**Artworks are Not Valuable for Their Own Sake**

**Introduction**

Many philosophers and critics of art[[1]](#endnote--1) believe that

(*FVT*) Artistic value, the value that works of art *as such* have, is a kind of ‘final’ value; objects that possess artistic value are valuable for their own sake in virtue of their value as art.[[2]](#endnote-0)

I will refer to this as the ‘Final Value Thesis’ (FVT). In this paper I argue that the Final Value Thesis is false. Artistically valuable works of art are not, as such, valuable for their own sake. Some artistically valuable works of art may be valuable for their own sake, but for reasons distinct from their artistic value. For the sake of brevity, though, throughout this paper (as I have done in the title) I simply write: artworks are not valuable for their own sake. In every case, I use this to mean the denial of the FVT.[[3]](#endnote-1)

I will begin by examining ‘experiential’ or ‘empiricist’ theories of artistic value, according to which the artistic value of a work of art consists in the final value of the experiences that work affords. This appears to entail that works are not valuable for their own sake, but valuable only for the sake of the experiences they afford. However, the defenders of the experiential view deny that their view has this consequence; they do so because they share the common assumption that FVT is true.

In the first section of this paper I argue that the appearance is correct: experiential theories of artistic value *do* entail that works of art are not valuable for their own sake. However, in the second section -- which constitutes the bulk of the paper -- I argue that FVT is false. Consequently, my argument from section one does not show that Experientialism is false. In fact, I argue, it constitutes strong reason in favor of Experientialism.

1. **The Experiential View**

Here is Budd’s statement of the experiential view:

My claim is that the value of a work of art as a work of art is intrinsic to the work in the sense that it is (determined by) the intrinsic value of the experience the work offers (so that it offers more than one experience, it has more than one artistic value or an artistic value composed of these different values). It should be remembered that the experience of the work of art offers is an experience of *the work itself*, and the valuable qualities of a work are qualities *of the work*, not of the experience it offers. It is the nature of the work that endows the work with whatever artistic value it possesses; this nature is what is experienced in undergoing the experience the work offers; and the work’s artistic value is the intrinsic value of this experience. So a work of art is valuable as art if it is such that the experience it offers is intrinsically valuable; and it is valuable to the degree that this experience is intrinsically valuable.[[4]](#endnote-2)

By ‘intrinsically valuable’ Budd means valuable for its own sake, rather than valuable in virtue of its intrinsic properties (I will have more to say about this later). In order to avoid confusion, I will use the term ‘final value’ for what Budd calls ‘intrinsic value.’[[5]](#endnote-3)

I want to point out two features of this view. First of all, it is not the final value of just any experience a work affords that determines the artistic value of the work. The experiences whose value determines the artistic value of an object are (a) experiences of *that very object* that (b) involve correctly understanding it. For instance, a pill that reliably produces an experience phenomenally indistinguishable from the experience of a performance of Mahler’s Sixth Symphony does not count as artistically valuable, even if this experience is valuable for its own sake, because the experience the pill provides is not an experience of the pill; the pill affords finally valuable experiences, but they are not experiences of the pill so they do not make the pill artistically valuable. Similarly, if I find listening to Parsifal valuable for its own sake only because I do not understand its meaning, and, were I to understand it, I would find it morally and philosophically repellant, as some have claimed it is, and would no longer find listening to it valuable for its own sake, I have not been appreciating its artistic value all along.[[6]](#endnote-4), [[7]](#endnote-5)

We say of two very different categories of things that they are valuable: objects and their properties. For instance, gold bars are valuable, and being made of gold is (usually) a valuable property of objects that have it. Objects are not simply valuable or not valuable, with nothing more to be said about it; they are valuable in virtue of their other properties. Object-value is explanatorily prior to property-value: a property is valuable only insofar as objects that possess that property are valuable in virtue of possessing that property. Valuable properties are not literally valuable; if I value the property of being made out of gold, what I value is objects made out of gold. Thus, valuable properties might be thought of as ‘value grounding.’ By ‘values’ I will typically refer to valuable properties, properties of objects in virtue of which they are valuable.

Next, I want to make some familiar distinctions among some kinds of values:[[8]](#endnote-6)

1. *Intrinsic and extrinsic values*. This is a distinction between how a valuable property is *had*: whether it is had intrinsically, or extrinsically. For instance, if being made of gold is a property had intrinsically by a bar of gold, and being made of gold is a valuable property of the object, then being made of gold is an intrinsically valuable property of the object. The bar of gold has intrinsic value.[[9]](#endnote-7)
2. *Conditional and unconditional value.* This is a distinction in how or under what conditions a valuable property is valuable. To take the previous examples, being made of gold is a valuable property of a bar of gold, but being made of gold is only valuable provided that gold is exchangeable for hard currency or other commodities. In the absence of a market for gold, being made of gold is not valuable. Whether there are any unconditionally valuable properties is a contentious issue, but for the sake of illustration let’s take Kant’s example of unconditional value: the possession of a morally good will. Kant’s claim is that there is no possible circumstance in which possessing a good will is not a valuable feature of an agent that possesses one.[[10]](#endnote-8)
3. *Final and non-final value*. This is a distinction in why a valuable property is valuable. The property of being a pleasurable experience, to take a common example, is valuable for its own sake. By contrast, the property of being made of gold is not valuable for its own sake, but only because objects that possess it can be exchanged for other valuable objects. This distinction is often described as the distinction between what is valuable for its own sake, and what is instrumentally valuable. However, I do not want to assume that the only way an object that is not valuable for its own sake can be valuable is through being an instrument. For the purposes of brevity, I will refer to a property of an object that makes the object valuable for its own sake as a ‘final value’ or ‘finally valuable’ property.[[11]](#endnote-9)

