, but only in outline or in another color, to avoid any pretense of authenticity. Professor de Campos decided immediately in favor of an integral restoration.<sup>7</sup> He said later that, if missing pieces of the eye and nose of the Madonna were not replaced, the statue "might have had value as historical evidence but not as a work of art" (72).

What objection can the purist raise against the repair of the *Pietà*? A purist may argue that the repair deceives the public. Suppose it does: is anyone made worse off by the deception? Imagine that your dentist refused to cap a tooth for you except in silver or gold, fearing that a white tooth would appear to be one of your own. You would look for another dentist; you want the tooth to seem natural. The point of the integral repair is to make the whole work look original. One might reply to the purist, therefore, that, if the public is deceived, so much the better, for nothing of the aesthetic experience will then be lost. A very good integral repair

<sup>6</sup> Quoted by Sidney Alexander in an interview, "The Restoration of Michelangelo's *Pietà*," *The American Artist*, xxxvii, 2 (July 1973): 72. Parenthetical page references, except those clearly attributed to Goodman or to Vlastos, are to this article.

<sup>7</sup> De Campos decided upon the integral restoration immediately upon seeing the damage and without knowing what needed to be replaced, as the Alexander interview makes clear.

could have the character of a white lie; dishonest, of course, but capable of doing less harm than good.

In the case before us, this reply is unnecessary, for de Campos carried out his work with all the publicity, documentation, and thoroughness of disclosure that scruple can demand. The objection, if general, must condemn every integral repair, but it does not, since curators, like de Campos, can be honest without being purists; if it applies only in specific cases, however, it is not an objection to the integral restoration as such. It simply criticizes any curator who does not keep the public adequately informed.

Someone may observe, as a second argument in favor of purism, that a great master can create effects which an artisan, centuries later, might not discriminate, much less reproduce. Minute differences are very important; wholesale damage may be more acceptable than a slight but obvious retouching.<sup>8</sup> The curator, therefore, may rely more securely on the imagination of the viewer than on the ability of contemporaries to recreate the work as it was. A purist restoration is safe; an integral one may further damage a work of art.

This argument applies in some cases, but does not discredit the repair of the Michelangelo. Its success can be tested against hundreds of careful photographs of the undamaged statue. As a precaution, moreover, the Vatican had prepared, during the 1940s, a plaster cast taken directly from the *Pietà*. "When we have such a resource," de Campos commented, "we cannot, we must not deprive ourselves of it. . . . We would reattach all the fallen fragments and substitute the missing parts with a prosthesis, just as dentists do" (72). The new pieces, molded in the cast, were made of a special plastic of marble dust "bound with a resin, a synthetic polyester resin, one of those artificial man-made resins which are colorless, odorless, and very powerful" (72). The result is a *Pietà* of an appearance no observer can distinguish from that of the undamaged statue, except that it is more beautiful than before, as the reporter noted. The purist objection, then, may apply to a bad job but not to this one. Given the nature of the statue and the extent of the damage, moreover, the integral repair looks better than anything the purist could have done.

The purist so far has missed the point. One cannot object to the integral repair on principle and still assume that the value of a statue depends solely on its appearance. This is the reason for the integral restoration and, if false, the reason to reject it. The point

<sup>8</sup> See Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1968), p. 108; parenthetical page references to Goodman will be to this work.

is that the authentic and the inauthentic are aesthetically different not necessarily because they look different but because they are different things. Some objects have replaceable parts—automobiles, for example. A new muffler becomes part of an old car. Works of art, however, are created once and for all by a particular artist at a particular time. Michelangelo created the *Pietà* at the end of the fourteenth century; can de Campos make parts for it today? No; he can only replace part of one thing, the *Pietà*, with part of another, a copy. If damage continues, no matter how perfect each integral repair, the statue Michelangelo created is destroyed as fast as if there were no repair; in time, that statue may be reduced to a fragment, while a reproduction, which is slowly built around it, will take its place.<sup>9</sup> Prosthetics are just that when applied to a person or to a work of art. They save the appearance of the art work—but they change its substance. They turn it, bit by bit, into something else. In one sense, the *Pietà* cannot be repaired integrally. We can create a new piece, we can attach it, but we cannot make that piece a part of that work of art.

