

Valuing Philosophical Work

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I am a multifaceted person, as I am sure you are as well. I love philosophy, obviously, but also computer science, programming and video games. I care about robotics, nature, my family and more. However, why is it that I *particularly* care about writing philosophy when it will most likely not convince anyone? Why care when my writing will most likely fall into obscurity, only to be forgotten in a deluge of other papers, essays, and works that will *themselves* fall into obscurity, only to also be forgotten? I propose that philosophy is intrinsically important because they are artistic expressions, and artistic expressions are intrinsically valuable explorations into the self. Therefore, philosophy is an intrinsically valuable exploration into the self.

In defense of this argument, which I might call the argument from the value of artistic self exploration, we need to argue that philosophy is an artistic endeavor, and that these kinds of endeavors are indeed intrinsically valuable explorations of the self. For example, to say that philosophy is an artistic endeavor seems trivial -- "what makes something art?" seems to be a philosophical trope. One obvious answer to this for us is to view "...philosophical essay[s] as an art form whose medium is ideas..." (George Sher, "Why Write Philosophy?") This way of seeing works of philosophy as an art compares it to other more obvious modes of artistic expression, such that the work of philosophy is the product, like a painting, and that the idea is like the paintbrush. Understanding philosophy this way -- as an artistic expression, should help pave the way to seeing the next point that artistic works are intrinsically valuable explorations into the

self. By which, I mean that we are not only learning more about ourselves by doing the work, but also that the audience gets to know the creator. The work of art is a piece of its creator at the time of creation. As such, respect should be given to it as *a piece of the creator*. To reiterate this, "Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never merely as a means to an end, but always at the same time as an end" (Immanuel Kant, "Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals"). The point here is that we ought to give respect to individuals for just being human beings. Philosophical endeavors are artistic expressions of the self, and since the self is worth valuing as a human being, so too should the artistic expression thereof, such as philosophical works.

One of the main rebuttals to this is to start out by saying that works of philosophy are not expressions of the self, i.e. they are not works of art. After all, works of philosophy are almost always dry and written more like a contract than an artistic expression. Scientific papers aren't considered art generally, and philosophy papers in modernity are written more like scientific papers. We have to bear in mind, though, that the medium is the *idea*, not necessarily the paper or how the paper is written. Sometimes, this takes the form of a scientific-esque paper, or a five paragraph paper like this one, an argument in extraction, or even as a meme. The idea is the art, all else is another methodology which could in itself be an artistic form on top of this.

The other, less poignant rebuttal is that artistic expressions of the self are not inherently or intrinsically valuable. This rebuttal may go deeper as to say that specifically, artistic expressions are not in and of themselves representations of the self, an expression of the self is not the self itself. In other words, the ideas that one creates and marks down is not the creator inherently, the creator is the creator of the work, and not the work. A farmer is not his crop, for example. The problem should be obvious: if we are our ideas, and the ideas are the medium, then we are in part the work that we put forth. The rebuttal doesn't necessarily argue that we

aren't inherently worth respect as a human being -- most agree that Kant had at least an inkling of truth there. The rebuttal claims that artistic expressions of the self are not part of the self particularly. Yet, as we are seeing here, especially with philosophy, if we are, at least in part, our ideas, and ideas here are the medium of the art, then we are the art in which we produce, it's a part of us. If we are all to have some sort of respect as a human being, then, so too should our philosophical art.

With all of this being said, I hope to have made it clear -- works of philosophy are indeed valuable intrinsically. This is because they are works of artistic expression, and particularly in the case of philosophical works, these artistic expressions are the self and thus worthy of intrinsic value. Therefore, works of philosophy are intrinsically valuable. I have gone over a couple of the most prominent rebuttals to each premise, leaving my thesis intact. Unfortunately, we do not seem to respect others' ideas as we should in modernity. I am not here to point fingers, I have unfortunately not respected another's work as I should have. Hopefully, we can recognize others' ideas as a piece of themselves moving forward -- and respect them as such.