These distinctions do not overlap. Some valuable properties had intrinsically are only conditionally valuable, e.g. being made of gold. Some objects are valuable for their own sake in virtue of their extrinsic properties, e.g. for the religious, being close to God is valuable for its own sake, in virtue of the relation, closeness, in which one thereby stands to God. Finally, an object can be valuable for its own sake, but only under certain conditions. For instance, a retributivist might think that happiness, when valuable, is valuable for its own sake, but the happiness of an unpunished criminal is not valuable. Thus, happiness, while valuable for its own sake when it is valuable, is valuable only the under the condition that it is not being experienced by an unpunished criminal.

With all of these distinctions in place, we can formulate the experiential view more precisely. On the experiential view, experiences of understanding works are finally valuable, valuable for their own sake. However, artistic value is a property of works, not of experiences. The property of having artistic value is the property of affording finally valuable experiences of understanding the work. This is an extrinsic property, but that does not entail artistic value is not a kind of final value; as we have seen, there are extrinsic properties that are finally valuable. If a work is artistically valuable, it is artistically valuable in virtue of affording finally valuable experiences of understanding it.

Experiential theorists deny that their view entails that works of art are not finally valuable. Strictly speaking, they are correct. What it does entail, I will argue, is that FVT is false. While this does not strictly entail that works of art are not valuable for their own sake – it may be that they are valuable for their own sake for some reason unconnected to their value as art – it is very close. However, Experiential theorists also deny that their view entails that FVT is false. Moreover, they share a common strategy for arguing that their view does not have this consequence, an argument I paraphrase as:

The valuable experience a work affords is not separable from the work itself. The valuable experience the work affords is not a mere ‘feel,’ characterizable only by its non-intentional phenomenal character. The experience a work affords is essentially an experience of that very work*.* Consequently, the work is not merely a particularly effective way of obtaining that experience. The work is an essential constituent of the experience.[[12]](#endnote-10)

This experientialist reasoning could be represented as:

1. The work is not merely a causal instrument for producing the experience. Instead, it is impossible to have *that* experience the work the experience is essentially an experience of *that* work.
2. The experience is finally valuable.
3. If A is not merely a causal instrument for B, but it is impossible for B to exist without A, and B is finally valuable, A is finally valuable.
4. ∴ The work is finally valuable.

This argument is unsound because premise (3) is false. Premise (3) is false because necessary concommittants, even necessary constituents, of things valuable for their own sake are not necessarily valuable for their own sake. The nearest to hand counter-examples to (3) are artistic ones. Take a Beethoven Piano Sonata that has a particularly dramatic rest. This rest is an essential constituent of the Sonata; the Sonata could not exist without that rest at that place in the piece. The Sonata, let us assume (following the experiential theorist), is valuable for its own sake. But the rest is not valuable for its own sake. It is only valuable because of its contribution to some larger whole, the Sonata, which is valuable for its own sake.

Earlier I claimed that the experiential theory entails that artistic value is not valuable for its own sake. Now I will present my argument for this claim:

1. If an object possesses a value in virtue of its contribution to a finally valuable whole, then the former object is not valuable for its own sake in virtue of its contribution to the finally valuable whole. The object may be finally valuable, but not in virtue of its contributing to the finally valuable whole.
2. If experiential theories of artistic value are correct, then a work possess artistic value in virtue of its contribution to a finally valuable experience of that work.
3. ∴ If experiential theories of artistic value are correct, works are not valuable for their own sake in virtue of their contribution to the value of experiences of them.
4. ∴ If experiential theories of artistic value are correct, works of art are not valuable for their own sake in virtue of their artistic value. In other words, artistic value is not valuable for its own sake.

My diagnosis of where the experientialist went wrong is that they assumed, mistakenly, that:

1. If an object is valuable but it is not valuable for its own sake, then it possess that value in virtue of making a causal contribution to the existence of a finally valuable object.

But, as we have already seen, causal contributions are not the only kinds of contributions valuable objects that are not valuable for their own sake can make to ones that are valuable for their own sake. Objects can also be non-finally valuable in virtue of being essential constituents of finally valuable wholes. I will remain neutral on whether an object that is valuable in virtue of being an essential constituent of a finally valuable whole is instrumentally valuable; I will remain neutral on whether all non-final values are instrumental values.