The reason for this has been explained by Nelson Goodman in an argument too long and technical to be repeated here, but the gist of which is as follows. The identity of different works of art is determined in different ways. In the case of poetry and music, for example, the criterion of identity is compliance to a set of letters or notes—more precisely, a character in a notational scheme. In a literary work, the notation is the alphabet: what matters is “sameness of spelling: exact correspondence as sequences of letters, spaces, and punctuation marks. Any sequence that so corresponds to a correct copy is itself correct, and nothing is more the original work of art than is such a copy” (115/6). Two performances that follow the same score are performances of the same musical work even though they may not sound entirely alike. But no notation decides whether two paintings or sculptures are instances of the same work: no symbol scheme distinguishes the token from the type. Goodman concludes that the only way to identify a painting, e.g., the *Lucretia*,

<sup>9</sup> I would argue that the undamaged and restored statues, although spatially and temporally continuous under the sortal ‘statue’, are not so under the sortal ‘Michelangelo’—for the repaired statue, after the *n*th repair, is a de Campos, or something, and not a Michelangelo. This is a case of identity under a genus while there is a change in species. Compare the case of repairing a Dodge with Chevrolet parts—so that, when all the parts have been replaced, one might speak of the same automobile but not of the same Dodge (because the car is a Chevrolet). The species concept is decisive in the case of an art work and, it seems, in all cases. See David Wiggins, *Identity and Spatio-temporal Continuity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971), esp. pp. 35 & 72.



“is to establish the fact that it is the actual object made by Rembrandt” (116). The crucial point is that the identifying features—Goodman says “constitutive”—of a sculpture or a painting are not necessarily aesthetic but are necessarily historical.<sup>10</sup> A work by Michelangelo cannot be identical in whole or in part with a work by de Campos—unless they actually collaborated; two statues may look alike, but, insofar as they have a different provenance, they are different things. This difference troubles the concept of the integral restoration; it indicates a willingness to change the statue to save its appearance. This poses no problem for those concerned with the value of the *Pietà* as a stimulus; but it worries sentimentalists or snobs, if you like, who care about the statue itself.

A purist restoration allows viewers to imagine a work of art as complete, yet, at the same time, to see what is authentic and what is not. The integral repair succeeds, on the contrary, if the viewer is at a loss to tell even that the work has been restored. The purist may object to the integral repair, therefore, *because* of its similarity to the undamaged work. This similarity in appearance may be felt to be an indignity, given the disparity in substance. Spectators cannot tell what is carved, what cast; what is marble, what plastic; what is Michelangelo, what de Campos. These distinctions are for snobs; they have nothing to do with aesthetic experience. Shall we admire in the eloquence of the Madonna’s hand the inspiration of Michelangelo? the skill of de Campos? or the magic of coal-tar derivatives? What do we care? They all look the same. You do not really want to know. The outstretched left hand of the Madonna is largely an eighteenth-century restoration. But pretend it is by Michelangelo if that helps you enjoy it—or by Mary herself, for that matter. All you need is the stimulus; all you want is the response. What difference can it make whether the vehicle is a creation of an artist or a fabrication of Union Carbide? There is no difference, for those interested in a vehicle; there is a great difference, for those concerned with a work of art. It is quite clear that the appearance of a thing is enough to cause a response—in rats in a cage, who salivate or push a treadle when the stimulus is right. But the appreciation of a work of art is not an operant reaction to a stimulus; it is not even a reasoned tribute to the qualities of an object: it is a human impulse to its very existence. Why call this snobbery when it is the basis of respect? How can we value something and not care what it is? How can our response to it not be

<sup>10</sup> This is weaker than Goodman’s statement, p. 120. For sculpture, see same page.

based on knowledge? The integral repair introduces a macaronic element into a work of art which makes nonsense of our experience. This is merely comic in some cases, but it adds insult to injury when the subject is a masterpiece. We simply owe more to a Michelangelo than to replace its parts with polymers, as if the appearance of the statue meant more to us than the statue itself. But what is valuable—a stimulus? a response? or a work of art? The purist believes a work of art may be so valuable that it is worse to repair it integrally than to let damage to it stand. This position cannot be explained apart from a general aesthetic theory; but, even in a short space, we can see that the thinking that motivates an integral restoration is probably wrong.