**2. Denying the Final Value Thesis**

Experientialism and the Final Value Thesis are incompatible. In this section, I argue that we should embrace Experientialism and reject FVT. In what follows, I will discount the mere intuition that works of art are valuable for their own sake as a reason for endorsing the Final Value Thesis. If there is one thing this discussion has shown, it is that questions about final and non-final value are more complex than they at first seem, and can easily be confused with questions about intrinsic/extrinsic value, and unconditioned/ conditioned value. Why should we trust ourselves to correctly interpret our pre-theoretic intuition if, prior to explicitly thinking about these issues, we did not carefully distinguish these different kinds of value? This does not mean that I will discount the probative value of all intuitions as such.

One might think that denying FVT leads to unacceptable consequences. For instance, one might think that denying FVT entails the ‘instrumentalization’ of art. It might be thought that if works of art are not valuable for their own sake, they are merely instrumentally valuable. Earlier I pointed out that the final/instrumental distinction may not be exhaustive: it may be that works of art are not valuable for their own sake, but are not merely instruments for obtaining other things of value. So, although Experientialism entails that works of art are not finally valuable, it does not necessarily entail that works of art are instrumentally valuable.[[13]](#endnote-11) However, all of my argument still goes through if it turns out that the final/instrumental value distinction is exhaustive. Nothing in my argument rests on denying that works of art are instrumentally valuable.

Another reason the Final Value Thesis has been endorsed is that it has been thought, erroneously, that if we abandon it then works of art become fungible. For instance, one form of Experientialism takes it that works are valuable in virtue of affording aesthetically pleasurable experiences, which are valuable for their own sake. This view appears to entail that works are merely the occasion for pleasure; it doesn’t matter which work you experience, as long as it gives you the ‘pleasure hit.’ But one thing our discussion in section one shows is that Experientialism is not committed to thinking that works of art are merely the external causes of the finally valuable experiences they afford. The Experientalist can consistently maintain that the works are essential constituents of the finally valuable experiences they afford. Experientailism is not committed to the fungibility of works of art.[[14]](#endnote-12)

In what follows, I will argue that, on the contrary, the Final Value Thesis is the view with unacceptable consequences.

Imagine a group of movie-lovers, the Cinemaniacs, who have idiosyncratic views about film appreciation: they avidly collect, and insist on watching, the *original* print of a film, the one that was physically put together by the original editor. Any copy of the original print – no matter how perfect – they regard as a poor substitute for the original.[[15]](#endnote-13) If you tell a Cinemaniac that you recently saw the latest Woody Allen film at the local multiplex he will smugly inform that you saw only a copy while he and his friends saw the original print in Paris and that, consequently, your experience of the film was significantly less valuable than his. The Cinemaniacs freely admit that the experience of watching a faithful copy of the original print is subjectively indistinguishable from watching the original; however, this does not diminish their devotion to seeing the original print, nor their conviction that original prints have significantly greater artistic value than indistinguishable copies and that experiences of those prints are (derivatively) of vastly greater artistic value than indistinguishable experiences of copies.

The Cinemaniacs hold with respect to original film-prints and copies the precise analogue of the view defended by proponents of the Final Value Thesis with respect to works like sculptures and paintings: even though the original and the copy afford indistinguishable experiences, the original, and experiences of that original, have a distinctive artistic value that cannot be replaced by any copy. Clearly, the Cinemaniacs are being systematically irrational about their film connoisseur-ship; they are fetishizing the original print, and according to it a value that it does not have. It is not rational to original prints as more artistically valuable than copies. Nor is it rational to regard experiences of the original print as more artistically valuable than experiences of perfectly accurate copies.

I am not denying that it is rational to accord to the original print, and experiences of it, some additional value not possessed by the indistinguishable copies. For instance, it would be reasonable for a film archive to expend additional resources to obtain and preserve the original print of *The Passion of Joan of Arc*, the very print sewn together by Dreyer and his editor – if it still existed[[16]](#endnote-14) -- rather than settle for a copy, even an indistinguishable copy. But seeing the original print of the film does not acquaint one any better with its artistic value than seeing an indistinguishable copy. You would be in no better position to understand Dreyer’s mastery, his use of lighting contrasts, etc. on the basis of viewing the original print than you would be on the basis of viewing a perfect copy. I conclude from this that the original print does not have any greater artistic value than its indistinguishable copies, and neither do experiences of that original print have greater artistic value (or acquaint one with something of greater artistic value) than experiences of the perfect copies. Whatever difference in value there is between the original print and its indistinguishable copies is not artistic value; let us call it the ‘artifact value.’ One way of stating what is strange about the Cinemaniacs is that, unlike the rest of us, they take the artifact value of film prints to be partly constitutive of their artistic value.[[17]](#endnote-15)

The Cinemaniacs are making a mistake, and we would like to have a diagnosis of that mistake. Even better, we would like an argument against the Cinemaniacs that does not beg the question against them. We would like an argument that appeals to considerations that even the Cinemaniac should accept, which entails that perfect copies are just as artistically valuable as original prints. Otherwise, the Cinemaniac position is just as internally coherent and rational as our own, which, clearly, it is not.

We might try to argue against the Cinemaniacs by claiming that they are making a mistake about the ontology of film: by watching a copy of *The Passion of Joan of Arc* you are still watching the film *The Passion of Joan of Arc*. However, they will freely admit that there is a multiply-instantiated work that is also tokened by every copy of the original print, and that that work is the object mistakenly appreciated by movie-goers who are not Cinemaniacs. They simply claim that the original print is a distinct work, and maintain that the original print, and experiences of it, have a distinctive artistic value not shared by copies, and experiences of copies. Whatever they are mistaken about, the Cinemaniacs are not making a mistake about ontology. There clearly *are* two different works here: the multiply instantiable type and the original token print.

It might be objected that, while the Cinemaniacs are not making a mistake about ontology, they are misapplying the concept of a *work*: the multiply-instantiated type is the *work*, it might be objected, not the token original copy. To which the Cinemaniacs can respond: why not think that both are *works*? Putting aside the contentious term ‘work’ for a moment, there are two objects, one of which we (typically) appreciate, the type, and the other of which the Cinemaniacs appreciate, the token. What is added to the argument by claiming that the former, and not the latter, is a *work*? I think that all that is added by pointing out that this object is a *work* is that this is the object we believe has (non-derivative) artistic value and is the appropriate object of apprecation; but that is precisely what is at issue between us and the Cinemaniacs! We would only beg the question against the Cinemaniacs by pointing out that the type and only the type is a *work*, because the Cinemanaics can respond: (1) why isn’t the token also a work?, and (2) assuming that the type and only the type is a work, what justifies us in our assumption that the work is what non-derivatively possesses artistic value? In other words, the Cinemaniacs might concede that we, the non-Cinemaniacs, direct our appreciation at the *work* (the type) but then ask why this is any more rationally legitimate than directing our appreciation at the token, as they do.

The Cinemaniacs fetishize the original film-print. If we retain the Final Value Thesis, we cannot explain why the Cinemaniacs are being irrational without begging the question against them. We cannot do so, because the Final Value Thesis commits us to fetishizing ‘non-multiple’ works of art like paintings and sculptures in a manner precisely analogous to the Cinemaniacs. In both cases, there is an original work (e.g. painting, original print), and there is a work-type tokened by the original and all perfect copies. In the case of (almost all) paintings, this work-type has only one token, the original painting, because there are no indistinguishable copies. In the case of films, we take the copy, and experiences of the copy, to have the same artistic value as the original, and experiences of the original. However, if we accept the Final Value Thesis with respect to ‘non-multiple’ works like paintings and sculptures we take the original to have a distinctive final artistic value that grounds the value of experience of the original. If we retain the Final Value Thesis, the Cinemaniacs can respond to any argument we make with a *Tu Quoque*: why is it rational to accord a distinctive value to the original painting, but not to the original film print? From this point of view, the difference between the Cinemaniacs and the Final Value Theorist looks largely arbitrary. Both of them acknowledge that there are multiply-instantiated works (e.g. novels), where the experience of any instance is equally valuable as the experience of any other; the Cinemaniacs do not think it matters whether you read the original manuscript version of *Of Human Bondage* or a copy you bought at your local bookstore. Of course, the original manuscript version has greater ‘artifact value’ than the copy from your local bookstore, but it does not have greater artistic value, and artistic value is the focus of this discussion. They also acknowledge that there are ‘non-multiple’ works, where the original, and experiences of it, have a final value not shared by copies, and subjectively indistinguishable experiences of them. The only difference is that the Cinemaniacs acknowledge one more kind of ‘non-multiple’ work than we do: original film-prints. And, to reiterate a point made earlier, they are not making a mistake about ontology: the original film-print is distinct from the type tokened by all accurate copies. The Cinemanics are making a mistake about value: they are irrationally according to the original film-print an artistic value it does not have. To any of our attempts to show why this is irrational, the Cinemanicas can always respond by simply pointing to the fact that (as long as we are under the sway of FVT) we do not accord the same artistic value to the original painting or sculpture than we do to indistinguishable copies. As long as we retain FVT, we cannot respond to this objection.

I have written as though FVT is committed to claiming that there is a difference in artistic value between, for instance, an original painting and an indistinguishable copy. Strictly speaking, this is not true; it logically compatible with FVT that originals of non-multiple works have the same artistic value as their indistinguishable copies. However, that package of views deprives FVT of much of its intuitive appeal. The intuitive appeal of FVT is that works of art are valuable in their own right, not in virtue of our experiences of them, so, in general, an indistinguishable copy will not be as artistically valuable as the original (in the case of non-multiple works). If it were the case that, in general, non-multiple works and their indistinguishable copies had the same artistic value, from the perspective of FVT this would have to be a cosmic coincidence: since their value is not grounded in our experiences, that they are indistinguishable does not explain why they have the same artistic value. Consequently, although the conjunction of FVT and the view that non-multiple works in general have the same artistic value as their indistinguishable copies is a position in logical space, I do not think it is a position anyone will want to occupy.