### III

The reasons for repairing an art work integrally are patent. If the repaired work has the same appearance as the undamaged work, it has the same visual properties. If it has the same visual properties, it incites the same feeling or the same kind of experience. This is true, anyway, if snobbery or something like that does not get in the way. If it incites the same feeling or the same kind of experience, finally, it has the same aesthetic value as the undamaged statue or painting. These premises provide a justification for every successful integral restoration. The repaired work and the undamaged work look the same, so they have the same aesthetic value. Good. The integral repair is a restoration of the work, then, in that sense.

This argument lies behind or motivates an integral repair—yet de Campos himself seems to have had doubts. He made sure that the *Pietà* can easily be restored to its *damaged* condition. The reporter quoted earlier notes that the resin used in the marble paste is soluble. And this is not all; the reporter writes:

One of the most dramatic moments of my silent colloquy with the statue was when Prof. de Campos turned all the lights off in the chapel and focused an ultraviolet light machine on the statue. Suddenly the group was glowing in all its wounded parts as if one were observing human organs under a fluoroscope. Wherever prosthetics had been applied, green pulsations emerged from the gloom. The resin has a high fluorescence. Hence, at any time, if need be, the restored areas may be removed, their exact location pinpointed by the ultraviolet light (56).

This description of the statue when the lights are out may give us pause. The difference in substance is rather dramatic, even if the appearance, in daylight, is the same.

It is easy to see why de Campos would reject the argument that appears to justify the integral repair: it tends to show that any reproduction that matches the *Pietà* in appearance matches it in value as well. But de Campos would not allow a total fabrication, even one indistinguishable from the original, to stand in its place, and he would consider any curator to be acting strangely who displayed a copy as if it were a Michelangelo. We cannot but agree with de Campos: we applaud the pains he took, over several months, to classify all the pieces large enough to be identified, and then patiently to reattach them; but our approval does not stop us from asking why, if a look-alike is aesthetically as good as an authentic piece, he went to all that trouble, when he could easily have cast all the fallen fragments in plastic and swept the originals out the door. Why did he send to the hills for marble when there was plenty of the right kind in the *Pietà* itself, which could have been ground down to powder, resinated, and cast hollow and a hundred times stronger in exactly its present shape? Several statues could have been created in this way, using the very marble of the original, each indistinguishable from it, if not more beautiful. Such a course, abhorrent to de Campos as to ourselves, is positively justified by the argument, for each statue would have had the same appearance as the original, and would be bullet-proof as well. Spectators might be permitted to examine it as closely as they wished; they would see it luminate at night, which might be a very beautiful spectacle, if you do not think too much about it; and they would not have to view it through a thick pane of glass. It is not too late: de Campos can still complete the work of restoration that the madman began. Why stop with the Madonna? The rest of the statue can be replaced with what is aesthetically as attractive: not the obsolete work of Michelangelo, but a plastic Jesus that glows in the dark!

Were Professor de Campos present he might reply that people appreciate works of art and value them in different ways. For some the motive in experiencing art is its usefulness; they do not value a work for its inherent qualities, but in terms of the good they get out of it, whatever that may be, a feeling, a pleasure, instruction, or an elevated state of mind; and thus, for them, the kind of experience a work of art induces is important, but not, except as a physical stimulus, the work itself; they admire, to put the distinction in traditional terms, what is accidental and therefore may be duplicated, rather than the unique, the particular, the substantial thing. But there are others—and de Campos would count himself among

their company—who value a work of art in itself: they recognize the goodness of art as inhering in it rather than as arising in an experience produced in them; they admire the work, then, as being the particular subject of *these* characteristics, not the characteristics, as it were, detached or detachable from their subject; they respect the painting or the sculpture as the object of *this* experience, but not that sort of experience in the absence of its particular object; they are rewarded in their perception, of course, because the work is good, but they do not regard it as good because it rewards them, nor something else as equally good, from which they can obtain a similar response. They value the particular, substantial, actual thing; and thus they discover that the best use of a great work of art is its preservation, for the relation they have to that particular object will last, as is not the case with those who value something only for the pleasure or good they receive, for this sort of usefulness is not permanent; rather, whatever is found to be pleasant or exciting at one time may diminish at another, or something else will have as great an effect, and the reason for valuing a particular object will vanish, since it owed its existence to these motives.