Experientialism, and its concomitant denial of FVT, allows us to argue against the Cinemaniacs without begging the question. The Cinemaniacs are wrong to accord a different final value to original film-prints than to accurate copies because artworks, quite generally, do not have final value (at least not in virtue of their artistic value). They are artistically valuable in virtue of the finally valuable experiences they afford. Since (by hypothesis) the original and the accurate copies afford equally artistically valuable experiences, the original and the accurate copies are no different in artistic value. This conclusion ramifies in the other direction: if the Cinemaniacs are wrong in their differential treatment of the original print and the accurate copies, we are wrong in our differential treatment of the original painting or sculpture and its subjectively indistinguishable copies. However, this point is largely moot: subjectively indistinguishable copies of ‘non-multiple’ works like paintings and sculptures are well beyond our technical means. Consequently, my argument has little or no consequences for the actual practice of art curatorship: until we have the technical means to produce copies of paintings and sculptures which afford experiences subjectively indistinguishable from experiences of the original, we are justified in preferring, and doing our utmost to preserve, the original works.[[18]](#endnote-16)

This detour through the case of the Cinemaniacs also shows us how to respond to an objection that no doubt has already occurred to some readers. In discussions of the Experiential theory of artistic value, it is commonly objected that in actual practice we accord a distinctive value to an original work that we do not accord to copies of it. Picassos’s *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* is highly original, even revolutionary; if someone were to paint an indistinguishable copy, that painting would not be original, but would be derivative and uninteresting. Since originality is a valuable feature of works that possess it, and being derivative is an artistic flaw, it follows that Picasso’s original painting and the copy differ in artistic value, despite affording (by hypothesis) indistinguishable experiences. This might appear a clear refutation of the Experientialist view.[[19]](#endnote-17) Similarly, it might be argued that in appreciating *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* one of the things we are appreciating is Picasso’s creativity, but the creation of a copy involves no creativity whatsoever. Consequently, in viewing the copy we are not in a position to appreciate what we appreciate in viewing *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* so the experience of the copy is less valuable than the experience of the original.[[20]](#endnote-18)

None of this constitutes an argument against Experientialism. The Experientialist can admit that we *do* attribute significantly greater value to the original painting, and experiences of it, than we do to the copy, and experiences of it. The Experientialist need only deny that we are *rational* in doing so. Earlier, I allowed that there is some difference in value between the original print of *The Passion of Joan of Arc* and any copy, even a perfect one. I call this the ‘artifact value.’ Artifact value, in general, is grounded in causal and historical connection to important persons, places or events. Many items other than works of art have artifact value. That the original *Demoiselles* has an artifact value not possessed by its (imaginary) perfect copies is not controversial; this is a value that might be shared by Picasso’s easel and brush, or his shaving kit. What I am denying is that the original *Demoiselles* has greater artistic value than its perfect copies. I am claiming that in experiencing the original *Demoiselles* you are not appreciating or ‘in touch with’ anything of greater artistic value than you are when you experience its perfect copies. In both cases you are experiencing the work-type tokened by both the original and the copy. In both cases you are in touch with Picasso’s creativity and the originality of *Demoiselles*: in the first, case, by being directly acquainted with the product of that creativity, and in the second by being directly acquainted with something that is non-accidentally a perfect copy of it.

Recall the case of the Cinemaniacs: the original print of *The Passion of Joan of Arc* and a perfect copy of it. Clearly, there is something more valuable about the original print than the copy. Earlier I called it ‘artifact value.’ It would be rational to expend more resources on preserving the original than on any given copy; it would be more rational to expend resources to own the original print rather than the copy. But it is clearly false that the original is significantly more artistically valuable than the copy. The case of the original Picasso and the copy is perfectly analogous. The original Picasso has a special historical value: this very painting was painted by Picasso, was seen by the original audiences, etc. The very same things can be said about the original print of *The Passion of Joan of Arc*. Any residual intuition that the original Picasso is significantly more artistically valuable than the copy is due to the assumption that the copy could not be truly indistinguishable: over time, to the right pair of eyes, some difference would be found. In all actual cases, this is probably true; as I have pointed out, my argument has no consequences for actual practice. But, in the case imagined, the copy is truly indistinguishable.[[21]](#endnote-19)

It might also be objected that my argument proves too much: it requires not only that we reject FVT, but that we significantly revise our views about the ontology of works of art. [[22]](#endnote-20) But it does not. My argument has no consequences about the ontological status either of ‘non-multiple’ works like *Les Demoiselles d’Avignon* or ‘multiple’ works like *The Passion of Joan of Arc* or Bruckner’s Sixth Symphony.[[23]](#endnote-21) What my argument does entail is that the ‘non-multiple’ works, the particular statues, paintings, etc. are not the appropriate objects of our appreciation. If our appreciation should be directed at the objects that non-derivatively possess artistic value, i.e. the objects that have artistic value and not because of the artistic value of some other object, it should be directed at the *type* constituted by the original token and all of its indistinguishable copies (if there are any).[[24]](#endnote-22) This does not entail that works that are ordinarily taken to be ‘non-multiple’ works like paintings, statues, etc. are already ‘multiple’ works – it entails that we should be directing our appreciation at the multiple works, the types, associated with those paintings, statues, etc. In other words, it does not entail that there is no distinction between ‘multiple’ and ‘non-multiple’ works, nor does it entail any claims about the nature of ‘multiple’ works – it entails that the works we should be focusing our attention and appreciation on are all ‘multiple’ works.[[25]](#endnote-23)

The FVT theorist has to make an arbitrary distinction between works like paintings, where indistinguishable works differ in final value, and film prints, where indistinguishable works do not. The FVT theorist, therefore, cannot answer the Cinemaniac’s *Tu Quoque*; the FVT theorist cannot non-question-beggingly explain why their position is more rational than the Cinemaniacs’. Mine can. This is a significant theoretical advantage because it means that the FVT theorist has to posit a distinction between two kinds of cases, without being able to give a principled account of that distinction. There are no such unprincipled distinctions on the Experientialist view.

It might be claimed that the Experientialist view is thus proven to be false because it involves a violation in our current conceptual practices. As we currently deploy our concepts, we do attribute a greater artistic value to, e.g. the original Demoiselles than to any copy, even a perfect one. Thus, it might be claimed, there is no further question to be settled: our concept of artistic value is a concept according to which there is a difference between originals and perfect copies.

There may be concepts so fundamental to our conceptual scheme that we cannot revise them. Perhaps our concepts of the logical connectives are like this. But it is not plausible that artistic value is one of them. I have argued that if FVT is correct about our actual use of the concept *artistic value* then we should revise our use of that concept because it requires us to make an invidious and unprincipled distinction: a distinction between art forms where originals and copies are identical in artistic value (e.g. film), and art forms where they are in general not (e.g. painting). This is analogous to discovering that our concept of *moral respect* makes an invidious and unprincipled distinction between human and non-human animals because it is part of our concept of moral respect that all and only human beings deserve moral respect but (as is plausibly the case) there is no reason to accord moral respect to some human beings but withhold it from certain higher primates. It would, I take it, be totally inadequate to just throw up our hands at this point and say *‘all we can do in philosophy is investigate our conceptual scheme. If our concept of moral respect requires making an invidious distinction between human and non-human animals, so be it.’*  We would be rationally obliged, in the imagined situation, to revise our concept of moral respect so that it makes no invidious distinctions between human and non-human animals.Likewise, it is inadequate to respond to my arguments by saying ‘*all we can do in philosophy is investigate the scheme of our aesthetic and artistic concepts. If our concept of artistic value includes an invidious distinction between different art forms, so be it.*’ We are rationally obliged, in both cases, to revise our concepts so as not to include this invidious distinction. Another way of putting this point would be to say that in philosophy we can aim at more than merely unpacking or uncovering or analyzing our concepts: we can also revise those concepts if we find that they are in some respect rationally illegitimate. I have argued that, insofar as FVT expresses our ordinary concept of artistic value, we are in precisely this position. We must revise it.

The view that works of art are valuable for their own sake might be thought to have much to be said in its favor. First of all, many claim to find it intuitive. I have discounted this intuition on the ground that our pre-theoretic intuitions are too coarse-grained in this context, because they do not distinguish between being finally valuable, and being an essential constituent of something valuable for its own sake. Secondly, it might be taken to be necessary to avoid the fungibility of works of art. I have argued, on the contrary, that Experientialism does not entail that works of art are fungible. I argued further that it is FVT that has unacceptable consequences, for it entails that we must make invidious distinctions between art forms where originals and copies differ in artistic value, and art forms where they do not. For this reason we should reject FVT. I have not argued for the disjunction: *either* works of art are valuable for their own sake (FVT) *or* they are valuable in virtue of the finally valuable experiences they afford (Experientialism). However, it is hard to see what other options there might be. Nonetheless, I will temper my conclusion accordingly: of the views of the nature of artistic value offered in recent work on the philosophy of art, the only tenable view is that works of art are valuable in virtue of the experiences they afford.[[26]](#endnote-24), [[27]](#endnote-25)