Readers who recognize in this imaginary speech of de Campos the language of Aristotle's discussion of love may see an analogy between the value we place on an art work and the way we love a person. Plato seems to have been the first to observe this analogy, as Gregory Vlastos<sup>11</sup> says:

Plato is the first Western man to realize how intense and passionate may be our attachment to objects as abstract as social reform, poetry, art, the sciences, and philosophy—an attachment that has more in common with erotic fixation than one would have expected on a pre-Freudian view of man. . . . He sees that the aesthetic quality of . . . purely intellectual objects is akin to the power of physical beauty to excite and to enchant even when it holds out no prospect of possession (27).

As Plato conceives it, that which is loved is not an individual, whether a person or thing, but some of its qualities, particularly beauty. This, according to Vlastos, is Plato's point:

What we are to love in persons is the "image" of the Idea in them. We are to love the persons so far, and only so far as they are good and beautiful . . . the individual, in the uniqueness and integrity of his or her individuality will never be the object of our love (30/1).

<sup>11</sup> *Platonic Studies* (Princeton: University Press, 1973).

Plato's theory of love corresponds closely with the theory of aesthetic experience advanced by Croce and other idealists, who held that the object of aesthetic appreciation is not, properly speaking, a physical thing, but a Form, an Idea, an Intuition, or, more generally, a set of qualities, insofar as they exist "in" perception and not insofar as they have a particular subject or referent. The physical art work, like the person in Plato's theory of love, is valued, if at all, only as the bearer of these qualities, or, more precisely, as the vehicle or the stimulus of a pleasant experience. Diotima tells Socrates in the *Symposium* that we love and desire to possess a thing because we expect that its possession will make us happy. We appreciate the characteristics of a thing for our enjoyment of them; appreciation never extends to the thing itself.

The theory that makes the object of love an individual, rather than a set of enjoyable characteristics, is associated with the *Nichomachean Ethics*.<sup>12</sup> Aristotle emphasizes the primacy of the person: one loves the individual one knows—not his or her qualities wherever they may be found. A person may be loved for certain characteristics at the beginning, but friendship grows to bind individuals, not attributes or needs. There are many who appreciate the *Pietà* in this Aristotelian way, that is, as a particular object with a particular history, and not merely as a bearer of properties. They do not appreciate its qualities any the less, but all the more, for belonging to it. They do not "look through" these characteristics, as if there were something else to see; rather they attend to each property in relation to the work of art. But this is not the case with those who value the qualities apart from the identity of the work, for they appreciate only what serves a purpose, one might say an interest, to deliver a feeling, cause a pleasure, or stimulate a state of mind. They must ignore, therefore, if they do not condemn, any quality which is not useful in this way, which fails to meet their theoretical requirement or satisfy a personal end.

Let us now consider the argument with which this section began. It suggests, first, that two things that have the same appearance *a fortiori* have the same visual properties. This is false. You have to know what a thing is to recognize its qualities. It takes a skillful and subtle forgery to pass for a blunt and clumsy fourteenth-century portrait. A drawing that might be taken for a remarkably three-dimensional medieval sketch is seen to be flat when attributed to the sixteenth century. It may be doubtful whether a painting is a

<sup>12</sup> See especially 1156a–1157b.

peaceful Van Gogh or an intense Millet. Terms like 'skillful', 'flat', and 'peaceful', which describe visual properties, apply differently to different things; they are predicated of an object in relation to other objects of its kind. A cast by de Campos and a carving by Michelangelo are such different things that they are hardly to be compared visually; for example, what is smooth for a carving may be rough for a cast. Objects that have the same appearance, then, may not have the same visual properties. The first step in the argument, therefore, is false.

A reproduction and an original, nevertheless, may have some of the same visual properties; for example, both may be beautiful. We value the beauty of the *Pietà*, however, as a quality of that statue. We may not appreciate it—we may even resent it—in a reproduction. The attack on the *Pietà*, therefore, was really an appalling event. An attack on a reproduction would not have been so bad; in some circumstances, indeed, it is an act to which you or I might be tempted. What do we value: the beauty of the reproduction or the beauty of the original as represented in the reproduction? This distinction is blurred in an integral restoration. The same visual properties may be appreciated and interpreted in different ways when they are found in different things. The second premise of the argument, therefore, is false.

The third premise proposes that two objects are equally valuable if they evoke the same aesthetic experience. This suggests that aesthetic value attaches primarily to a state of mind, such as a feeling or an emotion; the object provides only a material condition. The notion that a feeling can be valuable *per se* is a curious notion. We usually think that emotions—such as those which accompany friendship—are valuable only insofar as they reflect or represent that which is valuable in an object or in a situation. To test this, suppose that you receive a letter from an admirer, and, after a long exchange, during which you experience what seem to be close ties with your correspondent, you discover it was all a joke or a confidence game. You would be bitter, not grateful, as a result. And yet your experience might not have differed in quality—that is, phenomenologically—from that of the closest friendship. You might resent it all the more, indeed, because it felt so genuine. There is a sanity in our emotions, as in our other faculties. When we enjoy something, when we respond to it with a feeling, we make a judgment; in effect, we describe it to ourselves in an approving way. Our emotions may be mistaken; they may be true or false of things; like

perceptions, they can be deceived. Indeed, we most resent the deception of our emotions. A false friendship can mislead our feelings; so can a forgery. This deception does not make a confidence game as valuable as a true friendship; it does not make a forgery a masterpiece. Forgery, except in very special cases, is a trivial exercise. Why would anyone want to respond to it as if it were more than what it is? Why would we want to be deceived?

The answer, someone may say, is that what is valuable, in the end, is the response, not the object. Why? The feeling incited by an art work, we may be told, is aesthetic. But everyone knows this—as everyone knows that the response to colors is chromatic. The Greek adds nothing. If ‘aesthetic’ means anything, it has to do with the disinterested, sympathetic contemplation of an object for its own sake. Does this sound consistent with the theory that a work of art is simply a stimulus for producing a feeling? The feeling is desirable in itself, we may also be told, because it is an enjoyment. Everything that produces the feeling, therefore, has the same value. But we can enjoy the damnedest things—public floggings and hangings were discontinued in England because they kept the theaters empty. Does the fact that you enjoy seeing a public execution make it better? No; it just makes you worse. If an enjoyment is inappropriate to its cause it is the reverse of valuable: it is a feeling which, as feeling creatures, we ought to shun. The value of the *object* is aesthetic; the value of the *response* is epistemic. The object may be beautiful or ugly, sublime, powerful, or gentle; the response is appropriate or inappropriate, discriminating or indiscriminate, subtle or shallow.

These observations suggest that the argument with which this section began is less than perfect. The reasons for thinking it unsound may be summarized in four principles. Appreciation, I have argued, is *individualizing*: works of art are not interchangeable unless, among other things, they are instances of the same work. Appreciation is *historical* because it identifies an art work as the result of a particular process; it is *relational* in that it judges a work, so identified, in the context of others similar to it in period, place, and kind. Appreciation is *cognitive*, finally, because our feelings make us aware of the properties (not merely the surfaces) of things.

These principles make sense of the fact that people go to the Vatican Museum to see the *Pietà* of Michelangelo and not simply to have a certain experience. Our desire to see the *Pietà*, indeed, is the whole of our desire to have that experience. The nature of the

object is fundamental. We would not be as satisfied with a big plastic doll that has been extruded from a mold. So what if it does look like the *Pietà*? It is worse for that. Is this snobbery? Is it snobbery to believe that how we feel is how we think about the nature of things? Is it snobbery to insist that our pleasures and pains be sensitive to important distinctions? Is it snobbery to hold that our emotions may themselves be perceptions—indeed, perceptions of the most delicate and discriminating kind? No; none of this is snobbery. It is the definition of taste.