1. Historically by, among others, Victor Cousin in *Lectures on the True*, *the Beautiful and the Good*, O. W. Wright (trans.) (New York: D. Appleton, 1854); Walter Pater, in the Conclusion to *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry* (London: McMillan, 1888); in the analytic tradition, by Stuart Hampshire in “Logic and Appreciation” in *Art and Philosophy*, ed. W.E. Kennick (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1964) and by P.F. Strawson in “Aesthetic Appraisal and Works of Art” in *Freedom and Resentment and other Essays* (London: Methuen, 1974); and more recently by Malcolm Budd, *Values of Art* (New York: Penguin, 1995) and R.A. Sharpe, “The Empiricist Theory of Artistic Value” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* vol. 58 (2000), 321-332. Stephen Davies defends the FVT in the case of musical works in “The Evaluation of Music” in *What is Music? An Introduction to the Philosophy of Music*, ed. Philip Alperson (New York: Haven Publications, 1987). Notable dissenters include John Dewey in *Art and Experience* ; Monroe Beardsley in “Intrinsic Value” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 26 (1965), 1-17; and, more recently, Robert Stecker in *Artworks: Definition, Meaning, Value* (University Park: Penn State Press, 1997).  
    [↑](#endnote-ref--1)
2. In this paper, I am solely concerned with *artistic* value. Some theorists distinguish between *artistic* and *aesthetic* value. I am concerned solely with the former in this paper. [↑](#endnote-ref-0)
3. Strictly speaking, it is compatible with my view that every single artistically valuable work of art is valuable for its own sake. My claim is that, even if this is true, these works are not finally valuable in virtue of being artistically valuable. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
4. Budd, *Values of Art* (New York: Penguin, 1995), p. 5. Cf. Davies, “Against Enlightened Empiricism” *Contemporary Debates in Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006); and Matthew Kieran, “Value of Art” in *Routledge Companion to Aesthetics*, ed. Berys Gaut and Dominic McIver Lopes (New York: Routledge, 2002), 293-306. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
5. Gary Iseminger holds a similar view, consisting of a principle about the value of art, and a definition of the semi-technical term ‘appreciation’:

   (V’) A work of art is a good work of art to the extent that it has the capacity to afford appreciation.

   *Def*. *Appreciation* is finding the experience of a state of affairs to be valuable in itself.

   By ‘valuable in itself’ Iseminger means that the experience is found to be valuable for its own sake. See *The Aesthetic Function of Art* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1994), p. 23, 36. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
6. Of course, the upholder of the experiential theory owes us an account of what it is for an experience to be an experience of correctly understanding a work. But that is a separate issue. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
7. Cf. Matthew Kieran, *Revealing Art* (New York: Routledge, 2005). Kieren raises several objections against Experientialism. I think Experientialism has the resources to respond to Kieran’s objections, but I don’t have the space to discuss that in this paper. Alan Goldman defends Experientialism against several popular objections in “The Experiential Theory of Artistic Value” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 64 (2006), 334-342. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
8. What follows is heavily indebted to the extensive and sophisticated literature on intrinsic and extrinisc value, especially G.E. Moore, “The Conception of Intrinsic Value” in *Principia Ethica*, Ed. Thomas Baldwin (New York: CUP, 2003), p. 280-298; Christine Korsgaard, “Two Distinctions in Goodness” *Philosophical Review* 92 (1983), p. 169-195; and especially Jonathan Dancy, *Ethics Without Principles* (New York: OUP, 2004), Ch. 9 & 10. A collection of the most influential recent work can be found in Toni Rønnow-Rasmussen and Michael J. Zimmerman (ed.),  *Recent Work on Intrinsic Value* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2005). [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
9. Following Dancy, I take the important distinction to be between properties had intrinsically and those had extrinsically, rather than between intrinsic properties and extrinsic properties. Cf. Lloyd Humberstone, “Intrinsic/Extrinsic” *Synthese* 108 (1996), p. 205-67. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
10. See *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten* in Immanuel Kant, *Gesammelte Schriften*, edited by the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1900—), vol. 4, 393-4. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
11. The point that the final/instrumental distinction might not be exhaustive I owe to Jonathan Dancy, *Ethics Without Principles*, p. 175. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
12. Cf. Budd, *Values of Art*, p. 13-14. This strategy is implicit in Iseminger’s ‘epistemic’ conception of experience and his discussion of valuing an experience for its own sake; see *The Aesthetic Function of Art*, p. 36-40. Jerrold Levinson adopts an essentially identical strategy for defending the hedonic view against the objection that it instrumentalizes art; see “Pleasure and the Value of Works of Art” in *The Pleasures of Aesthetics* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1996), p. 22-23. I also detect a suggestion of this strategy when Stephen Davies , “Understanding Music” in *Themes in the Philosophy of Music* (New York: Oxford, 2003), p. 205. A similar argument is given by Matthew Kieran in “Values of Art” in *Routledge Companion to Aesthetics*, ed. B. Gaut and D.M. Lopes (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 215-225 at p. 216-217. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
13. Dancy borrows from Rae Langton the example of a wedding ring: it is not valuable as an instrument for anything, but it is not at all clear that it is valued for its own sake. See Dancy, p. 175 and Langton, “Objective and Unconditioned Value” *Philosophical Review* 116 (2007), p. 157-185. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
14. Levinson makes this point about aesthetic hedonism in “Pleasure and the Value of Works of Art.” I take it that this is the real upshot of the (I have argued, misguided) attempt by Empiricists to argue that their view is compatible with FVT; this point is brought out nicely by Robert Stecker in *Artworks: Definition, Meaning, Value, 255-6.* [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
15. In a lot of cases, there will be no such print; the Cinemaniacs regard those films as lost, known to us only through copies. And in the case of digital film, the idea of an ‘original print’ makes no sense. The Cinemaniacs have no interest in digital film, regarding it as the debased medium of a superficial age. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
16. The near perfect copy found in a Norwegian mental hospital in 1981 is precisely that: a near perfect *copy*. It is not the *original*. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
17. My argument bears certain similarities to the view presented by Walter Benjamin in *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit*. What I am calling ‘artifact value’ is an analogue of what he calls the ‘aura’ of the work. However, working out the exact relationship between my view and Benjamin’s lies outside the scope of this paper. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
18. It should also be clear that my argument has no consequences about forgeries, works which are not copies of another artist’s works, but are passed off as being authentic works of that artist. My argument has no consequences for cases like this, because there is no reason to think that experiences of an artist’s work and experiences of even very competent forgeries of that artist’s work would be subjectively indistinguishable. Cf. David Davies, “Against Enlightened Empiricism” *Contemporary Debates in Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art*, 22-34. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
19. See note 7 for my response to similar point by Matthew Kieran. Cf. Gordon Graham’s discussion of cases like this in “Aesthetic Empiricism and the Challenge of Fakes and Ready-Mades” in *Contemporary Debates in Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art*, p. 11-21. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
20. Cf. Alan Goldman’s response to the same objection in “The Experiential Account of Artistic Value” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 64 (2006), 333-342. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
21. In a review of Gregory Currie’s *An Ontology of the Work of Art*, Jerrold Levinson criticizes a view relevantly similar to mine in the case of painting; he writes: “the irreducible historical fact of how it was produced differentiates an original from any copy, and does affect appreciation, appreciation of the canvas as art. Here is one way this manifests itself concretely: we can more transparently and vividly imagine the artist’s gestural action in creating the painting [. . .] when we know the object in front of us was actually and directly the result of such action” (“Art as Action” in *Pleasures of Aesthetics*, 143). This is an empirical claim about our ability to imagine vividly the action of a painter; I see no reason, and Levinson, provides none, why human beings would find it easer to imagine vividly this action in the presence of an indistinguishable copy than in the presence of the original (especially if they believe it is the original). Does Levinson find it easier to imagine vividly the motion of the camera when watching an original print than when watching a perfect copy?