The principles I have mentioned make no sense as long as we analyze aesthetic experience on the model of stimulus and response. We should expect no more of people, in that case, than we would of laboratory mice. The model presupposed by our principles clearly is that of a knower and the known. To defend these principles, therefore, would be to defend a new aesthetic theory. They can be put forward here only as being plausible. Yet there is some support for them in the literature;<sup>13</sup> they are also consistent. What they imply about integral repairs is so plain as not to need further laboring. The principles apply in a general way to reproductions of painting and of music. I conclude this essay, therefore, with remarks concerning the problems with which it begins.

#### IV

The reason that people might want to see the *Pietà* is that it has a certain meaning for them. To say that the *Pietà* is meaningful, however, is not to say that it is the subject of interpretation. Everybody knows that art works are interpreted in hundreds of ways—or what are doctoral dissertations for?—and in that sense they mean different things to different people. That is beside the point. What a child does has meaning for a parent; you take great joy in the success of a son or a daughter; it is meaningful not in the sense that it states a proposition but in the sense that it is extremely important. Why is it important? To be concerned about a child's welfare is part of being a parent. Those who share a culture, that is, a civilizing tradition, share a concern, similarly disinterested and similarly

<sup>13</sup> Goodman (245–252) provides the best available account of the cognitive function of feeling. The historical character of aesthetic judgment is argued by Erwin Panofsky in the first two chapters of *Meaning and the Visual Arts* (Garden City, N.J.: Doubleday, 1955). The argument would be helped if it were shorn of its Marburg neo-Kantianism. For a discussion of aesthetic predicates as relations (attributives) see my “The Aesthetic Status of Forgeries,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, xxiii, 2 (Winter 1976): 169–180, and “Historical Authenticity,” *Erkenntnis*, xii, 1 (January 1978): 83–93. I know of no discussion of the individualizing nature of aesthetic appreciation—i.e., loyalty to the art work.



deep, for objects and events of the past which constitute what is known as a heritage. To be concerned about these things is part of being civilized: it is one of the ways we identify ourselves within a larger intellectual and moral order. We appreciate these things not because they make us happy—there is a great deal of tragedy to care about—but because a certain relation to them makes us secure and decent in our souls. To say this is embarrassing, because nothing is more commonplace than the hope of parents in a child, the love of friends, and the intense attachment some of us feel to objects as abstract as social reform, poetry, art, the sciences, and philosophy—and nothing is more unexplained. Our understanding of these matters has not advanced greatly since Plato and Aristotle. The concept of love, however, is very much on the agenda of moral theory; in another respect, it is, or ought to be, what aesthetic theory is all about.

As to photographic reproductions of paintings, it is clear we care about the painting, not the photograph. Some photographs are themselves works of art—those of Ansel Adams offer many examples—but reproductions are not like that; they are more like mug shots. If a reproduction captures, let us say, the strength of the mountains in a painting by Cézanne, it is not because it duplicates the work of Cézanne but because it accurately represents it. It is a picture of a *painting*, not a picture of *mountains*. And as such it is and ought to be singularly uncreative and mechanical. A photographer like Karsh might be able to produce a portrait of a painting which is interesting and has value as a photograph—but this sort of thing rarely or never happens. Photographic reproductions are vehicles; they are useful because they show us a great deal about a real work of art, but they are not art works in themselves. They are trivial as photographs; they are not anything as paintings. The proposed Annenberg Center will house not great photographs, but ordinary photographs of great works of art. It may be possible for visitors to respond to the work represented in a reproduction—but not to the reproduction itself.

The question of putting plays on film is a little more complex. A film may be related to a live stage performance in the same way that a photographic reproduction is related to a painting. Films of this kind are valuable not as films but because they represent and, thus, provide a record of performances which might have been important. The performance is the logical subject of aesthetic properties and value; the film is merely a vehicle and should be as uncreative as possible. What if the film becomes creative? What shall

we say if it is spliced and edited? In that case, the audience will not know what it is seeing—a film representing an actual performance? simulating a performance? about a performance?—and this introduces a macaronic element reminiscent of integral restoration. We must know what we are seeing. If it is a movie, we expect all the resources of cinema to be used; if it is a stage performance as represented on film, we expect the use of these resources to be restricted, so that we can judge the performance. Splicing, for example, cannot improve a live performance; on the contrary, it turns it into something else, perhaps a series of *takes*. There is a great difference between a studio and a stage. In filming a live performance, the camera might be allowed to move; close-ups are possible; the exact proprieties cannot be studied here. The general rule suffices that a film that *seems* to be a record of a performance, should be; it should maintain authenticity.

These remarks raise questions about music. The answers are the same. A recording may be related to a concert-hall performance in the way that a reproduction is related to a painting and a film to a theatrical performance. A recording of this kind is faithful to a performance, clams and all. A studio recording is a bird of a completely different feather. The resources of the studio are vastly different from those of the orchestra pit; the spatial and acoustical dimensions of stereo reproduction are distinct from those of the concert hall. Feats of virtuosity on the piano or violin are unnecessary in the studio; dubbing, splicing, and a dozen other techniques make artistic demands of another kind. The comparison of studio recording with live performance has been detrimental to both. Recorded sound has been unable to become an artistic medium of its own; live performance has been wired up in all kinds of ways to compete with stereo. Why not judge each of these for what it is—not by how it approximates the other? This is the thesis I have argued: that we should respect the product in relation to the process and each work according to its kind. This principle allows us to understand the aesthetic value of forgeries and reproductions; it applies to every work of art.

Why? Why care about the process when all we see or hear is the product? Why not enjoy the “perfect” performance on tape or film—even if it is not a performance? Are bird songs beautiful? Put a mechanical bird in the tree, then, and turn on the sound! Is the view from the mountain magnificent? See it from the airplane and sip a martini at the same time! Do you ski or sail so well that you can win a race? Try to beat a snowmobile or a motorboat! As

should be obvious, we value not just the song of the thrush but the thrush as well. The climb up the mountain makes the view excellent—as well as the other way round. And the speed you travel is admirable only because it shows how well you set your sail. The product must be appreciated in relation to the process: to judge a thing, we have to know what it is. We should be aware not only of the sound of the violin but of the way that sound is made. This is to be aware of the violinist—but more: the practice, the tradition, the history which, giving the art work authenticity, gives it value as well. What we are aware of is the past—not the pastness of the past, but its presence; we are aware of history—not as something dead but as what is already living. The artistic and natural processes of creation are themselves their most important products. What is their final creation but our own lives? What meaning, apart from them, could these lives have? No wonder we respect the environmentalist who keeps the highway out and the museum director who takes the forgery down. They preserve not the integrity of art and nature only, but our own integrity as well. No wonder we resent the intrusion of technology—for one of the things it is replacing is ourselves. Technology should serve the energies of art and nature, not be a substitute for them. This is not conventional wisdom simply, but sound aesthetic theory. What matters in the end? Not just the response, but the object. Not just the quality, but the object itself—its nature and meaning as something inherited.

Nothing matters but the quality of the affection—  
 in the end—that has carved the trace in the mind  
 what thou lovest well is thy true heritage  
 what thou lovest well shall not be reft from thee.<sup>14</sup>

MARK SAGOFF

Cornell University

#### A SENSE OF UNITY \*

**P**HILOSOPHERS have often raised questions about our concept of the unity of a thing. Most typically what is sought is an analysis of what our concept of unity consists in. The answer to this question commonly takes the form of citing various

<sup>14</sup> This is taken from the videotape of Ezra Pound reading at the Spoleto Festival, 1965. The lines occur differently in the *Pisan Cantos*.

\* I am grateful to William James Earle for helpful comments on an early draft of this paper. The paper also benefited from being read at a New York University Colloquium.