    [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
22. The literature on the ontology of works of art is extensive and quite sophisticated. Influential recent works include Gregorie Currie, *An Ontology of Art* (London: Macmillan, 1988); Stephen Davies, *Art as Performance* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004); Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992); Jerrold Levinson, *Music, Art and Metaphysics* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 199); Amie Thomasson, *Fiction and Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999); and Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Works and Worlds of Art* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1980). See also the overview of the debates in Amie Thomasson, “The Ontology of Art.” *The Blackwell Guide to Aesthetics.* Ed. Peter Kivy. Oxford: Blackwell, 2004; Stephen Davies, “The Ontology of Art” *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics* (Oxford: Oxford, 2003); and Guy Rohrbaugh, “Ontology of Art” *Routledge Companion to Aesthetics* (London: Routledge, 2001). [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
23. However, it is not neutral on *all* views on the ontology of art. I am assuming that there are ‘multiple’ works and that these works are types instantiated or tokened by individual objects. Thus, my view is incompatible with views in the ontology of art that deny these principles. Arguing against such views about the ontology of ‘multiple’ works, however, lies outside the scope of this paper. [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
24. I mean ‘type’ here in the most general possible sense, to include universals, sets, abstract artifacts, etc. (all of which have been used to model the ontological status of multiple works; see previous note.) I am not committed to the traditional ‘type’ theory of multiple works defended by, among others, Richard Wollheim in *Art and its Objects*. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
25. Thus my view is similar in certain respects to those of Currie, *An Ontology of Art* and Eddy Zemach, *Types: Essays in Metaphysics* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992). [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
26. It might be objected that this has the unacceptable conclusion that works of art are instrumentally valuable. However, this objection assumes something I have not assumed, and which is questionable on independent grounds: if artistic value is not a kind of final value, then it is a kind of instrumental value. Jonathan Dancy borrows from Rae Langton the example of a wedding ring: it is not valuable as an instrument for anything, but it is not at all clear that it is valued for its own sake. See Dancy, 175 and Langton, “Objective and Unconditioned Value” *Philosophical Review* 116 (2007), 157-185. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
27. I would like to thank Robert Audi, Otavio Bueno, Brad Cokelet, Andrew Huddleston, Keith Lehrer, Amie Thomasson and an audience at the 2009 ASA Annual Meeting in Denver, CO for their comments and criticisms on various versions of this paper. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)